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HarborCountry®

Chamber of Commerce
&
Lodging Association

Connection
the monthly newsletter

We are watching!

Your Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce is watching. Actually, that means you— we're going to be asking you to keep an eye out for trouble in your immediate "business" neighborhood. That's the fundamental approach to Business Watch, a new program that the Chamber is instituting.

Business Watch is based on the nationally popular Neighborhood Watch program that works because of cooperation between citizens and police. A chamber steering committee recently met with Berrien County Sheriff Deputy Karen Klug to work out the framework in developing a successful Business Watch program.

Deputy Klug brought a Robbery and Burglary Prevention seminar to the area just before the Holidays in response to a series of robberies in the Harbor Country communities from New Buffalo to Sawyer. That robber was apprehended, but what about the next one?

Chamber president Michael Hojnacki felt it was time to put the membership on alert. "We are not insulated from the bad elements out there," he said. "In fact, our growing popularity and our high profile marketing are part of the equation bad guys seem to be drawn to. We need to take a proactive stance in thwarting their plans."

Business Watch is part of the

answer. It hinges on area businesses paying attention to their immediate business neighborhood. You, as a business owner, can be the eyes, ears and mouthpiece in a network that alerts fellow business people and the police to imminent danger. That danger could be as simple as a suspicious person in your store asking questions about your store's operation or as real as an overnight break-in at your place of business.

Hopefully, the presence of Business Watch will be enough to tell the amateurs that we not going to take it any more. The program provides door, window, building and community signage identifying us as "watchers." More importantly, we stay in touch through a network of telephone calls, faxes and email alerts.

"It's really a two-way street," Klug explained to the committee. "You can create the alert through your organization or local law enforcement will alert you when a situation arises."

The committee felt that because of the number of communities that comprise Harbor Country the onus of notification could rest on our shoulders. Understand that Harbor Country is served by New Buffalo City, Grand Beach, Michiana, Three Oaks Village, and Chikaming Township Police Departments, as well as the Berrien County Sheriff Department and Michigan State Police. That's a lot of law enforcement to put under one umbrella. Deputy Klug made it her responsibility to notify law enforcement in exchange for the Chamber doing the footwork to develop the Business Watch awareness.

Board of Director John Nelson of



A MIXER WITH VISION-- Diane Ashcraft, owner of Spectacles in Three Oaks helps Jayson Sites from Springdale try on a new pair of sunglasses. Ashcraft hosted a Chamber Mixer with a Twist of Business on Feb. 26. Her shop features a wide selection of designer and specialty frames. About 50 members attended the event.

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Don Jackson, Treasurer

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John Nelson
Ray Vasquez
Joan Zonka
Chuck Garasic
Patty Prino
Diane Botica
Brenda Stellema



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The Next Step

By Michael Hojnacki, Chamber President

As I complete the first quarter of my term as president, I don't have to look far to determine what's going to be my next project. I have eager board members champing at the bit for more involvement in their community. This is a good thing and it certainly provides a full plate of activity.

Delegating is the key to leadership, but it's only effective if you have responsible people to share the burden. I am blessed with a strong board of directors who don't shirk any responsibility.

My executive committee of vice president (president-elect) Karen Gear and treasurer (past president) Don Jackson is impeccably precise in their observations that guide the direction of the Chamber to benefit the entire membership. They're numbers people and provide a good balance to my artistic bend. Don is in charge of the Government Interaction Committee and Karen heads Economic Development.

Recently, I appointed board member John Nelson to head up the Business Watch. I did this not because of any particular sleuthing ability on his part, but because of his interest in a secure and safe Harbor Country. Under his leadership I can see us going beyond Business Watch to include the establishment of Neighborhood Watches.

I also appointed board member Joan Zonka to head the M239/LaPorte Road renaming campaign. As an active New Buffalo Township resident, I felt she could move this project through the tedium of consensus and the bureaucracy of paperwork needed to get the job done.

When it comes to Community Development and the Harbor Country

Guide, I couldn't ask for a better leader than Chuck Garasic. He is certainly a "take control" kind of guy and that gives me a lot of confidence that we are always moving in the right direction. He has surrounded himself with very capable committee members that bring a representative viewpoint from the membership.

Ray Vasquez paves the way for our participation on the digital super highway. Heading the Internet Services committee he is the driving force behind making our web site more than it appears to be. It's not all there yet, but the promise of an extremely interactive tool for visitors and chamber members alike is exciting.

