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THE CHAMBER Matters

A Quarterly Publication of the News, Events, Members, and Volunteers that Make it Matter
 October 7, 2002 • 99 PLEASANT STREET, NORTHAMPTON, MA 01060 • 413-584-1900

How the Chamber Matters



From left to right, Michael Cimini, Rita Turcotte & Judith Fine create The Chamber Matters page at the Daily Hampshire Gazette

It has been a true pleasure to have served as the editor of *The Chamber Matters* these past two years. Full pages of information, stories, photographs, successes and communication have filled each quarterly edition. While this is my last page serving as editor, *The Chamber Matters* represents much of what my relationship with the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce has been for nearly a decade. The theme of today's issue is "how the Chamber matters to its members, and how the members matter to the Chamber."

The Chamber matters greatly to me. It is the beacon that represents business interests, stays abreast of issues, communicates to its members, serves as the welcome/information center to the hundreds of folks who drop in to request information, advertises events, offers networking opportunities to members, conducts learning seminars, has social events, hosts Summerfest, The Taste, The Chamber Auction, and is there for me on a daily basis. Of course, it is a challenge for the Chamber to take a stand on a specific (often political) issue. The Chamber grapples with how to best represent all sides, and in some cases, must remain firm for the majority good.

Because I chose to become an active chamber member, I have met men and women, both on the Board, in committees, and at social occasions, that I wouldn't otherwise have had any occasion to meet. I have made close friends that have become dear friends, and will remain so for many years.

What do I matter to the Chamber? Probably, because I am an active member (there are many who choose to support the organization in dues only, and we need that too!), my opinion on issues are heard. The Chamber knows it can depend on me, if I say I'll do something, I follow through. So in that sense, I matter. I'm also willing to represent the Chamber, and to recruit for the Chamber. Personally, I can't understand not joining the Chamber, if you are a member of the business community. While sometimes the Chamber's work is invisible, it's constant, and always cognizant of trying to improve the business climate. So, in that sense, I matter to the Chamber, because I have chosen to partner with it. I imagine I matter because I bring a certain sense of humor, a specific attitude, I fight for the little guy, I don't whine, I play the devil's advocate, I have a "cup half full" philosophy, I speak my mind.

It's rewarding to help make a difference, as any person who has been a volunteer is aware. The Chamber matters to me, I matter to the Chamber. End of story, beginning of story.

JUDITH FINE



A Chamber-City business visit at Vox Radio, The River, 93.9 and Bear Country, 95.3. Pictured (front from left) City Councilor Jim Postal, Will Stanley, the City's Economic Development Coordinator, Teri Anderson, Barb Stanley, (back from left) Johnny Memphis, Chamber representative Al Sax and Sean O'Mealy.



The Chamber's Education Committee publishes "Education Matters" to promote the strengths of the Northampton public schools. (pictured) Jonah Suskind and Kendra Rowan, students in Lisa Leary's Advanced Art Class at Northampton High School appeared in a June 2002 issue about enriched curriculum offerings.

Education

"Today, the Chamber has a vital connection with our schools - one that didn't exist 5 years ago. When the Chamber's Education Committee promotes the strengths of the schools or stands up for our need for increased funding, people listen differently. The business community has an important stake in our schools and the Chamber is the voice for those interests."

Victoria White,
 elecTechs Chairman of
 Education Committee

Check out The Chamber



These Chamber volunteers are spreading the word about the benefits of being a Chamber member. Pictured: (front row from left) Noeen Mieskiewicz Hayes, Jane Winnie, Barbara Hawkins, Jenny Pelissier, Pam Cook, Judith Fine, Dave Malek, Joe Traczynski; (back row from left) Gary Bunker, Dan Kunhardt, Christine Dutton, Bob Baker.

The month of October is the Chamber's time to throw open the doors and invite businesses to join. To introduce ourselves, the Chamber is hosting 4 get-togethers open to any business who would like to know more about our organization. If you may be interested in attending, please call Jessica Thompson at 584-1900. Here are the dates:

Wednesday, October 16 at 12 noon
 Tuesday, October 22 at 12 noon
 Wednesday, October 23 at 8:00 AM
 Tuesday, October 29 at 8:00 AM

Northampton Schools are Making the Grade



Northampton's Superintendent of Schools addresses the Chamber at a Meet & Eat breakfast held in February.

Superintendent of Schools Michael Cosgriff delivered an excellent report card to our Chamber Partners last month demonstrating recent successes in Northampton's public schools. Chamber Partners are a group of members that have chosen to increase their investment in the Chamber and now meet regularly for information and discussion about community issues. Cosgriff's report to our Partners emphasized the results of excellent leadership that he commends throughout the district.

- For the school year that ended in June, student achievement improved 7% over the prior year, measured as a percentage of students performing at or above grade level in reading and mathematics.
 - Enrollment in Northampton's schools is also on the rise because more families are choosing Northampton for education. For the school year that began in September, 173 students enrolled through the School of Choice program, a 28% increase over last year.
 - Northampton High School is ranked the 2nd best in the Commonwealth in a statewide performance rating that factors in demographic characteristics of individual school districts.
- For the current school year the district has increased its goal for student achievement and enrollment. Cosgriff is interested in working with Chamber members to set up student internships and to convey "best practice" expertise in purchasing and personnel to help streamline district business procedures.