



11/01/2006

Program can help businesses to grow

To the Editor:

For the past six years, Schuylkill County has participated in the Business Retention and Expansion Program, a statewide business calling program sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development that encourages firms to stay, grow and create more jobs in the commonwealth.

The program is targeted at a number of key industries, including construction, education, health care, manufacturing and transportation/warehousing.

Through the program, economic development professionals visit businesses to assess their needs and offer assistance whenever necessary. The assistance is provided through an extensive network of service providers throughout Pennsylvania.

If a business requests assistance during a visit, a Customer Action Plan is devised to address specific needs. BREP offers CAPs in eight major areas: business management; financial assistance/capital; market development; product development; site location, preparation and infrastructure; technology; workforce and government.

The CAPs are referred to one of the service providers, whose responses are tracked to ensure timely follow-up. The program results are two-fold: the business receives needed assistance and, in turn, our state legislators are better able to assess the needs of the various industries and stay in tune with the local business communities.

To date, BREP representatives have completed more than 60,000 visits to Pennsylvania businesses.

This program is an important tool in measuring the success of Pennsylvania's industries — where we've been and where we need to go. I urge all area businesses in the key sectors of the Business Retention and Expansion Program to schedule a meeting with one of the BREP business liaisons when contacted. There may be resources available to you that can help you stay competitive.

Sara Hodon

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