

May 2008

WILLIAMSBURG'S

Next Door Neighbors[©]

VOL. 2, ISSUE 5

PRICELESS

Discovering the people who call Williamsburg home

2008 SMALL BUSINESS ISSUE

*Williamsburg's
Small Businessperson
of the Year*
Tom Austin

Local Organizations
Provide Resources for
Williamsburg's Small
Businesses

Fleming Buck's
Success Story on
Changing with the
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Meredith Collins, Publisher

Next Door Neighbors publishes two issues each year relating to local business. In late December, we bring you a business forecast issue where we interview Williamsburg business leaders within categories such as real estate, banking and hospitality, and we ask them to tell us what they predict for their industries in the upcoming year. In late April, we publish an issue that focuses on small business in Williamsburg.

In this 2008 small business issue, there is a common thread that runs through each of the stories. This common thread relates to the realities of an economic downturn and ways small business owners can adapt to changes in the marketplace. The purpose of these stories is to provide answers to some of the questions many small business owners are asking themselves during a tough economic year: *What can we learn from others to help make the best of a tough situation? What resources are available to small business owners that may help us learn how to operate our businesses more efficiently or make better decisions? What can business owners who have been in business for a long time tell us about the challenges they have faced over the years and how they handled them?*

We recognize that not everyone who receives and reads this issue of *Next Door Neighbors* is a small business owner. In fact, some of you are retired from the workforce or have never worked at all. Many of you, however, go to work each day and if you don't own your own business you work for someone who does. You, like the business owner, feel the pinch when sales are slow and you reap the benefits when times are good.

While none of us can change a slow economy on our own, we can increase our understanding of the business environment in our own backyard. The reality is that collectively we have everything to do with how Williamsburg's small businesses fair in 2008. My hope is that you will allow these stories to heighten your awareness of how your spending as a consumer can impact others. That small business you pass by occasionally and think about visiting could probably use your patronage and you, in turn, will most likely be pleasantly served. After all, those small business owners are an integral part of Williamsburg's economy and it's likely that they are your neighbors too! NDN

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Tom Austin Believes Flexibility is Important for Success in the Restaurant Business

By Linda Landreth Phelps

Tom Austin is the General Partner of Berret's Seafood Restaurant and Tap-house Grill, a favored dining destination of Williamsburg locals and tourists alike. The building his restaurant occupies at 199 South Boundary Street has seen many uses throughout the years. It began as an Esso station and became a Ford dealership as well as a fire station. A quarter of a century ago it was converted to its present use as a restaurant.

In 1972, Tom came to the area as a young man with a family to raise, fresh from a demanding job in New York City. Throughout the ensuing years, he worked in various positions at fine eating establishments such as Christiana Campbell's Tavern, Cascades Restaurant, and the Williamsburg Inn. Like many young people, Tom was full of ideas. His experiences in the restaurant industry sparked his desire to one day own his own restaurant; today his dream has come true in triplicate.

In 1984, he and several friends brainstorming over oysters and beer created a partnership, formed an investment group and purchased Berret's. They, plus additional more recent partners, now own Berret's, River's Inn Restaurant and Crab Deck at the marina on Sarah's Creek in Gloucester, and The Riverwalk Restaurant at the recently renovated waterfront in Yorktown. As the general manager of all three estab-

lishments, Tom puts in many miles traveling between them. Every so often he pauses on the Colonial Parkway for a restorative break in his rounds, pulls out the fishing rod he carries in his car, and tries his luck at a little angling. Over the years Tom's observed the

regular ebb and flow in the tides of the rivers and in his businesses as well.

Tom, a hands-on manager who likes to roll up his sleeves and participate in every aspect of the restaurant business, found it challenging when River's Inn was opened in addition

to the original Berret's. The hours are long and the holidays few.

"We're off on Christmas and New Year's Day, with only six hours of daily down time between 1:00 and 7:00 a.m. Burnout is common in food service, so you have to learn to delegate responsibility," Tom says.

Between the three locations, there are about 175 employees, many of whom have been with him from the very first. "I am blessed with good people who know their jobs and have been with me for many years. I had to learn not to micromanage them because you just can't do that successfully. I had to let go of the small stuff and concentrate on the bigger picture."

Until recently the lagging economy had less impact on Tom's businesses than on others. "Unlike some, 2007 was a great year for us at all three restaurants," he says. "But it was an unusual year in that we had the President's visit and Queen Elizabeth was in town for the big Jamestown 2007 celebration, all of which were responsible for bringing in a lot of customers for us."

According to Tom, the real challenge began this year.

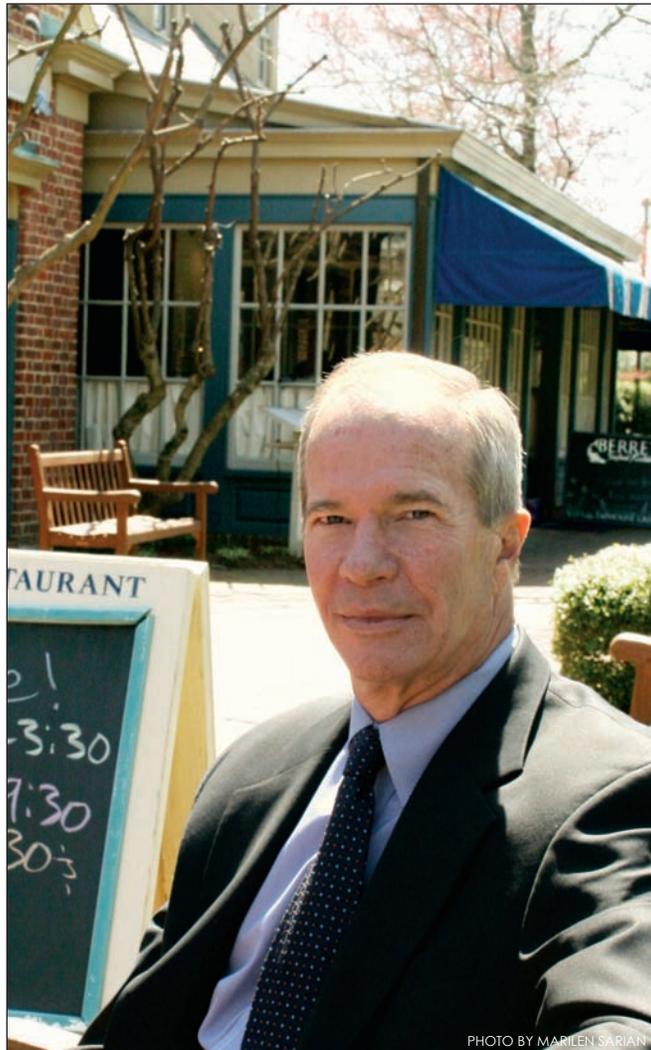


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"Fortunately for those of us in the food industry, the population of Williamsburg has grown quite a bit. People who have a large number of available choices in dining tend to demand and expect reliable service and good food, which we strive to provide. All of our places have always had a strong local following, and as much as we appreciate the tourist trade, with the decline in numbers since 2007 we are going to be concentrating even more on the locals," Tom promises.

