



Chamber Visions – May 2009

Lunch on the Chamber

April 19-25 is National Volunteer Appreciation Week. The Chamber is almost entirely dependent on volunteers throughout the year in order to accomplish the organization's mission statement. A volunteer luncheon was hosted by the Chamber as a mere token gesture to acknowledge and express appreciation for those who have stepped up to the challenge. The luncheon was held at Pizza Hut/KFC/Taco Bell on Thursday, April 23 with nearly 40 in attendance. Pam Harsh, Chamber Executive Director, shared a quote with the volunteers: "Volunteers are not paid, however, it is not because they are worthless....but rather because they are priceless."

The Chamber Salutes . . .

Mike Kennedy at Pizza Hut/KFC/Taco Bell for assisting us with the Volunteer Luncheon on Thursday, April 23. It's always a treat to eat at Mike's place

Leadership Institute Students Recognized at MHS Leadership Banquet

McCook High School students involved with Leadership Institute were recognized on Monday, April 20, at the High School Leadership Banquet. Bill Burton, Leadership Institute Chairperson, presented engraved crystal paper weights to the students. The six students who will graduate from Leadership Institute on May 14 include: Heather Bieker, Brooke Burton, Matt Carriker, Austin Larson, Stephen Smock and Mary Spilinek.

Annual 8th Grade Ag Awareness Tour on April 8

Members of the Chamber Ag Task Force hosted the annual 8th grade ag tour on Wednesday, April 8. The morning began with an assembly in the school auditorium which was facilitated by Mark Friehe, Frenchman Valley Coop. Mark shared general ag information with the students and set the tone for the day. Others assisting with organizing the tour included Alex Haag, AmFirst Bank, and Nikki Cappel, Terry Ellinger, CPA. Three buses transported the students to various stops on the tour.



Four Winds Animal Clinic - Cort Mohr



Olsen's Ag Lab - Bob Olsen

The purpose of the tour is to develop an awareness of what opportunities exist in the agricultural industry in McCook and the surrounding area. The tour highlights some of the possibilities where they can utilize their classroom work right here in their hometown. Science labs, computer skills, veterinarian fields, heavy equipment operation, GPS navigation applications, animal science, mathematical computations, etc. The list is endless. The students also got a taste of buying animals on the auction block and were given a new appreciation for the skills of a cattle buyer. Stops on the tour included Four Winds Animal Clinic, Tri-State Livestock Sale Barn, Southwest Implement, Olsen's Agricultural Laboratory, Frenchman Valley Coop, Timmerman's Feedlot, and Ram's Horn Dairy. We believe this exposure to the ag industry and how it impacts our area is a crucial addition to our students tool kit for their respective futures. Even though they may live in McCook, which is a rural community, for some of the students this is their only exposure to agriculture.

The Chamber Salutes . . .

those businesses that shared their business day with the 8th grade students on April 8th Ag Tour. We appreciate their commitment to the students as they spoke of their respective businesses and the opportunities therein. The exposure to these ag businesses may strike a chord with the students as they consider their career paths through high school. In addition, we also appreciate the schools' cooperation in allowing us to take the students out of school for the entire day.

'Amazing Race' Television Host Rides Through McCook



Darryl Volquardsen, Chamber Board Member, welcomes Phil Keoghan and his crew to McCook



Jesse Stevens, Hometown Family Radio, interviews TV host



Cindy West, Community Hospital Physical Therapist, helps Phil Keoghan of Amazing Race "warm-up" before biking out of McCook

Phil Keoghan, host of the popular CBS television show, 'Amazing Race' was in McCook on Tuesday, April 14, for a brief visit on his "Ride Across America" to raise awareness and funds for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and to encourage people to pursue a healthy lifestyle. His route across the United States included stops at only 30 communities. We were pleased that McCook was chosen to be one of those locations. Also the Chamber was happy to assist in his effort to raise funds for MS.

The Chamber arranged for McCook area enthusiasts to meet with Keoghan at 8:30 a.m. that morning at the lower shelter house of Kelly Park. A healthy breakfast treat from McDonald's Restaurant was available for those attending. Free will donations went to the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Local bicyclists rode with the celebrity on the newly completed concrete trail from Kelly Park to East H Street then South on East 11th street to B Street and then East to Karrar Park. A police escort as well as a group of local motorcyclists accompanied the group. Video footage of his visit may be included on a popular CBS morning show as well as in a documentary film of the ride across America.

