

“A Walk in the Woods...”

It was 13 degrees, there were beautiful “goose feather” snowflakes falling everywhere, gently drifting down to cover the entire landscape. At the same time, the sun was trying to make an appearance through the “frozen fog” of the morning. I am walking along the towpath in New Bremen, heading north out of town wondering to myself “what the heck are you doing out here Scott?” I had to remind myself a few times of my goal to “fully jog” my first 5K sometime later this year in order to push myself further along the canal but. I did it. (That’s no resolution, mind you... That’s a **GOAL!**)

I am glad I made this year’s 2nd Annual Lockkeeper’s Winter Canal Hike for several reasons. First of all, I am glad I came out because the Chamber of Commerce sponsored the event and it wouldn’t do for the Executive Director to be missing in action! Secondly, I am glad I came out because it was a nice way to change up my workout/walking routine at the YMCA (and I got my first 10 points on the “Road to Fitness”. Thirdly, I am glad I came out because toward the end of my hike back from Lock Two, I bumped into a friend of mine from the New Bremen Historic Association and was treated to some wonderful stories and bits of history as we trudged back to town. Lastly, my long walk through the snow gave me an opportunity to do some reflecting on my new career here with the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce.

As a former small business owner, the importance of being a member of the chamber of commerce was made known to me by my predecessor here in the Golden triangle, Mr. Coons. I saw very clearly that I ***needed*** to be a member as soon as I opened my doors, if for no other reason than to take advantage of the various networking and marketing services provided to chamber members. But, what I didn’t realize is that there are scores of other important benefits to being a member of the chamber of commerce.

As a member of the chamber, I received numerous benefits including: discounts on health insurance premiums from major health care providers (in our case, Anthem); discounts on group dental insurance; a discount of up to 55% off Worker’s Compensation Insurance Premiums; bulk mailing permit usage; discounts on credit/debit card processing services; a 50% discount on a Grand Lake Area Safety Safety Council membership; access to inexpensive printing and photocopying services; exposure on and access to the chamber website (www.augliaze.org) and various events throughout the year; access to market my business through the Chamber Newsletter 6 times per year; the ability to allow my clients to redeem chamber gift certificates; access to the media through the chamber’s relationships with local media outlets and; opportunities to attend or market my business through various chamber educational programs, networking groups and workshops.

When I was presented with all the various benefits to being a chamber member, I not only joined the “Golden Triangle” here where I live and did business, but I

joined the Chamber of Commerce in Wapakoneta where my business was physically located. The decision to join those two chambers of commerce was one of the best business decisions I had ever made, based solely on the connections I made as a result of my memberships. The money I saved via the various discounts speaks for itself.

So, if you've got a new business you're trying to build, or you're looking for new ways to market your existing business, give some thought to joining your local chamber of commerce. If you're an existing member, give me a call so we can make sure you're taking full advantage of your chamber membership. There's a lot more we can do for you and your business than just saving a few bucks on insurance! And, I have already saved you the trouble of having to take a 4 mile walk through the snow in order to come up with a new marketing strategy to take you into the New Year! Come join the Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce and make 2010 your best year yet!