Tom believes flexibility is the key to success and adjusting to the flow of the tide is crucial. "The Crab Deck at River's Inn opened April 4th instead of Memorial Day, and we're opening earlier on weekdays, too, hoping to catch the lunch crowd," he explains. "We also serve the full restaurant menu on the deck. You can still get a quick crabcake sandwich and a beer, but now you don't have to go inside to get the catch of the day. Live entertainment has proven to be very popular, so we're doing more of that, too. Basically, we're fine-tuning our marketing to encourage even more customer loyalty and repeat business."

Some cooperative innovations are also being employed such as tie-ins with other businesses. "We've started a new dinner cruise arrangement with the Schooner Alliance, the 110 ft., 3-masted ship that docks at Riverwalk Landing in Yorktown," Tom says. "The all-inclusive package will include a sunset sail and dinner. We're also planning special promotional evenings such as Ladies Night Out, with a wine and cheese reception at the restaurant, followed by expanded shop hours, free hand massages, and sales in all the participating stores."

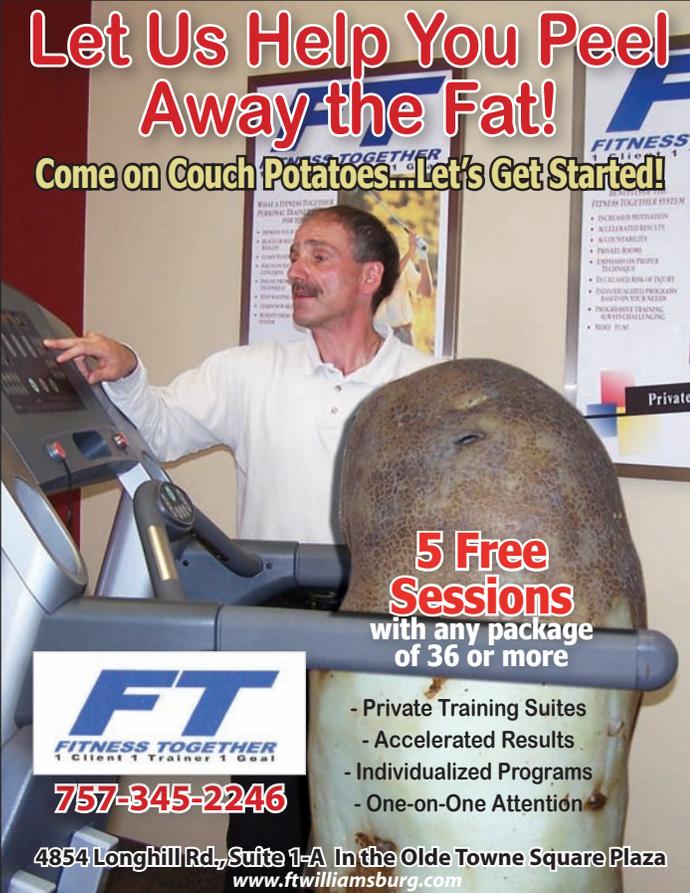
Tom and his friend, Tom Power of Williamsburg's The Cheese Shop, were organizers of the flourishing Saturday morning Farmers' Markets in Merchant's Square and instituted one on the waterfront at Yorktown as well. That should be an even bigger draw this year, according to Tom.

Tom's enthusiasm for his job is contagious. "It is a big adventure; it's challenging and a lot of fun," he says. "When it stops being fun, you need to start doing something else."

Commerce is by its nature symbiotic and interrelated, and if one business sinks, the ripples are felt to some degree by all. This is especially true in a smaller town. If Busch Gardens or Colonial Williamsburg has an off year, it's not just their businesses that suffer. It's also going to affect the businesses directly related to hospitality, and the ones that are indirectly related as well. If employees of a major company have had their hours cut and therefore their discretionary income, the effect will be felt by lost revenues right down the line, whether it be fewer customers in line at a sandwich shop or the dry cleaner who sees a drop in sales. Almost every type of business feels the pinch.

One way locals can minimize the impact of an economic slowdown is to buy locally. Lending a helping hand is what good neighbors do - but it's especially rewarding when we can help ourselves at the same time. If there's a choice between purchasing something from a local store or ordering it over the Internet, a local buy is one that could have a positive ripple effect in our own community. Perhaps that business could spend its own profits with you. In that case, Tom Austin would recommend celebrating your success with a special dinner at Berret's! NDN

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Young Professionals Create 'YEP' to Enhance Development

By Rachel Sapin
William & Mary Intern

Talking to Ron and Vince Campana, who are cousins and two of the founders of non-profit organization Young Emerging Professionals of Williamsburg, is a lot like talking with two very concentrated, very different energies. Ron is serious and direct, with a genuine interest in giving back to the Williamsburg community. Vince is talkative and likes to joke. He uses anecdotes and colorful phrases to describe the organization. Together, the Campanas form a coherent and well-rounded voice that serves as a great introduction to the Young Emerging Profession-

als of Williamsburg. Also known by the acronym YEP, the organization genuinely



Vince Campana

Ron Campana

aims to serve the community while providing a forum for enthusiastic young professionals in Williamsburg.

Established in 2007, YEP is a group that is relatively new to the Williamsburg community. The organization's mission is to provide a place in the area for young, working individuals to develop professionally, civically and socially. YEP came into being through what Vince Campana describes as "four guys, four beers and one big idea." The men who started YEP are an eclectic mix of individuals. Ron and Vince are commercial Realtors, Robert Earl is a general contractor who owns his own firm, and Mark Harrington is a business banker, who left the group after moving back to his hometown for work reasons. "Mark left us kicking and screaming," explain the Campanas of Harrington's departure.

