

# The Chamber Executive Network

Finding, keeping  
more Chamber  
**volunteers**



Special report: Pages 5-6

Innovative management, membership and project ideas for progressive Chambers

December, 2011

## Promos, trends

■ **Daily M2M deal.** This past year, Melbourne Regional Chamber of East Central Florida has emailed a different member-to-member discount coupon every working day to each of its 1,100 members. The coupons have no expiration date and also link to the Chamber's website page showing all member-to-member discounts. President/CEO Christine Michaels collects positive feedback from members, such as "I saved \$650 on rental storage – that's good ROI on my Chamber membership!" She'll continue her daily "i-deals" program through 2012 for sure.

■ **Euro decal trend.** Those oval Euro-style car decals/stickers are now appearing on this side of the pond, such as OBX for Outer Banks or MV for Martha's Vineyard. Greater Southington (Connecticut) Chamber recently joined the club with the 3 X 5 -inch decal you see here. CEO Art Secondo says its another way to show "Southington pride" that he offers to the public from the Chamber office for a small profit.



## For 2012, Chambers should put a critical eye on downtown!

Dear Subscriber,

As consultants go, we at the CEN are fans of Roger Brooks, who seems to have insights into positive community promotion and development you don't get from others in the field.

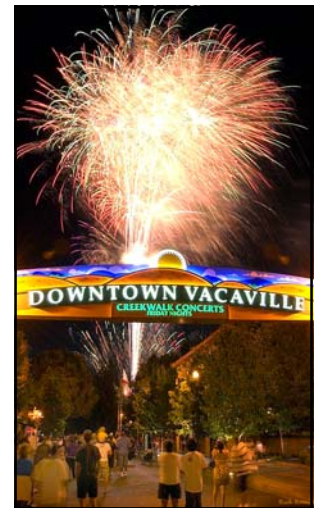
Here's our quick recap of his recent annual banquet presentation at Chillicothe-Ross (Ohio) Chamber. It focuses on the importance of downtown shopping districts for both tourism and economic development, based on his firm's research of 400 U.S. and Canadian towns:

■ **Downtown is the heart and soul of every community.** It provides that all-important first impression and instantly portrays the health of your community. It answers the vital question: "Is this a place I really want to live, hang out or show off to my friends and relatives?"

■ **Visitors have eight hours a day to spend money.**

The average visitor is active 14 hours a day in your town, but only spends four to six hours on the primary activity that

brought them to town – a sporting event, a concert, a family picnic, a class reunion. The other eight hours are spent on "diversionary activities" – of which the top activity is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting. Brooks' research indicates that diversionary activities



**Downtown Vacaville,** California is a lively place as shown in this Rick Roach photo of fireworks over the arched Davis Street welcome sign. See how lively at [www.downtownvacaville.com](http://www.downtownvacaville.com) and watch two short videos featuring an amazing off-the-cuff recap of events by downtown director Bob Vollmer.

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account for 80 percent of visitor spending.

■ **Curb appeal has a HUGE affect on sales.**

Brooks reports that curb appeal accounts for 70 percent of visitor spending at restaurants, retail shops, wineries, golf courses and lodging facilities. Pass that statistic on to your members who need a wake-up call!

■ **Downtown must attract locals first.** Visitors are not looking for solitude – they want a lively, thriving environment. The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and relatives. When they arrive, do you take them downtown where things are hopping?

■ **Downtown as a destination? Think 10+10+10.**

Brooks says a destination downtown must have at least three lineal blocks with the following businesses: Ten places that serve food – soda fountains, coffee shops, bistros. Ten non-chain specialty shops – galleries, clothing, books, antiques. And finally, ten places which stay open after 6 p.m., preferably entertainment businesses.

■ **The final, most amazing statistic.** A full 70 percent of all consumer spending – locals and visitors – takes place after 6 p.m. Are your stores open? “And you wonder why downtowns are dying while lifestyle retail centers are thriving,” says Brooks.

For our CEN subscribers, the message is to take a fresh look at downtown during the coming year in light of your community marketing programs. Is it time to divert marketing money into “product development”? Brooks says “many downtowns need work to become a good product,” and we think he is right.

**Vendor note:** Roger Brooks is President/CEO of Destination Development International. You can learn more at [www.destinationdevelopment.com](http://www.destinationdevelopment.com).

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## Five Chamber websites worth a glance ...

**Plane flies in to Punta Gorda (on map).** Slightly low-tech but we love it. See [www.puntagordachamber.com](http://www.puntagordachamber.com).

**You gotta like this song.** You'll hum it later. Go to [www.abileneks.net](http://www.abileneks.net). New website launched last year.

