

2016 Community Improvement Awards

Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce
Huntingdon County Planning Commission

March 2017

Award Promotes Excellence in Development

The Huntingdon County Chamber of Commerce and Huntingdon County Planning Commission are proud to announce the winners of the twelfth annual Community Improvement Awards.

The Planning Commission and the Chamber jointly reviewed the nominees, with the final selection being made by the Planning Commission. The sponsor for the Awards is Kish Bank.

Award categories are Community Spirit, New Construction, Preservation and Special Merit.

- New Construction includes any type of new construction of buildings of all types.
- Preservation includes the restoration, preservation, and/or rehabilitation of buildings of all types to retain historic character.
- Community Spirit includes the recognition of individuals and organizations that have made a significant contribution to Huntingdon County in the field of community development.
- A Special Merit Award may be made for projects, persons or groups that demonstrate outstanding achievement on their own merits.

The principles of sustainable development include:

- ⇒ Creating walkable neighborhoods;
- ⇒ Directing development toward existing communities;
- ⇒ Creating housing choices;

- ⇒ Providing transportation choices;
- ⇒ Encouraging a mixture of land uses; and
- ⇒ Preserving open space, farmland, and environmentally-sensitive areas.

Community Improvement Awards are based on both the visual and the environmental impact of the project. Nominations were judged on how each project:

- Enhances the attractiveness of Huntingdon County;
- Is compatible with the site area and environment;
- Shows creativity/innovation in design and use of materials;
- Enhances the quality of life, including job creation; and
- Exhibits the principle of sustainability.



2015 Community Improvement Awards Presented March 23, 2016



Community Spirit Award

RYAN GIBBONEY, REINVISION HUNTINGDON INITIATIVES

Ryan Gibboney (a Huntingdon native) returned home and started a non-profit organization called ReInvision Huntingdon in the fall of 2015. She was determined to acquire community input to guide local people who were interested in joining the Boom Town Initiative led by Huntingdon Borough Mayor Brown in 2016, creating and facilitating Borough-based events to draw people back to the downtown area. Gibboney was joined by a board of individuals including; Courtney Lang, Kirstin McKenzie, Nick Miller, Erica Shoaf and Greta Gibboney Hall.

Historically, Huntingdon used to hold Boom Town Meetings as a place to meet and discuss the community and local initiatives. Recently, there has been interest by many community members and local business owners to get together and identify potential connections in our community.

The first Boom Town Meeting hoped to identify business owners, leaders, and, most importantly, volunteers who make things happen. The goal of this first meeting was to get together in one room and bring awareness to the local initiatives that are brewing. "There is currently a plethora of individual movements, committees, and initiatives that are working on improving Huntingdon. Unfortunately, this is happening in many unlinked meetings rather than one cohesive community," states ReInvision's website.

The first year of the "Small Projects, Big Ideas" grant funded four beautification projects, such as benches at Portstown Park, totaling \$2,400. In 2016, three Public Community Discussion meetings were held. A small team of garden and food enthusiasts emerged from that get-together. The members proceeded to focus on creating educational garden programs, planting workshops, harvesting instructions, and food-preservation techniques. In the spring, ReInvision Huntingdon arrived at a vacant elementary school yard with shovels, trowels, and seeds, and started planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, and nibbling.

The Huntingdon Community Food Garden grew enough produce to donate over \$1,100 worth of sustainably-grown food to local organizations like Meals on Wheels, the Drop-In Center, and the Salvation Army. Ryan's hope for the future is that by having conversations and working together everyone can contribute something toward the positive rejuvenation of a vibrant downtown. The hope is, "To create united organizations, community members, politicians, and communities through a collaborative process, rooted in revitalization."



