



NEWSLETTER – January 2011

MEETING REMINDER

The general meeting of the Chamber is held on the first Tuesday of the month. **The next meeting will be held at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, February 1st** at the Route 6 Diner. If you haven't attended a Chamber meeting in a while, join us for dinner or a snack so we can get reacquainted.

NATIONAL WOOLY WILLY WONDERDAZE 2011 – PLANNING BEGINS NEXT WEEK!

With snow falling it is hard to believe that it's time again to begin planning for this Summer's bigger and better-than-ever 2011 National Woolly Willy Wonderdaze. Our initial planning meeting will be held at 5 pm on Thursday, February 3 at The Country Porch.

The meeting will be chaired by Smethport resident Jeff Andrulonis, who is president and CEO of Colonial Radio Group. Volunteers are needed to manage the many tasks that make this annual community event a great success for Smethport. Please join us and find out how you can pitch in. And if you have an idea for a fun event during the festival, please come to the meeting and tell us about it.

VACANCY ON CHAMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

One of our Board members resigned this week. If you would like to be considered as a Director for the remainder of the term, please contact Nathan Muller at 887-4134 or njmuller@smethportchamber.com.

LOOKING TO SELL OR BUY A BUSINESS IN SMETHPORT?

When buying or selling a local business, contact the Smethport Area Chamber of Commerce. Nathan Muller, the Chamber's president, will be happy to steer you to local professionals with the knowledge and experience you can draw on.

Selling a business is not fast or easy, and every situation will be different. For example, if you want to sell, a closeout sale may not always be a good idea. Sometimes potential buyers will want to see your business in full operation with a look at the previous 3 years of financial statements to evaluate the investment decision not only for themselves, but for a lending institution. There's also the possibility of selling the business, then giving the new owner a lease with the option to purchase the building.

On the other hand, it might be preferable to show a vacant building. There are so many code implications with old commercial buildings that it is often better to empty it. Electric may need to be updated, fire escape doors added, and a handicapped-accessible bathroom installed.

When buying or selling a business in Smethport, you don't have to go it alone. Contact Nathan Muller at the Chamber: 887-4134 or njmuller@smethportchamber.com. It could result in a better outcome for you!

PATCH PRODUCTS ANNOUNCES PERMANENT LAYOFFS IN SMETHPORT

Patch Products announced this week the permanent layoff of 13 employees at its Smethport, Pennsylvania facility. This amounts to 45% of the local workforce, which now numbers 16. Layoffs include both office personnel and those working the assembly line.

"Patch's business is healthy, but our mix of products and customers is changing," said Brian Maxwell, President of Patch. "Unfortunately this mix has negatively affected our Smethport facility."

"I want to thank our employees for their service and dedication to Patch. This is a difficult time, and we're doing everything possible to provide support to those affected," said Maxwell.

Employees whose jobs have been eliminated have been provided a severance package and resources to assist them in their job search.

A spokesperson with Patch said the layoffs are not part of a phased plan to eliminate the Smethport facility, but added that nobody can predict how the market or the economy will change in the future.

Mayor Ross Porter noted, "Smethport has been going head to head in the toy industry with the Chinese for many years, and up until now we have been holding our own. Patch is competing with China in the real world and they are trimming the workforce to stay competitive. This is a set-back for us, but we really want Patch Products to stay healthy and viable."

Porter said the Smethport workforce has a history of being dedicated, hard working, focused and creative. "We are confident we can successfully compete in the global market. We are wishing Patch all the best to bounce back to its former workforce strength here in Smethport."

NATURAL GAS EXPO TO BE HELD IN BRADFORD – March 10 and 11

The Natural Gas Expo for Cameron-McKean-Potter will be held on Thursday, March 10, from 10:00 am – 6:00 pm and on Friday, March 11, from 9:00 am – Noon at the Sports and Fitness Center at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. The Smethport Chamber will again be participating in the Expo.

If you have any materials that you want displayed at the Chamber's table, please contact Nathan Muller at 887-4134. Items may include literature about commercial properties or office space for sale or lease, homes for sale or lease, overnight accommodations, entertainment and restaurants, equipment and supplies, etc.

The Expo will feature education and industry seminars that will take place on both days at Blaisdell Hall. A Wednesday evening networking event will be held for only exhibitors and their guests. You can register, get information and explore sponsorship, exhibitor, and advertising opportunities on the Expo's website at www.natural-gas-expo.com

The event will bring together the natural gas industry and local business entrepreneurs to explore the opportunities that are emerging out of the Marcellus natural gas play. The industry is raving about the quality and quantity of natural gas in Pennsylvania. Industry leaders are taking note and putting major resources into this region. Taking the opportunity to be part of the Expo is a must if you and your business are interested in serving or gaining visibility with this emerging industry.

STATE OF THE BOROUGH – SMETHPORT AT A CROSSROADS

At the Borough Council meeting held on Monday, January 3, Mayor Ross Porter delivered a *State of the Borough* message. "We are at a crossroads for Smethport's viability as a vibrant community," he said. "We are facing a bleak time of crisis in Smethport."

According to Porter, things started going downhill with the partial collapse of nearby Kinzua Bridge, a key area tourist attraction, followed by local closings of the Christmas Store, The Cottage House Restaurant, and Lindgren's Variety Store.

Porter said: "What we do in Smethport in the next three years will determine where Smethport will end up in the future. It is time for Borough leadership and citizens to volunteer and invest in their community."

