



# CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEWS

Another benefit of your West Union Chamber membership!



**FEBRUARY 2009**

## **ENERGY INCENTIVE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED**

Beginning on February 16, West Union business owners who participated in the energy audit program in August 2008 will be able to apply for grant funds to assist with the installation of energy efficient equipment for their businesses. As part of the Green Pilot program, the Iowa Department of Economic Development has awarded a contract to Main Street West Union to administer the awarding of grant funds to local businesses. The purpose of the program is to provide an additional financial incentive to property owners and tenants to implement the energy efficiency improvements suggested in their audit. In order to apply for the funds a business must have participated in the free energy audit program last year and have a signed

consent and release form on file with the Main Street West Union office. Businesses that did not have an audit done last year can still participate by scheduling an audit with their local utility for a small fee.

Applications and information on the types of rebates offered will be available at the Chamber/Main Street office after February 16. 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.

This special offer is the next step of an intended long-term commitment to pilot economic and environmental 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. Rebates are provided on a first-come-first-serve basis and funding is limited. All improvements must be completed by May 1, 2009. For additional information contact Robin Bostrom at 422-3070.



## **COMMUNITY AWARDS BANQUET WELL ATTENDED**

The annual Community Awards Banquet held on January 17 drew 150 attendees. Although it was a cold, windy Iowa night, the atmosphere inside the Echo Valley Banquet Center was very warm and welcoming. The Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Main Street West Union, recognized many individuals for their contributions to our community. Among those recognized were Kevin and Pam Cline, Community Service; Ron & Emm Moore, Education; West

Union Ministers, Religion; Richard Klinefelter, Health Care; Joe Winter, Youth Community Service. Congratulations also go out to the 2009 Citizen of the Year, Roy Guenther. All of these award winners spoke about giving back to their community and that they volunteer not for personal gain, but to make things better in whatever way they can. We are very thankful to have citizens like this working for the betterment of West Union!

Special thanks go out to Burham-Wood Funeral Home, West Union Rotary, Fayette County Dairy Promotion Board, West Union Lions, and Palmer Lutheran Health Center for sponsoring hors d'oeuvres and dessert, and to the planning committee for decorations, set-up, and clean-up. We hope that you will all join us again next year to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism in West Union.

### **Inside this issue:**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| VISTA Update        | 2 |
| Fireworks Survey    | 2 |
| Smart Marketing 101 | 2 |
| Green Pilot Update  | 3 |
| WU-LIGHT Special    | 3 |
| Calendar of Events  | 4 |

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Jane Blumhagen</b>     | <b>President</b>          |
| <b>Kristine Krivachek</b> | <b>Vice President</b>     |
| <b>Deb Merrill</b>        | <b>Secretary</b>          |
| <b>Brian Reichter</b>     | <b>Treasurer</b>          |
| <b>Cheryl Meyer</b>       |                           |
| <b>Gary Steinlage</b>     |                           |
| <b>Emily Ihlen</b>        |                           |
| <b>Robin Bostrom</b>      | <b>Executive Director</b> |

## VISTA VOLUNTEER UPDATE



Another benefit of 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.

Hello! Kind regards and thanks to everyone for being so receptive

toward my volunteering efforts. I have really enjoyed meeting you and learning about the vision for a greener WU. If I have not had the opportunity to meet you, please give me a call or stop by the Chamber office as I'd love to visit with you. Also contact me if your group or organization would like to learn more about the AmeriCorps VISTA program. I have a short presentation that I'd love to share.

After 8 weeks in action, I've attended meetings for the Local Housing Trust Fund and the Food and Fitness Initiative, am learning about all things "green", and have started working on the following projects:



**VISTA**  
Volunteers In Service To America

- Researching grant deadlines and requirements and created a grant database
- Worked with Dick Woodard on his rain garden project
- Developed a volunteer recruitment program
- Coordinated downtown businesses in an effort to submit a cooperative "Paint Iowa Beautiful" grant application
- Visited with local nursery owners about rain gardens, community gardens, and an upcoming rain garden seminar



## FIREWORKS 2009

We know it's only February and hard to think about celebrating on a warm summer day, but the Chamber Board of Directors would like your input on an important celebration here in our community. For many years we have enjoyed watching the fireworks on July 4th in many different locations around town. Each year this show costs about \$5,000 to host and unfortunately, donations to this annual event have been steadily declining to the point that we are no longer breaking even. We are asking for your input in deciding when to hold the fireworks, where to have them, and how to pay for the show. Please visit the West Union website at [www.westunion.com](http://www.westunion.com) to fill out a survey. Follow the link on the home page and offer your input. Thanks for participating!

## Smart Marketing 101

Turn on the TV or open a national newspaper today and all you hear is doom and gloom about the current economic conditions facing the nation. With inventory purchases, payroll, overhead and day to day costs, it can be hard to set aside money to market your business. When every dollar counts and budgets get tight, marketing is sometimes the first area business owners think about cutting. Here are some tips to help keep your business on top without breaking the budget!

