

# Gratitude Schools thank foundation, company for scholarships

By **JOSEPH STENDER**  
jstender@sungazette.com

Six northcentral schools came together to thank XTO Energy and Bridge Educational Foundation for a scholarship donation to go toward helping families pay for tuition Thursday at St. John Neumann Regional Academy.

Students, teachers, administrators and local politicians were present to to celebrate XTO Energy and Bridge Education Foundation's assistance.

The six schools — Watsontown Christian, Epiphany Elementary, St. Agnes Elementary, Greenwood Friends, Hillside Christian and St. John Neumann — will receive portions of the \$80,000 scholarships.

"We are celebrating the generosity of XTO Energy," said Denise Tobin, St. John Neumann



**Students and teachers stand up to applaud XTO Energy and Bridge Educational Foundation for the \$80,000 the schools will be able to use for tuition assistance. Students also made signs to show their appreciation.**

JOSEPH STENDER/Sun-Gazette

high school principal.

Bridge Education Foundation began six years ago in Harrisburg in an effort to connect local businesses with schools. The foundation was creat-

ed under the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program.

"We've helped thousands of Pennsylvania families," said Joseph Gerdes, of Bridge

Education Foundation.

Karen Matusic, of XTO Energy, said the company chose to give money to the foundation and schools because they believe it's an investment in the future.

"Education is a pathway to a successful future," she said.

State Sen. E. Eugene Yaw, R-Loyalsock Township, said the donation shows the company has become part of the community.

"They're working in this area but they're becoming a citizen of this area," Yaw said.

Being able to visit the schools to see the students who will receive the scholarships is the best part of his job, Gerdes said. He added the organization looks to help to lighten the financial burden of parents who choose a tuition-based school for their children.

"Hopefully this program can help a little bit," he said.

Gerdes said because of hard economic times, schools and parents need all the help they can get and that's where the foun-

dation and local companies come in.

"In any tuition-based school we've found there's a need," he said

One recipient of tuition assistance was on hand for the ceremony. Sabrina McEwen, of Towanda, has three children who attend St. Agnes.

"It means the difference between them going to St. Agnes or going to public school," McEwen said.

"They are the recipients of tuition assistance thanks to XTO and the Bridge Education Foundation," said Kathleen DeWan, St. Agnes principal.

After the ceremony Gerdes added that the organization has received numerous letters telling it how much it's helped.

"The stories that we hear ... are heart-breaking," he said. "There's just unbelievable stories out there."