**You control the webcam.** Pan the shore, pan the sea, zoom in on fishermen. [www.northmyrtlebeachchamber.com](http://www.northmyrtlebeachchamber.com)

**Very cool linking system.** Move your cursor over the four boxes at the top of [www.visitlbiregion.com](http://www.visitlbiregion.com). Kind of resembles Facebook technology. High tech. Unique.

**We like video, slogan.** Seal Beach (California) Chamber has a good intro video at [www.sealbeachchamber.org](http://www.sealbeachchamber.org). We also think the slogan rocks: *Small town California feel, Big time destination.*

## More downtown tips



## Chamber doubles number of stores extending hours

In an effort to urge local retailers to extend hours rather than cut back, our Chamber in Storm Lake, Iowa launched the “Gr8 Till 8” program this October, promoted by the above logo. The campaign is designed to convince merchants to stay open until 8 p.m. on Thursday nights and increase sales through public awareness of the extended hours.

Marketing Director Kelli Berg reports that a total of 27 stores – twice as many as before – embraced the campaign and are now staying open. “It’s a small step in the right direction,” she says. “We’re asking them to try it for a year and then evaluate.”

Promotional tools include newspaper and city water bill inserts, posters, buttons, radio, emails, social media and website efforts. Participants are scheduling special in-store entertainment and promotions on Thursday nights to convince the public that “great ‘till eight’ is here to stay.

■ **Looking Up.** That’s the title of a video at [www.tamaqua.net](http://www.tamaqua.net) which encourages development of under-used second and third floors of historic downtown buildings in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania. Click the “Downtown Main Street” link on the Chamber’s home page. Exec Linda Yulanavage says this video and others at [www.tacp.info](http://www.tacp.info) have “helped people realize the kind of wonderful space for development these older downtown buildings can offer.” She says two world-class artists from New York City recently purchased buildings here as “live/work spaces” and that local development leaders are making trips into NYC in an attempt to attract more artists.

■ **Pocket park.** We like “downtown pocket parks” here at the CEN and one of the most beautiful around can be viewed at [www.millburnshorthillschamber.com](http://www.millburnshorthillschamber.com). But look quick — it’s the first slide in a series.

Two high profit food-based fund raisers

**Wild Game Dinner could break your Chamber's fund-raising record!** Greater Boerne (Texas) Chamber sponsored its first Wild Game Dinner on the opening day of deer hunting season last month. It expected 600-700 guests but was delighted when 1,000 showed up at the outdoor pavilion at the fairgrounds. President Terri Politi says once final bills are paid, the Chamber will net more than \$45,000, making it the best single-event fund raiser in the Chamber's history. "We were looking for something different and exciting that could include families plus draw people to Boerne from outside of our area," says Politi. That's exactly what happened. For their \$20 admission which included food and beverages, guests sampled venison, elk, axis, Cajun gumbo, 100 pounds of fried alligator, smoked nilgai (antelope) backstrap, wild hog, quail and, for the more faint of heart, traditional barbecued chicken and brisket. In this photo of two Chamber volunteers, Carrie Tyner



Boerne Star Photo by Jay Ermis



samples chef Bobby Messina's special jambalaya. Ten local cooking teams prepared the feast, including one headed by the mayor which served "awesome bison burgers," says the exec. Besides admission income, the Chamber enjoyed spirited bidding for donated live and silent auction items, including three specially-engraved shotguns commemorating

the state's three major universities. The Texas A&M gun topped the bidding at more than \$2,000. Other raffles and skill games such as "throw darts at the pig" pleased young and old, as did a local bakery which provided pie samples all night. What was the key to this project? "Lots of volunteers," says Politi. "Our board chairman, Beca Short, recruited about 200 to help with set-up, man the gate, sell raffle tickets, run food, staff the bar and more." Will the Chamber repeat the event next year? "Absolutely," she says. [830-249-8000] [terri@boerne.org](mailto:terri@boerne.org)

**Special December BAH features "giant shrimp tree" and \$20,000 profit.**

Business After Hours is held every other month by Fargo Moorhead West Fargo (North Dakota/ Minnesota) Chamber and is always a big, profitable event with expo booths and large crowds.



But the Christmas BAH is even bigger and consistently nets the Chamber \$20,000 or more, says Adrienne Olson, the Chamber's communications director. Expected this year were 1,000 Chamber members and guests, two giant "shrimp trees" like the one shown here totaling 1,500 shrimp dominating a massive hors d'oeuvres table, plus people celebrating in elf, Santa and other holiday costumes. Ads promoted a "Fa la la la la la BAH" and used language such as "For your \$20, you get two drink tickets and all the food you can balance on your plate." Significant-other guests pay \$25 at the door, the only time non-members are allowed at BAH all year. Nearly 80 vendors were registered with premium booth/sponsorships at \$2,000 and regular booth space for \$175. Most booths will have a holiday theme. Door prizes are many and substantial – flat-screen TVs, Kindles, hotel stays and airline tickets. "It has become one of the biggest business events of the year in our region," says Olson. "We named it the Holiday Business After Hours a couple of years ago when we realized our members were treating it as a holiday party. In fact, we've extended it by another hour this year at our members' request – from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m." This year's event was scheduled for a hotel convention center which enjoys creating spectacular food displays such as the amazing shrimp trees.

