



Mantua-Shalersville Area Chamber of Commerce

NEWS BRIEFS

Welcome Packets

Remember to provide your organization's information for the welcome packets provided to new businesses and residents in the area. Contact a welcome committee member: Edie Benner, Advanced Rehab, 330-274-2747, ebenner@adelphia.net; Virginia Goodell, Goodell Farms, 330-274-2376, vgoodell@aol.com; John Metzko, Teresa's Pizza, 330-274-3000, jmet64@yahoo.com; or Helen Hazlett, Howard Hanna, 440-247-8900, hhazlett@juno.com.

Scholarship Application Deadline

Applications for Chamber scholarships are available at the high school guidance office and are due April 1.

Goodell Farms Pancake Breakfasts

Four Sundays in March 8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at Shalersville Town Hall...\$6.50 adults, \$3.50 children 4-12, complete with country sausage and real maple syrup.

Farmer's Market Vendors

Once again, Mantua Rotary is organizing a farmer's market for the third Saturday of July through August at Buchert Park from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Anyone with products to sell or ideas to expand the market are asked to call Jim Rogers 330-274-8738 or Virginia Goodell 330-274-2376.

Upcoming Chamber Meetings...

Mark your calendar - there's much to learn, the information, food, and friendship is FREE!

Wednesday, April 19 7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Cortland Bank, St. Rt. 44 at Mantua Corners
Topic: Small Business Financing - You Have Options
 Maintaining a healthy cash flow is often one of the greatest challenges for small businesses. Learn about various funding sources to keep your business operating efficiently from an expert in Small Business Administration loan programs.

Wednesday, May 17 7:30 -9:00 a.m.

Hilltop Church/4Cs, W. Prospect St. Downtown
Topic: The Ravenna Arsenal Today - Resource Drain, or Good Neighbor to Small Business Owners?
 Hear about the current state of the Ravenna Arsenal and its impact on the local economy from Training Site Commander Lt. Col. Tom Tadsen.

A Message from the President

First of all, I would like to thank everyone for your prayers, cards and well wishes during my recent illness. They were greatly appreciated, not only by myself, but by my family as well. It's good to be back. I hope to be back to a more normal schedule (whatever that means) in the near future.

For the better part of three years I have been asking in this newsletter that people "Get Involved and Stay Involved."

There has been, as in every successful organization, a strong core group of people who have driven the rebirth of this chamber. The Chamber's sponsorship of the recent Community Visioning meeting was a great step forward for this organization and more importantly for the community.

Well over 100 people "Got Involved." It was an incredible night and thanks go out to that core group of people (you know who you are) and to every member of the community who attended, for the success of that evening.

The true measure of its success however will be the second and third and fourth steps, the ones where we all "Stay Involved."

There will be many opportunities over the next year as the plan unfolds...don't be afraid to bring a friend. Standing room only at the next planning meeting, where we will see some of the results of the March 15 meeting, would be a good start.

Thanks again for getting involved. Please stay involved.

Sincerely,
 Ed Kent

Available Property

Commercial space on the corner of Main and High Streets (former gas station). Testing shows no ground contamination. Front 66'x96' parcel and building listed at \$79,900; 66'x88' parcel behind, with house is \$94,900. Contact Bill Sontag at 330-274-8244.



Small Business Resources:

Visit these websites for all sorts of business information to help you be successful!

- www.SBA.gov or www.krba.biz
- www.SCORE.org or www.akronscore.org
- www.Inc.com
- www.Entrepreneur.com
- www.Microsoft.com/smallbusiness
- www.NFIB.com
- www.Forbes.com/smallbusiness/
- www.irs.gov/businesses/small/
- www.odod.state.oh.us/
- http://ohio.gov/business.stm
- www.Allbusiness.com/
- www.Businessownersideacafe.com/



News from...

Mantua Township

Spring clean-up is Saturday, May 6 from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call 330-995-2640 for additional information.

Shalersville Township

Bi-centennial Committee will meet on Monday, March 27 and host a Chili Supper on April 1 from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., both at the town hall.

