

## Morris County Chamber of Commerce holds annual meeting



Former Secretary of Defense William Cohen speaks to chamber members during the Morris County Chamber of Commerce 93rd annual meeting at the Hanover Marriott. / Bob Karp/Staff photo

**HANOVER** — The annual meeting of the Morris County Chamber of Commerce highlighted their 2013 success in expanding membership, providing business development services as well as a look into the local and global influences on businesses in the county.

More than 600 people attended the meeting that was opened by Lou Vetere, the incoming chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of Garden Savings Federal Credit Union.

Praising the chamber's growth and welcoming new members, Vetere asked Chamber President Paul Boudreau to detail the growth of membership as well as the notable array of member services in the past year.

"Over the last five years we've added 130 new members," Boudreau said. "Today we have 850 members and over 100,000 employees with these member companies are represented. Why is the number of members important? A bigger chamber provides more opportunity for each member to meet the right people for one's business and to cultivate interesting partnerships."

Key accomplishments in 2013 cited by Boudreau included the work done by the Chamber's Economic Development Program.

"In autumn 2012, we hired Jim Jones as our executive director bringing 35 years of experience in real estate development to the chamber," Boudreau said. "Among the program's goals is to provide a private sector task force from different sectors of the economy to assist companies to relocate or to expand in Morris County."

Boudreau also cited the number of key members who have stayed with the Chamber and the organization's environmental efforts.

"We've been involved in a number of projects this year to keep Morris County attractive for current members. For example, PwC's lease in Florham Park is expiring and we want to keep their 1,200 employees in Morris County," Boudreau said.

"Trying to establish a bigger presence in the environmental arena, we delivered our first program entitled Leadership for Sustainability attended by over 20 middle managers and director-level participants from leading Morris County companies. We plan to conduct this 3-day class twice in 2014."

In 2013, the chamber offered its members 80 major events including networking opportunities, education and training programs and meetings with leading CEOs and elected officials, Boudreau said.

"Our Morris Business Cabinet has grown considerably to 35 of our largest companies that get together quarterly to discuss public policy, the economy and other key issues for county business," he said. "Most of these companies have a global footprint."

Keynote speaker William Cohen was introduced by U.S. Rep. Rodney P. Frelinghuysen, R-Harding, who praised the Morris County Chamber of Commerce for "its commitment to improving both the economic and political business environment."

Cohen, who was secretary of defense under President Clinton from 1997 to 2001 and was a senator and congressman from Maine, opened his presentation lauding the work done by the members of the Morris County Chamber of Commerce.

"People often forget the importance of free enterprise," Cohen said. "The companies you represent here in the Morris County Chamber of Commerce are the sturdy horse pulling the wagon of the rest of us to enjoy our country's prosperity."

Citing our relationships with Syria, Israel and China, Cohen talked about the complexities of America's leadership in the world. He emphasized that, as a nation, we have the capacity to create a stabilized environment around the world.

The meeting concluded with Boudreau's presentation of the inspiring 2013 Huber Award for Outstanding Community Leadership to Donald Kuhn of Morris Habitat for Humanity. William Huber was a president of St. Claire's Health System and a driving force in establishing Morris Tomorrow, a Chamber of Commerce program.

A retired AT&T executive, Kuhn was recognized for devoting volunteer time to Morris Habitat for Humanity's campaigns to create affordable housing in the county.

Key achievements under Kuhn's direction include eight homes completed, bringing Morris Habitat's total to 65 affordable units. Kuhn was also active in the creation of ReStore – a retail store in Randolph that sells new and used construction materials and home furnishings among other things. Since opening nearly eight years ago, ReStore has had gross sales of \$5 million in material and turned back \$2 million in profit.

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