I'm not forgetting the efforts of Margaret Anderson either, though she's laying low right now until it's time to organize the always successful PET scholarship golf outing. And I have already sung the praises of Patty Prino as our leader for Member Services.

That brings us to Marketing and Communications—my committee. New this year is the mission to create a greater awareness of the Chamber, especially for members. Also new this year is the fact that there are actual members on the committee that up until this term consisted solely of yours truly. Ray Vasquez, AJ Boggio, Brenda Stellema, and Diane Botica provide a powerhouse team full of unique ideas to bring the Chamber to the forefront. They are responsible for the next step, the next big project for the Chamber—a member card.

The card itself is going to serve three purposes. It will provide a unique member number that will serve as a password to the coming member section of our **See next page**

Harbor Country® Connection

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Relativity: Theory becomes fact

We're not talking about Einstein's genius, and the expanse of the universe. Rather, the expanse of cyberspace, and the ability for Internet visitors to "find you". Millions of web pages and topics are indexed and catalogued by software programs called Search Engines. The race is on to become "1st on the list" or at least to appear on the first page of a visitor's search. The "print media strategy" has little or no relevance in this arena of artificial intelligence. It doesn't matter if you use a large font headline to grab someone's attention, a tricky slogan, or an enticing image to draw in readers.

Last month we covered the subject of relevant words in web pages. This month we want to draw the distinction between

print and Internet visibility. Not to pit one against the other, the distinction is, simply put the difference between static and dynamic visibility. Print visibility is static. What you "see" is what you get. On the other hand web pages can be dynamic and interactive. Readers use artificial intelligence through keyword phrases to find targeted resources. This is called "relevance". What you "ask for" is what you get, and what you get can be direct electronic interaction with the advertiser/promoter (email, instant messaging, video conferencing, online chat, online shopping, etc.). Web pages can be interactive by "remembering" who you are, filtering out only what you want to see upon the next visit, and by giving web page owners

very precise statistics on visitors that viewed their pages.

The search for relevance is now the game. If you don't play by these rules, you may be counted out. Pretty pages with a nice look may win awards, but "getting to" your site in a sea of content is a challenge overcome by the best relevance. In addition, "link density" and popularity of a site also determines relevance. We've just scratched the surface, but to learn more on how to optimize your site's relevance, go to Google.com and search for "web site relevance" to find several sources that provide excellent tips. Knowing Google, the most "relevant" sites on the subject will be on the first page.

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website. The number will also classify you so we can identify your primary business, when you joined, and where your business is located and that will be good for Business Watch and promotional tie-in notification. Finally, the card will identify you as eligible for discounts or deals on services or goods provided by other members.

It was the last item that generated the initial interest in the member card. Brenda Stellema aptly described it as "...a partnership with other member

businesses for community improvement and networking." The concept is that members offer other members a reward for doing business with each other. Mind you, it's not the remuneration that's important. It might be a pen, or a doughnut, or a 5% discount. What's really important here is that members interact with members and indicate that networking by presenting their card. There are over 400 members in the Chamber and it behooves me to say that I have not met every one of them. I would guess I have personally met only

about 1/4 of our membership. It would be fantastic if a member card helped stimulate a little more business for all. If anything, a little bit of connectivity will be good for all of us. That's what a chamber of commerce is really all about.

Let us know what you think. We haven't spent a dime on the project and would like to hear some feedback on the idea before we proceed. As always you can call the Chamber office at 269-469-5409 or email me directly at president@harborcountry.org

new
members
Jan/Feb
2004

Belle Via Market & Caf 
Pat Pellouchoud
11 S. Elm Street, Three Oaks
Dining

Zieve Studios
Michael Zieve
205 Generations Drive
Three Oaks
Artist Studio

TLC Town, Lake and Country
Vacation Rentals
Mary Pat O'Connor
42 Whittaker Street
New Buffalo
Vacation Rental Agency

Executive Group Sales and
Rentals Realty, LLC
Carrie O'Donnell
16 N. Chicago Street
New Buffalo
Vacation Rental Agency

2nd Street Beach House
Catherine O'Hern

16287 Second Street
Union Pier
Cottage

Mickey Gallas Properties
Mickey Gallas
23 S. Griffin Street
New Buffalo
Real Estate

