

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Growing — and keeping — leaders

Erica Weekley Batdorf, one of Pottstown High School's success stories, is moving up the career ladder.

Raised in Pottstown, Erica was a star even in high school, playing the lead role of Dolly Levi in the district musical, "Hello Dolly."

After graduating from Pottstown High School in 2003, Erica earned a bachelor's degree in political science with a secondary teaching certificate from Shippensburg University.

After spending time as a classroom aide and substitute in Pottstown schools, Erica interned in Pottstown Borough administration, was hired as grants writer and promoted to assistant borough manager in 2013.

Now she has been appointed West Vincent Township manager. We wish her well.

Mobility is a fact of life in modern America, and upward mobility often means changing employers.

A healthy diversity can strengthen communities, and as in other towns, many Pottstown residents are from somewhere else.

For example, four of our seven council members are not originally from Pottstown, and six of nine school board members — including me — came from somewhere else.

On the other hand, communities also need long time residents and employees — especially public employees — to provide stability and commitment.

Pottstown is a geographic community. The students who attend Pottstown public schools do so because they live in Pottstown. The taxpayers who pay for Pottstown schools and borough government either live in Pottstown, own real estate here, or both.

What makes us a community is where we live. That's why the Hill School requires all its students to live on campus at least one year as a requirement for graduation, even if a student's home is in Pottstown. The Hill School believes that to truly be a part of the school community, you have to live on campus 24/7.

The Pottstown School District and Pottstown Borough are no different. A teacher or police officer who lives in Pottstown is a much greater asset to

the community than one who does not. Resident employees not only pay taxes that support our schools, they benefit our borough just by their presence, interacting daily with other Pottstown residents. They understand the community better. They have a much greater investment in our town, financially and emotionally, than those who commute in from the suburbs every day.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

Former Borough Manager Bob Jones believed Pottstown policemen who live in the borough help stabilize our neighborhoods and increase the quality of life in our borough. He negotiated with the Pottstown Police Officer's Association a residency bonus of \$1,000 annually for policemen who live in the borough. Practicing what he preached, Jones, who came to Pottstown after retiring as an admiral in the U.S. Navy, lived in Pottstown the entire eight years he served here.

Many professions are mobile — people frequently change jobs for advancement — but public school teaching and police officers are different. The longer teachers work in one town, the more they benefit. And teachers and police officers are rarely laid off. They enjoy job security that few other professions offer.

It is unrealistic to expect every Pottstown teacher and police officer to live in the borough. But we should encourage them to live in Pottstown, because they add value to our community and help make Pottstown a better place to live.



Erica Weekley Batdorf