Business After Hours will feature Waterfront Festival poster unveiling

Join the excitement Thursday, March 16 when the Business After Hours event features unveiling of the 2006 Anacortes Waterfront Festival poster.

The Business After Hours, scheduled from 5:30 - 7 p.m., will be hosted by mortgage consultant Mark Nilson and will take place at the WT Preston Heritage Center, 703 “R” Avenue.

Chamber Events Coordinator Stephanie Hamilton notes that special guests include poster sponsor Shell Puget Sound Refinery and the Port of Anacortes.

Consultant Mark Nilson sponsors After Hours

Event sponsor Mark Nilson is a local independent mortgage consultant, affiliated with a licensed broker, (Clarion Mortgage Capital, Inc.). Mark has a degree in economics from Washington State University, was a Senior Vice President for a major regional airline, a partner in a marine export agency, was Chairman & CFO of a software company and small charter airline simultaneously, and has been a business consultant since 1986.
From the President’s Desk

What’s your company’s ‘mantra?’

I thought I’d take a moment this month and talk about one of the new hip words in the advertising world: “Mantra.” This is the art of uncovering information that leads to a concise, simple statement that communicates your difference to the consumer. It can be hard for the insider to see their Mantra. There is a saying: “You can’t read the label from inside the bottle.” Sometimes an outsider sees the obvious that we can’t.

To develop your Mantra, first ask your employees to participate in filling out a survey. The survey must be confidential. Then reach out to those you trust outside your company. Some of the questions that will help you gauge how your employees and others see you and your company are:

1. What are some upcoming goals for the company?
2. What two or three aspects about your business distinguish you from the competition?
3. What aspect(s) are difficult for your competition to imitate?
4. How well does your company handle customer complaints?
5. How well does your company follow up after the sale?
6. What is the core strength of your organization?
7. What are your company’s weaknesses?
8. How could we overcome those shortcomings?
9. If you were the marketing director what key theme would you focus on that would need to be in every advertising piece representing your company?

The idea is that almost everyone will hit on one or two main themes. This is where your “Mantra” lives. The hard part is the ability to convey the Mantra to your customer. That’s the job of your advertising. It is important that you realize that Mantra/Branding Statement/Position/Direction, be part a everything you do in advertising and marketing.

Tourism Marketing

Gear up now for tourist season

By Steve Berentson

With spring just around the corner, the Chamber of Commerce has launched its annual campaign to attract tourists to our island community.

Advertisements and editorial contributions are scheduled in a number of tourism publications, including the ever-popular San Juanderer (Anacortes American), the MacGregor Newcomers and Visitors Guide and the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival publication (Skagit Valley Herald).

In the meantime, Anacortes tourism “stars” including Washington Park and Historic Downtown are featured in the March issue of Sunset magazine and the 2006 edition of the state tourism guide, which just hit the street (www.experiencewashington.com).

I love the Sunset magazine article written by Ali Basye. The subhead of the article reads: “Visit the San Juans without leaving the mainland.” And the article reads in part:

“The rolling hills, red-earthed bluffs, and sparkling water views of Anacortes’ Washington Park on Fidalgo Island feel just like the more remote San Juans to the west.”

This spring kickoff issue of Sunset also includes a “Sea to Sky” advertisement by www.SkagitTourism.com, a site created and maintained by the Skagit County Chamber Executive Directors’ Association (SCCEDA). This site offers a link to our website at www.anacortes.org.

Again this year, Anacortes leads off the Islands section of the new state tourism magazine, a mass-distribution publication featuring our own Skagit Valley tulips on the cover. An important element of the “pitch” is the convenience factor: “Fidalgo is the ‘drive-to’ island, accessible by bridges from the east and south.”

Photographs include the new Downtown Arch, a downtown shopping scene and Deception Pass Bridge. A list of annual events includes the Waterfront Festival, 4th of July activities, the Anacortes Arts Festival and the Anacortes Jazz Festival.

Our tourism marketing, coupled with the draw of the International (Sidney, B.C.) and San Juan Islands ferries, promises to bring seasonal guests by the droves. Make preparations now to extend a welcome and reap the benefits of the tourist’s propensity to spend money.
It was a full house for Mayor Dean Maxwell’s “State of the City” presentation, a President’s Luncheon program that included good news for Anacortes businesses.