It is not surprising that Harrington was upset leaving YEP given the success of the organization today. What started as four men, four beers, and one big idea has blossomed into a non-profit organization with more than 100 members.

Ron Campana attributes YEP's success in part to its commitment to community service. "Giving back to our town through community service is a big part of what we do," he says. In addition to partnering with the YMCA in its efforts to give back to the Williamsburg community, YEP's upcoming social networking event, being held at Colonial Downs in conjunction with the Strawberry Hill Races, will donate its proceeds to local organizations such as *Bright Beginnings*. Funded jointly by The Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools and Colonial Services Board, *Bright Begin-*

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nings is an early intervention program serving at-risk children, birth to five, and their families. “We’ve also been talking with *Bright Beginnings* about how we can give our time as well as our money,” explains YEP member Ashley Basford, a residential Realtor with Long & Foster. “For all of us I know that giving back to the community is a huge goal.”

Another important part of YEP is that it gives agency to Williamsburg’s young professional community. According to Ron Campana, Williamsburg can be a difficult place for individuals who are looking to get their foot in the door. “It’s a word of mouth town,” he explains. “It’s a matter of getting out there and showing that you’re confident and that you know what you’re talking about, which if you’re younger, is difficult to get past. We get a younger crowd at our YEP meetings and that helps me get my name out to the younger crowd and not just the established business community.”

YEP prides itself not only as an organization that helps younger individuals network and ease their way into the Williamsburg business scene, but as an organization that emphasizes the importance of members

getting to know each other on a first name basis.

“We’ll say at a meeting, ‘hey we’re going to get together this night and socialize, network, and have fun,’” says Vince Campana. “Along with helping each other out in a business sense, we also provide a medium for social life. It’s definitely different and it’s something that makes everyone smile at the end of the day.”

Coming from a variety of professional backgrounds, members of YEP serve as a support system for one another in an increasingly competitive business world. “Trying to make it in the business world alone is like going at it solo against the jungle with a machete and it’s not very easy,” Vince imaginatively explains. “Team up with five other good friends and you can move mountains.”

Although they may not exactly move mountains, the Young Emerging Professionals of Williamsburg have attracted the attention of the business community. “The Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce has already asked us to fly under their flag to give them that branch that they never had,” says Ron Campana. “The community seems to

love YEP?”

Having grown up in Williamsburg, the Campanas are strongly invested in keeping younger professionals from leaving the area. “We’re the old salts of Williamsburg,” explains Vince Campana. “What surprises me is how many talented young individuals have left our community. We need to hold onto that talent and YEP provides a good reason for young people to stay.”

In its effort to integrate young talent into the Williamsburg community, YEP will help ensure that Williamsburg has a positive economic future. “While there are a significant number of young professionals in the Williamsburg area, it is difficult for those outside of the College to meet and network with people their age,” explains YEP member Tom Cosgrove, Legislative Assistant to Senator Tommy Norment. “YEP provides an opportunity for this population to come together for professional development, community service, and social opportunities and that is a tremendous help.” NDN

To learn more about the Young Emerging Professionals of Williamsburg contact Ron Campana at Ron@campanavaltz.com

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Melvin Washington Cites Building a Strong Business Foundation as a Key to Long Term Success

By Meredith Collins

Melvin Washington, a soft spoken man who can best be described as a gentleman, can be found most days operating Jamestown Road Shell Service Center at the top of Jamestown Road where it intersects Route 199. He is a successful businessman having followed in the footsteps of his father, William, who started the business in 1962 in York County.

In the early 1970's, when Melvin was just a youngster, his father moved the business to its present location and it was only a few years later, while still in high school, that Melvin began working in the business.

Now, almost thirty years later, Melvin is still operating a successful business that depends heavily on a loyal local following and the additional tourist business he receives from those passing through the Williamsburg area.

He has nine employees – four mechanics, three that help with full-service needs and two cashiers that work at a recently acquired second location on Rt. 60. His sister, Vivian, does most of the clerical



Melvin Washington in front of his full-service pumps.

work and most days you will find Melvin on site – attending to customers and managing the operation.

Over the years, Melvin has seen changes in the business but does not feel that this year is the most challenging time period he has seen. According to Melvin, the business changed many years ago and it has never reversed itself to those better days.

“The challenging years started in about 1973 or 1974 when gas prices started to increase,” Melvin explained. “There were shortages; there were odd and even days when you could buy gasoline – that’s when it started. It’s been over 30 years ago and it is still going on right now. Along with all of the other overhead increases, insurance, licenses, taxes and fees, things like that. It’s been a challenge at one point or another ever since then.”

Challenging or not, his business continues to serve its clientele well and offers gasoline and traditional service work – brakes, tires, oil changes and light repair, as well as a towing service. Inside, he offers food and beverage convenience items.

Melvin attributes his ability to weather difficult times to staying with his core com-

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petencies and focusing on his customer's needs.

"We've stayed with our foundation," Melvin said. "We stay with a good, steady customer base and provide service, honest pricing and ethical business practices. We stick to our base."

This foundation includes offering full service gas pumps and the kind of consistent service that people know and trust. In 1962 when the business first started, there was no such thing as self-service. Over the years, while almost every other station evolved into 100% self-service at the gasoline pumps, Melvin retained some of his full service pumps and still offers full service to customers today.

"There's a market for it – the elderly, widows, people who are handicapped, people who have medical issues," Melvin said. It's not unusual for Melvin to assist a

handicapped person or elderly person by doing extra things for them – even getting a purse out of a back seat and searching for a credit card

at the owner's request. These customers are no strangers to Melvin for he has served them over time and they keep coming back.

"We even have the grandchildren of customers we started with years

ago," Melvin added with a smile. Even with that kind of loyal following, one has to wonder how the increasing gasoline prices affect his business. Does it allow him to make more money from the higher prices or does he see a decrease in business due to people driving less to save money?



A newspaper photo clipping from 1983 of Melvin and his father, William, who started the business.