Mantua Village

Don't be alarmed by the water; fire hydrants will be flushed March 28-30. Place your items for spring clean-up at the curb by 6:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 6.

MSACC Membership Tops 75

Welcome New Members:

Best Little Hair Hut in Mantua ~ 330-274-4247
sweetstuff50@sbcglobal.net

Dawn Pechman ~ 330-562-7187
dawnpechman@alltel.net

Duracote Corporation ~ 330-296-9600
jvair@duracote.com

Mantua Health Center ~ 274-2411
mantuahealthcenter@sbcglobal.net

OK Brugmann & Sons Concrete ~ 330-274-2106
okbrugmann@sbcglobal.net

Portage Fire Equipment ~ 330-274-3660

Building a Loyal Customer Base

Do you have a specific plan for building customer loyalty? When you consider the high cost of landing new customers versus the high profitability of a loyal customer base, you might want to reflect upon your current business strategy. Streetwise Business Tips offers the following advice along with the four factors that will greatly affect your ability to build a loyal customer base:

1. Products that are highly differentiated from those of the competition.
2. Higher-end products where price is not the primary buying factor.
3. Products with a high service component.
4. Multiple products for the same customer.

Market To Your Own Customers!

Are there additional products or services you can sell your customers? Keep all the information you can on your customers and don't hesitate to ask for the next sale. When you buy a new car, many dealers will within minutes try to sell you an extended warranty or an alarm system. It's often a very easy sale and costs almost nothing to make.

Use Complaints To Build Business!

When customers aren't happy with your business they usually won't complain to you - instead, they'll probably complain to just about everyone else they know - and take their business to your competition next time. That's why an increasing number of businesses are making follow-up calls or mailing satisfaction questionnaires after the sale is made. They find that if they promptly follow up and resolve a customer's complaint, the customer might be even more likely to do business than the average customer who didn't have a complaint.

In many business situations, the customer will have many more interactions after the sale with technical, service, or customer support people than they did with the sales people. So if you're serious about retaining customers or getting referrals, these interactions are the ones that are really going to matter. They should be handled with the same attention and focus that sales calls get because in a way they are sales calls for repeat business.

Reach Out To Your Customers!

Contact with current customers is a good way to build their loyalty. The more the customer sees someone from your firm, the more likely you'll get the next order. Send holiday greeting cards, see them at trade shows, call or stop by to make sure everything's okay.

Send a simple newsletter to your customers - tell them about the great things that are happening at your firm and include some useful information for them. Send them copies of any media clippings about your firm. Invite them to free seminars. The more they know about you, the more they see you as someone out to help them, the more they know about your accomplishments - the more loyal a customer they will be.

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and Bob Adams' "Adams Streetwise Series"*

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Your On-Call IT Staff

Many businesses cannot afford their own IT staff. Solisbury Hill Solutions fills the gap with a suite of technology services for businesses of all sizes. Services include system updates, website development and hosting, online stores, virus protection, troubleshooting, and customized training for businesses. Business owners who are not comfortable with computers find the one-on-one attention of our executive training consultants service a blessing. Solisbury Hill Solutions - our job is to make you look good! For more information, call Charles Hautala at 440-346-6448 or email chip@solisburyhill.net.



Fire Equipment & Protection

Portage Fire Equipment, Inc. has been owned and operated by its present owners, Mickey and Barb DeWitt, since July 1993. We are located in Mantua and are proud to serve our fellow Portage County homes and businesses. We acquired approximately 100 customers with the business, and now serve over 1000. We welcome inquiries into our services which include fire extinguisher inspection and maintenance, exit light maintenance, fire alarm inspection, hood system inspection and sprinkler inspection. If you need help with new equipment, service on existing equipment or simply have questions about fire protection, we can help you. We treat our smallest customers with the same respect as we do our largest customer. Contact us at 330-274-3660.

Community Visioning

Over 100 participants representing business owners, employees, and residents of the Mantua-Shalersville area shared their thoughts of the Village of Mantua during the Chamber-sponsored Community Visioning meeting on March 15.

