



# 2010-2011 Annual Report

## October 2011 Newsletter

### Meetings & Important Dates

#### OCTOBER 2011

- 3 Economic Development – Noon, Depot
- 10 Board of Directors – Noon, Depot
- 10 Syttende Mai – 5:30pm, Quality Inn & Suites
- 19 Victorian Holiday – 6:30pm, Depot
- 12 Ambassadors Club – 8:00am, Depot
- 20 Chamber Annual Meeting – 5:30pm, Wis-Tex Restaurant
- 24 Lunch & Learn – Noon, Sponsored by McFarland State Bank, Stoughton Country Club

#### NOVEMBER 2011

- 1 Arts Council – 9:00am, Giles Dow Room City Hall
- 14 Board of Directors – Noon, Depot
- 14 Syttende Mai Committee – 5:30pm, Comfort Inn
- 15 Ambassadors Club – 8:00am, Depot
- 16 Victorian Holiday – 6:30pm, Depot
- 25 Chamber Closed for Thanksgiving

## ANNUAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The 2010-2011 Annual Meeting will be held on

OCTOBER 20, 2011.

The event will run from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
The business portion will start at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting will take place at the Wis Tex BBQ (620 Nygaard Street)  
A sampling of appetizers and entrees will be served.  
A cash bar will be available.

Members are entitled to one free admission.  
Each additional attendee will be charged \$10.00.

Space is limited and reservations are necessary.

Please confirm your attendance by calling the Chamber at 873-7912.

## 2010-2011 Board of Directors

**President** – Tom Luttig, Luttig Imaging & Photography  
**Vice President** – Randy Olson, Universal Silencer  
**Secretary** – Kari Hvam, Coldwell Banker, SUCCESS  
**Treasurer** – Connie Mathison, Associated Bank  
Donna Olson, Mayor, City of Stoughton  
Sandra Burger, Blackhawk Community Credit Union  
Randy Olson, Universal Silencer  
Laurie Dybevik, Gunderson Funeral Home & Cremation Care  
Mark Halverson, Business Transportation Solutions  
Tim Onsager, Superintendent of Stoughton Area Schools

### Chamber of Commerce Staff

Dave Phillips, Executive Director  
Erica Dial, Visitor Services Coordinator  
Mickey McCormick, Receptionist

## Committee Chairs

**Ambassador Club**, Co-chairs Linda Olson, Associated Bank & Sandra Quam, Home Savings Bank

**Ambassador Golf Outing**, Chair, Randy McLaury, TRICOR and Ambassadors Club members

**Economic Development**, Dave Phillips, Chamber

**Leadership Stoughton 2011**, Pat McNally, Cress Funeral and Cremation Service

**Syttende Mai**, Margit Gerber

**Coffee Break Festival**, Co-chairs Dave Gasner, The UPS Store & Erica Dial, Chamber

**Victorian Holiday Weekend**, Mary-Carel and Henry Verden, Grote Publishing

### 2010-2011 Office Numbers

Office Visits	3,533
Phone Calls	3,181
Website Visits	51,746
Gift Certificates	\$33,624

*Financial information will be provided at the Annual Meeting on Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011.*

## Executive Director's Message

*By: Dave Phillips, Executive Director*

*"If one focuses too much on what was, one might miss what can be."*

Ancient Chinese Fortune Cookie

While continuing my tradition of looking forward in this message, I would be remiss if I did not do at least a cursory review of the accomplishments of the Chamber during the past year. For sake of brevity, I have listed these accomplishments and activities in outline form.

- The long-awaited Chamber web site was unveiled. Hits on the site are averaging 50% higher than the previous year.
- In conjunction with the web site, we introduced a new logo. This completely revamped look pays homage to our cultural heritage while at the same time portrays the Chamber as a forward thinking and "doing" organization.
- We put on a Business Expo in the spring. Over 75 businesses displayed their products to the more than 250 attendees at the event at the Mandt Center.
- Over the summer, we conducted interviews with a number of Stoughton businesses as a part of the economic development initiative from THRIVE (the eight-county economic development consortium). The data collected has been entered into the Synchronist data base and will be used to compare our local business environment to other communities in the data base.
- Once again, financially the Chamber ended the year with a small operating surplus. Considering just three years ago, we had an operating deficit in excess of \$27,000; any surplus is a great accomplishment.

