

Springtime optimism and change reign supreme in the Golden Triangle!

The “time for change” is upon us here at the Chamber of Commerce! I don’t mean to wish my life away but spring is nearly here (ok, maybe not but I am an optimist, after all) and I am ready for some of the changes that typically come with this time of year. Of course, we have the obvious changes like the temperature, the switch from snow to rain, the longer hours of sunlight, the return of songbirds and so forth. We also have the changes in how we worship at church, with the traditional Lenten activities of almsgiving, prayer and fasting, all in an effort to change ourselves and grow closer to God. Then there is the change in the school calendar from winter to spring sports, and talk of upcoming proms and graduations. It would seem that we have enough change to go around this coming springtime!

So, what are some of the changes I refer to with the Chamber of Commerce here in the Golden Triangle? Let’s take a look... The Chamber has been working on a few new wrinkles, with regard to supporting local businesses. We’ve developed a new retail and restaurant networking group, and from those meetings has come an event we’ve named the “Spring Fever Weekend.” Eight area merchants in Minster and New Bremen are holding “customized shopping events” during the weekend of March 4th - 7th. These merchants have all come together with the Chamber to invite everyone to shake off their “cabin fever” and come see what’s new with their businesses. Keep your eyes on the Chamber website and the local papers for more information regarding the “Spring Fever Weekend’ event. Another new event/group we’re supporting is the “Grand Lake Young Professionals” networking group (GLYP). The inaugural meeting for the group will take place on Thursday March 4th from 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm at the Easy Restaurant on US 33 east of St Marys. If you’re interested in that group, send an email to glypmembership@gmail.com. You can get more information about these two new events by visiting the Chamber website at www.auglaize.org.

It won’t be long before we’re settled into our new offices in the Lockkeeper’s House on Lock One in New Bremen. It appears that we’re still set to move in sometime in early May. Based on what I have seen inside the building, the Lockkeeper’s House will be a beautiful facility and will develop into an important asset to all of our communities. Our role at the Chamber will be somewhat expanded as we will now help to operate the Lockkeeper’s House as a Visitor’s Center. To that end, I am in the process of “reading up” on the history of the Miami and Erie Canal, especially as it relates to the communities that make up the Golden Triangle. I am learning that we’re blessed with a rich history and many fine traditions in our communities and I’m thrilled to be able to share that history with our visitors. Throughout the House, there will be many different displays of artifacts and historic pieces dating back to the early days of the canal. The Lockkeeper’s House will be charged with the responsibility of “telling the story” of the Miami and Erie Canal from the Ohio River to Lake Erie, and what an interesting story it is! I see this opportunity as a real privilege, to be able to

personally welcome folks to our area each day, and help them understand the importance of the canal and of our communities in the development of this area.

Not only is the “physical landscape” of the Golden Triangle and the Chamber of Commerce changing but the “e-landscape” is going through a bit of a transformation as well. Of course, you know that the Chamber website has been renovated and is still being updated and improved upon. In an effort to improve upon our communications and outreach, we’ve “taken the plunge” into the world of social media by developing a presence on Facebook and Twitter. It makes so much sense for us to utilize these newer forms of communication since so many folks have added the internet and their mobile devices to their sources of information. If I intend to fully serve my Chamber clients and help market and support their businesses, I need to be “broadcasting” regularly through these outlets. You can “*become a fan*” on Facebook by searching for “*Southwestern Auglaize County Chamber of Commerce,*” and you can “*follow our tweets*” on Twitter by searching for “*swacchamberguy.*” We’ll see you out there in cyberspace!

So, perhaps now you can see why I am so optimistic these days, there’s a lot to be excited about where the Golden Triangle is concerned. We’ve been hard at work during this long, cold, snowy winter and with any luck at all our transformation will result in a more active, vibrant and effective Chamber of Commerce, serving more organizations and businesses in and around the Golden Triangle. It’s definitely an exciting time to be a chamber member, just ask us how you can become one!