

# Accepting the Challenge: Environmental Awareness, Action and Advocacy

by Dennis Burton, Executive Director



Denis O'Brien, PECO President, and John Howard, Chairman of SCEE Board of Trustees, present the 2007 Henry Meigs Environmental Leadership Award to Governor Edward G. Rendell (Photo by Faith West Photography)

On June 6<sup>th</sup> The Center presented its 2007 Henry Meigs Environmental Leadership Award to Governor Ed Rendell. In his acceptance speech he focused on the changing energy needs of today's world and how the world would have to change to meet those needs. As he was addressing a room full of environmental educators he placed the challenge of changing the world on us. I want to first thank Governor Rendell for the many environmental initiatives that he has endorsed, many of which have benefited The Center, and second I want to let him know that we accept the challenge.

Pennsylvania should be proud of its history of outspoken environmental leaders and action. Benjamin Franklin long ago argued for the public's right to demand a reduction of pollution from tanneries in Dock Creek so that the economical benefit of a few is not paid for at the poisonous expense of the many. Rachel Carson carried that theme into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with

*Silent Spring*, by exposing the toxic effects of pesticides in the environment and, as a result, changing the policies and the laws of pesticide use.

This long history of environmental awareness, advocacy, and action benefits us in many ways, primarily by giving us the tools to both prevent further damage to the environment, thus our health, and to repair the damage already done. When Franklin advocated for cleaning up Dock Creek he took a stand against a powerful industry, but by persevering he prevailed and added one of the country's first tools—the public voice—to the strategic tool box of environmental awareness and action. This was Governor Rendell's appeal and challenge to those of us gathered at the awards ceremony.

To that end let me again thank Governor Rendell for persevering with Pennsylvania's environmental, conservation, and energy initiatives, and sincerely thank our supporters for supporting us in everything we do.