The Chamber Salutes . . .

those who assisted with the program for the Phil Keoghan "Ride Across America". Kyle Potthoff, representing the City of McCook and Darryl Volquardsen, representing the Chamber Board of Directors, welcomed the entourage to McCook. McCook Walking Trail promoter, Tor Olson shared information about the trail and Duane Tappe, Rotary President, told about the exercise equipment to be found along the trail. Cindy West, Community Hospital Physical Therapist, supervised a warm-up session of exercises for bikers prior to the ride. We also appreciate members of the local motorcycle group and the City of McCook Police Department for providing an escort for the entourage. In addition, we wish to express our appreciation to McDonald's Restaurant of McCook for providing their nutritious Fruit and Walnut Salads to those in attendance.

I-80 Vacation Tour Guides Visit McCook

Tour guides from the I-80 Tourist Information stops visited McCook on Saturday morning, April 18, to become familiar with our community and area. Members of the Red Willow County Visitors Committee hosted the group and escorted them to the Heritage Hills Golf Course, the Kiplinger Arena, the George Norris Historical Site and lunch at Sehnert's Bakery & Bieroc Cafe. The group was excited to visit McCook and look forward to sending tourists from the interstate to McCook to enjoy some of our unique characteristics.

On May 13, staff from the Chamber of Commerce will attend the Annual Brochure Swap in Hastings and provide the tour guides with flyers, brochures and other marketing material for McCook and the surrounding area. In addition, the staff will bring home tourist information from other areas in the state. Over the years, the brochure swap has proven an effective method to get tourism information distributed across the state.

Keystone Kick-Off Celebration

Senator Ben Nelson and Chairman and CEO of 21st Century Systems, Jeffrey Hicks, were among the dignitaries in attendance at the official kick-off ceremony for the Keystone Business Center on Wednesday, April 15. Twenty-first Century Systems will be the anchor tenant. The project, which is being facilitated by the McCook Economic Development Corporation, has been in the planning stages for nearly four years. Funding for the project has come from a number of sources including federal grants, local banks, and the City of McCook. Asbestos abatement is completed and other demolition efforts began the day following the kick-off. A number of offices will be housed in the new Business Center as well as areas for incubator businesses. The McCook Area Chamber of Commerce and the MEDC offices will be located in the building upon completion. The project offers an opportunity for job creation and expansion, promotes entrepreneurship and downtown revitalization all of which contribute to a very positive economic impact on our community and the area.

Arbor Day Celebrated in McCook



Tree Advisory Board with Dan Dueland of Double D Lawns & Landscaping

McCook Area Chamber of Commerce Director, Pam Harsh, joined City staff, members of the Tree Advisory Board and the general public to a celebration commemorating Arbor Day on Friday, April 10, at the Kelley Park Walking Trail on East Fifth Street.

Dan Dueland, Double D Lawns & Landscaping, spoke about the history of Arbor Day which was first initiated in Nebraska.

The City has planted a number of new trees along the walking trail, in Barnett Park, Norris Park and Kelley Park in recent months.

The Chamber Visions is the official publication of the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce, published monthly throughout the year at 107 Norris Ave., McCook, NE 69001. The Chamber accepts no responsibility for editorial content submitted to Chamber Visions.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Greetings to You--Our Valued Chamber Members!

McCook is looking great with everything turning green and blossoms on the trees. Prom is over and now on to graduation both at the college and the high school level. Isn't it great to know that we are living in the "Happiest State in the Nation?" Southwest Nebraska definitely contributes to this fact.

It was nice to honor so many of the Chamber's volunteers at the recent volunteer luncheon held at Pizza Hut. If you were unable to attend—know that your efforts to make McCook a great place to live, work, and play are truly appreciated. Again, McCook helps contribute to the "Nebraska near top in number of volunteers" category. Great things will only continue to happen in Southwest Nebraska as people step up to the challenges and together support one another to help McCook to grow and even thrive.

My sincere congratulations to Peterson Jewelers and Terry Peterson, Owner, for being named the Honor Business of the Quarter.

Congratulations to the MEDC for hosting the Keystone Kick Off Celebration. Everyone is certainly excited about all of the things that possibly can happen in that historic facility. It will be exciting to watch the progress. It was definitely great to see the High School Rodeo being held in the Kiplinger Arena over the weekend.

Also, I am pleased that so many of you were available to meet The Amazing Race celebrity host, Phil Keoghan. Thanks for supporting his efforts to raise funds for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. I heard the breakfast provided by McDonald's was appreciated by all!

The Chamber Board of Directors Nominations Committee is planning to meet next week to select the President-Elect for the board and for community leaders to be nominated to serve three-year terms on the Board. If you are interested in serving—please give Stacy Priebe, Kristin Stagemeyer or myself a call to let us know.

Happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers in the area!

Have a great spring!

