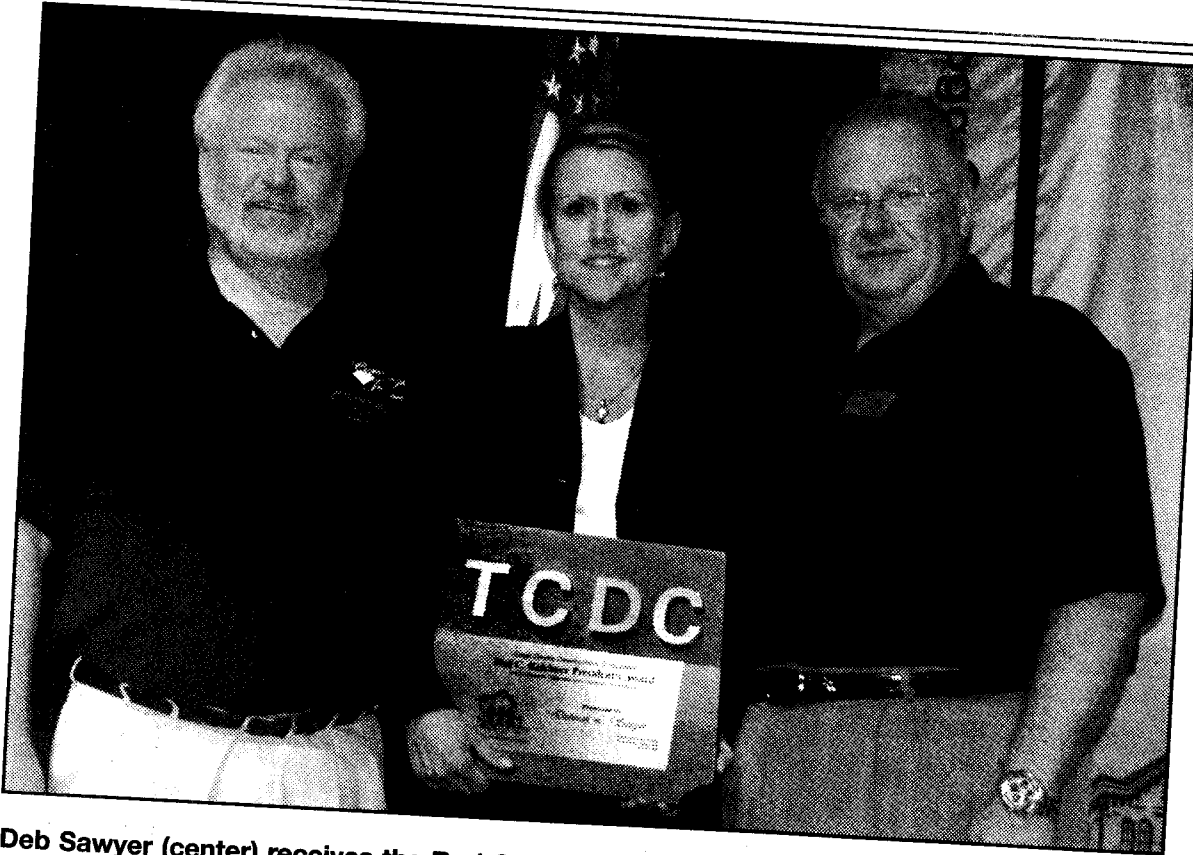


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Deb Sawyer (center) receives the Rod C. Kelchner President's Award from TCDC Chairman David Cummings (left) and President/CEO Bob Blair.

photo courtesy of TCDC

TCDC meeting boasts gourmet food, world-class music

by Jason Przybycien

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The Tioga County Development Corporation celebrated its contributions to the county at the Corporation's 16th annual meeting on July 27. Highlights of the meeting included new businesses at the networking convention, a surprised award recipient and a taste of the Endless Mountain Music Festival.

