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YorkCounts picks Menzer as chairman

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YorkCounts marked its annual meeting Thursday with a change of guard that bridged old with new, past with present and future with hope.

Those transitions were heralded with the nonprofit's theme this year, "Turning Points," in which chairman of the YorkCounts Board of Directors Larry Miller passed the torch to longtime community activist Eric Menzer.

For the past several years, YorkCounts has studied quality of life issues in the county. The organization, which is privately funded, has studied health, education and economic realities of the county and has started projects to combat problems.

Year after year, organization officials have launched programs to study problem areas and present solutions. Thursday, the officials recognized past accomplishments and renewed the group's commitment to education, a substantial part of the Metro-York initiative.

Metro-York, launched in 2006, assessed 14 municipalities considered the "core" of York County. Groups tasked with assessments of greater York focused on enriching the lives of many of the county's most impoverished residents. Solutions centered on children and the importance of education.

The goal is to improve education, decrease dropout rates and push students toward college. Featured speakers at the annual meeting Thursday exemplified importance of education, each offering recollections of personal challenges that pushed them toward their goals rather than deterred them.

Speakers: Terrence Roberts detailed his experience as one of the Little Rock Nine, the children who in 1957 were the first black students to attend the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Ark.

His talk garnered a standing ovation, as did that of the man who followed, Midshipman 1st Class Zerbin Singleton, most known as a powerful Navy Midshipmen slotback. Singleton talked about his mother's drug habit, homelessness, hunger and the eventual suicide of his father, whom he'd met only as a young man.

Progress is being made, but Menzer is quick to point out that YorkCounts' far-reaching initiatives will take time. He compares the community building effort to building a cathedral.

"You begin to build knowing it will not be complete until 200 years later," Menzer said. "You know you will not see it when it's done, but you know how beautiful it will be."

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