Anacortes continues to have the lowest property tax rate in Skagit County, noted Maxwell, and despite population growth City Hall is operating within budget, with reserves. The city has a policy of holding 5 percent of budgeted expenditures in reserve.

The mayor reported there are no user fee or utility tax increases proposed in 2006, and refinancing of a city library construction loan will save taxpayers $240,000. City water rates, he suggested, are among the lowest of any municipal utility in the state.

In reference to an economic study conducted by a consultant, Maxwell said the city is “well positioned” to address potential revenue shortfalls related in part to the Initiative 747 property tax limitation.

“If the city had added five full-time positions 12 years ago,” noted the mayor, “there would be no fund balance today to address our ever-changing, initiative-driven environment.”

The city continues to seek community input via a consumer survey distributed in utility bills.

“This economic study is a tool designed to help us focus on our community today,” he said, “and it will be used to help all of us define and target our future wants and needs.”

Other highlights of Maxwell’s speech include the following:

- 49 percent of the workforce in Anacortes commutes here from other communities;
- The City of Anacortes website has drawn more than five million visitors over a two-year period; the City Library boasted one million hits in 2005;
- Work continues on a new City Arts Commission operating under the umbrella of the Parks Department;

- This year the city will start to place mobile data terminals in patrol cars, enhancing the officers’ ability to operate in the field without returning to the police department.
- The budget for the city’s sidewalk program will increase from $31,000 in 2005 to $100,000 in 2006. Another $260,000 is budgeted for block improvements between 8th and 9th streets (five downtown blocks have been improved, four remain).

Our thanks to the following businesses for their recent contributions to the Chamber and its activities:

Beautification Donations
Portalis, LLC
Bubba Sudz Car Wash for washing the lamp pole banners.

President’s Luncheon
Luncheon Sponsor: Verizon Superpages and SuperPages.com
Express Personnel Services
KLKI Radio
Mark Nilson Mortgage Consultant

Mister T’s Awards & Embroidery
Mystic Sea Charters
Watermark Book Store

Business After Hours
Host: Nantucket Inn & Restaurant
ArtSmart of Anacortes
Chandler’s Square
Island Medical Spa
Johnny Picasso’s
KLKI Radio
Mark Nilson Mortgage Consultant
Ted Meyer
Mortgage Master
Northwest Cedar Homes, LLC

Take some of the mystery out of the story of small business in Anacortes. Come prepared to tell your story, and to hear about the business pursuits of others. As always, participants at the Business Connections Luncheon will move from table to table, presenting one-minute “info-mercials.” After each presentation, business cards are exchanged and “lead sheets” are completed.

Cost is $10, which includes lunch. For only $10 more, you can host a “talking table” with the opportunity to display merchandise or marketing materials. RSVP only. Call the Chamber at 293-7911.
International ferry season begins on April 2

Preparations are underway to kick off the Spring Season of the Anacortes/Sidney, B.C. international ferry run Sunday, April 2 with a gala event at the Sidney terminal.

Look for Town Criers and dignitaries to gather at 7 a.m. Sunday, April 2 when the ferry leaves the Anacortes dock for the first international run of 2006.

The first run will transport a Spring Season Kickoff delegation including Anacortes Chamber of Commerce representatives, Sister Cities Association representatives, City of Anacortes and Skagit County officials, WSF representatives, and more for a round trip adventure to Sidney, British Columbia.

Expected to be on hand in Sidney, Anacortes’ Sister City, are dignitaries from organizations including the Town of Sidney and Tourism Victoria. There will also be an unveiling of a commemorative Anacortes/Sidney, B.C. poster, with artist present to sign his work.

The Spring Season schedule for the international ferry begins April 2, with one trip daily from Anacortes and back. The run moves to two round trips effective June 10, when the Summer Season begins.

Once again this year, WSF will offer reduced rates for recreational vehicles - a half-price discount that last year increased RV travel on the route by 87 percent.

Call 293-7911 for information about the April 2 kickoff event. See www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries for reservations or details about the ferry schedule and travel requirements (such as photo ID, birth certificate or passport).

Caught in the Act of Doing Business

Caught in the act of doing business late last month was Bob Tracy of Tracys Home Furnishings, 1920 Commercial Avenue. Tracys, a 25-year-old Anacortes business, re-opened March 1 to a three-week Lane Home Furnishings sale after a brief closure to conduct annual inventory.

