



Chamber Visions – February 2011

Did You Know?

Did you know that February is Chamber of Commerce month across the country? The McCook Area Chamber of Commerce was first formed in 1925 and has remained a strong representative for business over the past 85 years. We will continue to do so throughout our 86th year and far into the foreseeable future. The heart of the Chamber is its members and we are blessed to work with businesses that have our community (all of SW Nebraska) at the forefront of their priority list. Our office is staffed by three employees who, with the assistance of 14 board members, work for each of them on a daily basis. Our member businesses are proud of our community and they show it in many ways, one of which is through their Chamber membership. To learn how you can become a part of the Chamber team, please contact us at 345-3200 or via e-mail at info@aboutmccook.com

86th Annual Chamber Awards Banquet at RRVEC

The Republican River Valley Event Center will be the location for the 86th Annual Chamber Awards Banquet on Saturday, February 5, beginning at 6:00 with the traditional social hour. Dinner will follow at 6:45. Tickets can be obtained at the Chamber office or from any Chamber board member. The Chamber is extremely pleased that Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy will be joining them for the evening. A special treat for the gala event will be entertainment by well-known local musician, Cheryl Christener. "The Heart of Nebraska.....McCook" is the theme so the banquet lends itself to this February season of hearts and flowers! Treat your significant other to a special night out. Cal Siegfried, locally renowned emcee, will use his special talents to keep the evening lively. The 2010 selections for a number of annual awards will be announced. They include: Community Builder, Ag Builder, Community Service Organization, Chamber Volunteer of the Year and Cordial of the Year. The Awards and the State of the Chamber address will be followed by the fundraiser auction where those in attendance can pick up a nice package at a great price! Our 2010 Heritage Days Royalty, Kim Holthus, Queen, and Emily Wood, Princess, will assist with the auction by displaying the packages as bids are being taken. Johnny Walker, Nebraska Auction Service, will commandeer the auction of packages which include but are not limited to, airline tickets, Husker memorabilia, Husker tickets, Bison items, advertising opportunities and much, much more! The Chamber depends on proceeds from the banquet and auction to supplement member dues so that they might be able to continue their program of work. A successful event, coupled with a profitable Home Show, helps the Chamber hold the line in any increase in membership investments. These goals have been achieved as dues have increased only \$10 since 2005.

The Chamber Salutes . . .

the members of the Chamber 86th Annual Awards Banquet Committee. This creative planning, organizing and facilitating group is responsible for the big and little things that make every banquet special for our Chamber members. Members include: Lynn Driml-Pinkal, Willow Ridge Senior Living; Gloria Mefford, First Central Bank; Deb Shields and Kathy Eaton, Nebraska Public Power District; Teri Turcotte, Linda Maiden Agency; Sharon Kircher, McCook Community College; Susan Hancock, CTE Construction; Terri Shipshock, Community Hospital Health Foundation and Annette Wagner, Wagner Auto Dealerships. Also we salute

Jennifer Allen, Quality Urgent Care, and Gina Stamm, Lifetime Eyecare, for the important role they play by 'staging' the auction packages for the banquet.

Chamber Home & Leisure Show Fast Approaching

The 21st Annual Chamber Home & Leisure Show will be held on February 18, 19 & 20 at the Army Reserve Training Center, 400 Airport Road. Linda Frank, Show Coordinator, is pleased with the vendors who have signed up to date and is looking forward to a great show! Mark your calendar to attend! The show always features a great line-up of products to help you with your building projects or to improve your quality of life with the leisure products marketed at the show. We are pleased to have something for everyone again this year. We have a number of exciting new vendors as well as our loyal vendors. As we have done the past several years, home show visitors are automatically entered (with every paid admission) into a drawing for one of two \$250.00 certificates which may be spent with one of the vendors. Admission is \$2 for adults with children under the age of 12 admitted at no cost. Food will be available on site catered by Chamber member, Catering Plus.

Coffee Connections are Baaaack!

As we opened a new chapter beginning January 1, 2011, we also geared up to host our first quarter Coffee Connection. Don Hall, curator for the Norris Home, hosted the coffee on January 19 which began at 7:30 AM. Conversation continued until just after 9:00 AM. Everyone in attendance took home a wealth of interesting information about our community and the businesses represented that morning. It is always exciting to see what is coming in the very near future! Come join us and get in on breaking news (even before the media) about your community.

Weekly Legislative Conference Calls

Each week through the Nebraska legislative session, Senator Mark Christensen will participate in a conference call with concerned McCook citizens at 8:00 AM, Thursdays, in the Keystone Business Center Board Room. The call, facilitated by the Chamber of Commerce, allows those in attendance the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the legislation that is pending for our state. A number of issues addressed this year will affect us on a personal level, so it is important that we all let our State Senator know our beliefs on each. There is no better way than by utilizing this weekly opportunity.

