

African American Chamber luncheon highlights connecting with partners

Dec 11, 2013

By Christian Morrow



KEYNOTE SPEAKER—Charles E. Bunch, chairman and CEO PPG Industries Inc.

When President and CEO Doris Carson Williams welcomed more than 300 guests to the African American Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Luncheon, she thanked the organization's sponsors and partners for strengthening their avenues of contact and connection with her members.

She noted that over the last year, workshops with entities such as the Marcellus Shale Coalition, Highmark and the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh have helped her members forge new [business](#) connections in the energy, health and development sectors, and another with accountants from Ernst & Young on the Affordable [Healthcare](#) Act helped her members understand the laws coming effects on their business.

And as members' and sponsors' names flashed across the large screens suspended in the Omni William Penn ballroom, Williams also highlighted the result of one such partnership between the chamber's Urban Power to Prosper program and the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence. "This is the future. A recent graduate from the program is Expanding Minds Printing, located on the North Shore," she said. "And it is an honor to welcome Expanding Minds to the membership of the chamber, and to watch Phillip Green [continue](#) to grow his firm."



DORIS CARSON WILLIAMS

Williams said while making such connections is always one of the chamber's goals, "Staying Connected" is the theme for the chamber's 2014 initiatives.

"And in the New Year, we will also be launching our new [Digital Asset Management System](#)," she said.

Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald stopped by briefly to congratulate the Chamber on continuing to grow the African-American and small business capacity in and around Pittsburgh, noting that certifications for minority-owned businesses were up 20 percent in the last two years and that the county's Public Works [contracts](#) to minority firms had increased by 21 percent at the same time.

Williams and Chamber Board Chair Samuel Stephenson then made a special presentation to retiring US Steel CEO John Surma.

Reverend Dr. Vincent K. Campbell, the newly installed senior pastor at Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church gave the invocation before lunch, which was followed by the keynote address from PPG Industries Chairman and CEO Charles E. Bunch.

Bunch noted that the company, which started as a small plate glass manufacturer in Creighton, celebrated its 130th year in 2013, and did so as the largest coatings and specialty materials company in the world. And it is working to make its supplier chain as diverse as its product line.

"Last year we bought \$125 million in products from 500 diverse suppliers," he said. "And we look forward to having the same level of diversity in our supply chain as in our workforce, like our electro-coating system in Mississippi, handled exclusively by a minority-owned business."

Bunch said as the chamber, the city and PPG look forward; a diverse and well-trained workforce is critical to success.

"2014 shows increases in all our end markets, which means more opportunity for suppliers," he said. "And with new energy here in our backyard, our journey has just begun."