



The Scots' Piper

A publication of The Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce



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December, 2011

From the Chair's Desk...A Year in Review

As the end of the year is quickly approaching, let me wish each of you a happy holiday season. It was an interesting and exciting year. I have enjoyed being your Chamber Chairperson. It is not easy being in that seat, but I would not have traded the experience for anything. Thank you for your support and I hope to continue being a part of the Chamber for a long time to come.

Your Chamber board of directors, staff, and volunteers have worked hard during this past year. Our goals were to 1) increase membership; 2) continue to collaborate and develop working partnerships; and 3) create a strong communication/marketing plan for the Chamber.

In terms of increasing membership, the Chamber continues to be the voice of business for the Laurinburg/Scotland County region. We continue to strive for new members and with the economic times facing us during the year, the Chamber has been able to maintain our membership base. We have had several ribbon cuttings and networking opportunities for members to learn more about our members' businesses and to show support for the small businesses in our area.

As for goal #2 of collaborations and partnerships, I think we are the tops. The Chamber developed a partnership with the Kauffman Foundation and the Scotland County School System to launch the Young Entrepreneurs Academy. A collaboration of over a dozen agencies was developed to begin a re-entry program.

The Chamber continues its partnership and collaboration with many organizations and in the upcoming year will partner with the Scotland County Tourism Development Authority (TDA). The Chamber will work with the TDA to support their goal of bringing more guests into Laurinburg/Scotland County and providing a quality experience for all of our visitors.

Speaking about goal #3, well...I am not sure how anyone else feels about this, but I believe we do a pretty fair job with this. Our communication and marketing plan for the chamber started with the unveiling of our new logo. Incoming Chair Becca Hughes and her marketing task force through several designs and re-designs introduced the new logo at the annual chamber banquet in January 2011. The logo appears at all chamber functions.

One of the most memorable accomplishments in 2011 was being selected as the 2011 National Chamber of the Year in our category. With a staff of two employees, it says a lot for our Chamber and its members.

In the New Year, the Chamber will continue to collaborate and strive for excellence for our members and community. Your incoming Chair Becca Hughes will lead the way next year and the Chamber will again accomplish what it sets its mind to do.

Here's to a great New Year!

Dee Hammond

Chairperson

Chamber Gift Certificates Make Great Gifts!

It's that time of year when members are scrambling to find the right gifts for family, friends and co-workers. Instead of taking a risk, and buying something those on Santa's "nice" list won't like, why not get them something they're guaranteed to like: Chamber gift certificates!

In this time of year and in this type of economy, it's more important than ever to keep our money in Scotland County. Remember, our neighbors and friends that own or work here in Laurinburg rely on your support to keep the doors open. That's why buying Chamber gift certificates help everyone.

Not only does someone get some money to buy whatever he/she would like, but the gift certificates are only good at participating chamber members' businesses; businesses that are here in and support Scotland County.

Chamber gift certificates can be purchased in any amount

from our office. Simply call your order in, and we'll have it ready for you to pick up! Participating businesses simply accept the gift certificates as cash or check, and return them to the Chamber office for a check in the amount of their certificates. That's it! There's no hidden fees for customers or merchants. Chamber gift certificates provide a great benefit for our members.

If you'd like to order gift certificates, just call our office at 276-7420. Let's remember to keep our money local this Christmas season and make all of our holidays a little better, not only for our gift recipients, but for our membership and Scotland County business community!



By The Numbers

from Joel Hartwell, Treasurer

A year of highs and lows is how we could describe this financial year.

The Highs:

- Financial review of 2010 records complete with no areas of concern
- Accounting systems brought in-house excluding payroll and taxes
- Established separate accounts for grant projects and special funds
- Developed long-term financial strategies

The Lows:

- Shortfall in revenues in terms of membership and sponsorship
- Retained membership dollars fell below anticipated levels
- Line of Credit was in use earlier than expected (October)

Overall, it has been a challenge to say the least. We are no different than the many small businesses we represent in terms of financial well being. We have been diligent in our efforts to maintain current level of benefits and services to our members, while at the same time keeping the doors open and the lights on.

Four Areas of focus: Membership, Sponsorship, Expenses and Non-Dues

Membership numbers have maintained at a level pace, while member dollars is less due in large part to more small business and entrepreneur members versus larger industries. Our new member gains fell a bit short with \$7,000 in revenues and 32 new members.

Sponsorships were also slightly down from previous years; only realizing budget projections for one event, our annual dinner. We did anticipate this drop off and therefore adjusted event related expenses down accordingly. Therefore, the overall negative impact to the budget was minimized as much as possible.