*Janet Weber, President
McCook Area Chamber of Commerce*

Each newsletter will focus on listing members of the Chamber in alphabetical order. Did you stop in and visit the valued members with business names beginning with the letter "R-S's" mentioned last month? If not, do so along with the new ones this month, those members whose names begin with T-V's as indicated below. Please let all of these members know that they are valued Chamber Members. Together we can accomplish more!

Taste of Texas BBQ
Terry Ellinger, CPA
The Buckle
The Coppermill Restaurant
The Sports Shoppe
TierOne Bank
TJ's Family Fun Center
TOP Office Products
Trails West Texaco
Trenton Electric
Twenty First Century Systems Inc.
Union Bank & Trust
U-Save Pharmacy and Medical Supply
Valmont
Viaero Wireless
VK Electronics
Vocational Rehabilitation

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

Olsen's Agricultural Laboratory-33 Years Serving McCook

Olsen's Agricultural Laboratory has been at fixture a 210 East First Street in McCook for 33 years. Still, many people are amazed to hear there is an agricultural lab in town. Those who have toured the lab are astounded by the amount of space the lab occupies; much more than the storefront would imply. From the front door, it spans into the buildings both north and south and runs to the alley.

The founders, Bob and Connie Olsen, operated the lab until November 2007 when they sold it to Christine and Kevin Grooms. The Grooms' together have over 40 years of experience in the agricultural

testing field with backgrounds in chemistry, biology, business, animal and plant sciences. The purchase of the company by these two employees was a natural step, a transition that made it possible to keep the business in McCook.

While continuing to focus on the quality of analysis, the new administration is committed to personalized customer service. Many clients are pleasantly surprised when they call in with a question and are able to speak with the owners. There are many involved with the customer care side of the business, including Bob Olsen who remains as an agronomist/consultant for the lab. Aside from the two owners, there are nine full-time employees and as many as an additional six seasonal employees. Some have been on staff for over 20 years and contribute much experience and knowledge, while others are recent graduates that bring energy, excitement, and a fresh outlook to laboratory analysis and the agricultural industry. All of these qualities, along with good communication and teamwork, make the laboratory operation efficient and successful.

The testing performed is agriculturally based. The lab offers the analysis of soil, animal feeds, household/livestock and irrigation water, fertilizer, manure and compost, lagoon and wastewater, seed germination and sugar beet nematodes. The diversified testing capabilities are also reflected in the client base. The lab routinely receives samples from all over the United States, Canada, Mexico and Central America. Those sending samples are farmers, ranchers, crop consultants, cooperatives, nutritionists, municipalities, fertilizer producers, engineers, private home owners and gardeners, just to name a few.

The agronomic concepts and beliefs of the laboratory, along with attention to the accuracy and integrity of results, are a large part of what keeps samples coming to McCook. Many current clients started sending samples when the lab opened in 1976, and we owe much of our business to positive 'word of mouth'. A satisfied client will tell their neighbor, or their colleagues. Advertising, marketing and internet searches also help to expand the client base.

Kevin and Christine are proud to serve the agricultural industry. They feel that keeping the laboratory and staff here, along with bringing new people to the area, will help McCook and the agricultural community to grow.

Christine and Kevin Grooms

Aire Drafting – No Job Too Big Or Too Small

Aire Drafting, an engineering drafting firm, was established in January 1999 in the Kearney Grand Island area. Aire Drafting proudly services central and southwestern Nebraska with quality drawings of just about anything you can imagine or build. We have contracted with many company's across Nebraska, including Diamond Plastics of Grand Island, Armour Foods of Hastings, and most recently Besler Industries of Cambridge. Aire Drafting has also provided quality drawings for many smaller company's, and individuals across Nebraska.

We specialize in mechanical and engineering drafting. No job to big or to small. Offering quality service and reasonable rates for over 10 years. As always, the first consult is free.

Aire Drafting has been located in McCook since January 2002.

John Smith, Owner

Burns Podiatric Laboratory, Inc.



Burns Lab was established in 1969, by the late Dr. Larry Burns, because of a demand for service in the Midwest. Dr. Michael Burns of Fort Collins, CO is President and C.E.O. Mary O'Dea of Loveland, CO is Vice President and Comptroller.

After more than 40 years of service, the Lab continues to provide quality custom made orthotic devices for podiatrists through out the USA and many foreign countries.



Quality is the number one priority of the lab technicians, under the direct supervision of Tom Kaminski, Production Manager.

We are extremely proud of the craftsmanship and quality control involved in the accurate manufacture of all our orthotic devices.