Guests enjoyed refreshments provided by Tubby's Subs, K&K Meat Shoppe, Side Street Café, Village Tavern, and McDonald's.

After presentations by Lynne Erickson and Bob Harris of the Portage County Planning Commission – explaining Mantua's comprehensive plan initiative – guests broke into groups to identify the greatest assets of as well as critical issues facing the Village. Each group then shared their feedback with all in attendance.

Common themes emerged, such as the need for more convenient parking downtown, the deteriorating appearance of many storefronts, and the lack of an "anchor" business in the area. Environmental characteristics, friendly people, and a feeling of safety were mentioned among assets to promote.

This feedback will be combined with survey responses and other information about the area to formulate a plan for keeping our "main street" alive and improving the quality of life of residents.

If you have not yet completed a survey, please visit www.mantuavillage.com (residents of the Village) or www.mantuashalersvillechamber.com (Township). The Village resident survey is also available at Village Hall. Survey responses are due April 15.

Attend the next Planning Commission meeting for results of the Village business survey and follow-up to the March 15 community visioning process. The Village Planning Commission meets at 7:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month (4/19) at the Village Park Lodge.

How you can help:

Keep in mind that this process is just beginning...that there is no magic bullet, it takes a great deal of time and effort for changes to be noticed...and that no one will fix our problems for us; we each need to take action.

If you operate a business, commit to making at least one improvement to your business by the end of each month. It doesn't have to be a major improvement, baby steps are better than none at all! Clean your windows, paint trim, reorganize customer areas, fix the sidewalk, add your business profile to the Chamber website, get assistance with marketing or merchandising, ask your customers what you can do better...stop and think, "Why would anyone want to do business with me?" (if you're a retailer, "Why would anyone park their car and walk in my store?")

If you don't operate a business, offer to help a business owner, the Chamber or Planning Commission...promote the community...support local businesses...(Contact Jim Rogers at jimrogers39@sbcglobal.net or 330-274-8738 to help update the Village Land Use Plan.)

Continued participation and input is crucial to developing a comprehensive plan that we can all live with and a community we're all proud of!

Perception or Reality

Businesspeople seem to know Northern Ohio has top-notch health care, but our corporations, colleges and universities need to do a better job of self-promotion, according to a recent survey.

The poll, conducted by the Northern Ohio Area Chambers of Commerce (NOACC), an organization that represents more than 120 chambers in Northern Ohio, showed only 37% of respondents knew Ohio ranks 5th in the number of Fortune 500 companies located here; only 35% knew Ohio ranks 5th in the number of higher learning institutions; and 14% knew Ohio ranks 2nd in the United States in providing professional, scientific and technical services.

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, NOACC sponsored a survey in conjunction with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield to gauge what businesspeople think of Northern Ohio, namely what they enjoy most and least about living and working here.

“Too much has been said that is negative about the region,” says NOACC Executive Director Vicky Hawke. “The chambers are on the frontlines. ... They know there’s a lot of success that’s happening.”

Perhaps the most interesting results of the survey were the variances in responses by zip code. Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed Ohio has excellent health care. Disagreement with this statement was near zero in Cleveland and Akron, but higher in Toledo (12%) and Youngstown (16%).

When it came to the outlook on job opportunities for individuals with higher education degrees, respondents in the Akron/Canton area were the most optimistic, with 61% saying there were many job opportunities. Respondents in Youngstown were least likely to agree. Hawke hopes the survey results will open people’s eyes to the assets of the region.

*Reprinted with permission from
February 2006 Inside Business Magazine*



Fewer Workers Believe the Economy is

Strengthening: 20% of adult Ohio workers believe the economy is getting stronger, down two percentage points from December. In addition, 50% of workers believe the economy is getting weaker, up from 36% in December:

Strength of Economy

	<u>December 2005</u>	<u>January 2006</u>
Getting stronger:	20%	22%
Staying the same:	30%	41%
Getting weaker:	50%	36%

*Source: January 2006 Spherion Employment Report
Visit www.spherion.com for more information.*

Crestwood Finances

Confused about the change in millage for the Crestwood levy on the May ballot? You’re not alone. Carol Corbett, district treasurer, recently explained events that led up to the reduction:

The district benefited from additional funds of approximately \$900,000 annually for the school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 because of a change in the law enacted in July 2005.

