

Chamber gives green thumbs up to local agriculture

Written by George Browning
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The Washington County Chamber of Commerce met at scenic Cornerstone Hall for their monthly meeting on July 26, 2012. Board President Hank Jacoby was in good spirits as he welcomed everyone in attendance and talked up some of the upcoming events drawing near in Washington County.

Front and center on his agenda was a reminder of the fall big three – Friday Night on the Square, Old Settlers' Day and the new beer and wine festival Eikosi. Jacoby particularly encouraged chamber members to attend the county's newest event, calling Eikosi "a celebration of local agriculture and crafts". Chamber members were also reminded that vendor applications are now available for all three events. For more information on registering, contact Anita Bush at the Chamber's office.

Jacoby also announced that Attorney General Zoller will be in town on August 16 to speak at Southern Hills Church. His topic will be healthcare reform. You can purchase your tickets ahead of time for \$10, or pay \$12 at the door.

And what better time to start talking about this year's 'Light up the Court House' Christmas lights project than the end of July. The Chamber recently took a survey of its members, seeking input regarding what changes or improvements Salem residents wanted to see in the annual lighting project this holiday season.

The survey proposed a few ideas that members could vote on, but two of them were undeniably more popular than the rest. The first was that people wanted to see even more lights drape the Court House and its lawn this year. The second was that they also wanted speakers set up around the square playing Christmas music. The Chamber is currently putting together a committee to begin planning for this year's setup. If you would like to help out, contact the Chamber's office.

Community announcements this month included an announcement for St. Vincent-Salem Hospital's new Senior Renewal Center, which is having an open house soon. The center's mission is to assist and treat senior citizens who struggle with the unique emotional challenges that can arise during this season of life. The open house will be held on August 30 from 3 to 6 pm.

SOAR will be celebrating their 3rd anniversary on Friday, August 24, and they are currently seeking silent auction donations or table sponsorships of \$200. The YMCA will be presenting the 5K walk/run for the kids on Saturday, September 8.

Dr. Mindy Gunn briefly talked about the first edition of a Washington County agricultural guide that has been a work in progress for some time now. The guide is intended to be a comprehensive list of every local producer, crafter and farmer in Washington County, but it will serve an important secondary purpose by helping residents find anything they're seeking to purchase within the county. "Nobody should be having to look outside the county for anything they need," Gunn said, emphasizing the wide variety of vegetables, meats and other products harvested and sold locally.

Jacoby added that Washington County is becoming a hotbed for "low tech", "high concept" agriculture. He pointed to the popularity of the Farmers & Artisans group as an example.

The Chamber of Commerce meets for their monthly meetings at noon on the fourth Thursday of every month. If you would like to RSVP for next month's meeting, email Anita Bush at info@washingtoncountychamber.org.