

January, 2012

# The Chamber Connection



## Tourism: Where Do You and the Chamber of Commerce Fit In?

After taking a break from the topic in the December Newsletter, it's time for a tourism update. While it's true that most Minnesotans' tourism thoughts in January involve warmer places they would like to visit, planning and preparation for future Morris tourism is actively under way now and the Chamber is officially involved.

As many of you know, the City of Morris put a lodging tax into place about three years ago. This tax is added to motel room rates and collected by the City specifically for tourism promotion. By law, a Tourism Board was formed to advise the City on how to spend the lodging tax funds. The Tourism Board is peopled by community volunteers, including Mayor Sheldon Giese and City Manager Blaine Hill. The Board hired a consulting firm last year to help develop a branding and marketing strategy. This effort is in process now, with considerations being given to a new logo and tagline.

When she was Executive Director of the Morris Area Chamber of Commerce, Carolyn Peterson was instrumental in advancing the lodging tax idea, and the Chamber Director has been on the Tourism Board since its inception. Paul Hendricks is the third, and current, Director to be involved.

The City has always acknowledged the essential role a Chamber of Commerce plays in tourism efforts. The Chamber is the natural first contact for people wanting information on an area and its attractions. Recognizing this, the City Council recently voted to reimburse the Chamber for the portion of staff's time and expenses that were used to promote tourism in our area over the past two years. This is intended to continue into the foreseeable future.

Like most undertakings, the Morris tourism initiative is composed of two main pieces: part conceptual and visionary, and mostly the day-to-day working out of those ideas. At the request of the City and the Tourism Board, the Chamber has accepted responsibility to oversee the tourism effort. This is a very cooperative effort with the Tourism Board and the City of Morris. The Chamber staff are accountable to the Chamber Board of Directors first, of course, and the Board of Directors must approve the degree of the Chamber's involvement in tourism work. Then, these are the basic roles of the three primary entities:

- The **Chamber** staff develops and submits tourism plans and budgets, oversees their implementation once approved, and reports on tourism activities. They develop tourism materials, respond to tourist information requests, and work to promote the growth of tourism attitude, aptitude and momentum in the area.
- The **Tourism Board** works with the Chamber to set the focus and direction of tourism efforts, review the plans, budget and reimbursement requests, and recommend approval to the City.
- The **City of Morris** assures that tax funds are being legally expended, approves the budget and reimbursement requests, and issues reimbursements.

That's the overall authority and responsibility structure, and you can see that the Chamber is deeply involved. But a very important question remains:

### Where do YOU fit in this picture?

Many among you are and have been strong advocates of Morris tourism. Some of you are stakeholders, with personal, professional or financial interests in the success of area tourism. Your ideas and help are important to this overall effort! Additional venues will be opening that offer opportunity to all who are interested to become involved. Please identify your interest to Paul Hendricks or Sharon Pederson at the Chamber (email to: [mchamber@fedtel.net](mailto:mchamber@fedtel.net) or call 589-1242).

We want to incorporate as many people as possible while remaining a *doing* organization. That is, while we truly want to understand people's ideas and suggestions, we also need to develop an attitude and track record of actual work progress. The successful development of tourism is an exciting and challenging undertaking — one requiring careful thought and planning as well as decisive action. Please let us know of your interest.

---

**Member News and Announcements:**

- **All NEWSLETTER Recipients:** If you have not yet responded to this request, please contact the Chamber office if you want to continue receiving this Newsletter by mail. Email delivery is much less costly in both time and materials. Plus, the PDF document delivered via email has all the pictures in color rather than black and white. Please email us at [mchamber@fedtel.net](mailto:mchamber@fedtel.net) so I can get you onto an email list. Thanks to the many who have already responded! Our hope is to convert 80% of Newsletter recipients to email.
- **Thank you** to the many businesses and individuals who used **Chamber Cash** as gifts in 2011. Nearly \$66,000 in Chamber Cash was requested through the year, with over \$53,000 of that coming in the month before Christmas. That's a lot of money being poured back into the local economy—and all of it goes to Chamber members!
- Please reserve the evening of **Wednesday, January 25**, for the Chamber's **Annual Meeting and Social Event**. The event will be held in the south side of the Old #1. Bello Cucina is catering a fabulous dinner, with Old #1 providing the cash bar. A Lucky Buck Auction will again provide both fun and funding. The "auction" works this way: \$1 and \$5 two-part tickets are sold to bidders; bidders keep one part, and "bid" on baskets by putting the other part of the ticket(s) in the cup by the basket(s) of their choice; winners are determined by a drawing from each cup. The more tickets you have in the cup, the better your chance to win. Social Hour (and bidding on the baskets being auctioned) starts at 5:00pm, with dinner at 6:00. The cost per attendee is \$30. Chamber members wishing to attend only the Annual Meeting are very welcome to come (without cost) at 7:00. How to prepare:
  - \* **Please consider donating one or more baskets to auction at this important Chamber fundraiser.**
  - \* Were improvements made to your establishment in 2011? Submit before & after pictures to the Chamber office. Perhaps we can develop a slide show including community improvements.
  - \* **Recruit attendees!** Talk it up at work and church; bring your neighbors! Let's fill the place!
- Approval of **changes to the Morris Area Chamber of Commerce By-Laws** will be on the agenda at the Annual Meeting on January 25. A copy of the proposed By-Law changes is available at the Chamber office, located at 507 Atlantic Avenue, Morris. Any interested member is invited to stop by and peruse this copy, as well as ask any questions you may have. A copy will also be available at the meeting.

