

## Leaders honored at CCDC banquet

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By **BILL GALLO JR.**  
Staff Writer

PENNS GROVE -- The Calvary Community Development Corporation held its annual awards banquet here Saturday evening, honoring five individuals and one group dedicated to service in their community and for their country.

This marked the fifth such gathering by the CCDC, a non-profit, faith-based organization whose members have dedicated themselves to community development through addressing many of the social ills of the day.

One of the CCDC's goals to help fulfill its mission is coalition building in the local community, bringing together the leaders and resources needed to accomplish tasks. It was evident from the local leaders -- from government, education, church and business -- that filled the Washington Club here that the goal is being achieved. "We will succeed in our endeavors and all of us will benefit from it," CCDC President Harvey Saunders told the crowd.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Community Builders Awards to those who have made a difference through their unselfish service in their particular fields.

This year's honorees are:

John Bibeau, Community Service Leader.

Bibeau, a Penns Grove-Carneys Point area businessman, was honored for his support of community endeavors and his generosity to local causes.

SWIFT (Sisters Walking in Faith Together) Ministries, Faith Leader - Represented by organization President Karen C. Wright.

Wright accepted the award on behalf of her group which started with a few African-American women gathered for a church retreat but has grown to be a source of inspiration for many.

Dr. Sonia Burgher-Gayle, Health Leader.

Burgher-Gayle is a longtime practicing pediatrician whose passion is to aid the most vulnerable in our community, the children.

Witcher has become one of the outstanding team members of the Salem County Prosecutor's Office through his tough prosecution of drug crimes.

Sgt. Michael Smith and Capt. Harry Lindenmuth III, Special Recognition of Armed Services Members.

Smith, from the Penns Grove-Carneys Point area and Lindenmuth, from the Woodstown area, have both served our country in Iraq.

Along with their CCDC awards, the honorees were presented with proclamations from the state Senate, Assembly and Salem County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Keynote speaker was Rev. Herbert H. Lusk II, pastor of the Greater Exodus Baptist Church, Philadelphia. A successful player with the Philadelphia Eagles, Rusk was called from the football field to the pulpit.

He has built his once-crumbling church into a major force in Philadelphia with a wide variety of outreach programs that benefit those in need.

Lusk said for organizations like the CCDC to succeed, its members must continue to have faith, even in the face of what seem to be major obstacles. It's something, he said, that has helped him succeed in his mission. "God is always on the side of community. All he needs is someone to make themselves available," Lusk said. "You can't do it without faith. Doubt is a dangerous thing. You must root it out. There's always the 'we can't do it' crowd. There's always the 'it's impossible' crowd," Rusk said. "Nothing angers God more than when people doubt. Everybody in here has seen God's work -- even those who don't believe in God.

"Don't doubt, because doubt can kill an organization," Lusk said.

Lusk also warned about an organization affiliating itself too closely with one political party. He said it doesn't matter what political party or denomination we are, "what matters is how we serve our people." "It's time to take back our community. If God is fighting our battle, who can stand against us?"

The CCDC was founded by the Rev. Edward Dorn, pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Pedricktown and a group of concerned members in November 2000 who saw a need in the community for a locally based effort to stimulate individuals and community development. Dorn continues to serve as chairman of the board.

The CCDC now has a continually widening outreach. Its mission includes building strong communities by empowering families and ensuring economic self-sufficiency, addressing social problems including poverty, teen pregnancy, crime, family disintegration, academic under-achievement and drug use.

The CCDC's mission also includes encouraging economic revitalization the areas of housing, senior care and employment. It also seeks to foster further development by forming partnerships with schools, mental health agencies, community groups, government and law enforcement.

Each year Calvary's outreach programs have continued to grow through Salem, Cumberland and Gloucester counties and beyond.

Rev. Dave Bailey Sr., founder and director of development for Ranch Hope in Alloway Township, was master of ceremonies. Denise Dowe was banquet chairperson.

"I believe there are great blessings on the way for Salem County," Dorn said in closing the evening.