"Most of the money is made on anything other than gasoline," Melvin explained. "Gasoline is your draw. It's what gets customers in so you can sell the other items. The margins haven't increased. If anything it has gone down to what it was about 10 to 15 years ago. Nowadays you also have a lot of credit card sales. That's 90% of your business compared to 10 or 12 years ago it was 20% of your business. With credit card sales there is a processing fee that cuts into your margin greatly."

Melvin speaks about his business softly in a way that reflects the way he runs it, steady and with consistency. Behind the counter there is a *Words to Live By* verse posted that perhaps lends some insight into this businessman's approach to his work and sums up how he is keeping his business alive and well as it approaches its 50 year mark:

The Power of Attitude
 Our lives are not determined by what happens to us, but how we react to what happens. Not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst...a spark that creates extraordinary results. **NDN**

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Parlett's

"Golden Rule" is Part of 45 Years of Business Success

By Brandy Centolanza

Local gift shop Parlett's is still going strong after 45 years in business. Parlett's owner, Sue Hill, explains that her family's business has been able to thrive because of their dedication to the store, as well as to their customers.

"We are completely hands on," asserts Sue. "Everything, every card, is hand-picked, and I think that makes a huge difference. We are also very customer oriented. Our customers are the most important thing. If their car breaks down, we'll give them a ride home. We always try to help. They are our friends."

For small businesses to find that type of success, Sue says: "You have to be able to work really hard, be flexible, and be willing to try something new and different. You should also try to live by the Golden Rule. If you treat other people like you want to be treated, then maybe you will do alright."

Those are the kinds of lessons Sue learned from her mother, Ruth Roberts, the original owner of Parlett's. The store, named after Sue's great-grandfather, began with Ruth selling homemade wooden plaques to fellow church members. Ruth added antiques to her merchandise line when she opened a small store along Jamestown Road and Route 199 next to where 7-Eleven sits today. A year later, the store, then known as Parlett's Plaks, moved downtown to Prince George Street.

"My mother has wonderful taste and was a great business woman," Sue recalls. "She really taught me the importance of forecasting changing styles and trends. She taught me how to do a display and layout of the store to maximize the customer's interest. I started out in the business doing the bookkeeping and payroll, and that was a great foundation."

Sue took the reins of the store permanently in 1985 after her mother's retirement.

She changed the name to simply Parlett's, and decided to combine business with pleasure by adding stationery products to the store.

"When we started carrying stationery, no one else in the area did so," she explains. "The invitation industry was changing rapidly as computers made printing of smaller quantities possible, and that suited us perfectly."

Though Par-

in Williamsburg over the last ten years," Sue reflects. "We began looking for new locations and when the Monticello Shoppes opened up, we thought, 'Let's test the waters out there with a small store.' It was a great decision. We found thousands of wonderful new customers plus many of our previous clients found it easier to park and shop. We quickly outgrew our space on Monticello and looked to New Town as a happy middle ground."

The new location also provides Parlett's with the opportunity to own the place, rather than lease. Sue closed the shop on Prince George Street last summer in anticipation of the opening at New Town, but, "our move there has experienced eight months of construction delays and that has been another challenge," Sue sighs. "But the new store is beautiful and everything we dreamed, and imagined for the future."

Despite the uncertainty over the past few months, Sue is looking forward to settling in at the new store.

"We are very excited about it," Sue says. "It's a beautiful space. We have a lot of the old store coming in, but also lots of new products, lots of new cards and pretty gifts. It's new, bright, airy, roomy."

Sue and her son are hoping to enhance their success with the addition of a coffee shop, New Town Coffee & Tea. The coffee shop, another one of Andrew's ideas, will carry all organic coffees and teas, as well as sandwiches, soups, homemade treats, and cups.

"We want to try to go as green as much as we can with this business, but that's also hard to do because it can be expensive," she says. But taking risks is what business is all about, Sue points out.

"It comes down to a willingness to grow with the area and re-group as needed and know when to ask for help," Sue states. NDN



Andrew with his mother, Sue Hill, the owner of Parlett's.

lett's sells a little bit of everything it's mostly known for its greeting cards, stationery, and party invitations.

"Stationery is my passion," Sue says. "I like paper. I like the feel of it. I like to write, and try to write a note every day. There's something special about going to your mailbox and getting something that is not a bill or an ad. I can hold a note, look at it, re-read it, keep it around. Nothing can replace that."

Sue's sister, Jackie Sutherland, and son, Andrew, are also involved with the business. Jackie does printing for the business while Andrew is hoping to follow in his mother's footsteps. He was instrumental with the opening of Parlett's second location along Monticello Avenue in the Monticello Shoppes six years ago.

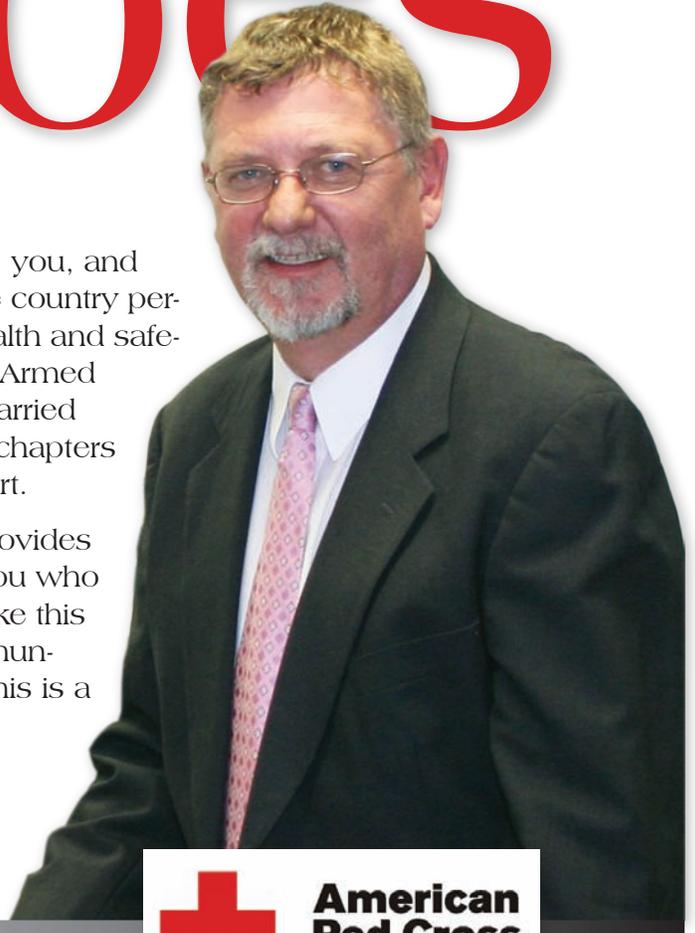
"Our biggest challenge [has been] facing the changing market and demographics

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a variety of individuals and companies decide to step up and contribute to their community by being a Hero. I congratulate them and hope this will spark many more Heroes to join our 2008 campaign."



