Get to know your fellow members

Spring is a great time to refocus your marketing efforts. The Business Connections Lunch is designed to give you 20+ personal marketing opportunities in an hour and a half time slot—what better way to spend your time?

Plan to send your marketing and sales representatives to the April 8th Business Connections Lunch, which is held at the Anacortes Lutheran Church at 11:30 am. The cost of lunch is $15—we’ll throw in the networking opportunity.

This month our sponsor is Barry Harter from Central Payment Corporation. Barry is sure to rev up the meeting and bring excitement and energy. Central Payment Corporation is your passionate, premium provider of all noncash payments, helping your business grow with acceptance of credit cards.

Lunch will be prepared by Bob’s Chowder Bar and BBQ Salmon.

Come see the America’s Cup

The 33rd America’s Cup recently won by the BMW Oracle will be on display at the Port Warehouse on Saturday, April 10. Doors open at 7:30 pm; presentation at 8:00 pm. Core Builders is excited to invite the community to view the cup and learn more about the race and the boat they built.

Congratulations Core Builders on building the America’s Cup Champion

business after hours

Please join Insights Gallery for the Business After Hours in their new location at 604 Commercial Avenue. New owners Kae Eagling and Mark Nilson look forward to seeing you there and having the opportunity to show you their new April art show.

Co-sponsoring the event will be the Star Bar, who welcomes Chef Jeremy Ritchie. They invite you to join them at their restaurant for a new menu, casual atmosphere, outdoor patio, live entertainment, daily happy hour and weekly specials.

The Business After Hours is scheduled for Thursday, April 22 at 5:30 pm.
a message from the president

Time to Welcome Back Our Tourism Guests!

By any account, spring is a special time of the year, especially with the onset of the tourist season and the business that it brings, which unofficially begins at the end of March with the re-start of the International Ferry Run to Sidney, B.C. On March 27th & 28th 1000 sport fisherman will visit Anacortes and our surrounding waters to compete for thousands of dollars of prize money at the Anacortes Salmon Derby, staying in local hotels, dining in our restaurants and shopping in our stores. April brings the start of the month-long Tulip Festival, as well as the second annual Anacortes Wine Festival on the 10th. May ushers in our annual Waterfront Festival. Immediately after, over 500 boaters will visit Anacortes for 4-5 days of Trawler Fest seminars and exhibits. The summer season sees thousands of boaters stopping in Anacortes on their way to the San Juan & Gulf Islands and up the Inside Passage to Alaska. In provisioning their boats, they too shop and patronize our restaurants. With the warmer weather, some 3,000 people will visit Anacortes for a bareboat charter cruise. During mid-July, Shipwreck Day and the Workboat Races draw thousands. The Anacortes Arts Festival attracts an estimated 75,000 visitors. 200 power and sail cruising boats are expected to descend on Anacortes for a weekend of fun for the Latitudes & Attitudes magazine Northwest Cruiser’s Rally. 200 boats, 4 people per boat and you have another 800 people that will be visiting our stores and restaurants. 30,000 people will probably visit Anacortes for a whale watching tour this season. Closing out the season in late September, the Oyster Run typically brings close to 20,000 people. And let’s not forget our ferry traffic—some two million people passing through town who often stop to shop or have a meal in Anacortes. Add it all up and somewhere between 2.5 and 3 million people will pass through Anacortes this summer, stopping for an event, a tour, to provision their boats or just to “Coast In and Hang Out” and spend their vacation dollars in town.

Now consider if just 30% of those who visit Anacortes tell five of their friends about the wonderful experience they had visiting our town. The numbers quickly multiply. This is the best and most cost-effective advertising and promotion Anacortes’ businesses can invest in. Each and every one of our employees and staff are ambassadors for Anacortes. A smile, a cheery hello, and a short engaging conversation is just the start of the Anacortes experience.

It feels like the economy is improving. The weather has been fantastic so far this year and it looks like we could be set for a strong tourist season for the Anacortes economy and our chamber members. Let’s build on the Anacortes experience and create a wonderful vacation for our guests and encourage them to tell their friends to “Coast In. Hang Out.”

Mike Trafton
President

County Government Affairs

A large number of chambers state-wide have banded together into governmental affairs consortiums to address regional issues in a more unified manner. The result is an increased “common voice” involving more legislators and a more specific slate, generally no more than three to four items.

We are exploring a similar scenario with our fellow Skagit Valley chambers. Recently Anthony Young, the chair of our Governmental Affairs division, and I met with a number of our counterparts from Mount Vernon, Burlington, Sedro-Woolley, and La Conner to discuss how we might better pool our resources in this area. It was generally agreed that our chambers do share many of the same issues and that allying with each other on specific topics—transportation, economic development, water resources, to name a few—could be valuable and worthwhile.

Current plans call for a monthly meeting. The focus will likely be two-fold: (1) improving communication between chambers on legislative activities; and (2) improving our lobbying influence through use of a larger group. If you have any thoughts on this effort, I would appreciate the input.

