

## **Remarks of 2010-2011 MCCC Chairman Sterling Crockett at 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Dinner – June 9, 2010**

It's truly my pleasure to be with you this evening. And, I am honored to have been selected by my fellow board members at the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce as their chair for this year.

Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to thank our outgoing Board Chair, Bill Eisig, for leaving me a Chamber that is healthy and thriving.

Leaders in government – exemplified by our distinguished award recipients-- The National Institute of Standards and Technology... and The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection – shape a future that strengthens our region and nation. Their purpose and mission are dedicated to a greater good, and they are a part of a large and complex landscape. The green economy, cyber-security, health IT and the energy SmartGrid are part of a new revolution. The future is now.

Some of us in this room are seasoned enough to remember the concept of the greater common good, it's application to business, and how wonderful it feels to be part of something that's bigger and more compelling than one's own immediate world. Broadly defined, the greater common good describes a specific "good" that is shared and beneficial for all (or most) members of a given community.

Tonight I want to talk a little bit about the Chamber and the greater common good. Leaders in business provide the engine for economic development. We have a critical role, as leaders in the business community, to give voice to issues that are important to businesses and their ability to grow and create jobs to boost our economy.

One of the things that's always interested and impressed me about the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce is how different it is than what one normally expects a chamber of commerce to be. It's more than merely the support of commerce.

What's made it different in the years of my involvement, at least, is that it had a vision that was inclusive of interests that are not exclusively business-related but that ultimately effect business. Support of education at all levels comes to mind as an example. That's not an issue most chambers focus upon. But focusing on these diverse issues is looking out for the greater common good.

So, let me be specific about the Chamber and the greater-common-good areas of most interest to me:

We thank the GovConNet council for providing the vision and sponsorship necessary for supporting the GovConNet program. GovConNet is the Chamber's approach to helping government contractors win more contracts. It brings together some of the best minds in the arena of support for government contractors to help us take the utmost advantage of opportunities afforded by the federal government. But GovConNet actually does more than that.

It adds to the greater common good because it fosters a stimulation of the County's economy, creating jobs and contributing to the tax base that so largely supports the quality of life we've come to know and expect in Montgomery County.

Veterans Institute for Procurement The Veterans Institute for Procurement is a tremendous educational program that helps veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned companies adopt best business practices to win more government contracts. VIP is supported by the Montgomery County Chamber Community Foundation. My business partners and I were so impressed with the program that earlier this year, R4 became VIP's signature sponsor. VIP's contribution to the greater common good, I believe, is self-evident: helping veterans transition back to contributing members of the society they put their lives on the line to protect.

I am also proud of the Chamber's role in establishing the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program, a partnership with the County's Department of Environmental Protection and Montgomery College. It provides training on best green business practices and how to achieve certification. The program is designed to recognize businesses and other entities that have taken voluntary steps to protect, preserve, and improve the environment. Certified green businesses contribute to the greater common good by operating in a manner that demonstrates a commitment to environmental stewardship, and conserve energy and water, reduce their carbon footprint, and generate less waste and recycle more.

I am proud of the Chamber's role in establishing the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program. We need to help businesses become full participants in the new green economy, which, in turn, will make them most competitive and better able to attract top talent. Under my chairmanship, we will encourage more certified green businesses.

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce also contributes to the greater common good through its conscious effort to ensure diversity of leadership on its board. Last year, the Chamber was led by Bill Eisig – thank you again, Bill – from BDO Seidman, one of the country's major accounting firms. In me, the Chamber selected someone from the small business arena. Small business, as every politician will tell you, is the backbone of America. Far too often, the attention small business gets from government, in particular, is mere lip service. I assure my fellow small business members here tonight that this year, behind those lips are some teeth. Small business will have a strong advocate at the Chamber and in the Chamber's dealings during my chairmanship.

You know, I didn't come to adoption of a greater-common-good philosophy on my own. No one does. So, I want to take a minute here to talk about the supports I had and have.

I came to the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce in 2007 through my relationship with my great friend and professional mentor Verl Zanders – a man who left us way too soon. Many of you knew him. Verl encouraged me to take a leadership role as co-chair of the Chamber's Small Business Committee. In 2008, Sterling Construction Services sponsored the Verl Zanders Emerging Business Award, which the Chamber established shortly after Verl's untimely death. I am here because of Verl. He knew that while it was a joy to build a successful business it wasn't enough. He knew that the greatest joy came from using that success to create all kinds of opportunities for others.

My business partners are here tonight – from Sterling Construction: Munish Kapoor, Bob Giroux, Eric Woodruff and George Curran. Additionally, I am joined by my R4 business partners, Scott Crockett, Dave Lewis and Vishnu Nathu. All of these men come from humble beginnings, raised by parents who understood the importance of good character and who instilled in them the importance of a broad definition of success; one that includes giving back – contributing to the greater common good.

I have spent close to 30 years in the environmental industry and our work at Sterling Construction Services ensures that employees have safe environments in which to work and that schools are safe for students and faculty.

R4 supports our men and women in uniform and we do our part to make sure that returning veterans have an opportunity to realize their dreams, particularly when starting their own business. At R4, we are committed to hiring veterans and 77% of our workforce is comprised of veterans.

At SCS and R4 we place a tremendous amount of pride in the fact that our missions allow us to do well while contributing to the common good.

Lastly, and MOST IMPORTANTLY, are the folks who keep me on the straight and narrow every day of my life: my family. It's an accident of birth, where one is born and to whom. My unbelievably fortunate accident was to be born in this country to my parents. My Mom, Frances, who is here tonight, and my Dad, Coulson, made us understand that even though we came from humble beginnings we needed to think about the needs of others first. Whether it was taking in a relative or supporting a member of our community who had fallen on hard times, we saw their example. Let me share one growing-up story with you:

And then there's Florence. I don't even know where to start to tell you about Florence. There's absolutely no way I'd be standing here this evening were it not for her. She is the most honest, most loving, most caring partner one could hope for. While we come from different backgrounds, we've always shared a general caring for others. We knew early on that if we were ever financially successful that we would be contributing to the greater common good through philanthropic giving which reflected our own life experiences. Florence experienced first-hand the challenges inherent with trying to earn a degree as a single mother. Knowing the importance of education and how access to education can transform your life, we believe everyone should have the opportunity to seek higher education. This belief motivated us to establish a scholarship endowment at the Universities at Shady Grove.

In the general scheme of things in this world, we here tonight, we members of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, are the fortunate few. We are fortunate to reside in this country, in this County, at this particular moment. We live in a free capitalist society and we are permitted to say what we want and to live out our dreams of success. I will be successful in this role if I can continue and grow the plan of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, along with all of you, to serve the business community and to contribute to the greater common good.

Thank you.

