

Celebrate Success!

public education standouts

Non-profit education foundation celebrates 20 years

The Oxford Education Foundation (OEF), a non-profit community organization created to enhance the quality of education for students in the Oxford Area SD (Chester Co.), celebrated its 20th anniversary in September.

OEF provides funding for professional grants to staff for innovative programs. In the last 13 years, more than \$128,000 in materials and training have been awarded to district teachers and administrators.

The concept for OEF came from Richard Winchester, then a school board member of the Oxford Area SD, after he attended a workshop at the PASA-PSBA School Leadership Conference in Hershey. The workshop *Making an Education Foundation Work For You* caught Winchester's attention and offered him the necessary ingredients to create a foundation. Presenters Dr. Margaret Kuypers and George Plosa, administrators in the Hatboro-Horsham SD (Montgomery Co.), described the origins of the public school foundation movement in other states such as Wisconsin and Minnesota, and explained the many ways non-profit foundations could generate support for schools. Inspired by his experience at the conference, Winchester returned to Oxford excited to begin the process.

With the assistance of colleagues on the Oxford Area SD board, Oxford alumni and community activists, Winchester helped form the Steering Committee for the OEF. Oxford alumnus and Attorney Randy Sebastian helped guide the committee through the paperwork. This group, under the leadership of former Secretary of Education John Pittenger, helped the OEF come to life. In 1994, the Steering Committee went out of existence and the first annual meeting of the OEF membership elected its first board of directors.

In its first three years, the foundation formed its board committee structure, hired a coordinator to recruit volunteers and mentors in the schools, purchased a satellite dish for use by the schools, assisted the high school in its organization of a career day, attended alumni reunions, and provided an Oxford Area SD and OEF bi-annual joint publication of the Oxford School News.

In the start of 2012, OEF received an anonymous \$1



Terence Farrell presents a citation from the Chester County Commissioners in honor of the OEF's 20th anniversary to Executive Director Dr. Raymond Fischer and President Jim McLeod.

million gift which assisted the school district in expanding its educational mission and strategic plan over the next five years. In Dec. 2012, the OEF concluded that an executive director would be needed to strengthen the organization and help provide support to the Oxford Area SD. The board voted and appointed Dr. Ray Fischer, the recently retired superintendent of schools and charter member of the OEF, to the position.

The OEF continues to look for new ways to support the efforts of the Oxford Area SD. These efforts include working to expand a list of experts who can enhance education by volunteering to be guest speakers or email pen pals. The Community Adults as Resources for Education (OEF CAREs) program allows connections to be made between careers and classrooms. Those interested in becoming a volunteer, mentor, or tutor or in learning more about the program can contact the OEF Volunteer Coordinator at (610) 932-7200, or oxfordedfound@yahoo.com. Information about the foundation can be found on the OEF website at oxfordeducationalfoundation.org. **b**