—Mitch
Most boat owners are away from their boats much of the year. During those many months, storms, theft, deflated or lost fenders and snapped or stretched lines can quickly damage expensive vessels at the dock. Leaks, power outages and faulty bilge pumps let water into the cabin, which, when left undetected for months, results in ruined fabrics, mold and equipment damage. The results can be devastating, and very costly.

These common yet unexpected occurrences are why it pays to have the inside and outside of your vessel checked regularly by someone you trust. The Boat Minders LLC specialize in providing regularly scheduled, affordable Boat Check Visit Services for conscientious absentee owners who want the peace of mind that comes from knowing an experienced boating professional is personally checking their boat to make sure everything is in order.

The Boat Minders also conduct regularly scheduled House Check Visit Services for absentee homeowners in the area. Interior and exterior inspections of client’s boats and homes are followed by detailed reports generated on-site during each visit that include date-stamped digital images taken at the time of the inspection. Completed reports are delivered via email or fax within 48 hours of inspection. Any issues or problems discovered during each visit will appear in the report. We can also assist with arranging and overseeing needed repairs for most problems detected during boat or home visits.

Boat Minders LLC is owned and operated by Larry and Helen Prier, a husband and wife team who are year-round residents of beautiful Anacortes, Washington. Experienced boaters, the Priers have spent years cruising Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands, Gulf Islands and the coast of British Columbia. Past sailing adventures have included cruising The Great Barrier Reef in Australia amongst the beautiful Whitsunday Islands.

Flexible weekly, bi-weekly or monthly visit schedules. Personal attention to detail.

Contact Helen or Larry for a FREE consultation and quote. Call 360-708-4888 or visit www.TheBoatMinders.com to check out our many other unique services. Serving Fidalgo Island and the San Juan Islands, Washington areas.
2009 Economic Metrics

A key goal of the chamber’s Economic Development division last year was to assemble a quarterly metric for membership use. The intent: a tool that could isolate specific areas of the local economy and provide a snapshot of our economic health. Two of the key areas of this metric—taxable retail sales and hotel/motel tax receipts—are delayed by the state’s Department of Revenue by two months. As such, we have just recently received final numbers. Please find below a brief synopsis.

Sales & Use Tax Payments to the City of Anacortes declined materially to $2.6M in 2009. This was down from $3.2M in 2008 (-19%) and from $3.6M in 2007 (-28%). Based on industry data through the first nine months of 2009, we know that the bulk of this decline centered around boat sales and construction activity.

Hotel/Motel Taxes—a good proxy for hotel stays—declined incrementally to $231K in 2009. This was down from $239K in 2008 (-3%) and from $245K in 2007 (-6%).

Home Sales declined to 208 in 2009. This was down from 243 in 2008 (-14%) and from 334 in 2007 (-38%). Interestingly in the second half of last year, the number of sales actually increased by 17% (127 vs 108 in 2008), a sign that this key indicator may be turning around. Note: this also reflects the reality of lower pricing, with the average selling price declining over the second half of the year, from $411K in 2008 to $352K last year.

Permitting Activity declined to 421 in 2009. This was down from 497 in 2008 (-15%) and from 742 in 2007 (-43%).

Activity at the marina picked up from 2008. Transient Boat Nights—a measure of slip usage—increased to 11,616 last year. This was up from 10,298 in 2008 (+13%) and down from 12,511 in 2997 (-7%). Another measure—Boat Launches—were also up in 2009, increasing from 3,121 in 2008 to 3,417 last year (+9%). Consistently the data reflect gradual improvement over the last six months of 2009 year-over-year but remaining below 2007 levels. We will continue to provide quarterly updates as the information is received.

Hang Glide Off Mt. Erie!

Due to popular demand, the chamber will be offering a special Business After Hours on April 1. One of our new members—Rick “Ripcord” Raponski of Almost Flawless Hang-gliding—will be sponsoring a BAH event at the top of Mt. Erie. For those of you Steve Miller fans who have always wanted to “fly like an eagle,” don’t miss this unique opportunity to get a bird’s eye view of your chamber from at least a couple hundred feet up on your way off-island.

Please RSVP to the chamber office (293-7911), as we need a valid list for insurance purposes.
Leadership Skagit Scholarship

The Anacortes Chamber of Commerce is committed through its board of directors to promoting effective leadership in our city. As such, the chamber has chosen to offer an annual scholarship to EDASC’s Leadership Skagit program. Each annual class forms in September and then continues for the next nine months, promoting leadership and networking skills. Scholarship procedures are as follows:

- The chamber will cover the annual tuition cost to the Leadership Skagit program out of its general fund. Letters of interest are due to the chamber by April 30.
- All chamber members are eligible to apply for the scholarship.
- In accepting the scholarship, applicants agree to complete the program. Should they fail to do so, they agree to return funding to the chamber. Graduates will be invited to a full chamber board meeting to share their experience.

Additional information is available through the chamber office @ 293-7911.

