



Awards

PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP AWARD

Township Officials Recognized for Dedication, Service to Their Communities

While many benefit from the behind-the-scenes efforts of local leaders, these public servants don't often get the praise they deserve. That changed 29 years ago when PSATS started recognizing those who have truly made a difference in their communities. Every year since, PSATS has presented the President's Leadership Award to two hard-working township officials whose accomplishments have made their townships better places to live and work.

BY JILL ERCOLINO / MANAGING EDITOR

Gary Elston, a supervisor for West Nantmeal Township in Chester County, and Daniel Kerr, manager of Limerick Township in Montgomery County, were honored with PSATS' 29th Annual President's Leadership Award at the Annual Educational Conference in Hershey.

PSATS established the award in 1990 to recognize township officials who have achieved outstanding accomplishments through projects or programs that benefited their community and whose service to township government exhibits the highest standards of dedication, leadership, and creativity.

Each year, PSATS presents the award, one of its highest honors, to a township supervisor and an administrator.

Gary Elston, Supervisor, West Nantmeal Township, Chester County

A model of leadership and public service, Elston has been described as a "fierce advocate for the community" and has been the driving force behind a number of projects that have enhanced the area's quality of life.

"His passion for the community shows in his every-day interactions with residents," says township secretary-treasurer Debi Kolpak, who nominated Elston for the award. "He has overcome personal obstacles, provided clear direction, and is a tremendous leader."

Elston, a supervisor for more than 30 years and the board's chairman, brokered deals that led to the successful consolidation of the Elverson and Honey Brook Area Emergency Medi-

cal Services (EMS) and the merger of the Elverson and Morgantown Fire Departments into the Twin Valley Fire Department. Throughout the process, the supervisor has provided steady leadership and helped the organizations find common ground on funding and other challenges. As a result, residents are benefiting from consistent and competent ambulance and fire services.

Stephen Bobella Jr., executive director of the EMS group, recalled the first time he met Elston, a lifelong township resident and an active member of both public safety organizations.

"A well-spoken man with a strong handshake, Gary opened the meeting and explained the situation: Elverson Ambulance was about to close its doors," Bobella said. "He was truly concerned not only for the organization but



Leadership Award winner Gary Elston, right, a supervisor for West Nantmeal Township, Chester County, has been described as a “fierce advocate for the community.” He is shown with PSATS President Shirl Barnhart.



Daniel Kerr, right, manager of Limerick Township, Montgomery County, has spearheaded initiatives that have given the township a solid financial foundation. He is shown with PSATS President Shirl Barnhart.

also for the community it served.

“Since then,” he added, “it has been an honor working next to him and watching him believe in people who sometimes don’t believe in themselves. Gary is the definition of a true patriot and friend.”

Rep. Tim Hennessey agreed: “Gary has always been completely dedicated to the residents of West Nantmeal and shoulders his responsibilities with a determination ‘to get things done.’

“Whether it’s dealing with citizens’ complaints, riding the roads to ensure that they are kept in good condition, or pushing PennDOT to maintain state roads in the township, Gary stays on top of things and keeps moving West Nantmeal forward.”

Daniel Kerr, Manager, Limerick Township, Montgomery County

Kerr was honored for being a proac-

tive leader who has spearheaded initiatives that have given the township a solid financial foundation and improved services while allowing it to maintain one of the lowest real estate tax rates in the county.

He created the Limerick Township Business Model, a long-range financial plan focused on improving efficiencies and finding sources of revenues other than taxes. By securing more than \$11 million in grants over the past 12 years, he has helped the township acquire parks, trails, and open space and improve roads and infrastructure.

Kerr also led the effort to sell the township’s sewer system for \$75.1 million. The township plans to use the revenues to support its volunteer fire company and expand the municipal complex. A township employee for more than a decade, he also serves on the executive committee of the Montgomery County Association of Town-

ship Officials.

“It takes a dedicated and gifted individual to steer a rapidly growing township in the proper direction,” said Sen. John Rafferty, who has worked with Kerr on several community development projects. “Daniel Kerr performs at an exceptional level in his position and is a credit to his profession.”

Tim Haas, the township’s assistant manager, agreed: “He is a man of integrity and never hesitates to do even the smallest of tasks for the greater good of the staff and residents. He is composed, doesn’t sweat the small stuff, and always has a plan.”

In addition to his work for Limerick Township, Kerr is active in several other community organizations, including the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association, the Montgomery County Consortium of Communities, and the Spring-Ford Rotary. He and his wife, Dottie, have three children. ♦