



Exit 1 could be new highway to Harbor Country

We are the Gateway to Michigan. Doesn't it seem odd that the Harbor Country communities welcome visitors at exit 1 of I-94 by asking them to egress onto LaPorte Road (M239).

Welcome to Michigan? Who would guess? For the geographically chal-

lenged, LaPorte is in Indiana. Though elbow-rubbing neighbors, Harbor Country has taken exception to their heavily funded visitor's bureau referring to themselves as Harbor Country in any sense of the phrase. You can be sure we have our attorney continually warning them to cease and desist all reference to

our trademarked property. So why in heaven's name do we spread the welcome mat with the name "LaPorte" emblazoned across it?

Such was the thinking of the Harbor Country's man of many causes, Gary Ramberg. As a realtor, investor, innkeeper, baker, entrepreneur, and idea man Gary has laid a solid rubber coating from many sets of tires traversing M239. This autumn the light bulb was glowing above his head once again.

"Why don't we change the name?" he wondered.

One of the best aspects of small town, Harbor Country living is that the wheels of democracy are spinning right next to you at any given social gathering. Chris Siebenmark of Three Oaks is kind of like the spark plugs of the engine set in motion by our very own Senator Ron Jelinek. Since the Honorable Jelinek is busy watching the cookie jar in Lansing, Siebenmark has become his eyes and ears back home in District 21. It's a big territory, but it is properly served by this arrangement.

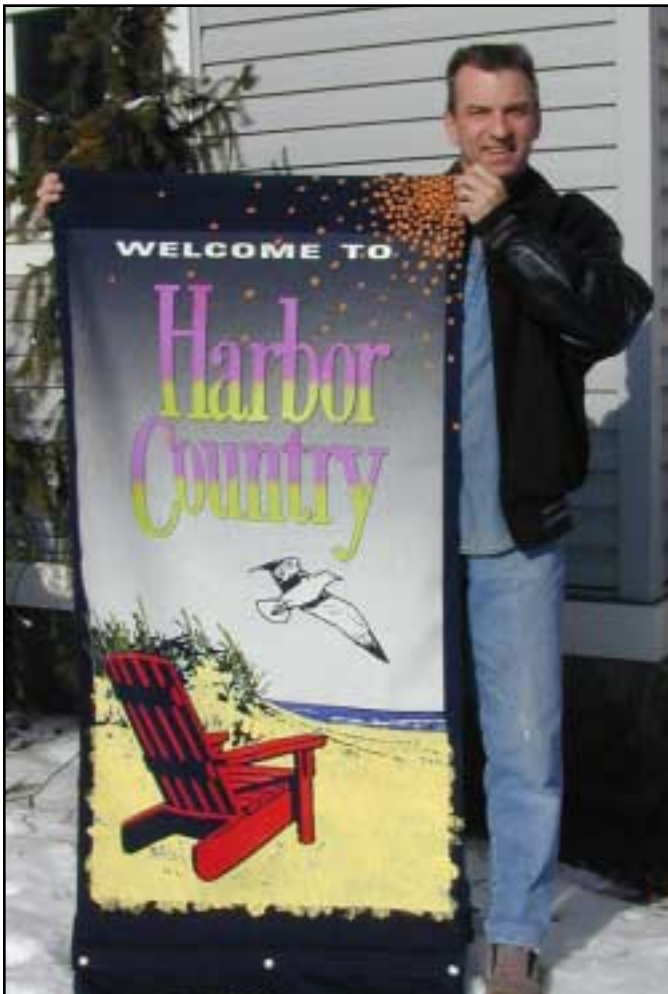
So when Gary was presented with the chance he asked the question, "How can we change the name of M239, also known as LaPorte Road, to something pleasant such as Harbor Country Drive?"

"No problem," reassured Siebenmark.

By December 5, 2003 Ramberg received the word from our Senator that it was "simply a matter of legislation" and that "he would make it happen."