First Friday Gallery Walk

The Gallery Walk is March 3, 6 – 9 p.m. 714 Commercial Ave., Artsmart
The theme is “Luck of the Irish,” with giclée prints by Gayle Keith-Ashley.
711 Commercial Ave., Anne Martin McCool Gallery. The gallery features the work of Rebecca Hyland and others.
619 Commercial Ave., Keystone Center for the Arts. Studios open for the event are Alice Kapka, Lorraine Beegle, Zeta Wolf Silk Art Gallery and Elizabeth’s Cottage by the Sea.
516 Commercial Ave., Insights Gallery.
In March Insights is having a Neo-Retro show: new landscapes and classic surrealist paintings by Larry Heald as well as new watercolors by Marty Rogers and always showing the work of Alfred Currier with more than 24 other artists represented.
510 Commercial Ave., Adrift. The café is showing photographs from travels in Sweden by Sam Winston.
420 Commercial Ave., Scott Milo Gallery.
The gallery features plein air pastel landscapes by Steve Hill, pastels and acrylics by Joel Brock, watercolors by Denise Cole, enhanced monotype prints by Shari Osti and Native American carvings by Kevin Paul, plus other gallery artists.
1005 4th Street, Johnny Picasso’s. The café is featuring work by artist Jean Kroll.
611 R Ave, Gallery at the Depot.
The Depot presents its annual Anacortes School District Youth Art Show for grades K-12. Music will be provided by students.
801 5th Street, Bowman Gallery.
The Bowman Gallery is showing enhanced digital photography by Marius Hibbard, pastels by Kathleen Faulkner and oils by Susie Thompson.
Anacortes Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Michael Broome represented local interests last month when a delegation from Skagit County and other northwest Washington communities traveled to Olympia to caution against premature federal action requiring passports at the Canadian border.

Broome was among those testifying at a joint House/Senate hearing on February 17 in the state’s capital. Others included state Rep. Jeff Morris of Anacortes.

Morris’ expressed concerns included potential negative impacts on the international ferry run.

A federal passport requirement for sea and air travel to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean takes effect at the end of this year, and tentative plans call for passports for land crossings in 2007.

“Security is a very important issue,” said Broome, “but too is the economy. Implementation of new border crossing requirements needs to be handled carefully so as not to negatively impact local economies, and the U.S. economy in general.”

He added, “In Anacortes specifically, the impact of poorly implemented policy would be significant in regard to the international ferry between Anacortes and Sidney, B.C.”

The Anacortes Chamber will continue to be engaged in this issue.

**Update your business information**

It may not have been among your New Year’s resolutions, but this is a good time to review and update information regarding your business.

Check our printed materials as well as the Chamber website at www.anacortes.org to confirm that our information regarding your business is still current.

For changes, contact Member Services Manager Sue Keller at 293-7911.

**AnacortesToday.com**

An Internet presence can be an important investment in your company marketing plan, and you won’t find a more colorful Anacortes-based website. Purchase a banner ad on AnacortesToday.com, updated on a daily basis by local writer and photographer Steve Berentson. Call 293-4852 for details.

Hmm. Is it text or images that catch your eye?
Lake Campbell Lodging

Lake Campbell Lodging is situated in the heart of Fidalgo Island, just four miles from Anacortes. The lodging has overnight accommodations and kitchenettes for long term renting in the fall, winter and spring. Fishing access to Campbell Lake offers catfish, perch, bass and trout.

Lake Campbell Lodge offers some great amenities for guests, including coffee pot with coffee and tea, microwave, refrigerator and seating area in all of our 10 rooms. Our kitchenettes come equipped with a stove and oven, large frig, all the cooking utensils, pots, pans, plates, cups, toaster, basically everything but the food. Some rooms offer a tub with shower. While others have a walk-in shower. A few of the kitchenettes have two separate private beds with their own TVs.

The lodging has been added onto once and remodeled four times over the years. Lake Campbell Lodging has been family owned and operated since 1968 by owners Bill and Jeanette Christensen. Bill is an Anacortes native and is the one responsible for the majority of the required maintenance. He refers to it as “gluing it back together.” He continues to be the man to call if something breaks. Jeanette is originally from Butte, MT and moved here in 1969. She has been the main housekeeper for most of the years. She has had granddaughters, a niece, and also local high school girls that she trained for summer work.

Lake Campbell Lodge has always been a family run operation. Bill’s mother, Karen Moberg, was the manager from 1977 - 1980. Jeanette’s parents, Marshall and Rosemary Roland, managed it from 1984 - 1996. There has also been a brother, a sister, a daughter and a granddaughter who did some short term managing.