After summarizing the current situation in Smethport, Porter outlined possible solutions.

Porter's remarks were covered extensively in The Bradford Era, and the Borough website where you can read the entire article: www.smethportpa.org/borough/smethport-at-a-crossroads-state-of-the-borough/

NATIONAL FUEL ASKS FOR RATE INCREASE

Despite all the natural gas from the Marcellus Shale, National Fuel expects a rise in the cost of gas for the period August 2011 through July 2012.

National Fuel has submitted its annual filing to the state utility commission and is requesting an increase to rates it can charge to customers. The company has requested an overall rate increase of \$19,472,000 per year. This would increase the total bill for a small business using 4,400 Ccf annually from \$313.46 to \$345.77 per month, or by 10.3%. Rates for a midsized industrial customer using 23,500 Ccf annually would increase from \$1,613.79 to \$1,786.37 per month or by 10.7%. (Ccf = One hundred cubic feet.)

Local prices for natural gas are not likely to go down because Marcellus gas will be used to feed the national market where overall demand is increasing.

INNOVATIVE MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Are you seeing the same customers repeatedly? Are you out of ideas for how to reach a new audience or bring back former customers?

This workshop will cover new marketing ideas and inspire some new techniques that can be incorporated immediately into your marketing plan.

\$39 per participant

Tuesday, February 8, 2011, 6 – 8:30 PM

2nd floor classroom, Seneca Building, Bradford

To register, contact Pitt-Bradford's Continuing Education and Regional Development division at 814-362-5078 or email: continued@pitt.edu.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: ANNUAL HAMLIN LIBRARY DINNER & AUCTION

Hamlin Memorial Library will hold its annual dinner and auction in Saturday, March 12, from 6:00 - 10:30 pm. The event will be held at the Smethport Fire Hall.

The Social Hour and Silent Auction will begin at 6:00 pm, followed by a buffet served by Rose and Phyllis.

The cost for the event is \$45 a couple.

If you would like to donate items for the auction, you may contact the library for details: 887-9262.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY STACKS THE DECK

The McKean County Historical Society has a limited supply of its unique deck of playing cards, featuring 58 historical pictures of McKean County and its people. The deck is priced at only \$10. Call the Society now for your deck: 887-5142. Makes a great gift for your out-of-town guests!

WORKSHOP ON STARTING A SMALL BUSINESS

Clarion University's Small Business Development Center is once again holding a START UP workshop in Smethport designed to give entrepreneurs a head-start with their business.

Date: February 9, 2011

Time: 8:30 am to Noon

Location: McKean County Emergency Management 911 Center at 17175 Route 6

Speaker: Amy Keth, Outreach Business Consultant

Topics:

Lifestyle requirements that are involved in owning a business
Differences between business organizations and structures
How and why to prepare a business plan
Guidelines on how to finance your business
How to research your market and competition
How to market your product or service
How to conduct research on your industry
Applications and licenses needed to start your business
Regulations governing a business
Business tax information
Environmental regulation compliance
Other resources you can use to help you plan and succeed

Cost: \$20.00 per person, payable by cash, check, or credit card

Pre-registration (required): <http://web.clarion.edu/SBDC/Training/Register.asp?CID=523>

MEMBERSHIP 2010-2011

As of December 15th, the following individuals, businesses and other organizations have joined the Chamber or renewed their membership for 2010-2011:

ADP Rental
Ascent Solutions
Barbara Ness
Barbara K. Bowman
Bill Lake Real Estate
Buchanan Brothers Pharmacy, Inc.
Chef Specialties – Backus Company
Colonial Radio Group
Connie's Route 6 Diner
Corner Bar & Tap Room
Costa's Ace Hardware
Costa's Supermarket
Country Porch Cafe
Edward Jones - Keith Delacour, FA
Enchanted Mountain Advertising
Forecon Inc.
Hamlin Bank & Trust Company
Hamlin Memorial Library
Hancock Forest Management
H&S Pet Animal Hospital

Helen Cole
Heritage Suites (Bradford)
James B. Kane, Jr. DMD
James K. Angell, Attorney at Law
James P. Miller, Attorney at Law
Kwik Fill
Lakeview Senior Care and Living Center
Lightwaves Laser Engraving
Mansion District Inn, LLC
McKean County Legion Riders
McKean County Historical Society
Northwest Savings Bank
O'Day Acquisition Consulting
Olson & Tenglund, Inc.
Patch Products, Inc.
Phillis Barnhart
Senior Center
St. Elizabeth of Hungary R.C. Church
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Smethport Area School District
Smethport Country Club
Smethport Drive-In
Smethport Fire Department
Smethport Gulf & Tire
Smethport Rotary
Thomas E. Ball Financial Services
United Refining Company of Pennsylvania (Warren)
Wayne and Mary Lee Pearson
Woods Baker & Ross

*** NOTE:** If you do not see your name / organization on this list, please drop a note to:
njmuller@comcast.net.

CHAMBER WEBSITE: www.smethportchamber.com

FREE ADVERTISING: If your business is located in the Borough, Smethport Web will host an advertising banner at no charge. Send advertising copy, images, and contact information to advertising@smethportpa.org. Don't miss this opportunity to use the power of the Internet to enhance your business. All the design work will even be done for you!

NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE: In case you need to refer to a past newsletter, the Chamber website keeps an archive at: www.smethportchamber.com/chamber_newsletter.htm.