

Letter from the Chamber Chairman

It's that time of the year when we have all started seeing the yellow school buses on the road again. Summer is coming to a close and school has begun for all the area students. For this particular Chamber Chairperson and my husband, it marks the year our youngest begins his senior year at Archbold. As he begins his final year in high school the timely task of college searches, ACT's, SAT's, scholarship applications, term papers, school projects, and exams quickly fill up the calendar. There is a lot to do to prepare for his future. Having two girls that have already gone through the process, at least we are prepared and know what to expect.

This past Friday night, Steven took the football field for his first game of his last season as an Archbold Bluestreak. Since he's been a freshman he and his fellow senior's have been preparing for their senior year in football, trying to make this their best season ever. For four years they have been lifting weights, running and conditioning to prepare for their senior year. They work hard with a goal in mind. Success does not happen overnight.

As businesses we realize too, that success does not happen overnight. Just like a football team, it takes planning, teamwork and hard work to achieve success. Marketing for your business can be extremely expensive and with increasing number of companies advertising through every imaginable communication avenue, it gets more difficult daily to attract the attention of consumers. So what can we do for our businesses?

To begin with it takes a lot less money to increase your retention of current customers than to find new ones-but many businesses don't give as much effort as they should because it does take a lot of energy and effort. Does your business have a specific plan for

building customer loyalty? The high cost of landing new customers versus the high profitability of a loyal customer base is a very good reason you may want to reflect upon your current business strategy. This is one of the most inexpensive ways for your business to grow by retaining existing customer loyalty. A loyal customer will spread the good word about your business.

Many of the marketing articles and seminars I have sat through offer suggestions for marketing on a small budget:

Coupons: These can easily be passed out on the street corner, trade shows, or just about anyplace. You can send a few to your best customers, or you can include "next purchase" coupons in the customer orders.

Contests: If you choose to develop a promotional contest make it fun and don't forget to really talk it up.

Frequent buyers: These programs can be very powerful tools for building loyal clientele for both retail and service businesses.

Cross-promotions: You might consider teaming up with other local businesses to offer cross promotions. You can easily team up with another business to promote your product with another business. Success does not happen over night. Success takes teamwork, integrity, honesty and vision. What is your vision for your business?

With Christmas just around the corner, maybe it's time to team up with another local business or businesses, and promote each other.

- **Chamber Chairman Cheryl Bostelman**