Correction

Last month we lauded our members who had won Best of Anacortes in the Anacortes American’s annual contest. However, sadly, we neglected to list some of those members. Please congratulate Randy’s Pier 61, Bellissima Ristorante and Anacortes Econo-Wash for being listed “Best of” in many categories!

save the date

President’s Luncheon – May 13:
Grow Your Business with Confidence in 2010

Marketing can feel overwhelming and for many of us it’s not technically in our job description. The reality is we’re all marketing all the time, so you might as well learn how to make it as stress-free and high-impact as possible.

You may be asking yourself some of these questions:

- With so many marketing tools, both on and off-line, where should we invest our time and money?
- Do we have an elevator pitch that really works?
- Do we need to update our website and print materials?

The answer is: it depends!

Join us as we learn from presenter, Erica Mills, the founder and principal of Mills Communications Group, a Seattle-based marketing firm that makes marketing simple, effective and totally doable.

Sponsored by

Peoples Bank
A higher level of service.

Tulip Festival

The 27th annual Skagit Valley Tulip Festival will kick off April 1 and will last through the end of the month. At press time, it appeared that the tulips would be early this year, with a number of locations opening the last week of March. Of special interest in 2010: the World Tulip Summit, slated for April 13–15. This international event will be the first held in the United States since its reestablishment. The program will include such topics as the latest developments in the science and technology of tulips, gardening in the Pacific Northwest, and the migration of tulip farming to Western Washington.

Summit delegates will include Tulip Festival goers and representatives from around the world and within the US. They will be encouraged to tour the various parts of the valley and to explore restaurants and shops. Hosting this event is a coup for the Tulip Festival, reinforcing local agriculture’s worldwide importance.
new members

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Larry & Helen Prier
Boat Watch

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member renewals

• Alice Bohnker Insurance Services, LLC
• Anacortes American
• Bayside Specialties
• Bob’s Chowder Bar & BBQ Salmon
• Chandler’s Square- a Retirement Community
• Fidalgo Pool & Fitness Center
• Kae Eagling – Arbonne
• Skagit Publishing
• Irishman Inc.
• Upstage Boutique & Men’s Store
• Whidbey Island Bank

Thanks to the following businesses for donating door prizes at last month’s business after hours:

• Anacortes American
• Bayside Specialties
• Bob’s Chowder Bar & BBQ Salmon
• Chandler’s Square- a Retirement Community
• Fidalgo Pool & Fitness Center
• Kae Eagling – Arbonne
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Spring Wine Festival

Get your ticket today for the Anacortes Spring Wine Festival—just call the chamber or hop online.

These wineries will be participating:
• Barnard Griffin
• Bookwalter Winery
• Bunchgrass Winery
• Challenger Ridge Vineyards
• Chateau Ste. Michelle
• Chinook Wines
• DiStefano Winery
• Five Star Cellars
• Gordan Brothers Winery
• Lantz Cellars
• Legoe Bay Winery
• Lopez Island Vineyards
• Mercer Estates Winery
• Milbrandt Vineyards
• Novelty Hill Winery
• Okanogan Estate & Winery
• O-S Winery
• Plaza Winery
• Pondera Winery
• Revelry Vintners
• Saint Laurent Estate Winery
• San Juan Vineyards
• Saviah Cellars
• Seven Hills Winery
• Tasawik Vineyards
• Walla Walla Vintners
• Woodinville Wine Cellars

Taste treats from these local restaurants:
• Avenue Catering
• Cameron’s Living Room Dining
• Deception Café & Catering
• Il Posto Ristorante
• Majestic Inn & Spa
• Star Bar

Take time to thank these sponsors:
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• Chandler’s Square, A Retirement Community
• Island Hospital
• J Roberts Fine Art
• Marina Inn
• Sebo’s Hardware and Equipment Rental
• Upstage Boutique & Men’s Store
Friends of the Festival:
• Coldwell Banker—Island Living
• Pestarino Family

Waterfront Festival Poster Unveiling

Join us on May 14th for the First Ever

From 4–8 PM Explore the delicious and exquisite cuisine exclusive to La Conner featuring fresh, local ingredients.

$25 for 5 Tastes Pick a Route

Chamber board president, Mike Trafton (Bank of the Pacific) and board member, Joe Schlundt (Shell Puget Sound Refinery) unveil the official 2010 Waterfront Festival Poster at the business after hours hosted by Trident Seafoods. Shell has been the long standing poster sponsor of the festival.
Thank you, volunteers!  
Visit us on the web at www.anacortes.org

2010 ANACORTES Spring Wine Festival  
SATURDAY • APRIL 10 • NOON – 5:00  
AT THE PORT WAREHOUSE  
FEATURING 24 WASHINGTON WINERIES AND 6 LOCAL RESTAURANTS LIVE ENTERTAINMENT  
ADMISSION: $40  
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE ANACORTES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND BROWNPAPERTICKETS.COM (MUST BE AT LEAST 21 TO ATTEND)  
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Coast in. Hang out.