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InterAction

The Official Publication of the Cleveland County Chamber December 2005

Cleveland County Celebrates the Holidays with Unique Events



Webbly House; Washington Street, Shelby

It's the most wonderful time of the year to be in the greater Cleveland County area. From Shelby to Kings Mountain, the area is already buzzing with holiday festivities. Whether young or young at heart, local or guest, there is surely something to satisfy the holiday spirit within us all. The following local events are certain to tickle your holiday fancy.

At the beginning of December, one can hardly walk the streets of uptown Shelby without hearing the delighted squeals of children or the patter of horse hooves on the street. Each Friday night during the holiday season, children can visit Santa and Mrs. Claus in the First National Bank Santa house, located on the Square. Afterwards, children can then stroll down the street to Santa's Toyland, where the sights, sounds, and smells of evergreen will transport them directly to the North Pole. St. Nick will be taking gift requests from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on December 2, 9, and 16. Please call 704-484-6293 for more information.

In conjunction with this event, the Uptown Shelby Association is sponsoring carriage rides around the court square, also on the abovementioned dates from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. For more information, please call 704-484-3100 to reserve your ride. Both events present excellent opportunities to shop uptown and/or dine at an uptown restaurant. Many other events are also being planned for the holiday season. On Saturday, December 3,

Chamber Seeking Nominations for Several Annual Awards

The Chamber is seeking nominations for several coveted awards given at the annual banquet, currently scheduled for January 19 at Triple D Publishing.

Nominations will be accepted through December 15 for all awards, including the Athena Award, the Entrepreneur of the Year Award, the Bridge Builder Award, the Zenith Award, the Duke Power Citizen Award, and the Jean Bettis Support Staff Award.

Nomination forms including criteria for these awards are available at the Chamber offices. Please contact Vickie Fitch at 704-487-8521 ext. 13 for information on the awards and how to nominate someone.

Carl Cartee will serve as the featured artist at the annual Salvation Army Benefit Concert at Gardner-Webb University. The event is free in exchange for new toys and/or canned goods or other non-perishable food items to benefit the Salvation Army.

The Kings Mountain Historical Museum will host Christmas at the Barber and Cornwell houses on December 3 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. And on Sunday, December 4, the annual Kings Mountain Christmas Parade will take place at 3 p.m.

The Cleveland County Choral Society will present the "Sounds of Christmas" on December 9-11 at Malcolm Brown Auditorium at Shelby High School. The concert begins at 8 p.m. on December 9-10 and at 3 p.m. on December 11. For more information on these and other events, visit the Community Calendar of events on the Chamber website at www.ClevelandChamber.org. — From the Travel & Tourism Division of the Cleveland County Chamber



Business After Hours at Hallelujah Acres

900 S. Post Road, Shelby

Thursday, December 15 · 5:30 p.m.—7 p.m

Chamber Urges Citizens to Continue Generosity with Local Holiday Purchases

By: Niki Bliss-Carroll, VP of Marketing & Communications



Bliss-Carroll

The holiday season has officially arrived, and the hustle and bustle of shopping trips, school plays, family dinners, and Christmas parties, is keeping most Clevelanders extremely busy. In spite of all of the activity this time of year, there are some serious issues facing our community, and there is no time like the present to take a look at what Cleveland County will face in 2006.

These days, we are continually encouraged to "think globally" and "act regionally," and these are important concepts. In fact, partnering with neighboring and other counties in the region has been a primary theme of the Chamber during the past several years (and will continue in 2006). The Chamber certainly doesn't support isolationism of any kind, and we don't expect shoppers to settle for anything less than quality service and merchandise.

However, we strongly encourage citizens to give local retailers a chance before leaving the county to shop elsewhere. It is especially important to support local merchants during the holiday shopping season, since this time period makes up a significant percentage of the total annual sales for most retailers.

In addition to supporting our Cleveland business owners, local purchases have a "multiplier effect" on the county's economy. Local purchases also support local employees who work at the stores and many other citizens who supply goods and services to the retailers. Our hope is that these dollars will continue to feed the local economic engine as the employees and suppliers also spend their profits locally.

As a community, citizens must be willing to bind together in a commitment to support each other by purchasing goods and

services here at home whenever possible. By "buying locally," the sales taxes that residents pay are poured right back into the county and help keep property taxes lower without sacrificing the services many people couldn't live without.

