



### chamber bulletin board

#### F.Y.I. SEMINAR A SUCCESS

The March 29 F.Y.I. Seminar was a huge success with over sixty-three attending the F.Y.I. program with a Meet and Greet breakfast at Hannah's Restaurant followed by Light Harbor Realty and Gierczyk Development (of New Buffalo, Michigan and LaPorte, Indiana) representative Gary Gillings.

In 2005, the F.Y.I. Seminar programs were developed to offer Chamber members an opportunity to network and to attend a presentation of timely and pertinent community and economic development information. Since then, under the organization of Janet Clark, (also our board treasurer) additional F.Y.I. Seminars with a meet and greet breakfast and guest speakers will be offered throughout the year.

The next F.Y.I. Seminar will be held in May. Watch for your postcard.

#### NEXT MIXER AT GPS

GPS Realty, Inc. will host a mixer at their office, 16170 Red Arrow Hwy., Union Pier, Thursday, May 18 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. RSVP the Chamber Office, 269-469-5409, by Friday, May 5.

Over 30 Harbor Country businesses and almost twice as many artists have joined forces to present the 13th Annual Harbor Country Art Attack on April 28, 29 and 30. Billed as the Midwest's most eclectic, interactive celebration of "all that is art," this year's presentations prove that following a tried and true formula gets results—year after year.

Event co-chairs (always have been), Rita and Jennifer Cochran of Local Color Gallery, agreed that Art Attack consistently draws from a solid core of business participants.

"Sure things change," says Rita. "Most of the time it's because of circumstances beyond our control. People get sick. They can't make it for one reason or another. But the fact is we still come out with strong support from the business and artistic communities."

Even though venues remain relatively unchanged, you can be certain that all the art is new. Art Attack began over a decade ago under the premise that even in business, art could be found—the art of cooking, the art of coffee making, the art of flower arranging, the art of cake decorating, the art of landscaping. Do you see the picture?

Many Harbor Country business-

es miss this point and, unfortunately, miss an opportunity to promote their business.

"We've always held true to our founding premise," says Rita. All that is art could easily be translated as: All that you do has some merit as an art form. For a business person, Art Attack celebrates the creativity behind the business. If you can find a way to present your creativity, then you should be active in this annual showing of talent.

Take some time this year and see for yourself the response that Art Attack produces. See why for some businesses this is one of the busiest weekends of the season—year after year. Schedules and maps are available throughout Harbor Country and online at [www.harborcountry.org/artattack](http://www.harborcountry.org/artattack)

#### 2006 Guide unveiling April 27

The 2006 Harbor Country Guide will be unveiled on Thursday, April 27 at Skip's Restaurant. Chamber members are invited to begin the celebration at 6 p.m. Prior to the unveiling, you'll have an opportunity to meet cover artist Roger Harvey. Signed, collector-edition posters of the cover are available at \$75; unsigned prints are \$25.

A limited number of the guides will be available. The event is free for Chamber and Lodging members.



# To travel or not to travel? That is the question.

By AJ Boggio  
President of Harbor Country Lodging Association

Shakespeare's Hamlet would be just as confused today if he were an average American tourist. "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of "the oil companies" "outrageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of "unemployment" troubles..."

Ever since the phrase "Y2K" infiltrated our everyday lives, Michigan's tourism industry has endured more pain and suffering than Ophelia's broken heart. Rising fuel prices, coupled with overall higher energy costs, have severely limited or, at least, cut back most consumers' purchasing power. Midwest unemployment rates, especially in Michigan's main travel markets, have continued to remain above nationwide averages. Fears of repeated terrorism attacks, an unpopular war in the Middle East and increased troubles for Michigan's auto industry have all plagued businesses which heavily rely on travel spending such as many of us in the Harbor Country® area. Yet, despite all that bad news and despite Michigan's statewide lodging occupancy ranking dead last among all 50 states through most of 2005,

"...tourists spent 4% more in Michigan than they did in 2004."