We also reviewed all of our programs and events realizing current staffing levels are significantly less than what we have had in the past, from 5 staff members to 2. There will be further adjustments to the events the Chamber produces moving forward. But we have made a commitment to our members that none of the programs or events adjusted will negatively impact our membership and the many benefits they currently utilize.

Expenses were kept on budget. In some areas where we unexpectedly exceeded budget, we cut back in other areas, thereby creating a zero impact on the overall budget. The biggest expense cutbacks were seen in the personnel related line items as well as the legal/accounting line items. These cutbacks were necessary to reduce the overall impact of the shortfalls in the revenue areas of membership and sponsorship.

Non-dues revenue continues to track as expected. Each year we make an earnest effort to secure outside sources of funding whether those monies are in the form of grants or sponsorships. This year we did secure a grant from The North Carolina Rural Center for \$10,000 and we secured a second grant from the US Chamber of Commerce for \$2,500.

In addition, related to our Young Entrepreneurs Academy we secured another \$3,000 from The North Carolina Rural Center and \$5,000 in other outside sponsorship dollars.

In closing, I would say that again we are no different than many of you. We are doing okay. Could it be better? Sure, and we are working on new strategies and programs to insure that the next few years are better for all of us. But I still believe that overall, we are a stronger Chamber than we were a few years ago and we are better off for the challenges we have faced, lived through and overcome. We are no way near ready to close the doors, financially speaking. As a matter of fact, I think 2012 will be a very strong financial year for us.

Our Human Capital

from Brenda Gilbert, Workforce Development Coordinator

Workforce Development efforts this year have included launching the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, organizing a Reentry Council to support ex-offenders when they are released from prison, maintaining the focus on promoting the use of Work Keys, and offering continuing support for our Benefit Bank sites.

The Young Entrepreneurs Academy has enrolled 20 bright, creative students from across Scotland County. The class includes fourteen students from Scotland High School, two from Sycamore Lane Middle School, two from Carver Middle School and two homeschooled students. Much preparation went into positioning the program for success. We are grateful to St. Andrews University for agreeing to house the program this year. Grants from the US Chamber and the Rural Center got us off the ground. Scholarships for some of the students came from several donors and investor level sponsorships are still being accepted. Investor Level sponsors to date include UNC-Pembroke, Curtis Foundation, Progress Energy, Stone Pump and Trench, Pilkington, and Dr. Habiba Tunau and Kenton Spencer.

Scotland County Schools Scholarship Coordinator, Toni Blount, is working with me as Co-Program Manager and Scott Cole, with Simmons Heating and Air Conditioning, is the class instructor.

I'll be calling on chamber members to help with the Young Entrepreneurs Academy throughout the year. We'll need mentors, business plan readers and guest speakers. If you would like to participate in this exciting new program, please give me a call.

The Ex-Offender Reentry Council has had a productive year. There are currently 58 people on the council membership list. Members include local agencies and organizations that have resources, and individuals who want to help make a difference. The purpose of the council is to form closer partnerships and alliances with local agencies and organizations as we bring together resources to increase educational opportunities to inmates and probationers that will give them the skills necessary to be successful in the job markets. Meeting agendas have included getting to know each other and learning about existing resources, conversations with ex-offenders, visits from successful program implementers, like Wake County's Community Success Initiative and Sageworks' Inmates to Entrepreneurs.

Continued on Page3



Our Human Capital

from Brenda Gilbert, Workforce Development Coordinator

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As we learn about the resources we each have, a referral network has begun taking shape. My hope is that the members of the Ex-Offender Reentry Council will claim ownership of this initiative and organize a council that will continue to grow and expand to meet the needs of this population. Finding a job is critical in preventing ex-offenders from returning to a life of crime.

On the other side of the coin, it is important that potential employers know the benefits of hiring ex-offenders. This has been addressed on a case-by-case basis. More work needs to be done in this area.

In the area of WorkKeys, the cost of profiling jobs continues to be the greatest barrier to more widespread use of Career Readiness Certificates. I participated in the Employment Security Commission's Job Fair in November and helped get the JobLink Mobile Van for that event. RCC offered WorkKeys pretesting in the van throughout the day.

The Benefit Bank sites in the county are still offering this service to individuals on an as-needed basis. While some sites have done little, others have grown and added more counselors. When needed, the chamber hosts meetings of all Scotland County's Benefit Bank counselors.

The Chamber's workforce development focus is multi-faceted and relevant. The Reentry Council for Ex-Offenders has the potential to give this population the tools and resources they need to find and retain employment. The Young Entrepreneurs' Academy will give twenty young people a first-hand opportunity to create their own jobs and businesses. The experience will serve them well as they finish high school and look toward their future careers.

Chamber's Premier Event Scheduled January 10, 2012

January will mark the 73rd year of the Chamber's Annual Awards Dinner and Membership Meeting, and tickets will be available soon!

