

## **The Local Chamber of Commerce: The Foundation of a Healthy Business Community**

There are plenty of misconceptions about what a Chamber of Commerce actually is and how and why it functions. Let me begin by explaining what a Chamber is...and what it isn't. Chambers are generally business organizations, may have lobby powers and are most commonly supported by membership dues and fundraising events. Chambers are **not** government entities nor are they charitable organizations. When a business or organization supports the Chamber through dues or sponsorships, this contribution is considered a business expense rather than a charitable donation.

The United States Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1912 as an American lobbying group representing the interests of many businesses and trade associations. One hundred years later, the U.S. Chamber continues to be one of the largest lobbying organizations in the country. While not all local chambers may belong to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the mission remains unified, to support a healthy and prosperous business climate.

The Pewaukee Chamber of Commerce models creative and diverse methods in its support of the local business community. Partnering with Wisconsin's largest chamber, the WMC, they recently hosted a Manufacturers Listening Session at Quad Direct, a division of Quad Graphics. The round table included discussion by ten Pewaukee manufacturers on the challenges faced in filling over 200 current open job positions in the community. As well, they shared ideas on how to form relationships with local schools, promoting discussion with students on entering lucrative paying positions that may not require a college degree.

Founded in 1948 and averaging around 200 business organizations, the Pewaukee Chamber promotes a strong philosophy of supporting local businesses. This follows the belief in studies that show consumers are 63% more likely to do business with a company that is a member of their local chamber. Members are encouraged regularly to promote, support and do business with each other. Once a year, success stories are shared of businesses marketing other businesses, a concept known as "fusion marketing". The monthly newsletter features a "businessXchange" column where successful business transactions between Chamber members are shared and publicized.

Recently, Pewaukee's Chamber Board approved a new initiative, known as "School to Business Partnership" that is dedicated to creating a partnership with its local schools. Chamber businesses will be encouraged to participate in the Pewaukee PTO's first ever Community Fest held Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at Pewaukee Lake Elementary School. Career fairs, projects, internships and apprenticeships are also part of the vision for the School to Business partnership.

Our very successful Community Awards Gala held earlier this month celebrates the best of what its businesses and citizens offer the Pewaukee Community. Another well-attended annual event, the Tri-Chamber Golf Outing (June 1) is a collaboration with the Delafield and Hartland Chambers, affording our businesses a casual and fun networking opportunity.

Interested in taking a closer look at how the Pewaukee Chamber can effectively support your business or organization? Join us Feb. 23rd for Biz After 4 at Boomers Sports Pub. If lunch is a better option, join us on March 14<sup>th</sup>, as Aleta Norris addresses the issue of “Leading Generation Y in the Workplace”. For more information about these events and Pewaukee’s Chamber of Commerce, visit [www.pewaukeechamber.org](http://www.pewaukeechamber.org)