Strike up the band; break out the ribbon for the ceremony. According to Siebenmark, all that the Senator needed was a request from the Harbor Country

See DRIVE page 5



**Chuck
Garasic
says,
"Let's
make 2004
a banner
year!"
See how you
can join the
fun on
page 3.**



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And now a word from your sponsor

By Michael Hojnacki, Chamber President

There has been much discussion, and subsequent confusion, of the role of the Chamber of Commerce and Lodging Association when it comes to lending its trademarked name to an event. The Executive Committee of the Chamber has been tackling this perplexing problem at its last three meetings and hopes to come to a resolution very soon. I'd like to share our thinking about this matter. If you have the time or the inclination you can share your opinion on the matter before we finalize a policy at the board level.

First of all, neither the Chamber of Commerce nor the Lodging Association is the host of an event committee. The only exception might be the PET golf outing, but that is really a fund-raiser with limited participation. But when it comes to Art Attack, BluesFest, Harvest Days, Country Christmas, Harbor Arts, Hoops Classic, Food & Wine Classic, and others, none are committees or subcommittees of the broader organizations. The common thread is they share the name "Harbor Country." It's brand marketing in support of community wide events. We are sponsors pure and simple.

We are also very demanding sponsors. In return for some money or in-kind services, we expect top and/or shared billing of the event. For example, Harbor Country Food & Wine Classic or Harbor Country Harvest Days. The idea is to present the homogeneity of the eight communities that comprise Harbor Country. Each area has its individual mindset, direction, and needs, but overall there is a oneness formed under the Harbor Country flag. Since that concept is what we are about, and that concept is trademark protected we have to assure that certain specifics are met. They are:

- 1) Top and/or shared billing in the name of the event
- 2) Use of the (r) after the name "Harbor Country(r)"
- 3) Placing the website address www.harborcountry.org on all promotional material, especially brochures, posters and advertising.
- 4) Placing the 800-362-7251 telephone number on promotional material that is geared to be presented outside the Harbor Country area; or our local 269-469-5409 number for hometown events.
- 5) Indemnify the Chamber and Lodging Association.

These are the essentials. Yet, we are considering perquisites for using the Harbor Country name. When we sponsor an event, it means that we see merit in its marketing strategy. It is reaching an audience we feel benefits our members. Likewise, the organizers feel the same benefits will be derived by their group, whether that be a civic club, school district or another business association. So we have been looking at participation fees as part of an incentive to participate. This part has not been solidly formulated, but looks like this:

- 1) Membership in organizing group and the Chamber of Commerce receives the greatest benefit/best price.
- 2) Membership in just one group but not the other, receives the second best rate.
- 3) No membership in either group would result in the highest participation fee.

It has been suggested that the "non-joiners" be charged fees that would shine the light upon their joining either the organizer's group and/or the Chamber of Commerce. We are very close on this position with several of the local event organizers especially the New Buffalo Business Association and the Three Oaks Business Association.

See SPONSOR page 5

Harbor Country® Connection

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Art Attack wants to paint the towns

The Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce and the Art Attack Committee would like to add a little color to the banners that hang throughout Three Oaks, New Buffalo, and Chikaming Townships. The sun has zapped some of the color from those banners over the years. Community Development chairman, Chuck Garasic, responded with a very different sort of art contest.

