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YorkCounts touts successes at annual community summit

York, March 26, 2010 – YorkCounts, a broad community coalition dedicated to assessing and enhancing the quality of life in York County, held its annual community summit March 26 at the Pullo Family Performing Arts Center on the campus of Penn State York. The theme of the summit was “One Person Can Make a Difference – Imagine Many.”

YorkCounts presented the summit to update the community on the work of YorkCounts from the past year. This year’s summit included the release of YorkCounts annual report, along with presentations on the United Way’s Stay in School Report and an update on the York Academy Regional Charter School, both of which grew out of YorkCounts recommendations. YorkCounts also released to the general public for the first time details of a proposed study examining options for regionalizing police services in select municipalities across York County. The complete annual report can be viewed online at YorkCounts’ Web site, www.yorkcounts.org.

The summit marked a change in leadership at YorkCounts. Loren Kroh was introduced as the new chairman of the YorkCounts board. He spoke about the organization’s recent work to refocus its mission and redefine its priorities. Kroh takes over for Eric Menzer, whose three-year term ended this month.

In his departing remarks, Menzer said YorkCounts was formed to take on the community challenges that no one else was willing or able to confront.

“We were created to shine a light on numbers that sometimes we would rather not see,” he said. “We were created to ask questions that make us a little uncomfortable. We were created to work on problems that one organization can’t solve alone. Remember our ‘inside’ slogan: If sounds easy, it was probably not worth the time and energy of YorkCounts.”

Lynn Cummings, a community organizer from New Jersey whose work became the subject of a documentary film, delivered the keynote speech. In 1996, Cummings founded Neighbors Empowering Pennsauken as a way for her community to confront white flight and its associated problems – declining property values, shrinking tax base, strained government budgets.

Her work was featured in the film “The New Metropolis – The New Neighbors,” which has been airing on public television stations around the country since October. Cummings shared her experiences, which show in the clearest terms that one person truly can make a difference.

YorkCounts leaders also recognized individuals and businesses that made significant contributions to its efforts. Larry Miller, president and chief executive officer of PeoplesBank, received the Volunteer of the Year Award for his service to and support of YorkCounts. Miller, one of the original participants in the YorkCounts Commission, stepped down from the board this month.

The rest of this year’s winners included:

- Regional Leadership Award – Northeastern Regional Police Commission
- Outstanding Organizational Support Awards – PeoplesBank and Stock and Leader
- Outstanding Community Volunteerism Award – Mike Smith

YorkCounts also recognized the winners of a student art and essay competition. The contest challenged students to answer this question: “What Makes York County One Great Community?” Each winner received a \$250 savings bond from PeoplesBank. The winners were:

- Elementary: Kirsten E. Arcarese of East Berlin, Grade 6, North Salem Elementary School, essay
- Middle School: Adin M. Brubaker of Red Lion, Grade 8, Logos Academy, essay
- High School: Jaquell Dewberry, Grade 10, William Penn Senior High School, illustration

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YorkCounts is a community-based coalition working to assess, sustain and enhance York County's quality of life – building alliances, introducing partners, spotlighting issues and facilitating conversations on education, economic development, health and safety and diversity. Partners include Better York, the United Way of York County, WellSpan Health, York College of Pennsylvania, the York County Commissioners, the York County Community Foundation and the York County Economic Development Corp. Learn more at yorkcounts.org.

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