

New BBA president excited about promoting local business and community outreach

By Jackie Giroux
Reporter

Laura Collins of Collins & Associates Accounting & Tax Service is excited about serving her 2010 term as Bedford Business Association president.

With many new ideas resulting from the recent BBA retreat, held at Lost Peninsula Marina, Collins is looking forward to the BBA beginning to implement these ideas that will be beneficial to both Bedford businesses and members of the community.

"The goal of the BBA this year is to work with current members and non-members to become more influential and noticeable in the community," she said. "The BBA is not a social group. It's number one goal is making businesses stronger and secondly reaching out to the community," she stressed.

The daylong retreat attended by the 15 members of the executive board is used to set the tone for the BBA for the coming year. The executive board members go over goal objectives additionally setting dates for the dinner meetings and fund raising events as well as to review and fine tune all committees. "The retreat is a huge commitment for people on the board because all are small business owners and it takes them away from their businesses for an entire day – especially in today's economy," Collins said.

Collins would like to see committees expanded from four or five members to 10 members. "The more people that are involved, the more ideas there are," she said.

An idea that is being considered is that there be some sort of recognition for members who become more involved in the BBA; serving on committees and volunteering. This may include some sort of member rewards program.

"Buy Bedford Always" is the BBA motto. Collins feels that if goods and services are offered at better rates, residents will shop locally instead of going to Toledo or Monroe. "Keeping the money in Bedford, keeps the community stronger," Collins said. The support and assistance the BBA can give to area businesses can help to insure that they remain strong and competitive so shoppers will patronize local businesses instead of going out of the area.

A new committee to be created is the Business Development Committee. "This is where Bedford business owners who have questions will be able to go to receive unbiased opinions to help solve their issues," Collins said.

The committee will aid both existing and new business alike. An existing business may be struggling with issues such as successfully collecting receivables in this economy and will be able to get some advice. Someone desiring to start a new business will be able to get some help with such things as organization, location, permits, licenses and tax liability. "This committee can help to get them up and running," Collins said.

The business directory is a very important tool of the BBA benefiting both businesses and



A lot of BBA history ... These BBA past presidents/board members recently attended the organization's annual retreat to go over their goals and objectives for the coming year. Left to right: Mary Ann McBee, Meg Smith, current BBA President Laura Collins, Karen Daggett, Linda Flick and Marty Monroe.

Bedford residents. This directory is mailed yearly to every resident in the Bedford area. Member businesses are included in the directory alphabetically and also by index. They also have the opportunity to purchase display advertising in the directory. The directory is an easy source for residents to use to find a local business to meet a product or service need.

Collins said that she is looking into including a Bedford Business Card in with the directory that will be accepted at

BBA member businesses. She suggested that customers using this card could accumulate points to be used toward something such as a gift certificate. She stressed that details are not worked out yet and that this is still in the planning stage.

With over 700 businesses located in the Bedford community and a BBA membership of 300 of these businesses, the BBA will be striving to increase its membership. Collins said, "We hope to offer a trial membership of three months for free to new

members on approval. They will still need to qualify with the criteria for membership in the BBA."

Collins said that the monthly dinner meetings are going to be structured differently. The meetings will be held at the same location each time and will have more informative speakers. The speaker will be a professional with a particular subject in mind. The topics will be beneficial to area businesses and may feature subjects such as creating a website, community relations or

how a business can be profitable in today's economy.

The BBA newsletter, *Bits & Pieces*, is currently only sent to BBA members and Collins would like to see all Bedford businesses receive this newsletter. "It would also be available at locations like the library so the general public would be able to read it and know what is going on. This will help make the BBA more visible to the community," Collins said.

Another goal is to rework the BBA website. Ideas that are be-

ing considered are to include an ad for all BBA members, a bio of their business and to have new members spotlighted. Collins said, "We plan to increase the coupons on the website."

"One of the other goals is to strengthen our commitment with Bedford Township and Bedford schools," Collins said.

Giving back to the community is a very important aspect of the BBA. "We want to make the community aware as to what we do as an organization," Collins said. The BBA scholarships, food drive, road cleanup and golf outing are some of the on-going ways the BBA gives back to the community. The BBA Trade Fair continues to be a very successful event in the community and they hope to expand it. Collins said that other events are being considered to show appreciation to the community. These events may include customer appreciation days or an Oktoberfest.

One of the hopes and dreams of the BBA is to have their own building. This building would provide a place to hold board meetings and dinner meetings as well as a site that provides storage for all of their equipment, such as for road cleanup, the Trade Fair signs and golf outing signs.

The BBA started a building fund over 15 years ago with the hope of finding a home for the BBA. They are keeping their eyes open for the right locations and would love an interested party to donate or offer a good deal on some property/building with enough parking to hold events.

If the building were large enough it is thought that they might rent out small offices. A building would also offer the members a place to hold their

company meetings along with being available to rent out. The BBA is looking at lots of ideas and is always open to suggestions.

Collins will be holding quarterly meetings with past BBA presidents. She feels these past presidents have some important ideas and feedback.

"To make the BBA stronger, you need to look forward and also to look backward. There's a lot of history. There are reasons the Trade Fair is so successful and the organization is so strong," she said. "With the BBA in its 30th year, you can't leave the past behind. There are reasons it's grown from five members to the 300 members that we have today."

"The BBA is looking to solicit ideas, comments, thoughts and suggestions from businesses and the community on what the BBA can do to become more impactful in the community and businesses that are here," Collins said.

With a lot of enthusiasm and the desire to make the quality of life in the Bedford community better, Collins said, "I'm very excited. If we stick with our main goal about promoting businesses and drawing on past history, I think it's going to be a fantastic year with goals and marketing in place."

In addition to Collins, the BBA Executive Board is made up by Jan Howard (J Howard Electric), first vice president; Karen Daggett (Temperance Printing/Bedford Press) second vice president; Linda Flick (Flick's Package Liquor, Inc.) third vice president; Jerry Barron (Barron Insurance Agency) secretary; and Mike Bassinger (Bassinger Building Company) treasurer. Trustees include: Tammy Lamb (Bedford Com-

munity Foundation/Goodwill Industries), Dr. Greg Vogt (Foot & Ankle Specialists), Wendy DeBord (Lambertville Orthodontics), Meg Smith (Bedford Township), Laurie Fulkerson (Laurie Fulkerson CPA), Deb Brescol (R.S.V.P. of Monroe Co.), Pam Norton (H&S Sports Plus), and Jessica Thompson (Farm Bureau Insurance). Marty Monroe (Affordable Accounting & Bookkeeping) is past president.

"We have a fantastic board," Collins said. "Some have been on the board before and we have new people who have never been on the board."

The Bedford Business Association is located at 8100 Lewis Ave., Suite 5, in Temperance. To contact the BBA, please stop by the office Monday-Friday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or call (734) 850-2200. Their website can be viewed at www.BBA.org.