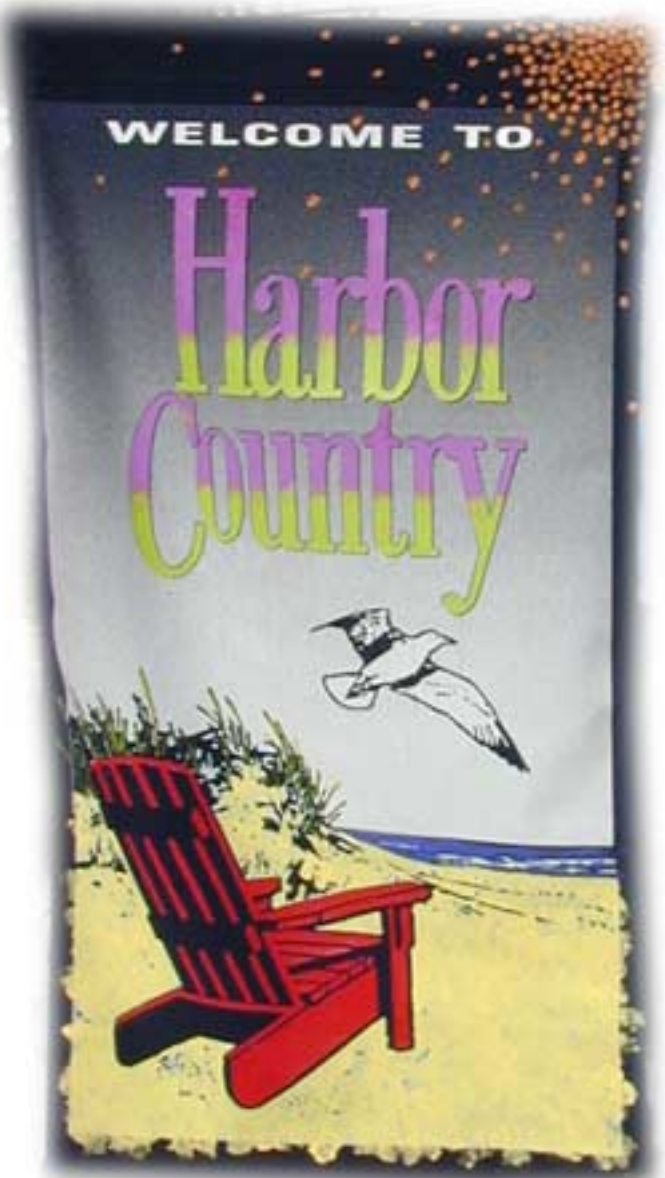
“We’re taking applications from people to paint the current banners so we can display their artwork and continue to promote Harbor Country, Art Attack and our artists,” Garasic explained.

The banner painting contest will work like this. With a \$50 entry fee anyone with even the slightest artistic talent can paint a banner. They can then express themselves on both sides of the canvass while maintaining the “Harbor Country” words and the logo items of the chair and seagull. All items can be painted, but the key items must be recognizable. Artists and/or business sponsors can sign their names at the bottom of the banner with the signature not to exceed six inches in height. Of course, all entries must meet the high standards of public exhibition. Disallowed is nudity, profanity and personal and political commentary.

Each banner measures 30 inches wide by 60 inches high. Artists can use any suitable medium for outdoor display, but exterior acrylic latex is recommended. Not to limit artistic expression, Garasic said that anything really goes from plastic bangles to glitter. The key is that it has to withstand the elements for a while and nothing can fall off.

“This can be a great project for seasoned artists, art students, hobbyists and crafters, church groups, Boy and Girl Scout troops, families, businesses and professional artists,” said the chairman. “There are only 98 banners available in all of Harbor Country. It’s a great way to display your unbridled artistic talent and help promote the area at the same time.”

The banners will be hung as part of the Art Attack weekend scheduled for April 23, 24, and 25. Once the application and fee are returned, a banner can be picked up at the Chamber office after February 2nd. Entries are due by April 10. Call the chamber office to request an entry at 469-5409 or visit the office at 530 S. Whittaker (the railroad depot), New Buffalo.



(Above) Liz Thomas' creativity oozes off this sample of how contestants could transform our fading banners into works of art.

Committees are prepping for Spring

No sooner have we put away the Christmas ornaments, thoughts shift to “thinking spring.” For two groups that means months of hard work to prepare for a proper welcome.

The 2004 Harbor Country Guide Committee has been busy letting contracts for editorial and design services and seeking printing bids for the popular 75,000 full color guides. At the December board meeting, Artistic Energy Group, Inc. (Three Oaks) was awarded a \$3,000 contract to provide all editorial content (written material) for the guide. Artistic Energy Group, Inc. also produces the Harbor Country Connection.