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RBC Centura Bank



Jamestown High School Key Club



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THE RED CROSS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Here are ways the Colonial Virginia Chapter of the American Red Cross impacts the lives of your family and friends:

DISASTER SERVICES

When a disaster threatens or strikes, the Red Cross is there 24/7. This past year, our chapter responded to numerous local residential fires providing food, shelter and supplies to the families who were affected. We also provide disaster education to help our local families be more prepared for emergency situations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICES

We provide training to prepare individuals to respond correctly to an emergency, both on the job and at home: First Aid, CPR/AED, Pet First Aid, Lifeguard Training. We also provide training for Babysitters and Family Care Givers, giving them the skills they need to take care of children and loved ones.

INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

Our international tracing program helps local families find relatives with who they have lost contact because of a natural disaster, war or internal conflict. We help families re-connect with one another.

ARMED FORCES EMERGENCY SERVICES

The American Red Cross provides communication between those in the Armed Forces and their families. We have a worldwide network that reaches service members wherever they are to communicate news of birth, death or illness.

BLOOD SERVICES

Over this past year, the Colonial Virginia Chapter of the American Red Cross conducted numerous local blood drives with the help of community sponsors to collect much needed units of blood. On a local level, 90 blood drives were held thanks to the help of 62 sponsors. 3,752 pints of blood were collected helping 15,008 people. Read Madeline's story below to see just how important your blood donation can be:

COMMUNITY SERVICES

We depend on volunteers of all ages and backgrounds to carry on our work. Volunteers constitute 97% of our total workforce serving as members of the board, instructors teaching lifesaving skills, disaster action team members, office administrators, event organizers and more. Find out how you can give us some of your time to help your local community! Call Jean Smith, Chapter Resource Director, at (757) 253-0228.

The Colonial Virginia Chapter of the American Red Cross is located at 1317 Jamestown Rd., Suite 105, Williamsburg, VA 23185. Visit our website at: <http://cvc.redcross.org>

Madeline's Story

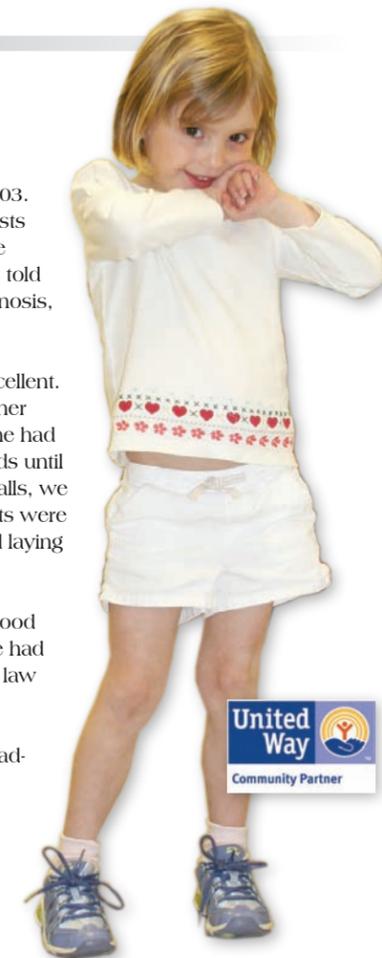
"Madeline was welcomed into our family on, October 2, 2003. By the time the morning had come around, several extra tests had been run and we received the news that she may have something wrong with her heart. By that evening we were told that Madeline had an Unbalanced AV Canal, Pulmonary Stenosis, VSD, and bilateral Superior Vena Cava.

Our team of Cardiologists, in Richmond, at MCV/VCU is excellent. By the time 6 months came around, the decision was that her surgery would need to happen sooner, rather than later. She had stopped gaining weight and maintained a meager 14 pounds until well after her operation. After 3 months and many phone calls, we had our date. We traveled to Philadelphia on Thursday, tests were run on Friday, blood was donated on Saturday, prayers and laying on of hands on Sunday and operation Monday.

I do need to mention the overwhelming response for the blood donation, two days prior to surgery was very touching. We had friends and relatives from five states; colleagues from local law enforcement all to show support and donate as well.

Two weeks after her surgery - we had a very close call. Madeline went into heart failure. We rushed her to the hospital in Richmond, where she remained for close to a week; her medications needed adjusting. Since that scary time, all has gone well. She is a thriving 4 year old and has added more love and JOY to our lives than we could have ever imagined! We count our blessings each day that we have Madeline and look forward to a bright future!"

Brian & Christine Hanlon



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & RETAIL ALLIANCE

Providing Support to Small Businesses During a Challenging Year

By Meredith Collins

You don't need to turn on the television or read the newspaper to know how challenging this year is. For most of us, operating a small business is difficult enough even during the best of times. When we are bombarded with information about increasing gasoline prices, the slump in the housing market and conservative consumer spending habits, it only strengthens our "sink or swim" resolve to make sure we are doing everything we can to keep our heads above water.

In times like these, we are apt to take a hard look at how we are operating our business. Are our processes efficient? Are our prices competitive? How do our services stack up against competitors? What more could we be doing?

There are many ways resourceful small business owners can learn what they need to know to compete successfully in a challenging marketplace. In this story we will explore two of them: The Greater Williamsburg Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Alliance and the Hampton Roads Retail Alliance.

Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Alliance

The Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Alliance (Chamber & Alliance) is a non-profit organization that was established locally 70 years ago and now serves over 1,000 members in the business community of the historic triangle – the City

of Williamsburg, James City County and York County. Bob Hershberger is the Executive Vice President of the Chamber & Alliance. He has lived in Williamsburg since 1975 and has spent the last 22 years working for the local business community through this organization.

Condensing all of what the Chamber & Alliance does into the time span of one short interview would be almost impossible, so Hershberger focused his comments on some of the organization's primary offerings that small businesses can most benefit from.

