

## Renaissance Hosts Regional Revitalization Presentation

New Bethlehem, April 9, 2010. A snowy Friday evening on April 9<sup>th</sup> turned out to be a good night for a regional revitalization program sponsored by Redbank Renaissance, Inc. and hosted by the First Church of God in New Bethlehem. 25 people attended including Bernie and Kate Hall of the Clarion University Small Business Development Center, Marilyn McCall of the Parker City Revitalization Corporation, Toni and Marty Henry of the Henry House Tea Room and Carolyn and John Olszak, who are all involved in revitalization



efforts in East Brady, and many New Bethlehem area residents and Renaissance members. The guest speaker was Rick Viglione, Western Regional Coordinator of the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. Mr. Viglione spoke about the advantages of what groups can do regionally to benefit each other, current regional efforts in PA, such as FLAG and a Warren area group, and the current funding climate for Main Street, Elm Street and façade improvement grant projects. Some of many tips for improving the economy of small towns included the importance of hospitality for visitors, knowledge of area assets by employees who meet visitors, geo-caching, Wi Fi capabilities, the value of zip code surveys to know a business' market area and the importance of setting goals and planning to meet benchmarks.

The group was first treated to a short historic film clip of a 1959 KDKA editorial in which L. R. Rawlins, General Manager, talked about how a group of businessmen had just brought 500 jobs to the New Bethlehem area in 5 years' time despite a difficult economy. A vibrant Broad Street filled with cars of the 1950's could be seen while he talked about bringing Crawford Furniture, Rola Company and Hawthorne Manufacturing Co. to the area.

The evening concluded with discussion after viewing an inspirational DVD of a program that was originally sponsored by the Armstrong Community Foundation in 2008. Jack Schultz, a researcher and consultant, spoke about his book Boomtown USA, The 7 ½ Keys to Big Success in Small Towns. His first point was the importance and great advantage of having a charitable foundation to provide assistance for revitalization efforts. In the process of talking about the 7 ½ keys, Mr. Schultz gave many examples of what towns can do to turn a downward spiral into successful revitalization. He spoke of the great example of what many in the millennial generation are already doing through the Internet, like teenage originators of Facebook, web design companies, grocery store entrepreneurs and others.

Renaissance thanked Rick Viglione, all those who attended and the First Church of God for hosting the event at their beautiful facility. Additional meetings regarding regional revitalization efforts and the possible establishment of a local foundation will be planned. A realization

spoken by many of those in attendance was that given the current funding climate, the example of what has been done here before and in other towns, it is clear that residents and businesses with vision who work together can accomplish a great deal. Information about future meetings and efforts will be posted on the Redbank Renaissance community calendar at [www.redbankren.org](http://www.redbankren.org).