Fusion Design Group (New Buffalo) was awarded a \$10,000 contract to produce all the design work for the guide. The contract also includes expenses for producing a poster and outputs of proofs of the guide. Fusion Design Group has been instrumental in producing the Guide for a number of years now.

You should have received a packet in the mail recently identifying the ad rates, the need to submit listing information, and how to enhance your listing. Included in this packet was a bright yellow sheet from Fusion Design Group that spells out the electronic guidelines that need to be followed for proper ad placement. If the guidelines are not met, an advertiser or their graphic designer, must make the necessary corrections. If not, Fusion Design Group will make the corrections and bill the advertiser.

“This is really vital,” said Tim Rogers, lead

designer of Fusion Design Group, at a recent Guide meeting. “So much time has been spent in correcting advertising problems that it’s not cost effective for me to keep doing it for free.” Rogers said he spent well over 40 hours making corrections last year.

When it comes to your Guide presence it boils down to “be careful, be timely and be seen.” Guide committee co-chairs include Chuck and Liz Garasic, and Trisha Miller. Other committee members include Diane Botica, AJ Boggio, Patty Prino, Michael and Marisue Hojnacki.

Meanwhile, you have also received an information packet from the Art Attack Committee. Though not an actual committee of the Chamber, it is a Chamber sponsored event (see President’s column on page 2). Now in its 11th year, Art Attack celebrates “all that is art.” The committee is spearheaded by Rita and Jennifer Cochran of Local Color Gallery and supported by Liz and Chuck Garasic of Sweethaven Resort, and Gene Halun and Melissa Stranad of Courtyard Gallery.

The committee seeks the participation of all businesses to sponsor or support an art event. “Turn your business into an art form,” says the promotional literature. “Consider the event as a creative festival with a unique draw for your customers.”

Art Attack and the April release of the 2004 Harbor Country Guide are the hand-in-hand harbingers of a new season. A strong showing for the first event of the year would set the tone for a good season to follow.



*Don't miss the best thing
that can happen to your
business in 2004!*

**GUIDE
DEADLINE
FOR SPACE RESERVATION AND PAYMENT
FEB. 6**

Don't miss out, get connected

The Chamber and Lodging Association have been working on a lot of new programs, updates to event schedules, offer deadlines, and committee meetings. We have found however that our database includes email addresses for only about 20% of our membership. We would love to have 100% participation so that we can continuously inform our membership about member benefits and opportunities.

Our email broadcast system is designed to offer members spontaneous information that cannot wait for the monthly printed publication of the Chamber's Connection newsletter. Here are some of the topics that are covered in our email updates: advertising opportunities/deadlines, weekend event updates, local government functions,

warnings about local scams, crime prevention, virus alerts, referral networking on cancellations, news bulletins on last minute happenings and more!

If you have a current email address and would like to receive broadcast updates from the Chamber, send it in an email to Sue or Patty with your address to: sue@harborcountry.org - patty@harborcountry.org. The Chamber respects your privacy and does not sell or distribute email addresses.

Chamber members can stay ahead of the pack. Don't miss out on what the Chamber is doing for you, and how you can benefit. Get connected and get up to the minute information on what's happening from the ONLY official Harbor Country® source.

DRIVE from page 1

Chamber of Commerce. It wasn't even necessary to get resolutions from the individual communities that make up the Chamber.

On December 16, the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors discussed this matter. It was unanimously agreed to rename the length of road starting at the CSX railroad tracks, specifically 530 South Whittaker and the Chamber office at the Pere Marquette Railroad Museum, southward along Whittaker Street in the City of New Buffalo and then M239 (LaPorte Road) in New Buffalo Township to the Indiana/Michigan State line. The consensus was to rename the street "Harbor Country Drive."