The Chamber Visions is the official publication of the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce, published monthly throughout the year at 402 Norris Ave., Suite 203, McCook, NE 69001. The Chamber accepts no responsibility for editorial content submitted to Chamber Visions.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



I can't believe it is the middle of January and into the New Year. I am hoping everyone had a safe and wonderful holiday season. As we traveled west to Denver to spend the holidays with our children and grandchildren, we couldn't help but think of the different outcome last year. In fact, whenever we pass the location where we left the road near the Perry Elevator we are reminded of the tremendous outpouring of help and caring we received at that time. I am happy to report that we made it to Colorado and back safely this year.

Now it is time for yet another President's letter. Why is it that writing assignments come around before you are ready? And, usually at a time when you have serious writer's block. It is a good thing that I did not choose journalism as my career. I definitely could not meet those daily deadlines.

With that in mind, do not be too critical of this rather brief letter. I would argue that this message probably isn't necessary as I will be seeing many of you at the Chamber banquet on February 5. Much appreciation is due the committee that has been meeting for several weeks to make sure the event is special. I love the theme this year...."The Heart of Nebraska....McCook", a very fitting theme for February. For those who are on the fence about attending, think about how you can cover the romantic holiday at the same time!

Speaking of romantic holidays, I am proud to share that my husband and I will celebrate our 40th anniversary on February 13th. The date of our wedding was chosen because Valentine's Day had a special meaning for us. When I announced the date to my family, their first question was, "That isn't Friday the 13th, is it?" Did I mention that we are quite a superstitious family? Actually there were probably some who thought it was a bad omen....but here we are 40 years later!

I imagine we will consider the Chamber banquet our "night out". Why don't you join us?

Terri Shipshock

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

Advance Services Provides Full-Service Staffing Solutions

Advance Services provides full-service staffing solutions to customers for planned staffing, temp-to-hire, direct placement and seasonal staffing. We deliver effective staffing solutions for clients who understand the need for proactive business strategies in order to remain productive and competitive in a global market.

Founded in Norfolk, Nebraska in 1994, Advance Services has grown to be one of the largest staffing companies in the Midwest. With over 35 branch locations, doing business in 22 states, we provide services to a wide range of industries and are set up to work with companies in a variety of capacities. Our consistent growth has been customer driven, attributed to our ability to customize our staffing services in order to meet the needs of our diversified client base.

Advance Services is committed to finding you the right candidates, when you need them. You tell us what you're looking for and we'll do the rest. We take care of the advertising, recruiting, screening and orientation. Our customers find comfort in transferring risk and liability that comes from hiring new employees. We do all of this for you and guarantee to provide you the best value in town.

Besides finding the best employees and providing the most competitive rates, many businesses are taking advantage of using our services for many other reasons. We provide a great benefits package to our employees including group health insurance, transitional health insurance, 401K, paid vacation and injury prevention incentives. We also cover all employer liabilities such as Workers Compensation, Unemployment Costs, State and Federal Taxes, and the employee payroll. Our services allow you to be more productive and reduce costs for your company.

Advance Services is located at 212 East 1st Street in McCook and is staffed by Donna Olson, who provides great customer service to our customers and employees.

For more information please contact our office at (308) 345-2630.

Tina Oswald, Regional Sales Manager

Local Producers Can Count on the FCSAmerica



Farm Credit Services of America (FCSAmerica) is dedicated to meeting the credit and risk management needs of farmers, ranchers, rural residents and agribusinesses – not just with the lowest financing rates possible, but through greater agricultural expertise, through more products, with more options, added flexibility and faster, more convenient services. Along with being one of the leading sources for real estate lending, we've grown to be a primary source of credit for production loans, equipment financing (including leasing), crop insurance and country home loans.

FCSAmerica contributes to the local community by not only serving local farmers and ranchers, but also its youth. We provide loans to young and beginning producers and youth project loans. We also invest in and work closely with local, state and national agricultural groups, such as 4-H and FFA and offer scholarships to promote agriculture as a vocation. Supporting young and beginning producers is a passion in which we give back to the people we serve and the rural life we value so highly.

Because of our cooperative structure (our customers are our owners), we are able to return a portion of our earnings to eligible customers through our patronage program. In March 2011, FCSAmerica will distribute \$110 million in cash-back dividends. Since 2005, we've distributed over \$425 million. Since the money we distribute is used to purchase products and services from local businesses, our patronage program works to strengthen the rural communities we serve and live in.

Local producers can count on the FCSAmerica McCook customer-oriented team of financial specialists to know and understand production agriculture. We are dedicated to identifying problems, recognizing opportunities and delivering relevant financial solutions that contribute to each of our customer's success. For more information, call the McCook office or 1-800-884-FARM. Or, visit us online at www.fcsamerica.com.