For example, approximately 17 percent of Cleveland County's total revenue is generated from local sales tax reimbursements. The sales tax on purchases in Cleveland County help support--among other things--human services programs, education, and public safety initiatives. Each time we shop outside of the county for items that can be found here at home, we give other counties our money. Their children are schooled in nicer educational facilities, their citizens are provided with public assistance, their communities benefit from no property tax increases.

Yet in the same breath that we all agree it is important that we support local businesses, we are discussing the sales at Concord Mills and shopping trips to the 'Yellow Mall.' In an effort to encourage Clevelanders to do business with Clevelanders, the Cleveland County Chamber unveiled a marketing initiative in 2001. "The Buck Stops Here... Buy Locally" campaign aims to increase awareness about the importance of shopping at home. Regardless of the economic uncertainties we may be facing, we can each take immediate and significant action.

The Chamber wishes the best of holidays to local retailers and all citizens...and don't forget to "buy locally" whenever you can and especially during the holidays. Take a stand today. Support your friends and neighbors. Buy locally. If we can unite as a community with that commitment, then the buck truly will stop here in 2006.

Small Business of the Month Recognition Ceremony at Hoke Enterprises

The Small Business Council of the Cleveland County Chamber is pleased announce the next recipient of the recognition program for small businesses in Cleveland County. Hoke Enterprises will receive the Chamber's December "Small Business of the Month" award at a recognition ceremony on Thursday, December 8 at 11 a.m. The ceremony and open house will be held at their business, located 2550 Blacksburg Road in Earl.

Hoke Enterprises is a construction company that was established in 2003 with one employee, and in just two short years, has grown to 30 full-time employees with nine different crews. According to President Ray Hoke, the business has experience such success due to the hard work and dedication of its employees. "This award reflects on our employees and our customers," Hoke says. "Without their support and hard work, we would not be successful."

Company officials say that this year, the business will complete over 100 projects across North and South Carolina totaling more than \$40 million in volume.

"We feel a great responsibility to our employees to supply quality jobs with good benefits," Hoke says. "our customers

have been our best marketing tool with most of our work being negotiated and repeat customers."

The business has made community service a priority, and recently completed construction on Christine's Home in Cleveland County. Hoke Enterprises donated their services for the construction of the facility and they say many of their employees are actively involved in community service projects and organizations.

For more information about Hoke Enterprises, call 704-482-0003 or visit their web site at www.HokeEnterprises.com. The Small Business of the Month award is co-sponsored by the Chamber's Small Business Council, the Small Business Center at Cleveland Community College, Carolina Trophies, Shelby Shopper & Info, and The Star. Each month, the winner receives a plaque, provided by Carolina Trophies, and a banner to display at their place of business. If you have any questions about this program or wish to nominate a business to be considered, please contact Misti Humphries at (704) 487-8521. — From the Small Business Council of the Cleveland County Chamber

Our Mission Statement:

The Chamber will strive to provide effective membership services and proactive leadership to enhance economic opportunity and quality of life in our community.

Our Vision Statement:

The Chamber will be the community's premier advocate of business and a leader of public and private initiatives to sustain second-to-none living, learning, working, and leisure-time environments.

Four New Division Chairs Slated to Serve on Chamber Board in 2006

Four new division chairs are being recommended to serve in 2006, pending approval from the Chamber Board of Directors on December 13. Noel Manning of Gardner-Webb University will head up the Marketing & Communications Division; Sandy Smith will serve as chair for the Travel & Tourism Division; Brownie Plaster will lead the Governmental Affairs Division; Missy Darnell of Keeter Ford will lead the Membership Services Division; and John Lattimore of Cleveland Community College will continue to lead the Education Division.

The Cleveland County Chamber would like to extend a special thank-you to the 2005 Division Chairs for all of their hard work and dedication: Holly Sweat, Gardner-Webb University (Marketing & Communications Division); Dave Hart, Duke Power (Governmental Affairs Division); Janet Berry, Frame Masters Gallery (Membership Services Division); and Kim Duren, Broad River Greenway (Travel & Tourism Division).

October 2005

Web Site Member Referral Report

- There were a total of 25,916 referrals made between 10/01/05 and 11/01/05.
- There are a total of 764 member companies listed.
- 516 (67.54%) of them have an email address.
- There are 764 (100.00%) companies that have more than 5 referrals.

Customer Service of Utmost Importance This Holiday Season & Beyond

As the holiday season approaches, residents across the county will begin to flock to area retail stores and supermarkets to stock up on clothing, toys, and groceries. Since this is one of the most profitable times of the year for many area businesses, it is only appropriate to discuss a topic that causes shoppers either disgust or delight: Customer Service.