In the last year, they turned over operation of the motel to their youngest son Brent, who will be responsible for all the hands-on operation. Jeanette’s sister, Marsha, who is the live-in manager, also helps with the office and cleaning and is another one of the friendly faces you will see. When our guests stay here we want them to feel like they are family and we believe that is why they come back every year. We have had family reunions celebrate here every summer for more than 15 years. Wedding parties are also a great yearly occurrence. We at Lake Campbell Lodging pride ourselves on providing a clean, comfortable and relaxing experience for all of our guests. After all our motto is “Clean, Comfortable, Reasonable!”

Ambassadors Corner

Catherine Bearce

Catherine Bearce and her family moved to Anacortes from Dallas, Texas, almost 10 years ago, falling in love with the year-round outdoor activities, scenery, and small town atmosphere of Anacortes. She and her husband Pat were sailors when they came to the area, moving to power boating (the dark side) several years ago. Every summer the Bearces try to get as far north as possible. “The scenery is spectacular and the people we’ve met while boating are always fun and interesting,” Catherine says. When not boating, Catherine enjoys bike riding, hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, art, travel, cooking, and photography. “I’m a fan of Washington State,” she says. “You can live a culturally rich and physically active life year round.”

Catherine owns Bearce Design, offering graphic design services from a studio in her home. “I’ve free-lanced since my daughter Andrea was in grade school,” she says. “It gives me more time to devote to my clients and their projects and I’m able to keep my costs lower than average. It’s been wonderful. Life is good!”

Consider the Ambassadors Club, a fun-loving group of people who endeavor to promote and advance the services and programs of the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce.

Ambassadors volunteer their time at Chamber events such as ribbon cuttings, Business After Hours and the President’s Luncheon. They also contact new members and are involved in large projects such as the Waterfront Festival and Jazz Festival. Call the Chamber at 293-7911 to learn more.
Community Baby Shower
Soroptomist International of Fidalgo Island will be hosting a Community Baby Shower on March 4 at the Anacortes Food Pavilion, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Too often the joy that should accompany the birth of a new baby is marred by poverty, violence, or abuse. Sometimes a woman has fled domestic violence, which usually accelerates during pregnancy or after the birth of a newborn. Parents serving in the armed forces or dealing with unemployment often find it impossible to prepare for a baby.

For these little ones, there will be no baby shower, no welcoming gifts, and no celebration. With a little help from everyone, we can ease the burden on new mothers and provide basic items that could give babies a great start.

To get involved, contact Jan Carpenter Gray at 299-2699 or stop by Food Pavilion on March 4.

David Wilcoxen
7337 Miller Road, Anacortes
360-293-5355
www.pioneertrails.com

GEM, LLC
Property management and storage facility for local commercial fishing and personal storage.
Farah Ally & Lara Dunning
360-293-6747

Vicki McNeil and Barbara Hoenselaar, attended American Booksellers Association's first annual Winter Institute. The two-day seminar offered extensive classes about many aspects of the business and art of bookselling, along with less formal gatherings of booksellers, publishers, and authors.

Twelve-year Watermark employee Vicki McNeil said, “I learned so much in two days! We came back to Anacortes full of ideas and energy, having recharged our batteries with peers and old friends. I particularly enjoyed the seminar on the bookstore as a third place. Watch out, Anacortes, we may even feature sheep-shearing at Watermark in the future!”

The institute, in Long Beach, CA, drew more than 350 booksellers from around the U.S.

Name change
Quality Log & Lindal Cedar Homes by Sevieri & Company recently changed its name to Northwest Cedar Homes LLC.
VIC Statistics

Thank You, Volunteers!

January 2006

Visitors 567 (581 - 2004)
Phone Calls 231 (220 - 2004)
Information Request 128 (38 - 2004)
Relocation Request 31 (27 - 2004)
Web Sessions 21,590 (16,151 - 2004)

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Anacortes
Chamber of Commerce
819 Commercial Ave., Suite F
Anacortes, WA 98221

This scene is from last summer’s 4th of July parade in Anacortes, but visitors to Sidney, British Columbia on Sunday, April 2 will see the “Ferry Between Friends” again when the first 2006 run of the International Ferry transports vehicles and passengers from Anacortes to Sidney. See details, page 4.