

YOUR GREATER PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S COMMITMENT TO PHILADELPHIA KIDS

By Rob Wonderling

The future of our city and region depend upon high quality schools that prepare every student for success in the workplace or college. Ensuring our schools receive the funds they need to prepare our students is the concern of every parent, school administrator, teacher, and employer in Philadelphia.

The Chamber strongly supports public education in Philadelphia as one of our highest priority goals. Now in its 10th year, *Read to Me* is a successful program run by the Chamber and sponsored by PNC *Grow Up Great* aimed at encouraging early literacy among the youngest children in our schools. The day of the event, business leaders make donations and volunteer their time to read to more than 2,000 children in 23 schools.

A primary beneficiary of this year's event was the Anna B. Pratt Early Childhood Center. Through PNC's signature philanthropic initiative, which is focused on early childhood education, more than 25 PNC employees came together to create a preschool library at the center. Volunteers prepared, cleaned and painted a reading room, assembled shelving, donated 1,600 children's books and stocked the center's new library. A total of seven preschool libraries have now been created through the initiative in the Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey region.

In addition to supporting early childhood literacy, the Chamber participates in the City of Philadelphia's summer jobs program. The Chamber annually helps create among our members more than 1,000 paid

summer internships for young men and women in our city, teaching them valuable career skills.

The Chamber is always looking for companies who are willing to participate in this important effort to help get our kids ready for the 21st century workforce. If you know of an organization interested in participating, please contact the Chamber.

In April, the Chamber teamed up with the Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia (CSFP) to promote 22 million dollars in PA tax credits for companies donat-

ing to fund children's educations. The purpose of the partnership is to inform business leaders and the media about the tax credits, which are still available to businesses through the Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program (OSTC) to aid deserving students.

Ina Lipman, executive director of CSFP, said that the 22 million dol-

lars in state funding available through June 30 equates to 10,000 scholarships. It was also a step toward building a stronger workforce.

"It will add to the vitality of the city," Lipman said. You can learn more about the Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia at www.csphiladelphia.org.

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