

Responses indicate business group gaining its own identity

The results of the Saukville Chamber of Commerce's second annual membership survey shows the group is gaining a better sense of its role in the business community.

"The Saukville Chamber, unlike a lot of Chambers in the area, is a relatively new group that is trying to establish its identity," said Nicole Sidoff, community resource development educator with the University of Wisconsin Extension.

It was the second year Sidoff conducted the Chamber survey. The 2009 response rate was 32% of the 104 dues-paying members, almost identical to the participation level in 2008.

The 10-question survey was conducted in December using the on-line tool Survey Monkey.

To garner an even greater response, Sidoff said, the next survey may need to be conducted in January to avoid getting lost in the holiday shuffle.

Although she has done limited survey work for the Port Washington Chamber of Commerce, Sidoff said her position with UW-Extension makes her available to work with even more non-profit groups and government organizations.

"I have a graduate degree in urban studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that included survey preparation and analysis. Working on a project like this makes that \$100 textbook worth the price," Sidoff said.

The emerging identity of the Saukville Chamber is signified by the fact that 44% of members responding to the survey have belonged to the group for no more than three years. Only 22% of the respondents have been members for as long as 10 years.

The surveys are the offshoot of a 2008 commitment to restructure the organization in response to requests from business owners.

Sidoff said the Chamber leadership has said the surveys should be used to gauge the value members feel the organization provides. The survey offers a critique of

Saukville Chamber survey shows progress

Written by Mark Jaeger

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existing programs, as well as suggestions for additional offerings.

“For me, the most meaningful results from the surveys were the individual comments,” Sidoff said.

“I think the most telling response came from the person who said, ‘I believe this Chamber has improved greatly in the last few years. This includes community involvement activities and trying to present programs beneficial to businesses.’ This shows the Chamber is making progress in the community.”

Three areas were most frequently cited for additional programming, with 38% saying the Chamber should offer more incentives to promote small businesses, 35% saying more educational offerings are needed and 32% saying joint Chamber events should be organized.

Survey respondents said the Chamber excels in hosting social events, including the annual golf outing, brat fry and after-hours gatherings.

Because a number of outside businesses have approached Chamber Executive Director Stacey Frey asking to purchase the group’s membership list, a new question was added to the latest survey.

However, Sidoff said little was resolved by the query.

While 33% of the respondents said the membership list should not be shared with outside businesses, 22% said the list should be provided at no charge to anyone who asks for it. Between those extremes, the responses supported selling the list for between \$25 and \$100.

“Because the responses to this question were widely varied, it will be important to seek additional input before making a decision,” Sidoff said.