Michigan's tourism industry report card managed to leave state researchers scratching their collective heads. Although modest by most standards, it was the only sector in Michigan's overall business climate with a higher growth rate last year. According to Dr. Don Holecek, Director of MSU's Tourism Center, tourists spent 4% more in Michigan than they did in 2004.

And the reason? Good weather. Holecek and his team of researchers concluded in their findings that, "the near ideal weather pattern that Michigan tourists encountered over much of last year was largely responsible for improved industry performance." Holecek points out that the weather was "dry and warm through peak summer season and fall which is the 80 to 90 day period when most tourism industry businesses make most of their annual income." No matter how bad things get, Holecek contends, "there's always a latent demand for travel."

Good weather also means good wine. Just ask Katie Maurer, who, along with her husband, Wally, have been making wine since 2001 as owners and operators of Domaine Berrien Cellars in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Maurer agrees with MSU that last year's summer weather was excellent. "It was hot and dry", said Katie. "The grapes thought they were in California!" In fact, Mother Nature was so good to their grapes last summer that this year, Domain Berrien Cellars will be releasing its first private label Chardonnay, made from 100% Chardonnay grapes grown at their winery. Maurer hopes that if March of this year is any indicator, business in 2006 will be even better. She's noticed more customers are showing up from the South Bend and Fort Wayne, Indi-

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## Leadership Harbor Country® Chamber of Commerce



Diane Botica Olszowka, President

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## Addressing the Chamber's diverse needs

▣ By Ellen M. Block

*Chairman of Chamber Marketing Committee*

During the first quarter of this year, the Marketing Committee has been working to address the diverse needs of our chamber members. From artists to auto mechanics to vegetable growers and gallery owners we are trying to promote and encourage Harbor Country to our target areas of primary and secondary homeowners, professional and tourist visitors.

In each issue of the Connection, Marketing committee members and/or guests will present the latest in Harbor Country marketing news. E-Biz by webmaster Ray Vasquez offers the latest in e-news. A.J. Boggio, President of the HC Lodging Association (HCLA) will report on lodging and the significant contributions HCLA provides the Chamber. Feature articles, such as Art Attack will be highlighted in addition to other significant marketing news. To highlight our marketing efforts:

### Advertising -

Placement of advertisement for the promotion of HCCC includes Full-color Ad in Herald - Palladium SW Michigan Tourist Guide to be distributed at tourist centers and retail outlets; 1/8 Page Black & White Ad in Crain's Chicago Business (to accompany tab feature article written on Harbor Country. Business card size ads to place sporadically and in various publications;

Art Attack: Placement of ads in News Dispatch; Herald Palladium; Beacher; HC News; and SB Tribune.

### Press Releases -

Press Releases were distributed for the FYI Seminar and Art Attack

### Welcome New Homeowners-

Jacque Craig, (Coldwell Banker) is developing a program to welcome new primary and secondary homeowners to Harbor Country. Welcome Basket could include gift certificates, promotional materials, merchandise and anything else of interest.



*"...the Marketing Committee has been working to address the diverse needs of our chamber members."*

## The Best Value

▣ By Ray Vasquez

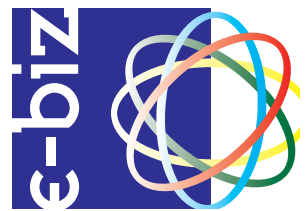
*Chairman of Chamber Internet/Online Services*

If you have a business web site, you've probably been spammed with offers for web listings on a number of sites. How do you choose? Despite the sales double-talk, it all comes down to numbers. You have every right to scrutinize these offers and ask about the visibility you'll get for your money. Ask those who send you these offers to show you their traffic numbers so you can compare sites on cost for their exposure level. Reputable sites will gladly tell you what kind of visibility you'll get for your investment. Their response should include measurements in "pageviews" or "impressions" (the number of times an ad is displayed).

