

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK • THOMAS DIPIETRO

Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday Season to All!



I shall forgo my usual ranting and prodding this month in light of the special season once again upon us. Let's absorb the ambience of this special time of the year and let it guide us for the next month

or so, forgetting for a short time our trials and tribulations. There is a lot going on for us to partake in as observers, or better yet, as volunteers and participants.

Our 3rd Annual WinterFest, featuring a Winter Wonderland Night Parade, will be in downtown Belleville on Saturday, December 5. Ice carvings are back again this year and will be displayed on Main Street and at Horizon Park, with a live carving demonstration. Many local businesses, even in this miserable economy (oops) purchased the carvings that hopefully, will survive display beyond Saturday (weather permitting). The Chamber makes no money on these sales as all proceeds are used to pay for related expenses, including the sculptors' fees. The bulk of the carvings will be produced by Ice Dreams Sculptures, LLC located in Plymouth, Michigan. Don't miss the live demonstration scheduled for noon at Fourth Street Square, which will be performed under the direction of Richard Teeple, Certified Culinary Educator and Executive Chef, Henry Ford Community College.

Additional WinterFest activities include a Sloppy Joe Pre-Parade Dinner at BHS Cafeteria from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and a Jingle Bell One Mile Fun Run/Walk at 5:00

p.m. that starts and ends at the Museum. The Winter Wonderland Lighted Parade steps off from BHS parking lot at 6:00 p.m. At approximately 7:00 p.m., Santa Claus will arrive to the museum to accept a key to the City and light the City's Christmas Tree. Then, Santa will proceed to the First United Methodist Church to greet children and hand out stockings. The evening will be topped off with a fireworks display over Belleville Lake at approximately 7:30 p.m. This event is well attended and you and your children or grandchildren or the neighbor's kids will have a great time.

The Chamber is also hosting its Christmas Party this year on Friday, December 11 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Van Buren Eagles located on Beck Road. Tickets are \$20 per person for dinner, live entertainment and a limited open bar of wine and keg beer; a cash bar for other drinks will be available. Please bring a toy for donation to the Van Buren/Belleville Goodfellows and the Sumpter Goodfellows. Please also bring a non-perishable food item to be donated to the food locker at the First United Methodist Church. More information is available in this newsletter. Once again, we do not plan on making any money, just spending some, in an effort to have as many people as possible come out to enjoy each other's company and get to know each other a little better. Lots of guests mean lots of toys and food – an extra reason to attend.

There is so much more – the Goodfellows need donations, the Salvation Army needs bell ringers to bring in donations and so many people need food and clothing. Jump in! It's the season for giving. Please be a part of it. There are plenty of groups in our area who need the help. Don't make excuses.

December 2009

Board of Directors

President

Thomas DiPietro
DiPietro & Day, P.C.

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Bellridge Apartments

President Elect

Martha Brown
Marti's Gift Gallery

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Garden Fantasy

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Randy Brown Landscape
Harlan Davenport
Davenport Brothers Construction

Anna Loranger
Loranger Family Chiropractic
Center

Beverly Neal
Higgerson & Neal Funeral Home

Johnny Vawters
Sumpter Township

Bill Wolters
Stoney Creek Motorsports

Staff

Lianne Clair
Interim Executive Director

Our Mission

To serve our members
as the gateway to
the tri-community
by promoting growth and
prosperity through commerce,
culture and education.

LIANNE CLAIR • INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome General Electric!

Undoubtedly you have heard the news that GE is establishing a high-tech facility in the old Visteon Village located in Van Buren Township. The "old Visteon Village" is a marvelous facility and it is wonderful news that it will be occupied and not left vacant. In addition to adding some much needed revenue to Van Buren Charter Township's tax rolls, GE's plans will add many high paying tech jobs to our area. We love that equation: more jobs = more people = more business for our businesses.

With this news, the Chamber has been inundated with questions regarding opportunities at GE. Subsequent to my recent meeting with a representative from GE's human resources department, I have some information to pass along to you.

