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HarborCountry®
chamber of commerce

Connection
the monthly newsletter



Member drive set for end of August

Member services chairperson, Patty Prino, is putting the finishing touches on an updated membership packet and hopes to spread the word to new businesses at the end of August. Key to the drive is the “Early, Early Deadline” rates for the 2005 edition of the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce Guide.

“The Guide has always been one of our biggest motivators for membership,” explains Prino. Only members in good standing are allowed to advertise in this popular publication distributed to almost 75,000 people each year. The

“Early, Early Deadline” campaign is offering a 10% discount on last year’s advertising rates. This is a space reservation deadline. Artwork for the ad isn’t due until next February.

Prino has overhauled the member application hoping to create a more user-friendly piece. A no-nonsense brochure explains the Chamber basics and provides an overview of member services. The new application form guides an applicant step-by-step in collecting vital information needed to help promote a business through the Chamber’s website, via a telephone

referral at the Chamber office or as the basis for a guide listing.

The Chamber Board of Directors has redefined the membership categories in their newly ratified revised bylaws. General membership at \$180 per year is still a full membership for a single business operation within the Harbor Country geographic area. A full member receives all mailings, discounts for participation in Chamber sponsored events, programs, advertising, and they have the right to vote when an general election is required. A full member’s second business can register for \$90.

The Chamber is also offering full membership to Neighbor(s) of Harbor Country at \$240 a year. This membership is offered to those just across our boundaries and features many of the entitlements of regular membership except they cannot serve on the Board of Directors or vote in a chamber election.

Associate Business Members (\$42 per year) is set up for individuals, affiliates, associates or employees of a General Member. An Associate Member (\$42 per year) is established for non-business supporters of the Chamber of Commerce such as a resident, second homeowner, non-profit organization, governmental body, school or church.

Financial Institutions are granted full membership but pay \$240 per Harbor Country location.

A new category is Theme Park, Casino, Residential College, Large Industrial that has a negotiated membership rate. Such large-scale developments would share a supportive role for the economic development of the area.



MUSIC IN THE PARK-- Carole and Kaye’s Dixieland Band filled Dewey Canon Park in Three Oaks with toe-tapping music on July 10. They are part of the 13 performances slated for the Music in the Park series. The free concerts (except for two) are funded in part by the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce, Three Oaks businesses, government and many individuals.

HCC



Harbor Country®
Chamber of Commerce

Board of Directors:

Michael Hojnacki, President
Chair of Marketing &
Communications

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Co-chair of Economic Development
and Government Relations

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Co-chair of Economic Development
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Former President, Serves on Internet

John Nelson
Business Watch Coordinator

Ray Vasquez
Chair of Internet/Online Retail

Joan Zonka
Chair of the Harbor Country Road
Initiative

Chuck Garasic
Chair of Community Development
Co-chair of Guide Committee

Patty Prino
Chair of Member Services

Diane Botica
Serves on the Marketing Committee

Brenda Stellema
Serves on the Marketing Committee

Beyond the Board, we need active members

By Michael Hojnacki, Chamber President

One of the missions of the Board of Directors is to divest itself of committee leadership roles so that the directors can concentrate more on the marketing strategies it needs to grow Harbor Country as a great place to visit, live, work and play. Up until our last board meeting, all committees were chaired by board members and most other members of those committees were also board members. The guide and internet services committees were two that actually had members-at-large helping out.

In a move to add some depth to participation in the Chamber's functions, a paragraph in the newly revised bylaws now says that a Board of Director MAY serve as committee chair. (It previously read that the president would select a chair from the board members for all standing committees.)

By lessening the workload of committee work, the Board can concentrate on many of the issues it has ignored over the last decade such as encouraging business development, promoting our area to the collar communities, and setting long range goals that will keep a watchful eye on development and its effect on the resources that made Harbor Country what it was in the first place.

What we're asking for is simply more active member participation in the organization. The Chamber is so much more than the ideas of 12 directors. We all know that. We have some 470 members, each one with a different idea about how things should be run. We

have 470 visions for the future of Harbor Country. We have 470 potential leaders just waiting to share their thoughts.

Join a committee. Chair a committee. We're only going to be as strong as the links formed by individual members working to a common good.

Take your pick:

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS: Primarily responsible for the Chamber newsletter, Harbor Country Lifestyles (on the website), general press releases and media relations. New duties could include developing advertising campaigns to promote our area regionally.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS: Acts as a watchdog for the best interests of Harbor Country's economic growth while maintaining a working partnership with local government.

MEMBER SERVICES: Responsible for membership growth and making members aware of all the services the Chamber offers.

PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW (PET): Maintains a relationship with our schools to promote a qualified employee base and build a future through scholarship.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Charged with the responsibility of promoting Harbor Country's quality of life through signage, beautification programs and support for community events.

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Next Month:

**Chamber and Lodging on path to new partnership
Building a Chamber-specific marketing program**

Harbor Country®
Connection

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Harbor Country®

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Links bring you paying customers

Want customers? Get linked! Numerous testimonials from many members who have a linked listing on the Chamber's website are proof that this small investment is key to getting visitors to go to their sites and become paying customers.

It's a no brainer. The harborcountry.org site is ranked #1 on Harbor Country searches on Google, Yahoo, MSN and other powerful Internet engines. That's only the half of it. The Harbor Country Lodging Association has pumped in a large portion of its nearly \$100,000 annual budget to further promote the site through campaigns like Beachtowns (Michigan.org), Google sponsor ads, and web site referrals in Midwest Living, Chicago Tribune to mention a few. This vast exposure results in tens of thousands of page views each month for inquiring visitors

that want a place to stay, eat, shop, get pampered, buy a second home, or get a tire fixed.