[218-359-0524] [AOLson@fmwfchamber.com](mailto:AOLson@fmwfchamber.com)

## Editor's Notebook:

### **Take members "behind the scenes" in 2012.**

One appeal of your Chamber is the idea that a member becomes an "insider" in the business community and gains access to contacts and information not normally available to the general public. President/CEO Nancy Keefer of Chester County (Pennsylvania) Chamber reinforced that notion last month with what she called her first Behind the Scenes networking event. Members gathered at the headquarters of a large retail energy marketing company for a continental breakfast, followed by a special tour of its trading floor shown



here – similar to a stock exchange trading floor – that is normally off-limits to the public.

"A year ago, we started a Made in Chester County quarterly breakfast event in which we toured manufacturing plants," says Keefer. "It was so popular that we started this new Behind the Scenes breakfast to focus on interesting non-manufacturing members. Our next one will be at a UPS plant." Keefer

has noticed that more decision-makers in her Chamber attend this type of event. "They want to expand their knowledge of what goes on in the community because it makes them better CEOs," she states. She agrees the concept of an "insider tour" could be adapted for any Chamber since most have interesting businesses to visit, regardless of community size. Now is a good time to schedule for next year!

[610-725-9100] [nkeefe@cccbi.org](mailto:nkeefe@cccbi.org)

### **Holiday thank-you from a sentimental editor ...**

My friends, 2011 has been a tough year on the personal side for your editor with the loss of three treasured older souls in my immediate family. Two things helped keep me going. The first is grandchildren as exemplified by the cutie below in the holiday hat. They bring a grin on the darkest days.

The second is you, dear subscriber. You are a delight to work with and serve. Chamber execs by their very nature are upbeat and enthusiastic, even when their challenges mount. You inspire. You encourage. You make me laugh. And



occasionally, you send a note that makes my day. Thank you for this.

I wish you and your Chamber a wonderful holiday season and a prosperous and stress-free 2012 as we glide together through these uncharted economic waters. Rest assured that there IS somebody out there who appreciates and respects your skill, hard work and devotion to your Chamber. Me.

*Dick Hakes, Editor/Publisher*

[hakesd@iw.net](mailto:hakesd@iw.net)



### **Unveiling logo early is a great way to kick-off festival buzz**

The communication folks at Daytona Regional Chamber are pretty sharp.

Last month, with considerable fanfare, they unveiled what you see here, the Bike Week 2012 logo -- some five months before the huge annual March motorcycle rally.

Chamber leaders say the logo is important because it must appeal to hundreds of thousands of bikers and will appear on T-shirts and be used for other applications.

This final version which features a slick futuristic style motorcycle on a traditional shield was picked from 60 designs entered by eight local artists who donate their skills.

"We like to build momentum for a big event like this and announcing the logo is the first of many steps," says COO Kevin Killian. "Plus it gives our partners and sponsors and licensed agents plenty of time to prepare their materials for the event." [386-523-3676] [kevin@daytonachamber.com](mailto:kevin@daytonachamber.com)

## Track volunteers' passions on database to match with projects

One way to enlist more Chamber volunteers is to record what members are passionate about, then match them to projects which might interest them. That's the word from exec Chelsea Pope of Dallas (Oregon) Chamber.

"We ask members what their interests are when they first sign up or renew," says Pope, "and we log that into our membership database. Then if we need somebody to prepare food boxes for the holidays, we can search for people in our files who are interested in a short-term volunteer project that deals with hunger. Or if they said they like business development, we might connect them with our Ambassador program when there is a vacancy." [503-623-2564] [chelsea@dallasoregon.org](mailto:chelsea@dallasoregon.org)



## Chamber websites must be 'volunteer friendly'

Make sure your committee page on your Chamber website has an easy way for members to volunteer when they view it. At [www.anokaareachamber.com](http://www.anokaareachamber.com) for example, each committee has a link to a form to sign up. Anoka Area (Minnesota) Chamber President Peter Turok says it's a rare occurrence when a new volunteer signs up in this way, but adds "if only one does it, it's worth it."

## Get creative, organized, flexible to boost volunteer recruitment at your Chamber

Dear Subscriber,

Somebody said it takes just three things to run a Chamber: Money, staff and volunteers.

All three have been in short supply in many Chambers during the last few years of economic turmoil. And based on our contact with subscribers, recruiting volunteers could be their top challenge right now.