Despite our successes, there were disappointments. We anticipated being able to market new land in the expanded industrial park. We had hoped the economic recovery would have been robust and would have made the cash registers in our retailers overheat from ringing up the increased sales. We

wish the Main Street reconstruction project could have been completed over one long weekend – okay, maybe a whole week. There were other “less than positive” things but these are enough.

The coming year – as always – holds lots of promise.

Among the activities and actions in our work plan are:

1. We will have another Business Expo with increased advertising to our surrounding communities. This one will be held in the spring.
2. With regard to the business incubator, we will continue to seek the seed money that will enable us to purchase or rehab a building to make this dream a reality.
3. As a part of the traditional Victorian Holidays celebration, we will have a holiday light park in downtown Stoughton. We are in the midst of a fund raising campaign as I write this and if we can raise the necessary money, I guarantee that every resident of Stoughton will have a brighter holiday (pun intended).
4. Our interviews with local businesses will continue and we will grow our data base. Moreover, we will actually utilize the information to improve and enhance the economic environment in Stoughton.

The Chamber is a valuable asset for Stoughton. There is no other organization that advocates for the entire business community to city, county or state government. There is no other organization that promotes local businesses to the local community. There is no other organization that promotes the community to visitors and tourists. And, finally, it is the Chamber that puts on the festivals that attract and delights residents and draws tourists and visitors to the city.

The Chamber's work and our many positive accomplishments are attributable to a strong, working board of directors, a dedicated cadre of volunteers and the magnificent staff – our receptionist Mickey McCormick and Visitor Services Director Erica Dial.

Of course nothing, **absolutely nothing** would be done without the support and participation of our members. We all thank you for what you do for us.

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## **Ambassador Club Report**

*By Linda Olson, Anchor Bank & Sandra Quam, Home Savings Bank, Ambassador Co-Chairs*

The Stoughton Chamber Ambassadors are the face of the Chamber in the Community and we are the most “visible” representatives of the Chamber. We have a total of 16 ambassadors working together to promote the Chamber. Ambassadors represent a wide variety of businesses.

This past year the Ambassadors have participated in 11 ribbon cuttings, attended monthly lunch and learns, participated in the Chamber Golf outing and other Stoughton special events that strengthen membership and enhance Chamber image.

Many thanks to all of the ambassadors for donating their time and participate in this club.

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## **Leadership Stoughton Report**

*By: Pat McNally, Director of Leadership Stoughton*

The 2010-2011 Leadership Stoughton Program was cancelled due to insufficient enrollment. It was the determination of Program Director Patrick McNally and Chamber Executive Director, Dave Phillips that a great deal of the benefits of the program lie in networking and team building activities, and that the class size registered for the 2010-2011 was not sufficient to provide this opportunity.

Currently the program's 2011-2012 class is going forward and will feature a combination of local speakers, an academic presentation on leadership, and community service projects.



## **Syttende Mai Annual Report**

*By Margit Gerber, Syttende Mai Coordinator*

The Syttende Mai Executive Committee for 2011 included: Rich Albright, Steve Christenson, Wendy Entwistle, Barbara Holzhter, Erica Dial, Jon Blackman,, Barb Zander, Mary Kohlhepp, Jerri Kittleson, Sid Boersma, Todd Fossum, & Debra Carter. All committee members were responsible for a lot of energy to the committee and brought many new ideas for the festival. Margit Gerber served as the Syttende Mai Coordinator for the ninth year, including her year working with the previous coordinator. Many of the current committee members have been on the committee for all of those years – how time flies when you are having fun!!

The Syttende Mai Festival would not be possible without all of the hard work and dedication of the many event chairpersons and the executive committee members. There are literally hundreds of volunteers that work tirelessly to make the event a success each year. The Stoughton Village Players production, “Mr. Olson Goes to Washington”, was once again an amazing & funny play and well attended. Due to the success of the changes for the two mile Lil' Syttende Mai Run last year, we kept this event open to anyone in the community. Due to the size of the Lil' Run, the start location was changed to the Fox Prairie School area. This change was well received by all including those who are responsible for crowd and traffic control. We also included a competition between the Stoughton grade schools to see which school could have the most entrants. The Arts & Crafts fair was changed to a Saturday only event and the committee will decide, along with the Arts & Crafts chairperson, if this change should be carried over for 2012.