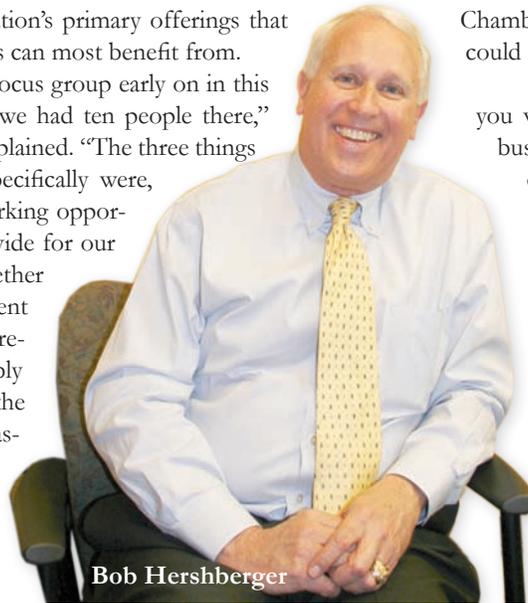
"We had a focus group early on in this fiscal year and we had ten people there," Hershberger explained. "The three things they told us specifically were, first, the networking opportunities we provide for our members whether it is government affairs or a pre-general assembly function or the post-general assembly function, or if we have any type of activity we always allow

some time for individual networking. The second is the educational opportunities we provide and a very close third is the health insurance program that we have."

The Chamber & Alliance is a part of a conglomeration of Chambers around Virginia that have come together to contract with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield to provide health plans to members. Many times this allows them to offer a better health care insurance package than Chamber & Alliance members could obtain on their own.

"We're trying to provide you with an opportunity as a business person to one, succeed and two, enhance your bottom line so that it grows and you are able to survive these traumatic times that we have now," Hershberger explained.

The Chamber & Alliance also offers structured networking opportunities to help small business owners meet others in the community who



Bob Hershberger

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could become potential customers. "We have monthly Business After Hours (BAH) that are spread around the community," Hershberger commented. "It gives the sponsoring business an opportunity to showcase their facility and sometimes the products and services that they provide. We have special events that really are grandiose networking opportunities – OctoberFest, A Taste of Williamsburg, the annual dinner. Those events are scattered throughout the year."

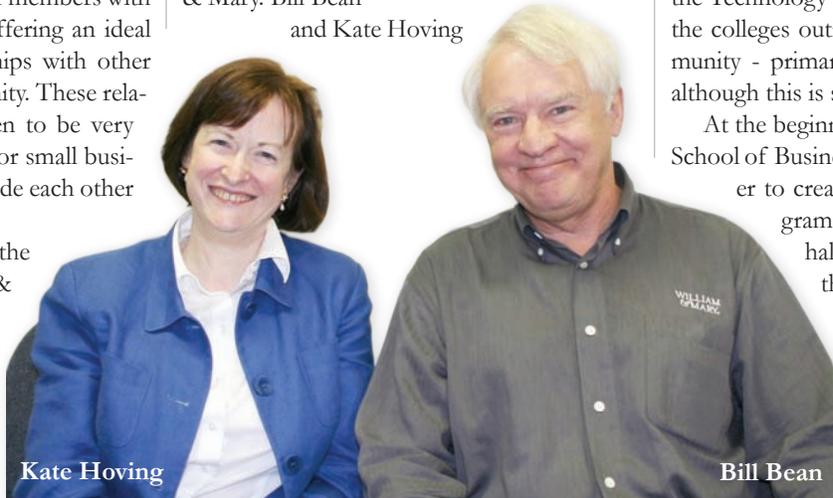
In addition, the Chamber & Alliance offers five networking groups for members with regular structured meetings offering an ideal setting for building relationships with other businesses within the community. These relatively new groups have proven to be very popular and are an ideal way for small businesses to share ideas and provide each other with referrals.

Hershberger also stresses the larger role that the Chamber & Alliance plays to help create a positive business environment in the Williamsburg area. "We get involved in legislative affairs at the general assembly level and to

some degree, at the local level, on things that will affect business," Hershberger said. "For example, this past year there was legislation pending where we saw the potential for it to increase the taxes that local governments would have to place on small business. We opposed that and it was defeated."

One of the newest and most successful programs that has recently emerged from the Chamber & Alliance is their Business Outreach program in cooperation with the Mason School of Business at the College of William & Mary. Bill Bean

and Kate Hoving



Kate Hoving

Bill Bean

are two of the individuals that have been propelling the Business Outreach program forward since it first began almost a year ago.

Bean is Director of the Technology Business Center at William & Mary and Hoving is the Director of Communications for the Chamber & Alliance.

Bean has been in Williamsburg for the past four years working at the Technology Business Center, and has served as director since 2006. "There is a broad suite of things that we do," Bean explained. "It is the charter of the Technology Business Center to be one of the colleges outreach into the business community - primarily the technical community although this is shifting a little bit."

At the beginning, Bean and several Mason School of Business professors worked together to create the Gateway Module Program which provided five specific half day courses designed for the emerging business community. They provided training on topics like SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), business strategy, finance, sales & marketing and

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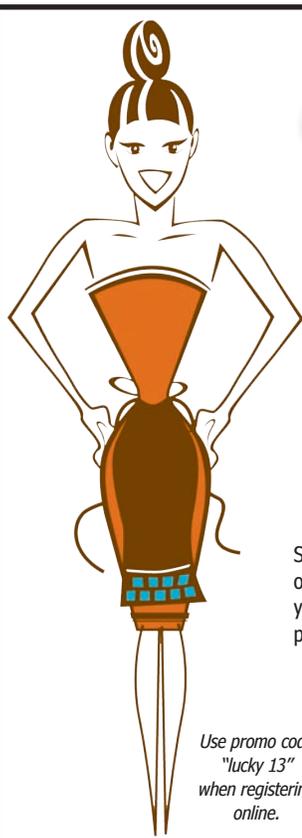
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business operations. The modules can be attended by anyone from the business community for a small fee.

"All of these provide some sort of the baseline fundamental information that the entrepreneur or business owner has to have some grasp of," Bean said. "Although they can't absorb all of this – it's kind of like an entire quarter MBA course in about three hours. It's pretty intense, but you've got the material in front of you so you can go back to it at any time and refresh your memory."