**Did you know that Chamber members can share their news in this section of the newsletter at no charge?**

*Do you have a new employee, a new product line, an upcoming open house?  
The rest of us would like to know about it!*

Contact us today at 589-1242 or e-mail [mchamber@fedtel.net](mailto:mchamber@fedtel.net) if you have information to be included.

## Holiday Promotion Wrap-up

A final “Thank You!” to all the retailers, sponsors, tree-adopters and many volunteers for supporting a successful Santa’s Great Giveaway promotion. Volunteers came from the Morris Fire Department, Stephanie Foto, Morris Theatre, Morris Sun/Tribune, Thrifty White Drug Store, Sonia’s Hair Clinic, City Center Mall, University of Minnesota Morris, City of Morris, Superior Industries, Visible Changes, Willie’s Super Valu and the Regional Fitness Center. I apologize if I have neglected to mention anyone—there were so many willing helpers!

In addition to doubling last year’s advertising budget and adding a \$500 Chamber Cash grand prize, the promotion ended in the black, and brought the year’s overall retail promotions to a bit better than break-even.

Especially appreciated are the several additional weekly prizes that were donated by Chamber members: Town & Country Supply, KMRS/KRVY/KKOK Radio, BP Amoco Food Shop, Casey’s General Store, Morris Sun Tribune and Lawn & Driveway Service. They definitely added interest in the weekly drawings.

Entry card counts for the four weekly drawings were: 229, 267, 430 and 423, for a total of 1,349 entries in the grand prize drawing (that’s about 10,800 stamps!). There were also 24 invalid entry cards culled out (too few stamps, no name, etc.). The grand prize drawing was made by a 3-year-old who cannot read. Shelley Evink recorded it and posted it on the Chamber Facebook page. It can also be seen on the Chamber’s website in the Facebook section.

The food shelf donations from the Pictures with Santa event totaled seventy-eight pounds, and required several bags and boxes. Since this included boxes of cereal as well as canned goods, it added up to a lot of food!

## Sharon Pederson, Administrative Assistant

A Morris native (maiden name is Anderson), Sharon spent most of the last 30 years in Virginia Beach, Virginia. For over 20 years, Sharon worked as a Legal Assistant and Paralegal. The call of home and family pulled her back to Morris a couple of years ago. She was followed by one of her sons and two grandchildren. Working part-time at the Chamber gives her the greater interaction with the community which she desired while still allowing time with parents and progeny. Sharon’s experience and familiarity with the community will be great assets in her new role.



### **Morris Area Chamber of Commerce Mission:**

*The Morris Area Chamber of Commerce seeks to pursue the sustainable prosperity of Morris and the surrounding communities by representing and promoting community, business, professional, educational, agricultural and tourism interests.*

Chamber Members: Please ponder how we can become more effective in accomplishing this worthy mission. Send us your thoughts and ideas. The real strength of any organization is in its membership (YOU!).



**Morris Area**  
**Chamber**  
*of* Commerce

507 Atlantic Avenue  
Morris, MN 56267  
MChamber@fedtel.net  
MorrisMNChamber.org  
320-589-1242

**Morris Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Term end</u>
Shelley Evink – Vice-Chair	Federated Telephone	2011
Mick Ekren	Superior Industries	2011
Jill Loge	Bank of the West	2011
Joan Spaeth	Stevens Community Med. Ctr.	2011
Karen Berget – Chair	American Eagle Realty	2012
Mary Philip	Willie’s Super Valu	2012
Dr. Randy Hamling	Accelerated Chiropractic	2012
Sonia Meyer	Sonia’s Hair Clinic	2012
Diane Anspach	Bremer Bank	2013
Marty Ohren	Thrifty White Drug	2013
Dr. Eric Rambow	Morris Dental Clinic	2013
Patty Kill	RiverWood Bank	2013
Erin Christensen	Univ. of Minn., Morris	2014
Jeanne Ennen	Stevens County Representative	Ex-officio
Twig Webster	Morris City Council Representative	Ex-officio

**WHAT’S HAPPENING...**

Jan. 25	Chamber Annual Meeting & Social
Jan. 12	Chamber Board meeting
Feb. 20	Resource Connections Expo

*This section of the newsletter is reserved for business card sized ads, free on a first-come, first-served basis to Chamber members.*

*All that is required is to email your ad to the Chamber office (mchamber@fedtel.net), and request its insertion in the newsletter. We will put it in the next available opening.*

*It’s available and free!*