Though Ramberg felt the need to "sell" the idea to the Chamber president prior to the meeting, his points were eagerly accepted. According to Ramberg there is more to this than a namesake road. First of all, it will open the door to

signage across I-94 that says "Harbor Country Drive." This is the first overpass of anyone's eastern adventure into Michigan. The welcome will now be truly from Michiganders.

Secondly, as the name of the road at Exit 1, the name Harbor Country Drive will begin to appear in MapQuest and other mapping programs when people request directions to New Buffalo, Michiana, and Grand Beach.

Most importantly, it reinforces the branding of this portion of Southwest Michigan. That has been part of the task undertaken by the Chamber for over 20 years. It reinforces our trademark status and it provides a true geographical reference point for the eight communities of Harbor Country: Michiana, Grand Beach, New Buffalo, Three Oaks, Union Pier, Lakeside, Harbert, and Sawyer.

Isn't it wonderful when all the plans come together? Now, where are we going to put Ramberg Lane?

Hillary Bubb
1221 Shore Drive
New Buffalo, MI
Associate Membership

For Flags Corporation
Dennis Fortier
P.O. Box 116
New Buffalo, MI

A Cottage at Covington Cove
Nancy Wentink
15612 Isobel
Union Pier, MI

The Cool Pepper
Bob and Michelle Nauyokas
110C N. Whittaker
New Buffalo, MI

Schlipp's Pharmacy
Stanley Schlipp
5857 Sawyer Road
Sawyer, MI

4 Seasons Cottage at Union Pier
Marc and Marilyn Odier
16338 Fourth Street
Union Pier, MI

Fenway Gallery
Bruce Wood
125 N. Whittaker
New Buffalo, MI

Adele Lanan, Realtor
P.O. Box 7
New Buffalo, MI
Associate Membership

Reith Realty
Richard Reith
5861 Sawyer Road
Sawyer, MI

Jackson's Fruit Stand, Inc.
Harold J. Jackson
2 E. Buffalo
New Buffalo, MI

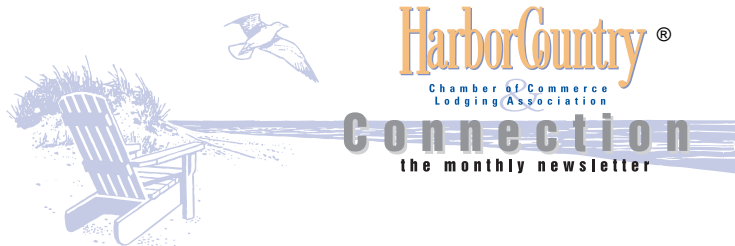
**new
members
december
2003**

SPONSOR from page 2

Association.

With membership, come benefits. The Chamber cannot stress this enough. We are, after all, a member-supported network. Promotional efforts are costly and we have been stiffed too many times in the past by seemingly shrewd business operators who ride our coattails without making a commitment of time, effort or money.

All of us— the Chamber, the business associations, the civic clubs and independent event organizers— simply ask that participants join the hometown spirit of working together. A lot of things get done that way. You might say they get done "your" way as well, but I can assure you they get done better when you apply the group dynamic.



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**IN
ROADS**

**SPONSOR
IN 2 WORDS**

**DEADLINES
LOOM**

| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-----------------|-----------|--|---|---|----------------------------------|--|--|
| FEBRUARY | 1 | 2 Community Development, 5:15 @ Hannah's | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 Post Hot Deals! Guide Ad Reservation Due | 7 Lions Club Cabin Fever @ NB Yacht Club |
| | 8 | 9 Guide Meeting 5:15 @ Hannah's | 10 | 11 Lodging Meeting, Noon @ Hannah's | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 Connection Deadline | 20 Post Hot Deals! | 21 |
| | 22 | 23 | 24 Chamber Board, Noon @ TBA Marketing, after Board Meeting | 25 | 26 | 27 Deadline for Art Attack participation. | 28 |
| | 29 | | | | | | |