- **Always think Marketing:** Keep a file of good ideas, direct mail samples, and great ads for future use or to help you brainstorm when the budget allows spending money in this area.
- **Target your Market:** When the budget is tight it's more important than ever to know that your message is reaching the customers you want to attract. Where will you best hit your target market? Look for low-cost ways to keep your message out there.
- **Develop your Brands:** Create new services or products. Update them or an area in your store. A new display or fresh paint creates excitement. Try to always keep things fresh so your customers see progress.
- **Establish a Budget:** How much are you currently spending on marketing? How much do you want to spend? How much can you afford to spend? Determine a percentage of gross income that can be spent on marketing. Try to establish a market presence monthly that fits your budget.
- **Be Creative:** Think about low cost ways you can market. Can you create an email database to send offers to customers? Can you print flyers on your own computer? Create a newsletter geared toward things your customers are interested in. The more value you can add, the more *valuable* you become to your customers!



**GREEN PILOT PROJECT UPDATE**

**GOING PAPERLESS:** In an effort to reduce the amount of paper used and ultimately reduce the amount of trees harvested, we are offering Chamber members the opportunity to receive your monthly Chamber newsletter electronically. Members can already access the newsletter from the West Union website and beginning in March, we will offer an electronic version as well. 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 "greener" Green Pilot Community!

**EARTH-FRIENDLY SHOPPING BAGS:** These neon green bags are HOT!! Don't be the only person in West Union without one. There are 2 styles available at the Chamber office; a cool zippered version that stores nicely in your purse or glove box for \$2.50, and the traditional shopping bag style for only \$1.00. Get yours TODAY!

**ENERGY AWARD TO BEMISS DISTRIBUTING:** Hats off to Bemiss Distributing for their recent Environmental Stewardship Award from Orion Energy Systems. Bemiss recently replaced 75 light fixtures with energy-saving fluorescent fixtures. What does reducing electricity consumption have to do with being green? Electricity that won't be consumed is never generated, meaning that harmful greenhouse gases associated with its creation won't be released into the atmosphere. The Bemiss lighting project reduces greenhouse gas emissions that are the air-scrubbing equivalent of an 11-acre forest or removing 10 cars from the road, according to the EPA! This is just one example of how companies can save on energy costs and also help save the environment. It's a win-win situation!

If your business is doing something to reduce your energy costs and save the environment, please let us know. We want to share all the good work going on in West Union with others.

**GREAT PLACES TAGLINE:** Thanks to all those folks who voted via email for a tagline for our Iowa Great Places projects. The winner is . . . **A Rich History . . . A Greener Future!** We will sign our contract to become a Great Place on February 18th in Des Moines!

**WU-LIGHT SPECIAL!**

The Main Street West Union Promotions committee is hosting the first of these bi-monthly events with Spirits & Such, Drew's Closet and Stephen's Windows. Stop by the store between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on February 26th for some treats, in-store specials and a chance to win a nice door prize! You may even learn something as our hosts reveal 5 things you might not have known about them!



**Fayette County Entrepreneur's Club**

*Treats Provided!*

**February 3rd, 6:30 p.m.  
Primetime, 228 S. Main, Fayette**

*Cash Bar!*

**Guest Speakers: Jeff Niemann, InsureDev, Oelwein & Lynn Lauer, One Block Over, West Union**  
**Topic: Entrepreneurial Stories**

**Enjoy great food, network with other entrepreneurs and exchange ideas!**

***Dream Big. Grow Here.***

Sponsored by: Fayette County Economic Development

To RSVP or for additional information, contact Fayette County Economic Development @ 800-477-5073 or email: [assocdir@fayettedevelopment.com](mailto:assocdir@fayettedevelopment.com)



West Union Chamber of Commerce  
101 North Vine St  
West Union, IA 52175

Phone: 563-422-3070  
Email: wuchamber@alpinecom.net

Check us out at [www.westunion.com](http://www.westunion.com)!

## AREA CALENDAR OF EVENTS



- |     |  |    |   |
|-----|--|----|---|
| 2   | Water Quality Meeting<br>City Council Meeting  | 13 | WUID Meeting<br>NF Spanish Club Taco Supper   |
| 3   | MSWU Business Improvement<br>Committee meeting<br>Fayette County Entrepreneur's<br>Club in Fayette | 14 | <i>Happy Valentine's Day</i>  |
| 4   | MSWU Organization Committee<br>Meeting   | 15 | Upper Iowa University "Unlocking<br>Opportunities" event                                      |
| 5-6 | Main Street Winter Workshop<br>In Des Moines   | 16 | City Council meeting  |
| 7   | First National Bank Open House   | 17 | MSIA Design Consultant here<br>MSWU Design Committee meets                                    |
| 8   | NF Mini Arts Festival at NFHS  | 18 | Iowa Great Places Legislative Day<br>Fayette County Local Housing<br>Trust Fund Board meeting |
| 10  | Chamber Board meeting<br>MSWU Board meeting  | 19 | Growing Sustainable Communities<br>Workshop in Dubuque<br>FC Food & Fitness Meeting           |
| 12  | Barn Quilts of Fayette County<br>MSWU Promotions Committee<br>Meeting                              | 22 | Boy Scout Soup Supper at Zion   |
|     |  | 23 | Fayette County Community<br>Foundation Board meeting  |
|     |  | 25 | Ash Wednesday   |
|     |  | 26 | WU-Light Special at Spirits & Such,<br>Drew's Closet and Stephen's<br>Windows!                |



If you have not already  
done so, please mail in  
your Membership  
Investment before  
February 28th!  
Thank you!!