Rylee Shaw, Customer Service Coordinator

GUEST EDITOR

Our nation and our state are currently undergoing a sea of economic change. However, despite the troubles in the state and nation, our local area businesses are swimming against the tide and continue to show growth and vitality.

Local sales tax receipts are not only increasing but are at all time highs. Building permits are up. Boardings at the airport have steadily increased. Major construction of the Keystone, Community Hospital, the Army Reserve/National Guard building, McCook Elementary School, and the impending construction of the City Safety Central Offices, the MCC Activity Center and the renovation of the Norris Band Shell, the YMCA, and the Fox Theater all generate many first, second and third rounds of economic stimuli to our area which has added to employment opportunities as well as local business responding with gusto to the construction needs in both materials and services.

As a past president of the McCook Chamber and past board member of the Economic Development Corporation, I know firsthand the challenges both groups have faced in recruiting members, securing financial support, and demonstrating relevance to our entire community. It has been a bit of a “catch 22” in that businesses and individuals have been reluctant to join those groups or provide financial support until they are convinced the Chamber and MEDC have something of value to offer them. However, with small membership and limited revenue from “dues” it has meant that those groups are limited as to what is possible to provide to the community.

I believe the climate in McCook is slowly changing and returning to the positive “can do” attitude of our forefathers. The attitude of that is if something needs done, it is we that need to do it-that we need to take responsibility for our own community’s destiny.

The Chamber of Commerce has a long history of stretching the dollars available to be the voice of McCook business, to be a source of information, guidance and support for local business and to provide activities that all in our area enjoy.

With the Chamber of Commerce banquet scheduled for February 5th, now is a prime opportunity for local businesses to recommit to membership and for businesses that are not members to join. I urge all current members to not only participate and attend the banquet but to invite nonmembers to attend with you, talk to them about the benefits of the Chamber and enjoy the evening with friends.

I urge all businesses in McCook to support the Chamber in its endeavors and all the expertise it can offer. At the end of the day it is your Chamber and it can only be as strong as your support allows it to be. Cora and I hope to see you at the banquet.

Dennis Berry, Mayor

RETAIL DETAILS

Weskamp Floral & Gifts-New Downtown Business

First, I would like to say that I am excited about becoming a member of the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce. I not only look forward to seeing how they will help my new business, Weskamp Floral & Gifts grow but also look forward to becoming an active member of the Chamber. I feel it is important as a business owner to become an active member in the community that I love.

I am proud to say that I am from McCook originally and I graduated from McCook Senior High School and McCook Community College. When I lived in Omaha I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Management of Human Resources. Although human resources has nothing to do with floral arranging, it will come in handy when I start hiring employees. This will not happen tomorrow but I am sure that in the near future I will have grown enough to be able to add more designers to my staff.

When I was living in Omaha I worked at a floral shop (Blooms in Rockbrook Village) and fell in love with the creativity aspect of the job. I have worked in the corporate world and traveled all over the U.S. and Canada for my job, but it is great to have a profession that I love doing every day. Originally I moved back to McCook for my family, but now that I have settled in (once again) I realize I am back home where I belong and wouldn't change it for anything. So moving home was a win-win situation, doing something that I love in a town that I love.

My store, Weskamp Floral & Gifts is located at 307 Norris Avenue in downtown McCook. In my store I offer the following; custom fresh floral arrangements in just about any dollar amount, balloons (both mylar and latex), candy bar bouquets, wedding flowers, sympathy arrangements, prom corsages, boutonnieres and live plants. We offer delivery in McCook, Indianola, Culbertson and Trenton. I am also a member of The Flower Shop Network so I can send flowers to your loved ones all over the United States. My parents, Dean and Faith Weskamp help with deliveries and I have many (GREAT) friends that come on short notice to help me with my orders when needed. You can either stop in or call me at 345-4065 or 737-9606 for any of your floral needs.

Pat Weskamp
Weskamp Floral & Gifts

Barnetts Do-it Center / All That Pizazz

Barnetts Do-it Center began in the 1800's as a small, but complete, lumber and hardware store. We continue to provide thousands of products and services for your home improvement needs. We are your locally owned and trusted home improvement store.

We are independently owned, as Barnetts Do-it Center, but we are serviced from one of the seven Do it Best Corp. distribution centers around the United States. Our store has joined together, as part of the Do it Best Corp. cooperative, to buy in huge volume, to offer you lower prices. We also offer our on line service, with over 7000 items available for ordering and delivering them to our store.

