



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEWS

Another benefit of your West Union Chamber Membership!



MARCH 2009

ENERGY INCENTIVE PROGRAM BEGINS

Main Street West Union, in partnership with the Iowa Department of Economic Development, is happy to announce that the Energy Efficiency Grant Program is now available! This program is Phase II in the energy audit program that over 70 businesses took part in last fall. As a part of our Green Pilot Program, \$35,000 has been awarded to Main Street West Union to establish the grant program available to any business located within the downtown Main Street District. The group is looking for additional funds with the hopes that the program could be expanded to include any business that participated in the energy audit program regardless of their location.

An informational meeting was held on February 25 to kick-off the program and information is currently available on the West Union website under the Green Pilot tab. The incentive offered will be a rebate upon completion of selected energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements. The rebate amount varies by type of improvement made with a maximum rebate per utility account of \$1500. These rebates are being offered in addition to rebates already offered by Black Hills Energy and Alliant Energy. Rebates are provided on a first-come-first-serve basis and funding is limited. Businesses are encouraged to check with the Chamber/Main Street

office on available funds prior to beginning a project.

This special rebate offer is the next step of an intended long-term commitment to pilot economic and environmentally sustainability concepts in West Union. Another goal of the project is to directly reduce the amount of energy consumed and in turn reduce the out-of-pocket cost to purchase that energy for West Union businesses. All improvements must be completed by August 31, 2009, and all claims submitted prior to September 30, 2009. For additional information contact Robin Bostrom at 422-3070.

WEST UNION SIGNS CONTRACT WITH IOWA GREAT PLACES

West Union's Memorandum of Understanding was made official on February 18th, with the state of Iowa, becoming one of four new Iowa Great Places. The program's leaders attended an event held at the Capital Building in Des Moines to support Mayor Merlin Dunt in signing the agreement. Currently, funding for the Great Places Program remains as a line item in the State's budget with funding of \$1.9 million. If funded, \$500,000 would be available for projects planned by the four

new Great Places communities. Communities would be required to apply for funding for projects outlined in their Great Places applications. West Union outlined four projects in their application including the streetscape project, walkable/bikeable project, Court House Square Plaza project, and Energy Efficient/Zero

Water Run-Off projects. The Great Places committee is hopeful the funding will remain in the budget.



Inside this issue:

VISTA Update	2
Stand Up to an Economic Downturn	2
Green Pilot Update	3
WU-Light Special	3
Congratulations!	3
Calendar of Events	4

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VISTA VOLUNTEER UPDATE

Another benefit to our participation in the Green Pilot Project has been the addition of a new face in the Chamber/Main Street office. Michelle Zander is a VISTA member who started her year of service to West Union on November 24, 2008. Each month Michelle will provide an update on the activities she is working on for West Union.

Many of you have had the opportunity to meet our VISTA Volunteer Michelle Zander as she has been visiting local civic organizations presenting a program on the AmeriCorps Vista project and what it will involve here in West Union. Michelle has been busy researching available grants and has applied for a Paint Iowa Beautiful grant that would provide paint to improve the exterior façade of several West Union businesses. The grant would provide over 60 gallons of paint in various

colors chosen by the property owners. The group is researching the possibility of sharing the services of local painters to help lower the cost of the proposed painting projects. Watch for more details coming soon.

Another grant opportunity Michelle has been concentrating on involves working with a public artist to incorporate public art into future projects for West Union. She has been researching grant opportunities and working with the Department of Cultural Affairs to learn more about this process.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these projects, please give Michelle a call at the Chamber office.



VISTA
Volunteers In Service To America

Stand Up to an Economic Downturn

Broad economic slowdowns can often trickle down to small businesses, including those in relatively stable industries or geographic locations. Individuals tend to cut back on discretionary spending while corporations curb routine activities, delay major purchases, and shelve new initiatives. For many small businesses with limited resources, these and other factors often combine to pressure bottom lines past the breaking point, creating a domino effect of other dilemmas such as a credit crunch or layoffs. A downturn doesn't have to spell disaster for your small business, however. Good financial management practices will help you weather even the worst of economic times, and be ready to capitalize on new opportunities when the good times return.

