

Editor, this article is submitted in connection with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Chester County Economic Development Council.

By Gary Smith  
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The Chester County Economic Development Council is celebrating during 2010 its 50<sup>th</sup> year in business. For the past half century the council has been the “go to” organization for those business leaders wanting to start or grow companies.

The CCEDC has helped many entrepreneurs with finding sites to build companies, helping with loans and offering expert help on everything from employee development and retention to international trade.

Times have change since 1960 when the CCEDC, then known as the Chester County Development Council, first began operation. Today we have partnerships with IT, bioscience, green environment and many other groups that weren't on the radar of the county business leaders of last century.

Our organization also supports training the next generation of workers. The 10th annual Girls Exploring Tomorrow's Technology event took place last month at Penn State Great Valley. This event began in 2001 as a response to the under representation of young women in the computer and information technology fields. This program offers a great opportunity for young women to explore the possibility of a career in technology.

To grow, thrive and remain relevant, the CCEDC has had to adapt with the ever changing times and we have done so. We have done so in the recent difficult economic times when our services are even more valuable to the Chester County business community.

The CCEDC is an independent, membership-based organization. We are the economic agency for the County of Chester but we are not a county agency, as some assume. We work with the Chester County Commissioners and all of our economic partners.

The genesis of the organization dates to a meeting at the Paoli Pancake House with “forward-thinking, like-minded business leaders,” as the Main Line Times called them. Those leaders included former U.S. Representative John H. Ware III from Oxford, Donald N. Givler, President of Grocery Store Products from West Chester, H. Fred Miller, President of Paoli National Bank and Stewart Huston, Vice President and Secretary of Lukens Steel in Coatesville.

Ware, who owned Penn Fuel Gas, Inc., was elected as the Council's first Chairman serving from 1960-1965, followed in turn by Givler and then Miller.

The purpose of the organization was to promote the economic growth of Chester County by the attraction of desirable industry and commerce and by assisting the orderly growth and expansion of existing industry and commerce in the county.

As a favor to county government, during the first two years the organization was located in the F & M Building in West Chester, near the county commissioners. Claude M. Stroup was the first director of the organization. The CCEDC later moved to a building on Route 100 between Lionville and Exton, across from the Pickering Creek Industrial Park. Now, we are in our state-of-the-art center in Eagleview.

Since 1960, the CCEDC has helped to create more than 115,000 jobs, retain an additional 140,000 jobs and acquire more than \$8.75 billion in financing loans and the establishment of more than 6,575 companies in Chester County.

The CCEDC looks forward to the next 50 years and helping the entrepreneurs of the future and our established companies. Chester County is known as one of the best places in the nation to live, work and raise a family. Our economic vitality is one of the key factors in making Chester County so attractive.