The very phrase "customer service" brings to mind a negative image. But what so many business owners and managers fail to realize is that customer service is what brings people back into their stores. Imagine a friend saying, "I'll never go there again. I was treated horribly." A complaint like that indicates one thing: Poor customer service.

The Cleveland County Chamber strives to provide friendly and helpful customer service. Probably the most difficult aspect of helping a customer occurs when they are requesting something that falls outside of one's capabilities. In that instance, staff members do their best to offer an alternative to the customer. Some people will never be pleased, but the most leave the Chamber office with a sense that the employees did their best to assist them.

Ever been the victim of some of the worst customer service, and the beneficiary of some of the best? Many consumers are qualified to share a few words about their own experiences. In his article "Seven Things to Never Tell Your Customers," author Jeff Wuorio discusses common mistakes committed by many experienced—and inexperienced—employees.

According to Wuorio, a customer or client should never hear any of the following things at a business:

"Why are you doing that for him?"

Service for a customer, be it run-of-the-mill or beyond the call of duty, should never be questioned in front of the customer. It is not only rude, but it implies that the businessperson either doesn't know what customer service is, or doesn't care whether his/her employees provide it or not.

"Are you sure you can afford this?"

Questioning a customer's capacity to pay for an item, or showcasing laziness to display an item that may end up back on the shelf because it is too expensive, is never appropriate. Certainly, letting a client know that an item is expensive can be a courtesy, but not when it is done with the connotation that it's probably beyond their means.

"What an idiot that last guy was!"

Many have heard this one. And often times, it is difficult to deny the truth in the statement. However, commenting on a customer to another employee, or worse, to another customer, is gossipy and terribly unprofessional.

"We don't have it." *Of course, businesses may run out of a certain item, but just hearing "no" leaves a customer feeling as if their business is not wanted if they are going to be "trouble." A better alternative is to suggest another option that is comparable to the product they need. Or let them know about another store—even a competitor—that may offer the product they want. Goodwill will be remembered by the*

customer, and they will certainly return to the business for their future product needs.

"What a _____ name." (Choose "different," "funny," "unusual," "bizarre," etc.) *Make it a policy to never remark on a customer's name, even out of curiosity.*

"I haven't a clue what I'm talking about, but I'll ramble on regardless." *Don't strangle an employee's eagerness to help clients and customers, but urge them to stick to topics and advice with which they are familiar. And if they don't know something, make certain they refer customers to an employee who does.*

"I only work here." *In these four words, the employee conveys a complete absence of enthusiasm or involvement, and an unwillingness to address a problem. Make sure employees know that there's someone available who can tackle something that is beyond their means.*

In summary, businesses in Cleveland County truly can provide customers with a reason to spend their hard-earned money at home. It won't have to be through markdowns and sale prices. If employees at local businesses would take it upon themselves to look customers in the eye and try to provide the service they expect when making a purchase, Cleveland County will certainly experience a tremendous increase in retail shopping this holiday season. Let's make sure that area customers leave local businesses not in disgust, but in delight.

Ribbon Cuttings & Chamber Events



Mi Pueblito Mexican Restaurant Kings Mountain location ribbon cutting on November 1, 2005.



Leadership Cleveland County at Shelby Fire Department on November 2, 2005.



Small Business of the Month Ceremony held on November 3, 2005 at Value Incentives, Inc.



Economic Forecast Luncheon featuring Wachovia Economist Jason Schenker on November 9, 2005.



Vision of Hope Award presented on November 8, 2005 to Natalie Bishop.



Ribbon Cutting at Dorothy's Stamps-n-Scraps on November 10, 2005.



Ribbon Cutting at Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy on November 15, 2005.

Member Renewals-October 2005

Goodwill Industries – 6 years

NVR Building Products – 7 years

Honeywell International Inc. – 32 years

Bert Costner – Farm Bureau Insurance – 2 years

ABC Screen Printing & Embroidery – 4 years

Subway Sandwich of Kings Mountain – 10 years

Sam's Club – 5 years

KM Pools, Inc. – 12 years

New Members . . .

DOROTHY'S STAMPS-N-SCRAPS

Ms. Mary Ruth Dixon · 108 Fairview St. · P.O. Box 952 · Boiling Springs, NC 28017

Telephone: 704/434-7766 · Fax: 704/434-5191 · Web page – www.stampsnscraps.com

CRAFT

Members On The Move . . .

