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North Penn Chamber of Commerce

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Agreement brings nearly 1,400 businesses together

Suburban Chamber incorporates membership into North Penn creating largest business organization in Montgomery County

The largest business organization in Montgomery County will be created through an agreement reached this week by the leadership of the North Penn and Suburban chambers of commerce whereby the membership and programs of the Suburban Chamber will be incorporated into the North Penn Chamber.

The Lansdale-based North Penn Chamber has about 1,000 members with a service area that expands across a large block of central Montgomery County, from Skippack and Harleysville to Montgomery Township, and from Spring House and Lower Gwynedd to Souderton. The Suburban Chamber, headquartered in Willow Grove, has 350 active members from communities throughout Montgomery and Bucks counties, with a concentration in Upper Moreland, Horsham and Upper Dublin townships.

“Suburban’s board of directors has long believed that business is best served by a single large chamber rather than by many small ones,” said Suburban Board Chairwoman Marcy Schilling. It was that philosophy that led to Suburban’s creation in 2004 when the former Willow Grove and Horsham chambers of commerce merged. “Incorporating Suburban’s membership into the North Penn Chamber multiplies the advantages for our members and builds clout for regional business,” she said.

R. Michael Owens, president and chief executive officer of the North Penn Chamber agreed the change will be a “win-win” for both organizations. The move, he said, “will allow the existing members of the North Penn Chamber to expand their marketing to new businesses in a larger area. And Suburban Chamber members benefit by becoming part of an organization that has been in business since 1913, with considerable experience in promoting its members and holding networking events that bring people together.”

Members of the Suburban Chamber automatically will become members of the new combined organization for the balance of 2008 and are eligible for all of North Penn’s membership benefits, such as group health insurance. “The transition will feel almost seamless,” said Schilling, “because North Penn will be conducting programs and events in our area to meet the needs of Suburban Chamber’s members.”

Owens said Suburban Chamber members can expect to see an expansion of marketing opportunities and networking activities. “We are already planning events in Willow Grove and Horsham to make the Suburban chamber members feel welcome to their new organization. They will have a stake in the direction we take. It’s a new ballgame for the Suburban members...I think they will be pleased with the results.”

Two members of the Suburban Chamber’s Board of Directors will be appointed to the North Penn board. Other members of the Suburban board are expected to be involved

with the Suburban Chamber's charitable foundation, which will continue its operations with a specific focus on the Willow Grove /Horsham area. Other members of the Suburban board will assist in a Transition Committee, helping to plan activities and events in Willow Grove and Horsham.

Owens said it is likely that the North Penn Chamber will take a new name. "It's not something we need to rush into, but a new organizational name is being considered – something that reflects the larger area we now service."

While Suburban is in the process of closing its offices in the lower level of the Upper Moreland Township Building, 117 Park Avenue, Willow Grove, staff will be available by phone at 215-657-2227 through the end of November. North Penn's offices are located at 229 South Broad Street, Lansdale. For additional information about the organization, call 215-362-9200 or visit its Web site, www.northpenn.org.