There's no magic bullet, but you may find help in this special report as you face a new year of festivals, promotions, seminars and other Chamber projects that depend on good people donating precious time.

### First, make volunteering for the Chamber less time-consuming

All of your Chamber members are more protective of their time these days, and with good reason. Many people are working harder for less money, plus have taken on more family obligations. To entice more volunteers to your Chamber, convince them you are sensitive to the increasing demands upon their time. Here's how:

**Plan fewer, shorter meetings.** A committee that holds long meetings and meets often can kill a volunteer's spirit faster than anything else. Hand-pick committee chairmen and give them training on how to run a meeting that doesn't waste everybody's time. Give them the flexibility to "not meet" if there is nothing to gain from it.

**Offer a limited time to serve.** Exec Julie Hering Kent of Cherokee (Iowa) Chamber is tired of poor attendance at retail promotion meetings. She told us her plan for 2012 is to split the larger committee into smaller groups which would only have a two or three-month commitment to handle a particular event – instead of a full year on the main committee. Splitting big tasks into bite-size chunks is often a great solution.

**Offer limited involvement.** Some examples: ■ *We only need you to find a crew to set up the stage on the day of the concert.* ■ *You only need to work with the radio station on this promotion – someone else will do TV and*

newspapers. ■ *If you can do the research on Chamber dues schedules and present it to the board, we'll take it from there.*

**Use technology to save time.** Send the logo samples by email instead of gathering the group for a special meeting to review them. Use a group text message to remind volunteers of deadlines or special events. Prepare an effective PowerPoint which can be used to train volunteers in projects which are repeated annually.

**Good organization saves time too.** Each committee, each event, each project should have a detailed three-ring binder or electronic file of clearly-written procedures such as schedules, deadlines, vendors, regulations, supplies, costs, assignments, who can help, what to avoid and what to improve. Re-inventing a smooth-rolling wheel can be a time bandit.

## Other ways to make Chamber work more appealing to volunteers

**Create little perks for volunteers.** Many execs give volunteers who put in large blocks of time on projects such as festivals a cleverly-designed T-shirt that not only honors the volunteer but promotes the event as well. Other perks: Donuts, lunch, a pizza party or a project-ending social event. Some committees take a "road trip" to investigate other projects or events which can double as a social or team-building outing.

**Accent skill-building benefits.** Dunsmuir (California) Chamber's website page for volunteers says it best: *Volunteering here at the Chamber and Visitor's Center is ideal for students needing work experience or skill development, unemployed adults looking to refresh their skills or develop new skills while gaining exposure to potential employers, and retirees interested in staying involved in their community and interacting with unique people traveling into the area.*

**Offer prestige, recognition.** Volunteering as an ambassador, board member or on some other major Chamber committee can be seen as a prestigious accomplishment, whether the Chamber springs for your blazer or brass name tag or not. Convince volunteer prospects that they are being invited to serve with an elite group which will offer them considerable Chamber and community recognition. Reinforce that promise by listing them in publications or introducing them in group settings at every opportunity.

## More quick tips on recruiting volunteers

### ■ ***Pounce on newly-liberated leaders.***

Look for those who have just ended a voluntary leadership position with another organization, such as Rotary or the high school boosters club – and snag them! Keep a "hit list" of when the terms expire of other organization officers and board members.

### ■ ***Ask others to help you recruit.***

Friends will often recruit friends or other co-workers for projects. Employers know their employee talents and can also encourage involvement. Ask people leaving a volunteer position with the Chamber to suggest their own replacement. Committee leaders should be willing to help recruit good people they can work with.

### ■ ***Invite prospects for a dry run.***

Ask them to sit in as a guest during a meeting of the board or committee you want them to consider joining – with no strings. They may be enticed to take part.

### ■ ***Use the "funnel theory".***

If you form a task force to research a Chamber project, some may choose to stay on after the initial work is done to help implement the project.

### ■ ***Make sure your needs are known.***

Keep publicizing your need for volunteers for specific projects and keep your recognition level high for those who help out.

### ■ ***Look to your Leadership Class.***

Some class members may be ready to step in to important Chamber volunteer positions.

### ■ ***Appoint a volunteer coordinator.***

Find someone at your Chamber – on staff or otherwise – who can shoulder the responsibility to recruit, train, thank and keep tabs on your many volunteers.

### ■ ***Declare "Chamber Volunteer Week".***

Email your members every day of the week. Pick two or three committees for each day, explain how they work and what volunteers are needed. Send a special mailing to members with several hard copy volunteer sign up sheets for employees. Print a recognition flyer for businesses to place in a window or in break rooms which thanks the specific employees of that business for their volunteer work for the Chamber. Arrange for newspaper and radio interviews of Chamber volunteers. End the week with a volunteer appreciation coffee or open house.

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