Special Merit Award

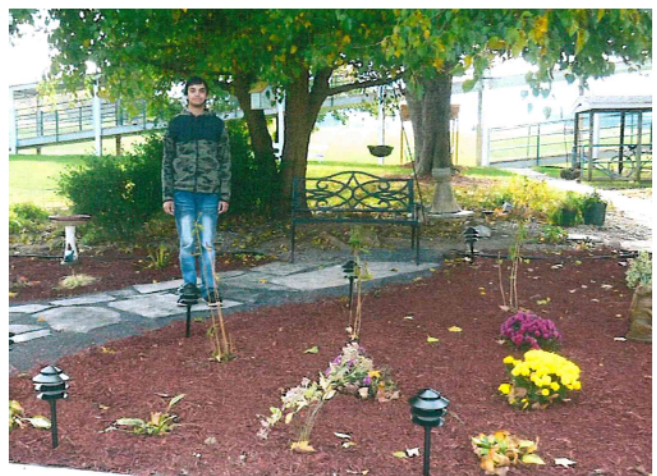
NEW SIGN AND GARDEN AT SHIRLEY HOME, SHIRLEYSBURG, PA

Jared Covert and Zachary Irvin worked in partnership with the Board of Directors of the Shirley Home and the Huntingdon County Commissioners to obtain approval for their Eagle Scout projects. The two teenagers have made significant improvements to the entrance of the Shirley Home for the Aged. The vision and labor came from the teenagers, and the fruits of their labor are enjoyed not only by residents and staff of the Shirley Home but by everyone who passes by on Route 522 (Croghan Pike). Fellow Scout Troop 237 members helped, but Jared and Zachary were the designers, fundraisers, architects, and primary laborers for the new sign and perennial flower garden at the entrance to the Shirley Home.

The sign is secured on a solid 10' by 3' concrete floor. The interior of the 6' by 8' sign is made of concrete blocks encased in stone. The square columns on either side are 7' high and the column closest to Route 522 contains a time capsule. LED lighting on a timer illuminates the project at night. The color of the stone was chosen to complement the colors of the Shirley Home. New landscaping plants and mulch were placed around the sign to complete the professional and welcoming appearance.

While Jared was the "Project Manager" for the sign, Zachary was the "Project Manager" for the garden. He took a bare piece of ground approximately 20' by 30' and transformed it into a walking path, which residents of the Home can use daily with their families. He installed slate stones for the path, iron benches, plants to attract butterflies and hummingbirds, landscape lighting, and stone figurines. Plantings were designed allowing room for growth so they will provide lush flowers as the garden matures. There is even room for residents to use containers and plant additional flowers to keep the garden growing and flourishing.

The value of both projects is estimated at \$6,000, and, since the Shirley Home is a non-profit organization, this investment in the beauty of the community is greatly appreciated by all.



Special Merit Award

KIA MEMORIAL, MOUNT UNION, PA

The KIA Memorial is located at the Community Entrance of the Mount Union Area High School. The Memorial was built to honor military service personnel killed in action during WWI, WWII, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam and wars on terrorism who were also graduates of Mount Union Area Schools. The Memorial contains a flag pole, cement brick pattern platform, killed-in-action monument, a three panel wall with the plaques of each war represented and a killed-in-action plaque.

The KIA Memorial is the graduation project of Garrett Love, James Woods, Hunter Blair, and Jamal Inch. The team expressed their gratitude for the project as the Memorial was publically dedicated to the community on May 28, 2016.

Funding for the Memorial was received from the Blue Juniata VFW Post 5754, Simpson-Hunt American Legion Post 107, Planet LoveJoy, and numerous Mount Union Alumni. Mount Union Contractor, Dwight Rittenhouse, provided guidance throughout the construction of the Memorial.





Lifetime Achievement Award **GINNY GILL, 30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Ginny Gill was appointed to the Huntingdon County Planning Commission in July 1986, when the County was being developed for Raystown Lake tourism and new housing. She served as Chairman and Secretary during her 30-year tenure before her resignation effective December 31, 2016.

In 2004, Ginny was appointed to the Huntingdon Borough Tree Commission and coordinated their twice-yearly tree plantings along Huntingdon's streets and in Borough parks. Now the trees provide beauty and shade for residents, visitors, wildlife, and birds.

With two commissions guiding her, Ginny has persisted in questioning developers' plans to make sure they were not destroying trees or habitat without replacing them, or carving out too many lots on the hillsides, or ignoring weeds and debris that people had to look at every day as they pass through town. "She was a thorn in the side of anyone who didn't treat the Earth with respect," wrote Ginny on her application. But we all know she was a rose amidst the thorns.

In support of her premise that we must all be good stewards of the Earth, Ginny loves participating in the growth of healthy, sustainable, and sensible development, while at the same time planting trees to clean the air and beautify the Borough and the County.

Ginny Gill's efforts will linger long into the future.

Community Improvement Awards

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