



Media Release

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Chamber Awards Citizen of the Year honor to James S. Hawkins

*Hawkins will be honored at an award ceremony held at Cross Creek Resort on
February 24th.*

The Venango Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the Citizen of the Year for 2009, James S. Hawkins. A well known businessman and active community volunteer, Jim owns a resume that evidences a lifetime of hard work and service to others. The oldest of three children and the only boy, Jim remembers his first job as a paperboy at age 11, followed by working as a caddy and groundskeeper for a local golf course in Penn Hills, where he grew up.

The product of hard working parents, Jim graduated from Penn Hills Sr. High School and went on to earn his Bachelors of Business & Economics from Slippery Rock University in 1971. His first post graduate job was with Aetna Life & Casualty in Pittsburgh, but in 1975 he was recruited to fill a vacancy at Barr's Insurance in Oil City.

Jim remembers that just two weeks after arriving in Venango County, the Oil City Chamber of Commerce Director visited him to ask "What will you do to serve the community?" His short answer was that he would like to work with kids. He would go on to serve on many committees of the chamber and ultimately as the President of the Board in 1982.

Along with Jim's willingness to serve was his dedication to Barr's Insurance. In 1980 Jim became a part owner of the company and in 1993 a majority owner. Those who work with and for him speak of the devotion Jim shows to community and to his "work family", which now includes 20 employees.

It is overwhelming to review the list of organizations that has benefitted from Jim's years of dedication. They include but are not limited to numerous coaching positions in youth basketball, Little League, and golf, Board and Officer Positions with Oil City

Jaycees, Oil City Kiwanis Club, Oil City Parking Authority and the United Way. Jim continues to be an active leader in his church and children's schools, particularly in promoting Catholic Education. He has served on the Slippery Rock University of PA Foundation and on the board of the Wanango Country Club. Jim has remained committed to improving the lives of community members and especially our youth.

Jim is passionate when he talks about his work with the Oil City Chamber of Commerce, Oil City Community Development Corp. and most recently the Oil Region Alliance. He remarks that "Working together in strong partnership across organizations, schools and our faith community is critical to the success of our area." Jim has been very involved in a number of collaborative projects of this nature over his years of service.

Those who nominated Jim for the honor of Citizen of the Year repeatedly expressed that Jim demonstrates a life of honesty, integrity, reliability and inspiration, personally and professionally. Jim suggests "We need good people to serve as mentors for future leaders and to challenge people to step up into leadership roles."

Jim speaks proudly of the accomplishments of his three adult children, Colleen, Christine and Bryan and his eight grandchildren, all now living out of state. He and his wife Andrea recently celebrated their 20th anniversary and are the parents of Garrett, age 15, an athlete like his father.

The Venango Area Chamber of Commerce invites you to join us in honoring Jim at the Chamber's 2010 Annual Dinner on Wednesday, February 24th at Cross Creek Resort. For more information visit www.venangochamber.org or call 814-676-8521

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