Harbor Country Rentals
Ann W. Kuppe
P.O. Box 411, Harbert
Vacation Rental Agency

Cathy Smith of ReMax
Cathy Smith
10234 Community Hall Road
Union Pier
Real Estate

Union House
Russ Kucera
P.O. Box 99
Red Arrow Hwy at Goodwin
Union Pier
Restaurant

Glad Rags Too!
Judith Mervine
19135 W. US 12, New Buffalo
Apparel

Dune Country Landscapes
Casey Sullivan
110 S. Monroe Street
New Buffalo
Native Landscaping

Summerwind Resort
Ray Sansonetti
15608 Victor Street, Union Pier
Cottage

Kamp Across From The Dunes
Doug and Kelli Ryskamp
12011 Red Arrow Highway
Sawyer
Campground

dawning, art the gift
Kim Pruitt
22 N. Elm Street, Three Oaks
Gallery

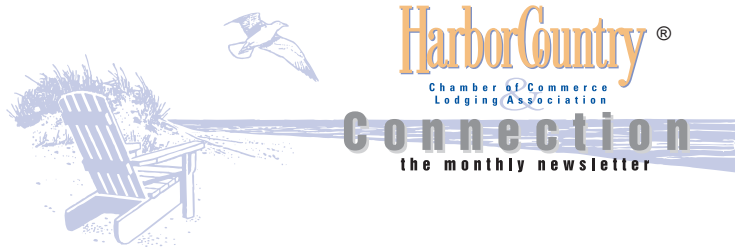
Ciel Bleu
William Holtz
16265 Fourth
Street

Union Pier
Cottage

Keller Williams Real Estate
105-B N. Whittaker Street
New Buffalo
Real Estate

Krieger's Professional
Plumbing
Freddy Krieger
6403 Sawyer Road
Sawyer
Plumbing

The Plum Tree
Pat and Tim Rodeghier
16337 Red Arrow Highway
Union Pier
Antiques



BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
UNION PIER, MI
49129
PERMIT NO. 7

530 south whittaker street, suite f, new buffalo, mi 49117

**EYES SEE
YOU**

**NEXT
STEP**

**WEB
RELATIVITY**

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WATCHING from page 1

Lakeside Antiques has been named chairman of the Business Watch program. His mission in the next couple of months is to organize key people in each community to be the primary contact points. They would be the leads in a telephone tree network and would begin a sequence of communication within and then beyond a business neighborhood.

The Chamber will also play a vital role in the communication network. They would be one of the first calls on any list and from there a broadcast alert via fax and email would be sent out to members who provide the necessary information (email addresses or fax numbers). The notification would also go out to all of the law enforcement agencies under the Harbor Country flag.

Notifications would be sent out about shoplifting, theft, burglaries, purse snatchings, drug dealing and vandalism. If a stranger is giving you an odd feeling, report it. Give enough details so

that law enforcement can respond and at the same time provide the identification necessary to help the next business prepare itself.

This isn't going to be the end of crime in Harbor Country, but it's certainly going to put perpetrators on notice. The system can also work for communication during other emergencies such as fires, power outages, and storm damage. The key is that we work together.

Do you have a special need beyond Business Watch? Contact the Chamber and we can work with the Berrien County Sheriff Department with programs covering Drugs in the Workplace, Financial Institution Security, Fleet Watch, Realtor Safety, Shoplifting, Violence in the Workplace and Working with Angry Customers.

For more information contact Sue Harsch at the Chamber office 269-469-5409 or contact the BCSD directly at 269-983-7141 Ext 7221 and ask for Deputy Karen Klug.

Coming in April

Keep the end of April open on your calendar for two very important reasons: the release of the 2004 Harbor Country Guide and the Annual Art Attack. Both events herald the coming of a new season and the promise of better revenues.

The Guide, as always, promises to be the most worthwhile advertising piece of the year for retailers, restaurants and lodging businesses.

Art Attack is posting a full schedule of events for their three-day celebration of all that is art. Watch for details in the next Connection.

Paint/sponsor a banner

Area chamber members who like to promote artistic talent can do so by purchasing an old highway banner and letting their favorite artist, employee or themselves loose on the canvas. For \$50 you can buy a banner and decorate it in your own "Harbor Country" style. The banners are at the office in New Buffalo and must be painted and returned by April 2. Call Chuck Garasic 269-469-5409 or Sue Harsch at the Chamber 269-469-5409 to find our more.