

# Hartwick tackles local issues as commissioner

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How would you like to be completely responsible for an entire city at the age of 25? In 1998, George Hartwick III accomplished just that by becoming the youngest mayor in Steelton history.

Hartwick, a Democrat, worked very hard for over five years for the residents of Steelton and is now hard at work in his new political position: Dauphin County Commissioner.

Hartwick was elected to office in November 2003, filling the seat vacated by long-time Democrat Commissioner Anthony Petrucci. With the support of Petrucci, Governor Rendell, Harrisburg Mayor Stephen Reed, and the majority of Dauphin County voters, Hartwick brings the ideals of the Democrat party to the table in an otherwise Republican-dominated county.

His job description carries a lot of responsibility. According to the Dauphin County website, as commissioner, Hartwick has oversight responsibility for human services, the public defender, housing and redevelopment, personnel, tax assessment, weatherization, work release and juvenile probation, the Capital Region Economic Development Corporation and the Dauphin County General Authority.

Hartwick took time out of his day to talk with *The Capital Times* about issues such as bi-partisan politics, prison overcrowding, and strategies to keep Pennsylvania's youth here after college.

Over the last couple years, and especially since 9/11, there has been more effort among politicians across America to work together despite party affiliations. Hartwick talked about the utility of bi-partisan cooperation.

"When you meet someone

at their doorstep, they want to know if you're a Republican or Democrat," said Hartwick. "I always ask people, when we try to solve problems, like a pothole in the road, would you ask me if it's a Republican or Democrat pothole? I think we need to, as a society and in our political process, move more away from individuals posturing over political platforms, particularly when we're at local government delivering services directly to our citizens. We shouldn't be talking about partisan issues that we have no decisions over. We're not talking about abortion rights or gun control, we're talking about delivering effective services, providing opportunities for economic development and additional jobs, making sure our county workforce is our number one priority, and making sure that their morale is such that they're able to have fair working conditions and deliver these services of the county."

These statements seem very promising, but there will always be someone, at any given capacity, which will tear down such emphatic statements as a means to their own end.

"Certainly, I am all for having different opinions," said Hartwick on welcoming criticism and debate. "But, there is a way to disagree without being disagreeable. There's also a way we can bring civility back to the process and make it less partisan and more about what's in the best public interest."

Hartwick oversees Dauphin County's many fiscal concerns, including the money that is spent at Dauphin County Prison (DCP). Hartwick believes that overcrowding is an issue at DCP and that simply throwing people in jail and building more prisons isn't the answer to crime in the midstate. He said that progressive forms of incarceration, such as the Dauphin County Work

Release Program, are beneficial to all parties considered and should be expanded upon.

"Thirty to 40 percent of the inmates at DCP are in there for not paying child support," said Hartwick. "Are you telling me that these men can provide for their children while sitting in this jail? Absolutely not. Certainly they should be in the Work Release Center (WRC). Expanding WRC is a critical component, as well as alternatives to education, to making sure individuals are out there paying their debt to society as well as trying to help their children and not wasting taxpayer dollars by sitting in jail doing absolutely nothing."

According to the Director of Probation and WRC in Dauphin County, Terry Davis, 80 percent of people coming into the system are involved with drugs. Hartwick said that drug rehabilitation is a major component in helping inmates make the transition back into society. By taking a more compassionate and responsible approach, he believes the answer is not to lock up convicted criminals and throw away the key.

"We need to make sure that prison is not a revolving door for these people," said Hartwick. "They do need to be locked up, but we also need to make sure that the burden doesn't always fall back on the citizens of Dauphin County. Unfortunately, in the times we live, our federal and state governments are undergoing major cuts. These cuts really hurt the people who can least afford the types of cuts being made."

Pennsylvania has one of the largest senior populations in the nation, and it isn't simply because a large amount of older citizens live here. It's because all of the young people are leaving.

There has been growing concern over the last couple of years regarding the number of young



Photo courtesy of www.georgehartwick.com

Dauphin County Commissioner George Hartwick stands with two local residents during his campaign for commissioner. Hartwick was the mayor of Steelton before becoming commissioner.

adults who are getting educated here in the Commonwealth and then accepting more lucrative jobs elsewhere. Hartwick sees this as a major area of concern that needs to be addressed.

"We need to think from an economic development standpoint that if a business moves into your community that there are no losers," said Hartwick. "All of us will benefit from the additional job creation and expanded tax base. We also need to begin a real serious effort in providing a trained workforce to meet the current needs of our world. Because of all the competition out there, we need to lure individual new companies here in a way that's going to assist them in getting their hooks into the ground through various means, such as tax increment financing as well as some

government assistance." Hartwick commended Mayor Stephen Reed's efforts to create the Harrisburg University of Science and Technology to help our residents learn and apply these specialized technical skills needed in today's workforce. He said we need to market ourselves known nationally as well as regionally and our hotel tax and tourism dollars ought to be providing the means for such exposure.

He also said he wants people to think of an individual who is true to his theme when they hear his name: "Hard work is the Hartwick way."

"I want to have the people know that I am dedicated to public service and not motivated by money," said Hartwick. "I know the experience I've gained in

economic development, public finance, managing employees, and my record as Mayor of Steelton, has indicated that I am truly making decisions based on the best public interest and not my personal interest. I'm not afraid to take on challenges and I'm a leader who stands behind his decisions. I'm open to debate and I encourage individuals to get involved in the process. I look forward to continue to provide this type of leadership and decision making for the residents of Dauphin County."

Hartwick is proud to be serving the citizens of Dauphin County. You can contact him by calling the Dauphin County Commissioners' office at 717-692-1947 or visit him on the web at Dauphin County's homepage at [www.dauphincounty.org](http://www.dauphincounty.org).

# Students have fun in the sun at spring luau



The band Steel Impressions provided lively entertainment throughout the day for this year's spring luau.

Above: Students Sean Stanton (left) and Jenna Charles (right) try on costumes at the spring luau. Other activities included a band and spray on tattoos. The luau was planned and sponsored by the Student Government Association.

Top Left: An inflatable wrestling ring was one of the many activities that students enjoyed at the spring luau this year.

Bottom Left: Nicole Dellinger (left) and Steve O'Holla (right) serve food at the spring luau



Clockwise from left: Tanya McCausland, Gus Laffey, Mark Wallace and Hannah Gordon enjoy many of the foods available at the spring luau. The foods included smoothies and hawaii-style rice.

Photos by Kathryn Herr/Capital Times