The 2nd Annual Syttende Mai 10 Mile Run started at the 10 mile mark of the 20 mile course, and we were happy to have even more participants than last year. We also added an event at the Stoughton Opera House featuring the entertainment group from Norway – “NorVille”. Those who attended said it was a good performance. The committee will decide if we will continue to try to add performances at the Opera House for the 2012 festival. There were new activities and demonstrations at various downtown businesses. The weather was definitely a challenge this year for many events. It was cold and a threat of rain for most days. UFF DA!! We were thankful for modern technology and cell phones to keep in touch with the weather channel, etc. to decide if an event needed to be cancelled. A special thank you to the Stoughton Senior Center for hosting Friday evening's opening ceremonies inside their building due to the rain.

**All** event chairpersons and volunteers should be commended for their dedication to the Syttende Mai festival. Many hours of personal time are contributed each year to make the many events possible to enjoy. We have countless volunteers who staff the various information/button booths that are scattered throughout town for the weekend. The Stoughton Lioness and the Stoughton “POSH” groups help by recruiting many of their members to work shifts for the booths. The Syttende Mai Committee has a great working relationship with the Stoughton Police, Street & Parks Departments, EMS, Post Office, Senior Center, City Hall, Opera House, Mandt Community Center, the Stoughton School District, Sons of Norway, and (of course) the Chamber employees. This is essential for putting together a premium, smooth running, and safe event. A special thank you also goes out to the many businesses and individuals who provide sponsorship, sell buttons & coins, loan us meeting & food stand spaces, and promote the festival each year. We cannot express how much this is **greatly** appreciated – again, thank you, thank you!!

Syttende Mai 2011 has been determined a successful event by the committee. We were disappointed about the cold & rainy weather but at least did not need to worry about any major storms, which is

always a relief. Most of the events stayed within their budgets and generated their projected income. We are looking at ways to change, add and/or enhance a couple of the events to increase participation and revenue.

The committee was able to pay all of the expected expenses, maintain the Sunday Parade budget – which continues to be greater event each year, and make a \$20,000.00 cash contribution to the Chamber in June of 2011. Dick & Barb Entwistle did a great job serving as the Syttende Mai King and Queen. They along with their escort, Tom Luttig, made many appearances throughout the week and were very visible within the community as well as with the Madison area media. Dick & Barb hosted a wonderful Norwegian style reception at the Stoughton Country Club on Sunday afternoon after the parade. It was a fun evening filled with good food, fellowship, stories, and many, many thank yous.

The Committee and Event Chairpersons are already looking ahead to the 2012 festival – discussing ways that events and activities can be enhanced and/or added. Expenses continue to rise, which is always a major challenge. New volunteers are always welcome for the many areas where help is needed. It's never too early to get involved.

As always, feel free to contact any of the Executive Committee members or Margit Gerber, Syttende Mai Coordinator (873-8082) if you have any comments and/or suggestions for the next year's festival which will be **May 18, 19, & 20 - 2012. Mark your calendars now!**

Again, thanks to all for your continued dedication and support of the Syttende Mai Festival!!! We should all be proud of such a wonderful event for our community.



## **Coffee Break Festival Report**

*By Dave Gasner, Co-Chair*

Even with a mid-morning shower the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Coffee Break Festival held on Saturday, August 14<sup>th</sup> was a success. This year's festival included special guest Julie Clark, author of Inspirational Coffee Breaks for Women who shared 12 ground rules for pouring your heart into life. We had a beer tent and the band, Rolling Rock that closed out the festival day. The coffee brew off had 6 different coffee roasters vying for the Roaster of the Festival award. Those festival goers that purchased a Coffee Break mug for \$5 received a ballot to vote for their favorite roaster and also had the opportunity to sample different brewed coffees for free throughout the day. Over 450 mugs were sold and attendees and roaster agreed that this is a great feature of the festival.

Special thanks to True Coffee House with their own coffee, Stoughton Hospital with Ancora coffee, The Firefly Coffee House with Kickapoo coffee, Nazareth House with Scandinavian Coffee, SoZo Coffee and Cheesers with Door County Coffee and Tea Co. Door County won the Roaster of the festival for the 3<sup>rd</sup> straight year. We truly want to thank all of them for their participation. The inflatable rides were back with an Obstacle Course, Gladiator Battle Zone, a bounce house and the Bungee Run. Other events were the custom & antique car show with 90 cars and motorcycles, the java jog with 130 entrants and the arts and crafts fair with 40 vendors. Food and beverages, a 50/50 raffle along rounded out the day's events.