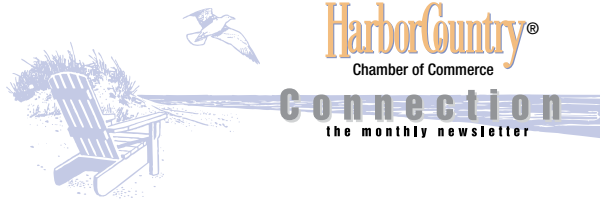
Our members tell us that their best referrals come from their own listings or ads on the Chamber's site, harborcountry.org, which has the highest inventory of relevant Internet traffic in the region (nearly 2 million pageviews annually). If you've asked, "What's the Chamber & Lodging Assn doing for me?" Here are a few

examples: Type "Harbor Country" into any major search engine, and you'll find harborcountry.org right at the top. The Chamber & Lodging Association collectively invest hundreds of thousands of dollars annually promoting our eight communities and the harborcountry.org site via our own Harbor Country® Guide and expansive media partnerships with Michigan.org, Beachtowns.org, along with ad buys in Midwest Living, Chicago Tribune, Crain's Chicago Business, a host of press articles in Chicago Tribune, Detroit News, Washington Post, and Google-Yahoo/Overture Pay-Per-Click programs, just to name a few.

This broad reach is the result of careful strategic planning, extensive market research and collaboration with industry experts, ranking your Chamber's site right at the top - giving your listing high visibility, at the best value for your investment. Find out more about the Chamber's online marketing programs available to in-area members at: [www.harborcountry.org/advertising](http://www.harborcountry.org/advertising) - and we'll gladly share our pageviews and statistics with you. Just login at [www.harborcountry.org/login](http://www.harborcountry.org/login) (requires membership number).



*"Type 'Harbor Country' into any major search engine, and you'll find harborcountry.org right at the top."*



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ana area over March of last year.

So, what does this mean for Harbor Country’s bottom line? Was 2005 a fluke or will travel spending continue to trend upward? The same nagging, negative indicators still persist, accentuated by even more potentially devastating economic news from Michigan’s automobile industry. Oh and by the way, don’t forget all that talk about the bird flu “flying” around. Then again, maybe the weather will cooperate. Sunny skies and warm temperatures are a sure cure for the “pocketbook blues.” And as an added incentive this year, don’t forget to promote your business to the Great White North, eh? Canadian dollars buy even more in Michigan these days.

The experts at MSU tell us it’s probably too early to predict which way the tourism industry is headed over the next few years, however, if fear of the unknown sends shivers up and down your corporate spine, one national travel industry organization may help to keep your cash flow from going into a deep freeze with what they’re calling the *Domestic Travel Fast Facts- Travel Trends from ‘A to Z.’* ([www.tia.org/pressmedia/domestic\\_a\\_to\\_z.html](http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/domestic_a_to_z.html))

But no matter how things shake out this year, keep in mind that even though Hamlet may have had his issues, running a business in Harbor Country wasn’t one of them. It always pays to treat every customer as if your livelihood depends on it.

Adulce House  
601E. Jefferson Street  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Berrien County Community Development  
701 Main Street  
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Cottage at New Buffalo Harbor Dunes  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Dancing Loon Artisans  
30 N. Whittaker Street  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

David’s Delicatessen & Catering  
30 N. Whittaker Street  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Gemini Lawn & Landscaping  
PO Box 803  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights  
208 S. LaSalle Street  
Chicago, IL 60604

Joseph Robert House  
23 Ramona Court  
New Buffalo, MI 49117



Linden House  
12187 Linden Avenue  
Sawyer, MI 49125

Lakeshore Funding, Inc.  
1425 W. Fullerton Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60625

Marina Grand Resort  
600 W. Water Street  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Roma Pizza of New Buffalo  
17600 Red Arrow Highway  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Service 1 Marine  
135 E. Buffalo Street  
New Buffalo, MI 49117

Worthenbury Country House  
235 W. Snow Road  
Baroda, MI 49101