

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SHENANGO VALLEY CHAMBER TO HOLD ANNUAL DINNER WEDNESDAY NOV. 6 AT PARK INN BY RADISSON – TO HONOR GARY HINKSON OF CITY OF HERMITAGE AS SHENANGO VALLEY BUSINESS AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR**

**WILL ALSO HONOR DAVE TOMKO, COACHING STAFF OF THE SHARON ROBOTICS TEAMS AS SHENANGO VALLEY CHAMPION ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR**

**CREATIVE COCKTAIL HOUR FEATURES LIVE MUSIC; SHENANGO VALLEY STATIONS; HOPECAT CENTERPIECE GIVEAWAYS & MORE**

SHARON, PA – The Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce plans to honor Gary Hinkson of the City of Hermitage, as their Shenango Valley Business Ambassador of the Year at the Chamber’s Annual Dinner Wednesday, Nov. 6 to be held at Park Inn by Radisson, West Middlesex. Also to be honored will be Dave Tomko and the coaching staff of the Sharon Robotics Teams, representing the Shenango Valley Champion Organization.

“By honoring a Shenango Valley Ambassador and a Shenango Valley Champion Organization, we are putting an emphasis on those that help inspire a mindset change that matches the revitalization in the region,” said Sherris Moreira, Executive Director of the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce. “The commitment of Dave Tomko and his coaching staff to the youth of our community via the Sharon Robotics Teams has had a huge impact locally – as well as made its presence known regionally and nationally. And Gary Hinkson’s commitment to his community and to the Shenango Valley is of the highest caliber – always working behind the scenes to do what’s best for a community that he very obviously cares about – all to benefit the City of Hermitage and the entire Shenango Valley region.”

The honorees must fit the guidelines put in place by the Shenango Valley Chamber for the annual dinner, explained Sherris Moreira, Executive Director of the Shenango Valley Chamber, which emphasizes the kind of leadership and community commitment the chamber values. These guidelines include:

- Invests Time, Treasure and Talent into the Shenango Valley
- Draws positive attention to the Shenango Valley beyond its geographic boundaries
- Helps positively evolve the mindset of the community inspiring an attitude of hope and change.

Describing Hinkson as a “visionary leader” Gary Gulla, Assistant City Manager of Hermitage added that under Hinkson’s watch, they city began providing police services to the neighboring communities of Clark and Wheatland and developed award-winning regional assets such as the eCenter@LindenPointe and the Hermitage Food Waste to Energy Facility. He also described him as “instrumental in the revitalization of the Buhl Park.”

Hinkson, who has been in the role of City Manager for 25 years, preferred to share his hopes for the City and region, rather than tout any accomplishments of his own. “I want to see (the City of Hermitage) continue to grow ... and that the community is vibrant and that it’s a place that people not only want to work, and visit our stores and restaurants, but to live,” he said adding that, “I also hope that the city stays a team player in growing the region. It has to be a player in the bigger picture, whether its economic development, whether its quality of life.”

David Tomko, along with his coaching staff, also preferred to tout the accomplishments of their current Sharon Robotics Teams who've had many victories in the past year including Sharon High School FIRST Tech Challenge Team advancing to the PA State Championship; C.M. Musser Elementary FIRST LEGO League Team placed first at the Erie Championship; Tiger Techs Team Orange captured first place at the Pittsburgh Championship, advancing to World Championships in Detroit, then captured first at the Worlds with the Inspiration Award; The same team was also selected as a semi-finalist for the Global Innovation Award which advanced them to finals in San Jose, California. Tiger Techs Team Black earned second place at the Pittsburgh Championship, advancing to the North American Robotics Tournament at LEGOLAND, California where they earned the 2<sup>nd</sup> place robot score. The same team also captured 2<sup>nd</sup> place overall at LEGOLAND.

Tomko, who started coaching at Sharon 10 years ago with one robotics team, now has an additional coaching team of 6 which include Darcy Wiesen, Kelly Roys, Lewis Kellar, Brian Weigle, Jen Barborak and Rick Barborak. "The goals are to promote STEM education to the students in Sharon, but also to extend it into the community," Tomko said, adding that setting up at various locations and events such as Waterfire; the Oh WOW! Museum in Youngstown is part of their "outreach to inspire others to spark something down the road."

But more than STEM, he and his team of coaches also help the students to utilize and better understand problem-solving; create innovative solutions; and develop skills such as persistence, collaboration and communication. "We try to work with them on getting these life skills that sometimes even adults have problems with," Tomko said, adding, "The hope is they are able to apply some of the skills they are learning to school and life."

Besides recognizing the honorees, guests will also enjoy a creative cocktail hour that features Shenango Valley stations that pay tribute to the honorees work in the community, as well as a special live musical entertainment. Veterans in attendance will also be recognized plus there will be HopeCAT centerpiece giveaways and Shenango Valley Swag Bags.

Special thanks to our Gold Sponsors: Sharon Regional Medical Center and UPMC Horizon and our Silver Sponsor: The Nugent Group.

Those interested in attending the dinner can contact the chamber office at 724-981-5880 or email [info@svchamber.com](mailto:info@svchamber.com) for ticket information. Tickets are \$75 and tables of ten are available for \$700.

*The chamber can provide contact information for Gary Hinkson and the coaches of the Sharon Robotics Teams upon request.*