

Chamber finds office, awaits director

Written by MARK JAEGER

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President of business group says lack of community presence seen as organization's greatest shortcoming

When Stacey Frey announced her resignation as executive director of the Saukville Chamber of Commerce at the end of last month, Chamber President Russ Lund admitted a few eyes brows were raised.

"It's a natural thing for people to be curious. They want to know what is going on?" Lund said.

The transition inspired Lund to send out a blanket e-mail to Chamber members and business leaders throughout the community.

The message box for those e-mails proclaimed — "Our Chamber is Very Healthy and Growing."

Leading the way in the advances the group is making, according to Lund, is the announcement that the Chamber will be renting office space at the front of the Krohn Real Estate building, 101 N. Mill St.

The real-estate office will continue to operate in the rear of the building.

"Our lease is through the end of the year, but I think it will be a no-brainer for the Chamber board to approve an extended lease," Lund said.

"It's funny how this all worked out, because (building owner) Margaret Krohn said she regularly has people stopping in her office, asking where the Chamber office is located."

The lack of an office has been one of the problems repeatedly cited in annual surveys of Chamber members.

Up until this point, Lund said the Chamber office was "essentially Stacey's house."

When a new director is hired, the position will remain part-time, but Lund said a reworked job description will specify a certain amount of time in the office.

Until a new executive director is hired, probably in November, Lund will be filling in as interim director.

He said he has already received the offer of assistance from the Saukville Area Historical Society.

Society President Anne Kertscher said her members would help staff the office.

"That should work out great for them, because if anyone is looking for the Society's Crossroads

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Museum the volunteers will be able to walk them to it right down the street," Lund said.

The Chamber is also unveiling a new Web site, which includes links to the sites maintained by all member businesses.

As an indication of the Chamber's commitment to making a difference in the community, Lund said the group recently presented Saukville Elementary School with 25% of the proceeds from its 5K run/walk.

That money, more than \$1,200, will be used for the school's breakfast program.

Principal Chad Brakke said the program offers children a free breakfast, thanks to donations and volunteers.

"We average about 30 children a day. Some come in for breakfast every day, and others come on days when their parents are running late," Brakke said.

He said the school used to charge 25 cents for the program, but participation grew this year when the fee was dropped.

"We're excited to be able to offer this to our children, and it is only possible through donations from groups like the Chamber," Brakke said.