

Fike touts successes at Chamber meeting

Passes gavel to Pittenger-Slear; Kaylan Newell honored

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By CHRIS KNAUSS Business Editor |

EASTON Throughout the general economic mayhem that defined much of 2009, outgoing Chairman of the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce David Fike has heard many stories of success.

Fike focused on the good news of 2009 and the increased efforts of the chamber to promote and supports its 800 members, representing 8,000 employees, during his speech at the chamber's 45th annual Membership and Dinner Meeting at Krystal Q.

"The other night, I was at my son's Tee Ball practice, and I was talking to a guy who owns a local business," said Fike. "When I asked how business was, I was happy to hear him say that he was coming off one of the best years his company has ever had. It made me remember that I recently have had that same conversation with several other businesses in the area. It also reminded me that in the midst of great adversity there are plenty of potential opportunities if we are willing to search for them."

During 2009, the chamber celebrated 38 ribbon cuttings and grand openings, hosted 22 business after-hour mixers, conducted 45 board and committee meetings, hosted an annual golf tournament, and printed and distributed 60,000 copies of the Talbot County Visitors Guide.

The chamber also entertained over 400 people at chamber sponsored seminars and its board room and meeting rooms were used 68 times by members. More than 650 people took part in special events such as luncheons, dinners and forums. Its communications included 54 e-Compass and e-member discount messages, and 10 Chamberline newsletters.

"But most notably," said Fike, "we developed a new robust Web site in partnership with Internet Connection Inc. This new Web site allows the chamber easier access to update data on the site, which in turn gives more meaningful information to the more than 120,000 visits to the site annually. With all of this activity, as you can tell, we had a busy and productive 2009."

Lisa Kaylan, of Innovative Health Services, was honored as the chamber's Board Member of the Year.

"During her seven years on the board, she has been instrumental in promoting the chamber's efforts," said Fike. "Most notably, creating our Medical Focus committee and spearheading our efforts to stay not only involved, but a central figure in working to solve the issues facing our local medical community. We thank Lisa for all of her contributions to the chamber and we are excited to give her this award."

The chamber's Volunteer of the Year award was presented to Gerald Newell of GGN Consulting, whose professional services include network installations of QuickBooks office systems.

"Gerry has been a great volunteer for many years," said Fike. "He's always around, volunteering and helping out over the years with the chamber. Most recently, he has been our chairperson for all our luncheons and has done an outstanding job."

Fike has served on the chamber board for six years and will serve as an ex-officio member.

"It was an honor to have the chance to work with an impressive group of board members, a long list of hardworking committee members and volunteers, a dedicated chamber staff and, in my opinion, the region's best chamber executive, Al Silverstein," Fike said. "To each of you, and to the over 800 chamber members, I thank you for the opportunity to serve as your chairman."

Fike introduced the board's new chairman, Suzzane Pittenger-Slear.

Pittenger-Slear is the president and chief executive officer of Environmental Concern Inc., a public non-profit corporation dedicated to the restoration and creation of wetlands in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay watersheds.

"Over the last eight years, Suzanne has grown Environmental Concern's revenue stream 10 fold," said Fike, "increased the growing capacity of the wetland nursery six fold and, most important, provides a solid career track for young environmental science graduates who want to get 'wet and muddy' restoring wetlands and improving the water quality in the tributaries of our beloved Chesapeake Bay."

"I am honored to accept the position as chair, and to have the opportunity to support the chamber's mission in 2010," said Pittenger-Slear. "I am also proud to be working with business owners and professionals who genuinely care about our Talbot County Community, to be

champions for business, to stimulate economic opportunity and to enhance the quality of life in our community. This year promises to be a productive one. I'm energized about the chamber's strategic plan and goals established for 2010."

Pittenger-Slear joined the Chamber Board in 2007 and was instrumental in establishing the chamber's successful Environmental Committee last year.

"We would like to see more of our members involved in the chamber events," said Pittenger-Slear.