We encourage you to find out just what we have to offer and see what items are available for you. We're sure you'll find just what you need! We offer items in building materials, doors, windows, electrical, heating, paint and supplies, plumbing, vanities, kitchen cabinets and list goes on! If you need it, there's a good chance that we've got it or can get it!

We also offer "All That Pizzaz", wedding and celebration rentals. For the wedding you are planning or the celebration, meeting, family reunion or graduation, we have your rental needs. Tables, chairs, lattice arches to white tents, candelabras to champagne and chocolate fountains, we will meet your celebration needs. We want your celebration experience to be easy and wonderful!

Our store has a long tradition of service to our customers, by providing great products at competitive prices and celebrations with that "WOW" factor!

We support the McCook Area Chamber of Commerce, Habitat for Humanity, Community Hospital Health Foundation, United Way and many more services that help our community thrive. We also support our McCook school systems, with activities and money making projects, to enhance our future leaders.

Barnetts Do-it Center and “All That Pizazz”, locally owned and operated, are ready and able to meet all your home improvement and celebration needs!! Our mission is to serve our customers, as we would like to be served.

Jim and Kristi Clapp/owners and management

MEMBER NEWS

VK Electronics Named 1st Quarter Honor Business



VK Electronics, owned by Linda Taylor and her son Trevor, at 1008 West B Street in McCook was selected as the first quarter Honor Business recipient.

The Taylors were cited for their continued support of specifically the Chamber and in general the community of Southwest Nebraska. Their love for their community is evident through their passionate support of many activities and events. In addition, on a personal level, Linda has served the community in many ways through service on the City Council and as the Mayor as well as a number of committees

within the City infrastructure. Linda is also the Chamber’s representative for Nebraska On The Move which deals with transportation issues across our state. Trevor dedicates himself to assisting track coaches with the training of their athletes for hours on end. Trevor was an accomplished hurdler during his high school years and is eager to share his wealth of knowledge about the sport.

The presentation, attended by Chamber members and the McCook Cordials, was made on January 11 at the store.

Photo courtesy of McCook Daily Gazette

AFLAC Moves Office Location



Greg Litz, AFLAC , and his associates, featured in the photo, take part in a Chamber ribbon cutting to celebrate their new location at 205 West 2nd Street. Chamber members and McCook Cordials joined the AFLAC staff in the 10:00 AM event on January 24. Agents and staff members included in the photo are: Missy Nelson, Rick Loos, Ann Marie Calvert, Jonathan Perkinson, Greg Litz, Mary Jo Longnecker, Michael Packard and Rami Packard.

Photo courtesy of McCook Daily Gazette

CHAMBER STATS

Office

| 2010 | Calls | Walk-In | Tourism Packets Mailed or Distributed | Relocation Packets Mailed | Misc. Packets Mailed |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Jan | 888 | 329 | 70 | 5 | 6 |
| Feb | 1,008 | 442 | 109 | 5 | 5 |
| Mar | 980 | 293 | 113 | 4 | 4 |
| Apr | 887 | 278 | 237 | 3 | 2 |
| May | 744 | 247 | 402 | 5 | 3 |
| June | 875 | 279 | 39 | 5 | 4 |
| July | 868 | 282 | 15 | 5 | 4 |
| Aug | 902 | 322 | 16 | 6 | 14 |
| Sept | 803 | 311 | 12 | 4 | 16 |
| Oct | 584 | 121 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| Nov | 402 | 187 | 8 | 1 | 3 |
| Dec | 312 | 155 | 11 | 6 | 3 |
| YTD | 9,253 | 3,226 | 1,039 | 51 | 67 |

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 |
| Jan '10 | 4,814 | 235 | 437 | 144 | 50 | 90 | 357 |
| Feb | 5,418 | 256 | 719 | 324 | 57 | 107 | 310 |
| Mar | 5,859 | 245 | 587 | 172 | 67 | 95 | 462 |
| Apr | 5,433 | 234 | 462 | 200 | 53 | 80 | 406 |
| May | 4,658 | 180 | 473 | 128 | 63 | 83 | 275 |
| June | 5,218 | 224 | 635 | 181 | 64 | 93 | 277 |
| July | 4,416 | 205 | 346 | 96 | 93 | 107 | 341 |
| Aug | 3,826 | 180 | 311 | 173 | 73 | 105 | 297 |
| Sept | 4,396 | 215 | 277 | 96 | 101 | 142 | 374 |
| Oct | 3,454 | 170 | 289 | 89 | 59 | 95 | 292 |
| Nov | 3,935 | 214 | 371 | 190 | 45 | 95 | 358 |
| Dec | 3,165 | 245 | 323 | 72 | 56 | 79 | 314 |
| Totals | 54,592 | 2,603 | 5,320 | 1,865 | 781 | 1,171 | 4,063 |

