

Brighton Township Honored for Outstanding Citizen Communication

Brighton Township in Beaver County was presented with the 20th Annual Outstanding Citizen Communication Award at the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors' 89th Annual Educational Conference and Trade Show in Hershey last week for its exceptional efforts to communicate with its residents. The conference attracted attendees from every township in Pennsylvania except Philadelphia, which has no townships.

The association presents the award each year as part of its Annual Township Citizen Communication Contest to recognize one township for its overall achievement and commitment to citizen communication.

Brighton Township also won awards in three categories in the contest. The township tied for first place in the websites category and for second place for its newsletter. It also placed third in the category of electronic newsletters.

"I think it's our duty as public officials to communicate with our residents the information that is pertinent to their lives here," township manager Bryan Dehart says.

The print and electronic newsletters, along with the website, are three valuable tools that help the township do just that, he adds.

"The newsletter is a way to communicate things that are happening currently," Dehart says. Recent articles in the eight- to 10-page quarterly publication focused on the move to countywide earned income tax collection, the township's participation in the Beaver County Regional Council of Governments, and information for new residents.

The quarterly newsletter is supplemented with a monthly electronic version that's available to anyone who signs up on the township's website.

"We started that about four years ago," Dehart says. "It was initiated by our park and recreation board as a way to notify people of upcoming events."

Now, he adds, the e-newsletter has expanded to include information from various local organizations and provides alerts about upcoming meetings and special events.

The website is another 24-hour communication tool. It's been in existence for more than a decade but was redesigned to be more user-friendly about a year and a half ago. The site now features the township seal, which appears on all publications, eye-catching professional photographs, and separate areas for residents and visitors.

While the 'Resident's Center' provides information about daily life in the township, Dehart says, the 'Visitor's Center' is for people who may be looking to relocate to the area. "There we talk about amenities in the township, recreation and parks, public safety, the school district, healthcare, and the transportation network," he says.

"We're always looking for ways to improve our communications," Dehart adds. "We're never satisfied with just accepting things the way they are. We are always striving to do more."

The Citizen Communication Contest was judged by members of the association's Publications-Public Relations Committee, representatives from the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, and staff members of the *Pennsylvania Township News*, the association's monthly magazine. Entries were judged on the usefulness of information presented and how well the information was communicated. Publications were also judged on their overall attractiveness and readability.

The Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors represents Pennsylvania's 1,455 townships of the second class and for the past 90 years has been committed to preserving and strengthening township government and securing greater visibility and involvement for townships in the state and federal political arenas. Townships of the second class represent more residents — 5.5 million Pennsylvanians — than any other type of political subdivision in the commonwealth.