



PHOTOS BY KENNETH NEELY

HANKING MURPHY—From left: Pittsburgh Tom Murphy accepts appreciation from AACC board chair Gregory Spencer, past board chair Robert Agbede and Doris Carson Williams.

Chamber luncheon marks high hopes for procurement

by C. Denise Johnson
Courier Staff Writer

New Pgh Courier
12/7-13/05

Far from being yet another rubber chicken luncheon, the African-American Chamber of Commerce's seventh annual business luncheon caught everyone's ear when incoming Presidential Roundtable chair Murry Gerber announced the goal of doubling the procurement dollars that Pittsburgh's top 25 regional corporations spend with minority businesses.

Gerber, president and CEO of Equitable Resources, Inc., made his remarks before a full house of nearly 400 attendees at the Omni William Penn. His remarks triggered applause and comments.

"The next step will be to work with (chamber president) Doris Carson Williams to bridge the gap," continued Gerber. The Chamber's Presidential Roundtable is made up of top executives of Pittsburgh's major corporations.

Current procurement numbers are being compiled to develop a benchmark for goals; however, the African American Chamber, which comprises a 10-county service area in western Pennsylvania extending from West Virginia in the south up to Erie, has been preparing for the objective through its Business Institute

which assists minority-owned business in positioning themselves to meet the procurement needs of large corporations like Equitable.

According to Gerber, Equitable is already moving toward that goal. "Our largest contact at this point has been with a minority gas marketing company for almost \$29 million."

"The goal was picked to be aggressive and visionary," Gerber said after the luncheon. "It also gives us a benchmark against which to measure our progress. We will be happy to exceed this goal and then we will set another."

Carson Williams is excited about Gerber's challenge. "We look forward to meeting this goal because not only will it be good for our rank-and-file members, but help our corporate members expand their procurement base. This will not only be good for Pittsburgh, but also for the entire region."

The Chamber also took time to express its thanks to outgoing Pittsburgh mayor Tom Murphy for his cooperation and support during his 12-year tenure (which included the formation of the AACCWP).

"He's been with us from the very beginning, so it is fitting that we honor him on this occasion," remarked Carson Williams.



AGGRESSIVE PLAN—Equitable Resources president/CEO Murry Gerber details his aggressive plans for procurement.