Burns Lab's office staff are experts at working with doctors, via telephone, to guarantee that our customer's are always satisfied with our service and quality. The staff is well trained and an intrical part of what makes Burns Lab the success it is today.

Burns Lab is proud to be located in McCook, Nebraska and service such a wide range of customers across the USA and internationally.

Mary Thorson

GUEST EDITOR

Struggling With a Question

I recently was asked to name one person other than family member who helped shape my life. I struggled with the question. Many people cross our paths in life and leave an impression on us. Offering one name seemed impractical and unfair. I thought of one name and another would come to mind. The second name made me think of a third. Before I knew it, my list had grown too long.

I thought of names like Mike Nickel, Gale Bly, Kerrilyn Symington, Lyle Moskal, and Elizabeth Benjamin. Each was professionally trained and dedicated to their profession. Knowledge was shared, debate was lively, and along the way they left you with the desire to seek more knowledge. From music to economics, from grammar to accounting, each of the above played an important part in shaping the lives of numerous citizens in Southwest Nebraska.

After struggling with my question for quite some time, I decided to answer the question with a short and simple answer representing the long list I continued to add to each time I thought of a name. It was one that would make Mrs. Symington proud because it was succinct and to the point, "My teachers."

As we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week, I challenge you to take a minute and identify those teachers who helped shape your life. Better still, grab a pen, drop them a note, and let them know you

still appreciate their efforts. If you have children in school, stop by a classroom and share your appreciation with your child's teacher. It is a very small way of showing appreciation for helping shape your life today.

*Tom Bredvick
McCook Public Schools Board of Education*

Head in the Sand?

In these tough economic times, some small business owners may feel like adopting the ostrich's "head in the sand" attitude.

That's a really a dangerous attitude – you can't hide from your problems forever. Now is the time to take whatever steps you can possibly implement to make sure your business survives the current crisis. Small business owners need to be looking at ways to lessen the impact the economic slowdown has on their business.

Don't make it easy for your competitors to get the jump on you while you procrastinate over your options. Take advantage of the slowdown to look for weaknesses in your company.

Ask for feedback from your employees. What would they consider a disastrous event to your company? Would it be the loss of an account, loss of a bank credit line, layoffs, or something else?

Once you have identified vulnerabilities in your company, work together with your employees to come up with action items to lessen the impact on the business. Inspire your employees to be proactive and take positive steps going forward.

Search for new customers. Keep your name in front of the customers you want to attract. Use your Chamber of Commerce events and activities to make contacts with business people in a relaxed, informal setting. Exchange business cards. Follow up with a note or telephone call the following week. Internally look at payment patterns. Watch out for the customer who over-orders. Establish your bill-paying priorities. Payroll and payroll taxes always come first. Then make sure any obligations backed by personal guarantees, such as credit cards, are paid.

Your advantage in tough economic times will be your attitude. Don't complain about the economy and sit back to wait for the turnaround. Pursue whatever opportunities are available to you. You can get a jump on the competition if you can maintain a positive attitude, stay in public view and make plans to survive whatever is thrown at you. In other words, take action!

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RETAIL DETAILS

Gary's Country Peddler, McCook Lettering and Garrisons

Gary's Country Peddler, McCook Lettering and Garrisons have grown by leaps and bounds in the last 25 years. As many of you know we have offered western apparel in work or dress boots, jeans, shirts and winter wear to Southwest Nebraska from the time we purchased Al's Army Store until today.

Garrisons opened its doors to the public in 2001, providing a full line of fine men's clothing, where we can help you look your best for any occasion, offering items such as suits, ties, dress shirts and slacks. We are also your tuxedo and suit rental headquarters for the area. We love helping all the area guys look fabulous on their wedding day, prom night, or other special event.

Along the way McCook Lettering has expanded into one of the best embroidery and screen printing departments in the area. Providing a variety of services for local schools, businesses, churches and organizations, not only in embroidery and screen print, but providing chenille, chain stitch, twill and heat press for an array of garments such as t-shirts, long sleeve t-shirts, sweatshirts, hooded sweatshirts, polo shirts, wind shirts, jackets, blankets and many more items. With all the work being done in our store by our very talented employees, we can create just one or many items. We enjoy being able to say "no job is too big or too small".

The past few months have been very exciting for the McCook Lettering department. We have a laser engraver and a rotary engraver and therefore have added engraving to our full line of services. We can fulfill your engraving and awards needs with trophies, plaques, medals, ribbons, glassware, name plates, dog tags and many more items.

Stores are located downtown at 304 Norris Avenue all under one roof making your trip a one stop shopping event.