The thousands of searches on the Chamber's site are dedicated to one major thing - bringing up a list of MEMBERS who meet the specific visitor's search criteria. A simple text listing may not be enough. Visitors want pictures, descriptions, and a story about the business they are interested in. Members who have signed up for a hyperlinked listing have the advantage of getting many of our visitors to end up at their own sites with a simple click.

Visitors want instant in-depth information, and they don't want to spend their initial time making phone calls. Once they arrive at the harborcountry.org site, the listings that get the most attention are those with a hyperlink to the member's own site.

You can currently purchase a hyper-link listing for only \$25 a year. If you want to sign up at this rate you must do so before September 1, 2004. We've held down the current rate for the past 7 years, but after September 1st, it will be increased to \$35, which is still a bargain, but a necessary increase to help cover the Chamber's Internet operating expenses. For more information on the External Hyperlink program, visit:

www.harborcountry.org/advertising
or call the Chamber office, 269-469-5409.

Note: This program requires a reciprocal link from the member's site.

**new
members
JULY
2004**

Beyond the Board from page 2

INTERNET AND ONLINE RETAIL: Maintains the standards of and sets policy for our popular website. Also coordinates efforts and product offerings for harborcountrystore.com

GUIDE COMMITTEE: Coordinates the design, editorial and distribution of the Chamber's annual tourism publication.

Other committees on the "to grow" list include a **Business Watch Maintenance Committee** and a **Service Directory Committee**.

If you would like to serve on a committee or better yet lead a committee call Chamber Vice President Karen Gear at 5/3 Bank in Three Oaks, 269-756-3121. Neighbors of Harbor Country can serve on and be committee chairs as well.

If a committee sounds like too much of a commitment then consider an active role in many of the Chamber-sponsored events. The Chamber does not directly produce an event, but instead partners with many other organizations such as the New Buffalo Business Association, Three Oaks Business Association, Harbor Arts, and the New Buffalo Lions Club Ship & Shore Festival to name a few. You can become an active member of these organizations supporting them by your

presence and participation, or you can support them financially or through in-kind donations. This past year the Chamber has sponsored in part **Harvest Days, Blues Fest and Fireworks, Country Christmas and House Walk, Sound of Silents Film Festival, Art Attack, Food and Wine Classic, Music in the Park, Flag Day, Ship and Shore Festival** and others.

We do this because these events are the fabric of our communities. They are the plus for any visitor coming from Chicago or Detroit. They are the "things to do" for locals and second homeowners. They also provide the Chamber another opportunity to promote itself- the more people actually read and say the words "Harbor Country" the more we open up doors to new opportunities.

Become involved. Don't just pay your dues and hope for the best. Protect your investment by sharing your ideas, sharing your voice, offering suggestions for new directions. When I look at the list of our 470-member idea pool I see a lot of diverse talent. I see a lot of people who have served, but could easily come out of committee retirement and serve again for a year or two. I see new faces that haven't even come forward to give us a piece of their mind. We need all of you to make this a Chamber that works.

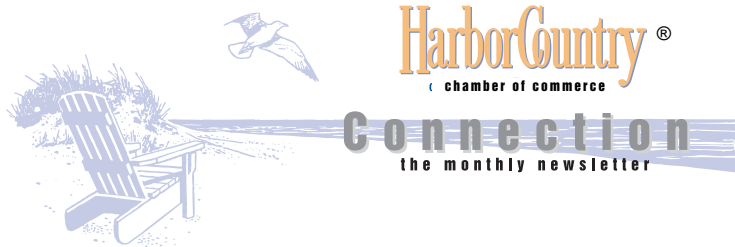
Greg Grosse, Realtor
19 N. Whittaker Street
New Buffalo, MI
Real Estate
Associate Membership

Michael Kuhn, Realtor
19 N. Whittaker Street
New Buffalo, MI
Real Estate
Associate Membership

The Petz Carlton
Helen Fasano
2689 Kaiser Road
Galien, MI 49113
Pet Care
Neighbor of Harbor Country

WitchsBear Crafts & More
Ellen & Joe Zebell
6 W. Ash
Three Oaks, MI
Home Accents/Gifts
General Membership

Do you know a business that could add to the diversity of the Chamber of Commerce? Everyone is welcome! Call the Chamber office at 269-469-5409 for more information or just stop in and pick up a member packet.



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**MEMBER
DRIVE**

**MEMBER
PUSH**

**MEMBER
PULL**

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HARVEST DAYS ARE COMING! The 2nd Annual Harvest Days is scheduled for October 8 thru 11 throughout Harbor Country. Chamber members are encouraged to participate by decorating their buildings in a fall motif, participate in the scarecrow decorating contest (that's Sweet Haven's 2003 entry pictured above), display a poster and distribute promotional material. Participation fee for Chamber members is \$25; non-members must pay \$90.

Aug/Sept

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

AUG 13-14- Sound of Silents Film Festival, Vickers Theatre, Three Oaks. Simply remarkable.

AUG 21- Joel Paterson's acoustic blues at Dewey Cannon Park, Three Oaks.

AUG 28- Springdale Block Party, Three Oaks featuring Jump Little Children. Dancing on Elm Street.

SEPT 3-5- Outsiders Outside Folk Art Fair at Judith Racht Gallery.

SEPT 4- Annual Acoustic Music Fest. Five hours of Music in the Park, Dewey Cannon Park, Three Oaks.

SEPT 18-19- Sidewalk Days in New Buffalo.

SEPT 26- 31st Annual Apple Cider Century Bike Ride.

UPDATES AT www.harborcountry.org/events