There are approximately 110 jobs currently posted that GE desires to fill immediately. This group of job postings consists entirely of Information Technology positions. GE has budgeted little or no relocation expense with these postings as they are striving to fill the openings with "local talent." Should there be an inadequacy of local talent and the jobs are not filled, GE will revise their budget to include relocation expenses in preparation for advertising the jobs nationally. Additionally, in approximately the second quarter of next year, GE will embark on a posting of PhD positions to staff the Research and Development Center.

Your best bet regarding the most current information available is to visit www.ge.com. Click "Careers" on the horizontal menu bar then proceed to "Start Your Job Search" on that page. Narrow your search by choosing United States and when you proceed to the next page to continue your search and

narrow your request further by typing "Van Buren Township" in the blank box and choosing Michigan in the drop down box for states.

Van Buren Charter Township also carries some useful information on their website, www.vanburen-mi.org. Scroll down the home page and you will find two links. The first is an informational article and the second links to a Frequently Asked Questions page. There are other useful links embedded in those articles.

So, if you know of anyone in the IT field who is looking for a good paying job, let them know of the career opportunities at GE. Welcome to our community GE!

Welcome New Members

When the opportunity presents itself be sure to introduce yourself to our new members and personally welcome them into Chamber Membership. We encourage you to do business with them so that they may know our appreciation and the value of Chamber Membership.

Life EmPOWERment Centre 734-697-7588
16650 Sumpter Road
Belleville, MI 48111
Cheryl Johnson
info@lifeempowermentcentre.org
www.lifeempowermentcenter.org
Community Center/Organization

3RD ANNUAL

Winterfest December 5, 2009

- **ALL DAY**
Ice Sculptures on Display on Main ST
- **12:00 PM**
Live Ice Carving Demonstration
4th Street Square
- **3:00 pm – 6:00 pm**
Sloppy Joe Dinner
BHS Cafeteria
- **4:00 pm**
Parade Participants MUST be at BHS
- **5:00 pm**
Jingle Bell 1 Mile Fun Run & Walk
Museum Start/Finish
- **5:00 pm**
Unit Judging for Parade Participants
- **6:00 pm**
Parade Steps Off from BHS Parking Lot
- **Tree Lighting (approx. 7 pm)**
When Santa Arrives to Museum in Parade
- **Santa Greets Children after Parade At First United Methodist Church**
- **7:30 pm**
Fireworks over the Belleville Lake

Extra-Noteworthy Members

Every now and then, the Chamber receives correspondence regarding someone's positive experience with one of our members. We've recently received two – and the people who sent them said they wanted to jump on the rooftops to announce to the world how impressed they were with the services they received. With such strong sentiments expressed, we have responded by creating this periodic column to share these comments with you.

Commendation for Service:

Garden Fantasy Greenhouse and Florist
10501 Haggerty Road,
734-699-7370

Submitted by:

Rose-Marie Walker, Accountant
Woodfine Walker Services,
734-328-9614
rwalker@woodfinewalkerservices.com

I am writing this as not only a resident of Van Buren but also as a business owner. It is refreshing to know that customer service is still important to some business owners. I have a commendation for one of our own Belleville Chamber members.

I would like to thank the ladies at Garden Fantasy. As we all know, a few Saturdays ago was Belleville High School's Homecoming Dance. Well my son was going to the dance and we went into Garden Fantasy to get a corsage for his date. Unknown to us, the store was closed (1/2 hour earlier). As I proceeded to ask about a corsage, one of the ladies came up to the front to say she was leaving. Another lady told me all she had was one boutonniere and it was orange. Without even thinking twice, the two ladies looked at each other and then said to

my son and I, "Would you like me to make you one?" I said yes and thanked them repeatedly. Not only did they keep the store open even longer but they made the most beautiful corsage for us. My son's date loved it and the colors matched perfectly.

I just wanted to say, this is what customer service is about. They could have shut the door and told us sorry. Thank you Joyce, you and your employees do an amazing job over there at Garden Fantasy!

