



Submitted

Several local, county, school district and state officials came together recently to hold an announcement ceremony related to a \$4 million Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant awarded to Steel Center for Career and Technical Education. Also at the event were students and school leaders/stakeholders.

STEEL CENTER FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

# School receives \$4 million state grant for renovations

*The facility is operated by 11 area school districts, including Elizabeth Forward.*

By **JEFF STITT**  
jstitt@yourmvi.com

Christmas came a bit early for Steel Center for Career and Technical Education, according to Executive Director Kevin Rice.

On Thursday, Rice formally announced that Gov. Tom Wolf's administration had awarded a \$4 million grant to be used toward the \$29 million renovation project at the career and technical school in West Jefferson Hills.

The school's executive director said the money was secured via a team effort,

and that it's a good example of what can happen when people — from the grassroots level up — work together toward a common cause.

Steel Center announced plans for a renovation of its facilities during an event in November. The career and technical education facility is a consortium Career and Technical Education School with 18 programs and a current enrollment of 860 students.

It is owned and operated by the Baldwin-Whitehall, Bethel Park, Brentwood Borough, Clairton City, Duquesne City, Elizabeth Forward, South Allegheny, South Park, Steel Valley, West Jefferson Hills and West Mifflin Area school districts.

Last week, Rice said that with support from "a bipartisan coalition of state senators and representatives," the school secured the additional renovation funding from the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program. He explained that the state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, also known as "RACP," is administered by the Governor's Office of the Budget and dedicates state funds for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational and historical improvement projects.

Rice was in direct communication with the governor's office in his pursuit of the RACP money.

The career and technical facility's renovation quali-

fies for the RACP grant because the school's mission provides a positive economic impact to the communities it serves as well as the Greater Pittsburgh region, Rice said, adding that Steel Center partnered with the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County to complete the formal RACP application process in August.

"From that point forward, the school followed a carefully designed advocacy plan that involved meeting and speaking with legislators from both the Pennsylvania State Senate and members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives who serve the districts within the school's footprint," a release from the school states.

**RENOVATIONS • A7**

## RENOVATIONS FROM A1

Rice said Steel Center leaders also met with Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald "to gain his support and seek his advocacy to the governor."

"The RACP grant is highly competitive and there are so many worthwhile projects that need funding right here in Allegheny County as well as across the state," Rice said. "Realistically, I was hoping for \$1 million, but we would have been happy and grateful to receive any amount. Four million dollars to help educate our students while strengthening the workforce is a big win for everyone."

Steel Center for Career and Technical Education was one of five organizations that received an award of \$4 million or more. The Steel Center RACP grant application was one of 120 applications from within Allegheny County in 2022, according to Steel Center. The average award for other organizations was about \$1.5 million, Rice said.

"I believe we made a strong case that these funds will create a very positive impact for so many communities as well as the region," said Steel Center's Board President and Brentwood Borough School District member David Schaap.

Schaap is also the president of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Board and incoming president of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

"In Allegheny County and across the state, career and technical education schools like Steel Center have become more needed and valuable than ever before," he said. "I think the state knows this and that certainly helped make it happen."

The advocacy and groundwork needed to gain support from legislators and the governor's approval was a team effort, Rice said.

"Teamwork is how we do everything around here. Working together to ensure a 'Pathway to Success' for our students is at the heart of how we operate Steel Center," Rice said, putting an emphasis on the word "teamwork."

He said the school's students, families, staff, superintendents and board members from the 11 partner school districts and countless community and business partners were "working the phones and sending out emails."

"The process for us began in April when I attended a session of the Leadership Pittsburgh program at the Capital Complex in Harrisburg," Rice said. "It was there that I learned more about the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, and with tremendous support from then Rep. Austin Davis,

we began the journey."

Rice said Davis and his staff "really walked me through the process."

"I've recently been in touch with our lieutenant governor-elect to thank him, he responded by simply saying he was glad to help," Rice said of Davis.

Rice said a ceremony was organized recently with State Rep. Nick Pisciotto and Sen. Devlin Robinson, D-Bridgeville, in attendance to present Steel Center with the grant.

Also attending the ceremony were State Representatives Jessica Benham and Natalie Mihalek, state Rep.-Elect Andrew Kuzma, staff from Sen. Jim Brewster's office, Fitzgerald, Pennsylvania's Deputy Secretary of Elementary & Secondary Education Dr. Jeff Fuller and his chief of staff, Dr. Carrie Rowe, and Associate Director of the Pennsylvania Association for Career and Technical Administrators John Pulver.

During the ceremony, Steel Center Board Vice President and Duquesne City School Board Director Calvina Harris addressed the group to express her appreciation of Gov. Wolf and the bipartisan group of legislators.

"This (grant) will go a long way to help our kids and all of Allegheny County," she said.

Kameron Hinton, an 11th-grade health assistant student from West Mifflin, also offered remarks before Fitzgerald addressed the audience.

"That is what it's all about, the future; the most important investment we can make is in the future of our students," the county executive said. "The work that the Steel Center team does goes a long way to make sure that our young people have these opportunities."

In a release, Pisciotto, a Democrat from West Mifflin, said the money is "a huge boost to area workforce development efforts."

"This investment serves as a major catalyst for local job opportunities, as well as our regional economy overall," he said. "Providing public schools with proper resources is essential in preparing our next generation of workers."

Pisciotto said the \$4 million can be used for:

- Complete replacement of HVAC, plumbing and electrical infrastructure.
- Updating ADA code compliances throughout the building.
- Renovating and expanding the diesel technology mechanic training program lab.
- Improving various training and student services programs.
- Preparing spaces for future training programs that have not yet been determined.