With Hoving's interest and assistance from the Chamber & Alliance, these educational programs migrated into half day courses utilizing these same professors and others. The sessions cover a broad range of subjects like Microsoft Excel, marketing, financial management and more.

"The advantage is that it's a small class," Hoving said. "You get these terrific professors but you are also in a small room and you can get to know each other. There is a lot of interchange."

"The interesting thing about these courses is that all of these professors have had real world experience," Bean added. "They are not ivory tower theorists. They've all been out and have been engaged in companies, they've done independent consulting, they've spent a lot of time in the outside world – so it's a very, very interesting program."

Hampton Roads Retail Alliance

Hampton Roads Retail Alliance is a Norfolk based organization that serves businesses throughout Hampton Roads and has, most recently, begun to focus more on the Williamsburg area for recruiting new members. Henry Goeltem is Director of Membership Development on the Peninsula and has lived in Williamsburg for the past two and a half years.

The organization was founded in 1903, originally as the Retail Merchant's Association. "We were actually born out of a need," Goeltem explained. "The Norfolk Chamber of Commerce, back then, said we need something for just the retailers – and advocate for retailers. Hence, the Retail Merchant's Association was developed. In 1998, we changed our name to Retail Alliance."



Henry Goeltem

While the organization was born out of the need to assist retailers, Retail Alliance offers memberships to all types of businesses and prides themselves in their hands on involvement with their members. The organization exists to serve the interests of local businesses providing them with products and services, being their advocate before local and state legislative and regulatory bodies, promoting the interest of the retail community and supporting programs through funding that benefit retailers and the community. Retail Alliance also offers a service that assists members with human resource issues.

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Chuck Haines

“We give our members many different options from health benefit options to cut costs to dental,” Goeltem explained. “Those are two huge things that small business owners look at. We also do the networking part. We have something called Retail 2 Retail where the small business owner can have a gathering of not only Retail Alliance members, but also other local business owners who may come to see their store.”

With more than 2,000 Hampton Roads businesses who are either members or customers of Retail Alliance, the networking opportunities are broad-based and can be especially attractive to Williamsburg business owners that do business beyond this area’s immediate borders.



Diane Dawson

Retail Alliance also offers a variety of training sessions for members that can help the small business person learn more about issues that could impact their business. Topics such as customer service “rapport building”, hiring your next great employee, how to read a credit report and how to maximize your sales and profit are examples of seminars they provide.

While most of its membership is from the Peninsula and Southside, Goeltem is actively making calls on local businesses to educate them about the benefits of becoming a Retail Alliance member. He cites the networking opportunities, education and training offerings and the cost saving measures as three excellent reasons for small business owners to consider becoming a member of the organization.

One such new member is Diane Dawson. She and her husband, Al, are owners of Dolls by Diane which opened in Williamsburg last November. Their doll museum showcases over 800 dolls from all over the world, provides doll furnishings and accessories and boasts a small gift shop for tourists and locals alike.

One of the first things they did as a Retail Alliance member was to apply for a grant whereby Retail Alliance covered a portion of the cost of their website development. She also gives Retail Alliance high marks in the area of guiding people in small businesses and helping them find ways to save money, which is particularly important for small businesses just starting out.

“Another special value of being a member of Retail Alliance is their special program called Ad Credit Petty Cash,” Diane explained. “As you use their logo and help them to advertise the wonderful organization that they are, then they give you ad credit petty cash. It works as real cash value. It can be used to pay for Retail Alliance seminars, conferences, entertainment offers such as movie tickets and sporting events as well. This credit cash really begins to add up and becomes very valuable. I have discovered that they have a genuine interest in people in business - small business entrepreneurs who are just starting. It is just so apparent that they are there with you every step of the way and they want to do everything possible to contribute to your success.”

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“Towards the end of the last school year Zoe was having problems, in math and reading especially. She had a lot of friends in her class and we didn’t want to hold her back. We decided to try Huntington Learning Center. At that time her last report card was C’s and a couple of D’s. That was bothersome. She started at Huntington Learning Center in May. The difference between last May and now is that with schoolwork she is just raring to go.



She just wants to do it. She got an A in Science, her reading and math is where it is supposed to be so we’re looking forward to these next two report cards. Zoe looks forward to coming here - especially in the last couple of months. She has really come around.”

- Mark Bonafe

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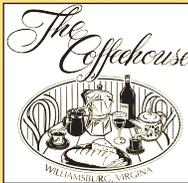
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What do small business owners say about these organizations?

When we interview people for our stories, it is only natural that they provide us their views from their own vantage point. If we could talk to every employee and member of both of these organizations and somehow boil down their comments into a story that truly represented a complete summary of what everyone told us, we'd likely end up with a story full of contradictions and opposing viewpoints. People tend to form their opinions based on their own experiences and everyone's experiences are different.

This story on how these two organizations may be able to support a small businessperson during a challenging year is intended to give you information that you may not have known and provide you with insight about the benefits of each organization.

To help you evaluate these two organizations, we suggest you visit their websites and speak to someone within their organization: www.williamsburgcc.com and www.retail-alliance.com. We've also included some comments from a few local business owners who belong to one or both of these organizations:

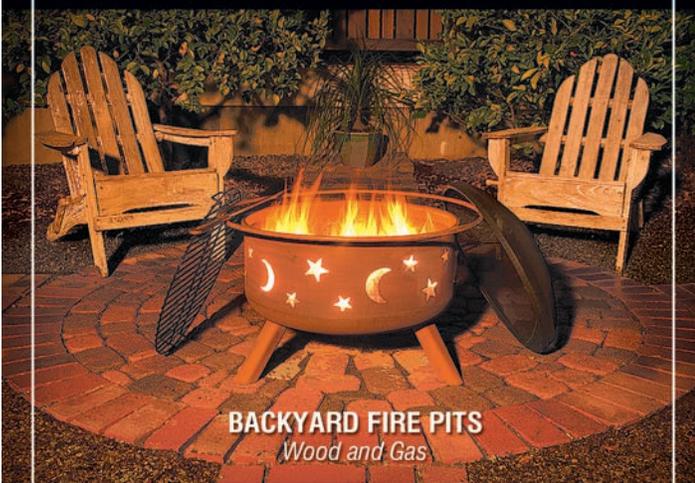
Steve Tyler, Owner of Wmsbrg Grafix

On the Chamber & Alliance...