Committee members are Erica Dial & Dave Gasner co-chairs, John Olson, Brian Larson, Beth & Brian Swain, Jean Johnson, Yolanda Staats, Liz Eugster and Mark Asleson. The Committee extends its deepest thanks to all the volunteers who help with the setup, operation, and teardown of the event, and to the Fair Board for the use of their band stage.

There are a few people retiring from the Committee this year. John Olson & Brian Larson are retiring after 8 years of running the car show and Brian & Beth Swain are retiring after 6 years of organizing the Java Jog. If you see them, please thank them for their years of dedication to the event. They will be missed not only for their hard work and dedication to the event but for the fun they have brought to the

committee. Joe Conant will be the new lead for the Car Show in 2012 and we are looking for someone to organize the Java Jog. If you or someone you know is interested in helping out with Coffee Break Festival, please contact Erica Dial or Dave Gasner. We have a very fun group of hard working people!



## **Victorian Holiday Report**

*By Henry and Mary-Carel Verden, Victorian Holiday Weekend Co-Chairs*

The weekend started out Friday night with a the traditional opening ceremony and tree lighting but we held it at the Stoughton Center for the Performing Arts hoping to increase the crowd for both the opening ceremony and the Holiday Party (formerly the Victorian Ball/Beggar's Ball). Unfortunately the crowd was small, though appreciative of the Stoughton Chamber Singer performance. We tried extending the Sweet Taste of Stoughton to before as well as during the Holiday Party(Ball) but did not experience much success with attendance. This year's ball was also sparsely attended but participants who seemed to really enjoy the dancing, the torts and sweet treats donated by various community businesses, the various skips and dances, and the musical performances from the Stoughton Chamber Singers. There was a Relay for Life reception held Friday evening during the same time which may have helped hold down attendance as well as a scary, weather prediction. The Friday events have not grown over the years and will be discontinued in 2011.

Saturday brought the trolley, sponsored this year by **Blackhawk Community Credit Union, Cress Funeral & Cremation Services, McGlynn Pharmacy, Stoughton Floral, and Stoughton Spirits**. The trolley was well received. We were very grateful to once again have the added feature of Mr. Joe DeRose from the State Historical Society with us on the trolley providing commentary on the history of Stoughton and some of it many homes and businesses the trolley passed. The local business tree decorating contest was popular though participation was down. Kiwanis again sponsored the popular Santa's Workshop in the community center next to the school administration building. The event was well attended as the children decorated cookies, made ornaments, and visited with Santa. The Arts and Craft show went well with over 70 participants and was also well attended. Peter Engler was ill and unable to be at All Through the House as in years past but Patty Tofslund again demonstrated rosemaking at Clock Tower Gifts. The annual quilt show at Saving Thyme was back and The Nutcracker Ballet returned for its 18th year. Both performances and the Sugar Plum Tea, held between performances, were as enchanting and magical as ever. This is a traditional event that everyone comes out for and is always a beautiful sight. The Fire Truck Parade was once again a very spectacular sight on Saturday evening, and one that so many in the community come out to see regardless of our typical Wisconsin weather! Relay for Life had their home tour followed by a reception and silent auction. The weather on Saturday was snowy although not as bad as predicted, however the predictions did hold down attendance at many events on Saturday.

Sunday the trolley and the Arts and Crafts Show continued. The Dickens of a Run/Walk, sponsored by the Yahara River Grocery Co-op, was down only slightly over the previous year in spite of the bad weather. The Victorian Holiday Bed Race moved to the Stoughton Plaza and had more beds this year and attendance was up. The Holiday Weekend finished with a performance by the Stoughton Dancers at the community center and the Stoughton Chamber Singers at the Opera House.

Overall, attendance was down only slightly from the previous year despite snowy weather and frightening weather predictions, and those who did come enjoyed themselves.