The meeting began with a networking reception in the Williamson Junior/Senior High School's gymnasium. The high school culinary program, directed by Brett Smalley, served stuffed mushrooms, smoked cheese, fresh fruit and more while community members chatted and viewed exhibits.

The room included newly flowering local businesses and regional businesses who see prospects in Tioga County.

LaBella Associates traveled from Rochester, N.Y., to offer 30 years of consulting experience to local municipalities. Until recently, much of their work came from water and wastewater treatment expansions. Their sign boasted a new specialty, "comprehensive wind farm services," including ordinance review.

"We're working for the municipalities on these projects, not the developers," said Steve Metzger, director of civil engineering. "A lot of times you get a sophisticated multi-national corporation coming into a rural corner of the state, so the communities need help."

Nearby, MRB Group from Horseheads, N.Y., offered similar services. Ronald J. Sherman Jr., project manager, spoke about an ongoing review for a new gas exploration support project in Horseheads. He said the operation did not handle fracturing water, as the residents feared, but it did have the potential to wash 190 trucks at a time near a wetland area.

After reviewing projects in four states, Sherman said the toughest decision for each community is balancing "hard core environmental concerns" with a good prospect for new jobs.

Across the room, a representative from Coal Country Iron Works spoke about a smaller scale project in Morris Run. This

project, which had sought gravesites on display at TCDC's annual meeting, is hoping to build a small factory for its product, dubbed Headstone Halo. At this point, the company is not sure when the land will be available.

After the convention, TCDC members filed down the hall to the auditorium for their business meeting. To start off the new year, they nominated their board of directors for 2009-10. Those elected or reelected were: Scott Bastian, James D. Baker Jr., Leo Parchesky, William W. Roosa, Brenda G. Abplanalp, Karen H. Russell, Timothy Bowers and Charles J. Miller.

One of TCDC's main tasks is administering state and federal loan programs for business development. As of the meeting, TCDC had \$1.25 million available to lend, including a \$463,000 revolving loan fund which the Deane Center for the Performing Arts in Wellsboro will receive in full. The center's money is on hold until the governor signs Pennsylvania's 2009-2010 budget.

TCDC's Leadership Tioga County program also touted its accomplishments. The Youth Leadership Program had graduated 295 students since beginning in 2000 and the Community Leadership Program had graduated 93 adults since beginning in 2003. Local businesses, through the use of their time, space and funding, have provided in-kind services for the two programs. To date, those in-kind donations total over \$1 million.

David E. Cummings, chairman of the TCDC board of directors, presented the David W. Rundell Director's Award. Named for a former director, the Rundell Award honors those who have "gone above and beyond the call of duty in their local communities." He presented the award to Tom Freeman and Scott Bastian for their work through the Betterment Organization of Mansfield, which opened 24 commercial lots to development in Mansfield's I-99 Business Park.

The next award recipient hadn't even had time to put her uncomfortable shoes back on before she was called to the podium. A longtime co-chair of Leadership Tioga County, Deb Sawyer received the Rod

accomplishments.

After directing counseling programs in the region and teaching at Pennsylvania College of Technology, Sawyer became the Community Development Specialist with the Northcentral Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center. She is the vice chair of the Tioga County Partnership for Community Health and serves on many other committees in the community in addition to being a mother of four and grandmother of two. Still, she finds time to do many volunteer tasks at TCDC.

"Ask her to do anything and she is always there, from last minute PowerPoint presentations for youth graduation under a severe stressful timetable to searching out new locations for events on our famous 'field trips' to talking to and mentoring an individual student in need of advice," said TCDC CEO/President Robert J. Blair. "She is always there for us."

Sawyer came to the podium and shared that she expected someone else to win the award so she had taken her shoes off at her seat.

"To say I'm shocked is a complete understatement," she said.

Before awarding door prizes and closing the meeting, the TCDC members heard a sample of the music from the upcoming Endless Mountain Music Festival. Pianist Michael Sheppard