Commendation for Service:

Valentine Tree Service, LLC
45705 Bemis Road,
734-699-TREE

Submitted by:

Richard Flake,
Van Buren Township resident

I contacted the Chamber looking for companies that provide tree and stump removal services. I called a new Chamber member, Valentine Tree Service LLC. Mr. Valentine and his crew were absolutely fantastic! They were courteous, highly professional and did a GREAT job of cleaning up my yard after some tree and stump removals. Upon arrival they quickly dispersed their gear, set up their equipment and dove into the work. Mr. Valentine was amazing to watch – he was like a ballerina ascending and moving around in the tree. Watching him work with his crew was fascinating. They made short work of some big jobs on my property. I think the world of Mr. Valentine and would recommend him to anyone and everyone who needs professional tree services. He and his company are one of the business gems in our community that I would hate to lose. Please do what you can

to spread the word in support of this Chamber member to help keep him in our community!

Interim Executive Director's Note: I, too, have had two wonderful experiences with Valentine Tree Service and echo Mr. Flake's comments. The first tree cut down was a large, tall, dead ash with very brittle upper limbs. No problem! Down, cut up, wood stacked and debris cleaned up in a snap. I missed the second tree (I was working at the Chamber all day) - a huge maple that was located very close to my house and hung over a large portion of it. One of my neighbors later told me (paraphrased), "I hope they didn't think I was out to monitor them. I was just so entertained watching Mr. Valentine climb the tree in his gear and work with his crew to take the tree down, piece by piece, flawlessly and quickly, that I couldn't leave. The whole process was very interesting."

If you have experienced extraordinary service provided by a Chamber member and would like to share your story, please submit your comments in writing to: bellechamber@bellevillech.org. We plan to repeat this column at the end of each calendar quarter (March, June, September & December) or at least minimally, semi-annually (June & December).



Visit the
14th ANNUAL
FESTIVAL
OF HOLIDAY TREES
December 1 – 30
Belleville Area Museum



TIMOTHY J. BURNS, ESQ. • PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR • BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

The Internet Amplifies Customer Complaints: Are You Prepared?



Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other Internet communication tools have empowered cus-

tomers with the ability to express their grievances and complaints like a megaphone to the world. The old adage that a satisfied customer will tell three people and an unsatisfied customer will tell ten has expanded exponentially with advances in technology. Now disgruntled consumers can rant online about their bad experiences dealing with a business to audiences of thousands, or in some cases millions, of people.

Recently, a musician who felt United Airlines damaged his guitar on a flight was so fed up with trying to get reimbursed that he wrote a song, made a video and posted it to YouTube. Titled “[United Breaks Guitars](#),” the video was viewed more than 2.5 million times in less than a week and prompted national media attention. As a result of the video’s popularity, United Airlines contacted the musician and offered to reimburse him for his guitar, but the damage was already done.

In the same way that an online rant can damage a company’s reputation, successfully handling complaints online can showcase a company’s dedication to customer service, setting it apart from the competition. Companies like Comcast and Zappos.com, for example, have received praise for their Twitter accounts that respond to tweets from unhappy customers. Suc-

cessfully responding to consumer complaints can build customer loyalty and enhance a business’s reputation which can turn an initially negative situation into a positive one for a company. The following are a few tips to assist your company with addressing online complaints and comments regarding your business.

Continually Monitor the Online Conversation. In addition to personally surfing through popular social networking, news, and review Web sites looking out for postings, there are also tools you can use to monitor who is talking about your company online. For example, Backtype.com and Google Alerts will send you e-mail messages when people post comments online or if your company is mentioned in the news. One of the easiest ways to monitor the conversation, however, is to simply do an Internet search of your company’s name every couple days, keeping an eye out for new results.

Pick your battles. Depending on the size of your business, it can be extremely time consuming to address every blog post, comment or tweet. When choosing rants to respond to, look for ones that are less than a few days old, on prominent sites and are about problems that you can solve.

Offer full disclosure. When defending your company online, don’t pretend to be an unbiased consumer. Tech savvy individuals can easily deduce who is behind comments so it’s best to be honest and admit up-front that you represent the company.

Take the conversation offline. Some companies have made the mistake of hashing out disputes online for every-

one to see. Instead, respond with brief and polite messages that ask the customer if you can contact them directly by e-mail or phone to discuss the specific details of their complaint.