We worked this year to try and develop a more retail-oriented event. The downtown retailers were interested but not yet ready to build a cooperative event. We will continue to explore the possibility of extending the single weekend to a series of weekend activities for 2012 to leverage advertising opportunities and increase visibility and attendance. We will focus the 2012 Victorian Holiday as a community event, focusing the the community groups that host events and use the weekend as a fund-raising opportunity. We are moving the tree lighting ceremony to Saturday following the Firetruck Parade and will incorporate a light display around "Lake Helen" beside the Fire Department.

We have purchased 4 bed frames to make it easier for teams to participate in the Bed Races. We would like to encourage board members and local businesses and churches to put together a Bed Race Team for 2011 and challenge your competitors (or friends) to a fun grudge match. Contact Henry or Mary-Carel at 877-0766 if you have any questions or ideas for Victorian Holiday. We welcome any suggestions from you and the community on things we can do differently to make the event more enjoyable!



## **Visitor Services Report**

*By Erica Dial, Visitor Services Coordinator*

The past year has continued to be a challenge financially. Tax revenue dipped slightly compared to 2009-2010 revenue, which was down approximately 20% from previous years. Despite declining revenues, there are many good things that have happened with regard to the promotion of Stoughton as a tourist destination.

The biggest success was the launch of the Chamber's new [website](#) in late January. The new site gives visitors a better feel for what Stoughton is all about. It's not only for visitors, but for residents and potential residents alike. It is user friendly and best of all can be changed or modified by any three of the Chamber staff at any time. So, if you ever see an error, please contact us! Since the launch of the new website, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of unique hits to the site. On average, we are seeing about a 40% increase!

In March, the Sons of Norway hosted a Norwegian Summit. Around 20 different organizations from the Stoughton area that have some affiliation to Norwegian heritage were represented. The afternoon consisted of groups explaining their purpose and identifying how they can work together to increase the awareness of Norwegian heritage to locals and visitors. Stoughton's unique Norwegian heritage has great potential in cultural tourism. There were discussions about creating Norwegian Heritage weekends that could be marketed to visitors and locals. These weekends would consist of Norwegian meals, Norwegian music and dance performances, classes, and other learning opportunities.

The Opera House is now advertised on the blue highway attraction signs near the Hwy N exit. The Opera House and Visitor Services worked together to get the approval from the Department of Transportation. There are certain requirements an attraction must meet in order to have their logo placed on the sign and the Opera House met those requirements. We hope people will take a quick detour off the Interstate to investigate the Opera House and the Stoughton community.

Norwegian Heritage bus tours have continued to bring visitors to the Stoughton area. We remain consistent with about 8-10 groups visiting throughout the year. Many thanks go to the Sons of Norway for providing wonderful meals and cultural demonstrations for the visitors, as well as Dave Kalland for being a top notch step on guide and museum tour guide and the Opera House for allowing visitors to tour for free. With out the volunteer efforts of these people, these tours could not happen. We continue to get rave reviews about the tours and know that the "word of mouth" advertising will go a long way.

Other happenings include new ownership of the Comfort Inn – now a Quality Inn & Suites. The new owners are working hard to update the hotel and make it more welcoming to guests. They recently replaced all the mattresses in the rooms, remodeled the breakfast room and replaced the furniture in the lobby. They are also looking forward to being a part of the Stoughton community.

We continue to advertise Stoughton's happenings and events through the Travel Wisconsin website and other local events calendars. Facebook continues to be a way to get the word out about Chamber and community events. If you haven't already, please "friend" us on the Chamber's Facebook page.



Stoughton Chamber of Commerce  
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Board of Directors: President: Randy Olson, Universal Silencer, 873-4298; Vice-President: Sandra Burger, Blackhawk Community Credit Union, 314-1610; Secretary: Kari Manson-Hvam, Coldwell Banker SUCCESS, 873-7731; Treasurer: Mark Halverson, Business Transportation Solutions, 873-8210. Board Members: Mayor Donna Olson 873-6677; Laurie Dybevik, Gunderson Funeral Home, 221-5420; Kristi Hund, Stoughton Hospital, 873-6611; Pat McNally, Cress Funeral and Cremation Service, 873-9244; Gloria Staley, Saving Thyme, 877-0075; Tim Onsager, Stoughton Area School District, 877-5000. Staff: David B. Phillips, Executive Director; Erica Dial, Visitor Services Coordinator; Mickey McCormick, Receptionist; Margit Gerber, Syttende Mai Coordinator