The event includes a reception, dinner, dessert, entertainment, installation of Becca Hughes as the 2012 board chairman and several chamber and community awards.

Sponsorships are available and include perks like reserved tables, tickets, invitations for the sponsors' receptions and recognition at the event, on sponsor signage and in press releases.

Nominations for the evening's premier awards, the Dunbar/McCoy Quality of Life Award and Dormegan/McLean Community Youth Service Award are being accepted.

The Ambassador of the Year Award and Volunteer of the Year Award will also be presented to members that have gone above and beyond for your Chamber.

Look for invitations and more information soon about this special evening. To reserve tickets, become a sponsor or for more information, call the office at 910-276-7420.

SAVE THE DATE

73rd Annual Awards Dinner
&
Membership Meeting

Tuesday, January 10, 2012



Chamber on the Half Shell



Thank you to all of our sponsors, volunteers and guests. We had a fabulous event, once again. It certainly would not have been possible without all of the support (financially and otherwise) from our members, our community and most especially our sponsors. Please remember to show your appreciation for our business community this holiday season.

It's Not Easy Being GREEN

from Leroy McIntyre, Chairman, GREEN Committee

To achieve anything worthwhile it is important to have a clear, concise vision of what it is you would like to achieve.

The word "GREEN" in environmental terms is the practice of using methods that contribute to the health of this planet we all share called Earth.

Sustainability - means we must meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Stewardship of natural and human resources is of prime importance.

Our desire is to help prepare everyone in the county for a Green and Sustainable Society.

Beginning 2011, we changed our program name to the Green Committee, which will allow us to place more emphasis on Green and Sustainability. We feel this will also put us more in-line with current trends.

The health of our economy and communities depend heavily on the spirit of its people. Because of this, we've chosen the theme of promoting pride, respect and a spirit of cooperation for our programs.

Our programs are designed with countywide participation in mind.

For 2011, we've implemented a revised countywide Green School Competition program for all schools, and a revised county-wide Beautification/Green Practices program for businesses & residences.

These two programs are composed of:

Education and Awareness

Beautification and Landscaping

Environmental Concerns

Pollution Control and Litter Management

Waste Reduction and Recycling

Water Conservation and Efficiency

And, Energy Conservation and Efficiency

We continue to promote our Bi-annual Litter Sweep program. It is conducted in the spring and fall of the year and is intended for all residents to become actively involved in displaying a sense of pride and respect for our communities and the county as a whole. We've made the program more attractive this year by offering monetary incentives to the top three teams/individuals based on the weight collected.

We feel it is very difficult to capitalize on our full potential as a Green and Sustainable county, with litter being such a huge liability/distraction throughout the county. We will continue to educate and motivate our citizens on the value of maintaining an attractive, litter free community.

We believe that pride and respect will always be powerful forces that make communities safer, healthier and more livable. It is all around us, we just have to recognize it, embrace it, nurture it and make the best use of it.

We are encouraging every resident to set a goal this year to make pride and respect a top priority on their list. Let it be reflected in everything we do. Let it be what Scotland County is all about: citizens, organizations, government and businesses uniting to create a better county and contributing to a more beautiful and healthier world.



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In Other News...

WELCOME TO ALL OF OUR NEW
"SUCCESS NETWORK" MEMBERS

Mary Jo Adams

Lady Bug Family Restaurant

Rainbow 66 Storehouse, Inc.

All Points Waste Service

Laurinburg Institute

Scotland Riding Academy

Louise Bingham

Lumber River Outfitters, LLC

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Downtown Deli

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*Thames Construction Company,
Inc.*

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New Hope Baptist Church

Tillman Fashions

John Ferguson

Pioneer Hi Bred

Tony Harrington Enterprises

Goody's Store #5458

Primary Health Choice

Dorothy Tyson

Great State Insurance

Purcell Funeral Home

Witmore Books

The Help Line

A SPECIAL *THANK YOU* TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS
WHO RENEWED THEIR INVESTMENT IN 2010!

Chamber Members Rock!



Dates to Remember

(Go to www.laurinburgchamber.com to see an updated listing)

December 8	<p>Business After Hours Purcell Funeral Home 301 N. King Street, Laurinburg 5:30pm—7:00pm</p>
December 11	<p>Christmas High Tea Storytelling & Arts Center 131 South Main Street, Laurinburg 3pm—Tickets \$12—Advance reservations only</p>
December 13	<p>Grant Writing M-Z, Part 2 Small Business Center—RCC Honeycutt Center, 600 McLean Street, Laurinburg 6:00pm—9:00pm</p>
December 25	<p>Merry Christmas Everyone!</p> 
December 31st	

The Scots' Piper December 2011

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