The five-year forecast prepared and adopted by the Crestwood Board of Education at their October 6 meeting was not yet finalized with regard to state funding. After the October week count (number of students enrolled) was completed and submitted to the state, a recalculation was made in the December distribution to the district resulting in an annual increase of \$900,000 from the October estimate because the district qualified for an additional guarantee: transitional aid guarantee.

Crestwood schools’ enrollment decreased by 120 students from the 2004-2005 school year due to lower entering kindergarten classes than were graduated and the loss of 60 students from a special education program. The state provides for these types of unexpected declines by “transitioning” the funding for a two-year period. This transition allowed Crestwood to collect no less funding than it actually received in fiscal year 2005.

Usually a decline in enrollment is unknown in the previous spring of the year when (by law) staff must be notified of their reduction. In Crestwood’s case, we were alerted to the reduction of the special program and were able to make staff reductions accordingly. Fortunately, through attrition and other staff changes, the vast majority of these staff members were re-employed for 2005-2006.

These additional funds offset a further deficit in the district’s operations and the resulting levy request can be for a lower millage amount as a result of the district’s prior planning and appropriate reductions to accommodate the changes.

If you have questions about the upcoming levy, call the district office at 330-274-8511.



Super Networking Breakfast **High octane for your business network**

Ladies and gentlemen, start your prospects for this Portage-wide networking extravaganza...the only place you can have breakfast with business leaders from the eight area Chambers of Commerce and personally speak with them all. Meet new people by giving a 90-second commercial about your organization to others repeatedly, by moving from table to table, until everyone has made 40-45 new contacts. Chamber members pay \$10; non-members \$15.

RSVP now to your local Chamber and bring your business cards and your appetite to the Twin Lakes Country Club on Overlook Drive (off of St. Rt. 43) in Kent on Friday, April 7. Breakfast begins at 8:00 a.m. and networking at 8:30 a.m.

Joint Business After Hours Event

The Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County is inviting fellow members of the Mantua-Shalersville Area Chamber of Commerce to a county-wide Business After Hours event at the board's new location in downtown Kent. The open house and networking opportunity is set for Thursday, April 27, 2006 from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the board's new home, 155 E. Main St., Kent. Please join us for refreshments and see our updated office space in the office site that is often referred to as the "Ohio Edison Building." For more information, call 330-673-1756, ext. 201, or email aurab@mental-health-recovery.org. For directions, go to www.mental-health-recovery.org/contact/.

Portage LEPC Business After Hours

The Portage County Local Emergency Planning Committee will host a Business After Hours open house from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 13, at the Portage County Justice Center.

Representatives from Portage area businesses, government agencies, chambers of commerce and school districts are welcome to attend and learn more about the LEPC and how it partners with the Portage County Emergency Management Agency to keep Portage County safe from hazardous spills. LEPC and EMA offices and Emergency Operations Center are located in the Justice Center at 8240 Infirmary Road in Shalersville Township.

Those attending the open house will have an opportunity to meet with LEPC officers and members who will answer questions on regulations about the filing of information on hazardous chemicals. A short program will include videos of how emergency responders handle large-scale hazardous spills in communities similar to Portage County. The Mobile Incident Command Post and HAZMAT vehicle will also be on site. EMA directors will also be present to answer questions regarding their office.

FREE Workplace Safety Training

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation Division of Safety & Hygiene Training Center offers 61 occupational safety, health, and ergonomic courses in twelve locations statewide. All courses are offered at no additional cost to Ohio employers who pay into the Ohio workers' compensation insurance fund. Courses are designed to emphasize practical application of safety principles, to help develop a safety culture, and to provide current and proposed standards for regulatory compliance. Employers may enroll any number of employees at no additional cost.

