

Letter from the Chamber Chairman

As I'm outside this morning scraping the snow off the sidewalks in front of bright.net, I'm joined by many other businesses clearing the sidewalks for their patrons. It looks like winter is finally upon us. For some like my son, they are excited for the snow to finally be here, for his love of hunting that he and his dad enjoy is much easier when you can track the fox and the coyote. Needless to say, the snowmobile that my son just bought a few months ago may finally get some use; or he's up early in the morning to clean open the neighbors driveway - not just one driveway - but he usually goes up and down the street making sure everyone is taken care of. Many times, he's joined by a friend or two as they work to help the elderly in our community. They do it not because they have to, but because they want to. To them it's fun, they get to hook up the snow blower or snow blade to the lawnmower and have a great time in the snow. To the elderly in our community, however, they know they are being taken care of and someone is looking after them.

As local businesses, we too depend on each other. I can remember getting one of our larger snowfalls last year thinking to myself as I'm driving into work how much snow I was going to need to shovel, only to find Larry Hilvers walking the sidewalks with his snow blower clearing off all his neighbor's walks. I can remember a semi truck pulling up in front of my business to make a delivery wondering "How in the world am I going to unload this" and here comes the crew from Kurtz's to help me unload it. Or that time I went out to my car at lunch time and my tire was flat. Steve at Howard's had it repaired for me by the time I got off of work. I know I'm not the only one that can attest to a local business helping you out at one time or another. We do it

not because we have to, but because we want to. That's what we do, we are a local business, we each take pride in our local business and we support each other's business. We all take ownership in each of our businesses.

Local ownership means that profits circulate within the community, and unlike national chain stores, local merchants patronize and rely on other local businesses for services such as banking, printing and accounting to name a few. As local merchants we have a vested interest in the health of the places where we do business. Each business is linked to the community and invested in its governance in a variety of ways; the property taxes each of us pay support local government services like public schools that our families use. Many of us, as small business owners, contribute to the civic life of the community, sponsoring Little League teams and participating in community organizations. As local businesses, we donate not only financial support - but also volunteer time to many charitable causes

It was very good news from our County Auditor when he stated that sales tax dollars were higher for the month of December. The increase in sales tax dollars means an increase in shopping locally. I hope that trend continues during 2007, and we can all, as chamber members, be the leaders in shopping locally by supporting each other.

I wish everyone a successful 2007 and I hope the Chamber can make this year even more prosperous for you and your business.

- Chamber Chairman Cheryl Bostelman