Don’t say anything privately that you wouldn’t want public. Just because you’ve taken the conversation offline, it doesn’t mean that your e-mails and phone conversations won’t end up on the Internet, so always remain polite and professional.

Follow through. Don’t drop the conversation when resolving a dispute and always follow through on promises. Consider providing a little extra perk, such as coupons, after the issue has been resolved.

Know when to walk away. There’s no satisfying some angry customers and at times a business can only offer a sincere apology and walk away from the conversation.

Timothy J. Burns, Esq. / Public Affairs Director: *Tim Burns is the Public Affairs Director for the Better Business Bureau Serving Eastern Michigan. The BBB is a non-profit organization that works to promote trust in the marketplace and prevent fraudulent and unethical business practices. Your local BBB can be reached online at www.bbb.org or www.facebook.com/myBBB.*

Contact me on:
Better Business Bureau Serving Eastern Michigan
26777 Central Park Blvd. Suite 100
Southfield, Michigan 48076-4163
www.easternmichigan.bbb.org

Celebrating 90 Years of Ethical Consumer and Business Relations



BELLEVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Christmas Party

Friday, December 11, 2009

6:00 to 9:00 pm.

Van Buren Eagles

9961 Beck Road, Belleville

Music by Dwight Carroll

Food by Doyce's Red Beans & Rice

Tickets \$20 per person

Includes Draft Beer & Wine

Cash Bar for Mixed Drinks and Canned Beer

*Bring a toy for the Van Buren/Belleville and
Sumpter Township Toys for Tots groups
also a non-perishable food item for the food locker
at First United Methodist Church*



248 Main Street
 Belleville, Michigan 48111

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Calendar of Events

December

1 - 30

2 7:00 PM
 3 7:00 PM

5

All Day
12:00 PM
12:00 - 8:00 PM
3:00 PM
5:00 PM
6:00 PM
7:00 PM
7:30 PM

Belleville Area Museum
 Fred C. Fischer Library
 Chamber Conference Room
Belleville - Downtown
Main Street
4th Street
Belleville Area Museum
BHS Cafeteria
Belleville Area Museum
Main Street
Belleville Area Museum
Belleville Lake

14th Annual Festival of Holiday Trees,
 Info: 697-1944
 Explore Your Family Tree, FREE! Info: 699-3291
 Belleville Area Council for the Arts Meeting
3rd ANNUAL WINTERFEST
Ice Sculptures, displayed on Main Street
Square Ice Sculptures, Live Display
Festival of Holiday Trees, extended hours
Sloppy Joe Pre-Parade Dinner
Jingle Bell One Mile Fun Run
Winter Wonderland Lighted Parade
City Tree Lighting
Fireworks Display



5 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
 6 7:00 PM
 9 7:00 PM
 11 **6:00 PM**
 11 7:00 PM
 13 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
 17 **12:15 PM**
 18 12:00 PM
 19 **2:00 PM**
 19 2:00 - 8:00 PM
 21 6:00 - 8:00 PM
 25 **Christmas**
 31 **New Year's Eve**

Van Buren Township Hall
 Hillside Cemetary
 VBPS Administration Bldg.
Van Buren Eagles Hall
 First United Methodist Church
 Van Buren Township Hall
Chamber Conference Room
 Chamber Conference Room
Life EmPOWERment Centre
 Life EmPOWERment Centre
 Fred C. Fischer Library

Holiday Arts & Crafts Show, Info: 699-8921
 Angel of Hope Memorial Service, Info: 697-5090
 VBPS Education Foundation meeting
Chamber's Annual Holiday Party
 Holiday Concert - Belleville Community Band
 Brunch with Santa, Info: 699-8921
Chamber Board Meeting, Please RSVP
 Central Business Community Meeting, Please RSVP
Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, Info: 697-7421
16650 Sumpter Road, Belleville
 Noel Fest 2009 - variety of holiday-related events
 Santa Visits the Library, Info: 699-3291

January preview:

16 6:00 PM

Wayne County Fairgrounds

Wild Game Benefit Dinner, Info: 734-942-1684