For more information about the BWC's Safety & Hygiene Division or to register for a class go to www.bwclearningcenter.com or call 1-800-OHIOBWC, option 2, then 2.

Download the BWC Safety Classes April-June 2006 flyer directly from the www.noacc.org website under Resources under Ohio BWC Literature.



BWC Ohio Safety Congress

The Ohio Safety Congress & Expo is the largest regional safety and health expo in the United States. Each year, more than 5,000 professionals attend this three-day event to learn about the latest ideas, information and tools to resolve workplace safety and health issues and reduce workers' compensation costs. It includes general sessions, panel discussions, product demonstrations, exhibits, educational sessions and unlimited networking opportunities.

Make plans now to join Ohio employers and employees at the BWC Ohio Safety Congress & Expo from March 28 to March 30, 2006 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

Registration is easy ... and free!

- Call 1-800-OHIOBWC (press 2, then 2 and 2 again)
- Visit www.ohiobwc.com
- Simply complete a registration form when you arrive at the event.

From the workshops on day one to the closing session on day three, the safety congress schedule is designed to provide attendees with a flexible yet customized, industry-focused approach to learning. No matter what combination of days you choose to attend, you can chart your own course to find the information, products and services you'll need to enhance your knowledge of safety and risk management.

Stay Involved...

In less than 2 hours, you can...

- Attend one of the Chamber's meetings.
- Participate on a Chamber committee or task force - a great way to network even closer with fellow business leaders AND improve the business climate of our community.

In less than 1 hour, you can...

- Visit a neighboring business to offer support.
- Post your company profile on the Chamber website.
- Fax or email a news item about your business which can be published in the next issue of the Chamber newsletter.
- Encourage friends and family to support local businesses and the Chamber.

Mantua-Shalersville Area Chamber of Commerce

For Chamber
information, contact
Ed Kent at 330-274-0881 or
ekent@middlefieldbank.com

For newsletter inquiries, contact
Michelle Barnauskas at
mlbarnauskas@hallrich.net
330-678-0684 x223

www.mantuashalersvillechamber.com

Chamber Goals

- ▷ To advance the commercial, industrial, educational, agricultural, and civic interests of the area ◁
 - ▷ To work together to support and promote local businesses and their products ◁
 - ▷ To work with elected officials to promote proper planning and growth ◁
- ▷ To support and work toward local harmony for the betterment of citizens and businesses in the area ◁

**“It is always wise to look ahead, but difficult
to look further than you can see.”**

~Winston Churchill

Mantua-Shalersville Area
Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 111
Mantua, OH 44255



Fax to 330-274-0883
 Drop at Middlefield Bank or
 Mail to PO Box 111, 44255

TASK FORCE VOLUNTEER FORM

Steering Committees – create a market positioning statement of direction/focus, lead action and communication

- Mantua Village
- Mantua Township
- Shalersville Township

Finding Funds – research financing, grants, non-profit and other legal entity options for ownership

Niche Identification – analyze successful strong points in comparable communities and recommend unique niche businesses for Mantua-Shalersville area...study other community plans/policies and document zoning, land use, and other practices to mimic, avoid, or consider

Beautification – distribute and display decorations for events (Soap Box Derby, Potato Festival, Holidays, etc.) to make Village, Corners, Township Squares look festive and inviting; recommend permanent improvements and organize volunteers to help...work with Village Shade Tree Committee and Village and Township Garden Clubs

Youth Involvement – develop children’s programs and volunteer committees to get Crestwood and Maplewood students involved and to complete projects in community...work with Scout groups, 4H, school organizations

Historians – document ownership and use of spaces for community brochure and Chamber website

Photographers – photograph exteriors and interiors of existing buildings and places, scenic views, events, and people for community brochure and Chamber website

Please place a checkmark beside any task force that you would be willing to assist with or provide the name of someone you think would be willing to help.

Your name _____ **Phone number** _____

email address _____

Other name _____ **Phone number** _____

email address _____