

Chamber hopes the new year will bring members, volunteers

Written by Chris Lee

Volunteers, advice, new ideas and commitment. These are just a few items the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce is looking for from the community to help move the Chamber forward and more importantly—keep it alive.

Funding plays a key factor in the events the Chamber is able to sponsor. With a limited budget and events that take a lot of work and dedication, it's tough to keep things rolling.

“There’s a lot we (Holyoke) have to offer,” board president Casey Blake said. “Yeah, we are a small town, but we kind of like it that way. Everything we do as a Chamber benefits everything in town.”

Currently, all nine seats of the board of directors are full. However, at the beginning of the year, at least one seat will be open. With nine seats filled, executive director Mary Tomky said it's one of the few times since she began in 2002 that all have been filled.

Tomky said the Chamber is always open to and encourages ideas from the public and Chamber members. Brand new ideas are always welcome.

The newest Chamber member, Dr. Jerold Brandt, said his business doesn't directly benefit from being a member. “I benefit because the town stays strong,” he said. “We have visitors who come in and spend money. We have activities going on, and the Chamber sponsors some of those things. And so every business benefits just because the city is stronger.”

“Even if a business doesn't receive something back for their dues, it doesn't matter, we receive it back in the health of our community,” Brandt said.

Benefits for becoming a Chamber member include:

—staying informed on community and/or county happenings.

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—attending monthly meetings with informative and educational speakers.

—having membership listing posted on the Chamber’s website.

—linking a website to the Chamber website. (If a business/organization doesn’t have a website, Tomky will create a one-page link to that group’s listing.)

—accepting Holyoke Scrip.

—participating in welcome packets to newcomers to the area.

—having the opportunity to participate in the packets for various events.

—being mentioned in the annual ad and every opportunity that arises.

—having the opportunity for a company/organization newsletter to broadcast to other Chamber offices.

Chamber board member Phil Biersdorfer said the events the Chamber holds such as Country Christmas and Dandelion Daze benefit all the businesses in town.

“We need Chamber members to fund the activities that we do participate in,” Biersdorfer said. “Without chamber members, we wouldn’t have any funding and wouldn’t be able to do anything, and we wouldn’t be benefitting anybody.”

A couple of interesting things are already on the radar for 2011. At the Jan. 13 board meeting,

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the Colorado Falconry will do a short presentation and talk about a three-day event planned for Feb. 19-21 in Holyoke.

Another event will be the Red Dale Camper group that plans to stop in Holyoke June 19-24. It's estimated anywhere between 70-80 campers will be parked out on the fairgrounds during the week.

"It just gives me such a good feeling to have folks come to Holyoke and enjoy our wonderful community that has so much to offer," Tomky said.

"When the community supports the Chamber through membership, volunteering to assist with events and extending business hours for events, it gives me the drive to find new ways to promote Holyoke and Phillips County and makes my position as executive director all worthwhile."

As of this year, seven events or projects were dropped from the Chamber's yearly agenda. They include the 4th of July activities (kids' games and steak fry cookoff), salsa contest, socials, residential lighting contest, tree decorating contest, creative window contest and being the northeast Colorado travel region representative.

Due to low participation, the Culpepper and Merriweather Circus will not return to Holyoke for 10 years, according to Tomky. The circus two years ago told the Chamber if numbers didn't increase, they would not stop in Holyoke.

Board member Mendi Lutze said this is a good time of year for people to think about becoming a chamber member as businesses are looking at the budget for the upcoming year. It's also a good time to look forward and set some time aside to help volunteer with the events, Lutze said.

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