- Begin with the basics. Even when times are terrific, no business can survive without good recordkeeping, budgeting, cash flow monitoring, and credit management.
- Consult your bank. Lenders can tap their vast experience in economic cycles to advise you on issues specific to your business or industry. Depending on your projected long-term expenses, consider arranging a line of credit in case a cash flow gap occurs.
- Be on good terms with your creditors. Falling behind on payments is never the answer, even if it's "just this once." Creditors will be more amenable to renegotiating terms to small businesses they consider to be reliable.
- Scrutinize your spending. Rather than arbitrarily slashing your budget, strive to spend only on those things that have a justifiable positive effect on your business.
- Step up your review of financials. Not many of us like studying the numbers, but assessing your reports weekly or biweekly rather than monthly or never, will put you in a better position to make informed decisions. Staying on top of this information will allow you to adjust your strategy and direction to the changing market conditions.

For more help in coping with an uncertain economy, contact SCORE. Call 1-800-634-0245 for the SCORE chapter nearest you, or to find a counselor online at www.score.org.



GREEN PILOT PROJECT UPDATE

GOING PAPERLESS: If you would like to switch from receiving a paper version in the mail to one delivered to your computer's IN BOX, please drop us an email or call the office and we will make the change. This is just another small effort we are making to become a great Green Pilot Community!

BEING GREEN ON A BUDGET: There have been many green technologies shared with West Union since we became a Green Pilot Community including information about green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens, and so much more. While many of these concepts are great, not all of us can afford a green roof, yet we still want to do our part. Take a look around your business and try some of these simple ideas.

- Make sure you have recycling bins for paper, plastic, glass, and metal
- Conserve paper by printing on both sides
- Use e-mail, phone, or the web whenever possible rather than printed materials
- Turn off lights you do not need
- Turn off computers at night
- Ask customers to use the new West Union shopping bags
- Walk when you can to save on gasoline. It will be great for your health as well!

FREE LIGHTING ANALYSIS: One of the best ways to quickly reduce your energy costs is to look at your lighting. The new energy grant program offers good incentives to replace outdated lighting with new energy efficient fixtures. Any business can also receive a FREE lighting analysis to help you determine how much lighting you actually need, proper fixtures, and an estimated payback schedule. If you would like to receive a free analysis, please contact the Chamber/Main Street office before March 15th.

Main Street West Union hosted it's first WU Light Special event at Spirits 'n Such, Miss Drew's Closet and Stephen's Windows. Spirits 'n Such had wine and beer tastings while Main Street West Union provided the snacks: homemade beer bread, meat, cheeses and fruit that complimented the beverages that were being taste-tested. There was a great turnout. Miss Drew's Closet offered up specials such as "Half Off Half" and other discounts throughout the store. If you are interested in having Main Street West Union hold an event like this at your place of business, just call the office at 422-3070. The next available month is October.



A big congratulations goes out to Jerry Blue, Editor and Publisher of the Fayette County Union for being awarded the 2009 IHSAA Media Award. Jerry was presented with this award on the final night of the State Wrestling Tournament at the Wells Fargo Arena. This award was earned by Jerry for his outstanding coverage of school, community and county athletic, academic and fine arts events for the last 45 years.



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«Business Name»
«Manager»
«Mailing Address»
«City State for Mailing»

Check us out at www.westunion.com !

AREA CALENDAR OF EVENTS



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| 2 National Main Street Conference in Chicago | 8 Dr. Seuss Breakfast at American Legion Hall |
| City Council Meeting | 9 H&H Food Show at Echo Valley Speedway |
| 3 National Main Street Conference in Chicago | 10 Chamber Board Meeting |
| 3 Fayette County Tourism Council Meeting in Fairbank | 12 Retail Committee Meeting
MSWU Promotions Meeting |
| 4 National Main Street Conference in Chicago | 13 NF Middle School Band Concert |
| 5 Water Quality Meeting | 16 City Council Meeting |
| EntreFest in Coralville | 17 Main Street State Visit |
| 6 EntreFest in Coralville | 18 Main Street State Visit |
| 7 Bill Heckroth Town Meeting at TAP'T Out | 19 Barn Quilts of Fayette County |
| | 20 NF Middle School Musical |
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| | 27 Main Street March Madness Fundraiser |
| | 31 Retail expert Margie Johnson in Elkader |



Membership Investments are due by March 15th to remain on the website and the mailing list for the Chamber. If you have not mailed your payment, please do so by that date.

Thank you!