The members listed below have changed their membership to include the following:

- **Cleveland Country Club** – Barry Henfey
- **First Charter Bank** – Lisa Carpenter
- **Covenant Painting Solutions, Inc.** – Bobby Spikes

New location:

- **Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy** has moved to 620 S. LaFayette St., Shelby. Telephone number remains 704/481-0076.

New address for **Hall Builders, Inc.** is 1425 Merrimont Avenue, Kings Mountain, NC 28086. Telephone number is 704/730-9696.

Name Change:

Jefferies and Sons Painting has changed the company name to **Covenant Painting Solutions, Inc.** The company is located at 1536 Suite B Union Road, Gastonia, NC, and telephone number is 704/861-0188.

Thank You Corner . . .

- **First National Bank** – Donated the bags for the community information packets that were prepared by the Chamber's Tourism Office for the following events: Soccer Tournament, Hog Happnin' and the Firemen's Conference.
- **Central United Methodist Church** – For use of the church's screen at the Chamber's Economic Forecast Luncheon.

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Jean Bettis
Office Manager

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Administrative Assistant-Kings
Mountain Office

Jean Canipe
Receptionist

Annual Banquet Date Set for January 19, 2006

The Cleveland County Chamber Board of Directors and staff are pleased to announce plans for an annual event that brings a ceremonial end to the calendar year. The Chamber's annual banquet is scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 2006 and will feature entertainment by "The Hilarious Hypnotist," Dr. Holiday. The event will be held at Triple D Publishing in Shelby and will begin with an elegant cocktail reception at 6:30 p.m.

Several leadership awards will be presented during the banquet. Awards include the Athena award, which is presented to an outstanding businesswoman. The Entrepreneur of the Year award will be granted to an exceptional small business owner. The Volunteer of the Year award will be given honoring the legacy of Paul P. Limerick, as the Chamber recognizes the volunteer who has made the most significant impact in 2005. The Bridge Builder award will also be presented to a Chamber member who has worked to overcome boundaries and unite the Cleveland County community. Other awards returning from the past will include the Ambassador of the Year award and the Rookie Ambassador of the Year award. Other awards include the Duke Power Citizen Award, an honor named to a particularly outstanding citizen of the Cleveland County area.

The Zenith Award will be presented to one

who has set a standard for extraordinary service and community involvement throughout his/her lifetime. The Jean Bettis Support Staff Award will also be making its debut at the banquet, and will be honoring an administrative professional who has held his/her position for at least 10 years. Nominations for the awards will be accepted through December 15.

The special speaker of the night will be Dr. Holiday, also known as the "The Hilarious Hypnotist." Based in Atlanta, GA, this licensed professional has a reputation for sweeping shows with laughter all over the United States. He specializes in performing for corporate functions and business parties, and should provide banquet attendees with great entertainment.

Banquet sponsorships are available at the platinum level for \$1000 and the Gold level for \$750. Benefits of sponsorship include event recognition, a reserved table, and admission tickets. Please contact the Chamber if you are interested in sponsoring this event.

Come be a part of one of the greatest business events of the year! The cost for the event will be determined soon. To make reservations for this exciting evening, call the Chamber office at 704-487-8521.

December 2005 Chamber Calendar of Events

Click on the online "Calendar of Events" located at www.ClevelandChamber.org for event info & updates!

- Dec. 01 Small Business Seminar: "Pricing Products & Services" at Cleveland Community College; 6 p.m.—9 p.m.; Cost \$5, call 704-484-4015 to RSVP.
- Dec. 08 Small Business of the Month Recognition Ceremony at Hoke Enterprises; 11 a.m.
- Dec. 08 Ribbon Cutting at Hampton Inn, 2012 E. Marion Street, Shelby; 4 p.m.
- Dec. 08 Small Business Seminar: "Website Development & Marketing" at Cleveland Community College; 6 p.m.—9 p.m.; Cost \$5, call 704-484-4015 to RSVP.
- Dec. 15 Business After Hours at Hallelujah Acres; 900 S. Post Road, Shelby; 5:30 p.m.—7 p.m., Call 704-487-8521 to RSVP. (Opportunity to win two tickets to annual banquet!!)
- Dec. 16 Staff Retreat: Chamber Offices Closed
- Dec. 23 Christmas Holiday: Chamber Offices Closed
- Dec. 26 Christmas Holiday: Chamber Offices Closed
- Dec. 30 New Year's Holiday: Chamber Offices Closed
- Jan. 02 New Year's Holiday: Chamber Offices Closed
- Jan. 16 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday: Chamber Offices Closed
- Jan. 19 Chamber Annual Banquet at Triple D Publishing in Shelby; Cost \$65