Tom Wiemers

MEMBER NEWS

Peterson Jewelers Named Honor Business



Photo courtesy of McCook Gazette

The McCook Area Chamber of Commerce named **Peterson Jewelers** owned by Terry Peterson, McCook, as the second quarter Honor Business for 2009. A large entourage of Chamber members and McCook Cordials attended the presentation on April 9. Darryl Volquardsen, Chamber Board member, presented the award and expressed appreciation for Terry's dedication to McCook and the surrounding area. Peterson Jewelers is celebrating its 25th Anniversary in 2009. Terry purchased the business from Bill Schilz in 1984. Until the past couple of years, Bill had continued to work part time in the store. Those in attendance reminisced years gone by and commented on Terry's role as "The Doctor" in his recent ad campaigns.

Chamber Coffee Connection Connects Members

Members continue to enjoy the quarterly Chamber Coffee Connection gatherings as was evident by the April 1 event hosted by Chamber President, Janet Weber, at Community Hospital. The open roundtable conversation allows those in attendance to share the latest happenings in their individual worlds. The coffee begins at 7:30 a.m. with a target end time of 9:00 a.m. The unstructured informal setting allows a "come-and-go as you can" format which better facilitates participant's schedules. At the April coffee, pastries were available from the Hospital Dietary Department and specialty drinks from Joltin' Joe's were provided by hostess, Janet Weber.

Chamber Welcomes Big Red Agency

The McCook Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to welcome the **Big Red Agency** to the Chamber family. Kristin Winters is the new State Farm Agent in McCook replacing Ron Penner. Kristin is excited about her new venture and is looking forward to moving their offices in May to a new location at West 4th and B Streets (in the former BAW Communications building). Renovations are already underway at the new office building where contractors are installing new windows and redesigning the entrance in the brick building. We are looking forward to working with Kristin and her staff in the years to come. Please watch for the grand opening/ribbon cutting ceremony in the near future so that you may also have an opportunity to welcome Kristin and thank her for her investment in our community.

Lord's Hardware & Furniture



Lord's Hardware & Furniture at Indianola is sporting a new look these days! Make the trip East to check out all of the merchandise at Lords and take a look at their new awning. What a marked improvement! And if you like it by day, you'll really admire the look when it is lit up at night! Congratulations to Tim and Kathy as they continue to anchor their corner in Indianola!

CHAMBER CHATTER



This is Flat Stanley, every now and again he shows up here at the office. It is a grade school pen pal type project, where Flat Stanley is sent to different locations to pick up information on a new area. Most times it is a grandmother helping out a grandchild. So I get my picture taken with the little guy, gather some information about McCook and off Stanley goes around the country or in some cases around the world. My most recent encounter was with one from South Africa.



Our very own Virginia Fickle sent this more generic version of Flat Stanley to me from her recent vacation in California.

Thanks to some additional advertising by the Red Willow County Visitors Committee, last month I mailed 563 Visitors Guides. That is double from the previous month. As you probably know, the RWCVC handles the lodging taxes collected on every motel stay. They in turn spend it on promotions and advertising for Red Willow County. On May 13, we will travel to Hastings to attend the Nebraska Travel Association Brochure Swap. We take our "McCook Nebraska's Hot Spot" brochures to be distributed to the rest areas along I 80 plus other Chamber of Commerce Offices around the state. In turn, we bring back an assortment of brochures from around the state. Stop in and check them out sometime.

Enjoy this glorious spring weather!

Linda Thieben
Administrative Assistant
McCook Area Chamber of Commerce

CHAMBER STATS

Office

2009	Calls	Walk-In	Tourism Packets Mailed or Distributed	Relocation Packets Mailed	Misc. Packets Mailed
Jan	875	258	178	7	5
Feb	873	273	283	1	2
Mar	793	815	528	3	2
YTD	2541	815	989	11	9

Website

Rolling 12 Mo Hits		Specific Website Page Total Hits					
Month	Total Website Hits	Business Spotlight	Business Directory Search	Member Directory Search	Community Calendar	Chamber Calendar	Chamber Newsletter
April 08	4,402	206	366	305	54	70	250
May	4,114	18	364	177	66	84	247
June	5,512	212	700	132	58	77	279
July	5,677	189	530	565	94	132	308
Aug	5,144	230	653	141	97	143	346
Sept	4,796	248	354	325	78	130	341
Oct	4,919	246	450	192	71	700	415
Nov	3,621	207	344	167	45	85	251
Dec	3,724	219	347	131	42	66	255
Jan 09	5,013	264	431	451	30	100	341
Feb	3,990	257	313	209	50	99	310
Mar	4,836	274	433	367	44	69	283
Totals	55,748	2,730	5,285	3,162	729	1,155	3,626