"Getting back to the Chamber starting these networking groups...I need these networking groups. I don't need these networking groups just for myself. I need these networking groups so that the people that I do business with can be a part of these networking groups and grow their business too. Plus, the resources that all of us as business owners have collectively - our minds, our intelligence - we are a unique people as it is to begin with. Nobody can understand what we go through besides another business owner. To have groups that meet on a bi-weekly basis where we're able to bring those needs and make those connections with other business owners when our entire world is caught up within just those four walls of your business most of the time, is not only a huge relief, a great exercise, but it also helps you build your business and gives you the ability to have a reputation in this community. What we need is a small business community. The Chamber for many years focused on tourism, much of the bigger business that is here, but they weren't focusing as much on the little guys. The little guys were left to fish for themselves... They're on the right path with these networking groups."



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Laura Rosalie, Owner of Fitness Together

On Retail Alliance...

"Since most of our business is paid for by credit cards we were shown that by joining the Retail Alliance that is one of the perks that we would get, so that's primarily why we joined. They were able to show us that the amount of money that we would save in a couple of months would more than pay for our membership in the Retail Alliance. There are a lot of different things that the Retail Alliance can provide for a small business - that's very important for a small business. Things like life insurance, dental insurance, mailing lists - and all of these are discounted to the small businesses that join the Retail Alliance."



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Joseph Glosson, Owner of Williamsburg Fine Art

On both organizations...

"The Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance and the Retail Alliance both have "big picture" activities to benefit member organizations. That work is less visible to members but very important: issues of taxation, regulation, employment law, etc. In Williamsburg, at least, the Retail Alliance shows more interest in the success of small, locally owned retail businesses while the Chamber's primary attention - understandable given the local investment in tourism - seems to be on the much larger member organizations that deal with tourism. Professional associations aside, it is vital that locally owned/operated businesses support each other and equally important for the local citizenry to support local businesses. If we (the local business owner) do not surpass chains and franchises in quality of service and products we provide, we are soon out of business. Therefore, for the best customer service and product satisfaction, a local resident will inevitably do better at a locally owned business."



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Bill and Robin Chenail, Owners of Southern Blue Lawn & Landscaping

On the Chamber & Alliance...

"We are pleased to be founding members of the third new group of local community leaders called Chamber Connects Williamsburg Business Partners. We have found great connections and networking opportunities with this wonderful group of professionals, who have become trusted resources for us, and regularly meeting together allows us all a healthy forum to share ideas and align our business leadership skills together in order to help build a strong economy for our communities." NDN

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Learning How to **Change with the Times**

Fleming Buck tells us how he "rolled with the punches."

By Linda Landreth Phelps



Fleming's Awards and Promotions is a lot more than trophies and plaques. Owner Fleming Buck, Jr. says he represents 4,000 factories and their catalogues of gift and promotional items and has recently developed a presence on the Internet, which makes the small store just off Richmond Road merely the visible tip of his business iceberg.

Fleming started his engraving service on a shoestring in 1985, boosting his children's college funds by working part-

time out of his garage. In 1988, he purchased Colonial Engravers on Bacon Street from a good friend, Joe Petro, who mentored him every step of the way, and he has continued to operate in this location. Joe still owned the building and remodeled

time out of his garage. In 1988, he purchased Colonial Engravers on Bacon Street from a good friend, Joe Petro, who mentored him every step of the way, and he has continued to operate in this location. Joe still owned the building and remodeled

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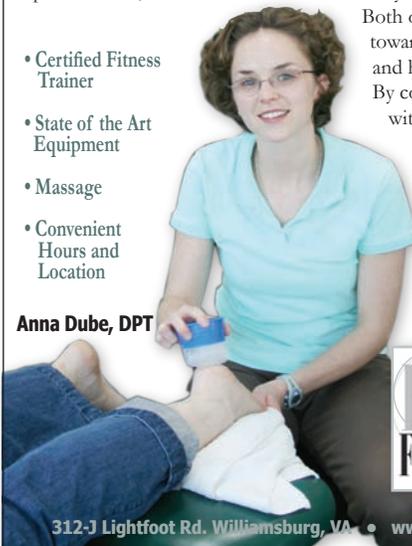
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the store - adding 1,400 sq. ft. around a 900 sq. ft. building - enlarged the parking lot, and then sold it to Fleming in 1995.

Things went along smoothly for six years until January of 2001, when, as Fleming says, "Business fell off dramatically. It was so sudden...we didn't see it coming. It was as if the economic engine went into a nose-dive and we didn't notice until it was too late to pull up."

Fleming quickly analyzed the situation and went to work. "In Williamsburg, the hotels were below 48% occupancy and I lost a major customer, a hotel that had made up over a quarter of our total business. I made phone calls and everybody was saying they didn't need award plaques or nametags done - they were laying employees off. It was tough."

I've been a member of the Chamber of Commerce since 1988, and through them I

learned a lot about good business strategies. I figured I'd have to change with the times or die. I started advertising heavily on the local radio stations and hired a retired Hollywood writer to do some good ads, but just about then they started the Richmond Road expansion project and tore up the streets that lead to us, which knocked our business down another 28% - although it felt more like 98%

"I figured I'd have to change with the times or die."

- Fleming Buck

to us! Customers stayed away, not wanting to deal with the mess and traffic. That's when I started telling people, 'Just call and place the order, we'll deliver it to you.' That kind of personal customer service

is what Fleming feels sets them apart from a faceless Internet business.

"If somebody comes in with a printout that shows a price available to them online we do our best to match it, but it's hard to compete with somebody working out of

Next Door Neighbors

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NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS MAY 2008

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In 2007, Fleming decided to get aboard the technology train and he had a website created for the store. He created what he calls a One Stop Shop where people can view his promotional products from the comfort of their home. He is expanding their presence on the Internet and doing some very effective online advertising as well to increase the visibility of his business. In addition, Fleming is diversifying his customer base by pursuing relationships with larger companies such as Anheuser Busch and Smithfield Packing. He now employs two outside sales reps who call on clients directly to increase sales.

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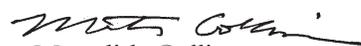
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Best Regards,



Meredith Collins

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Hey Neighbor!

Our Cup Runneth Over!

There are many more community announcements - Please visit www.wburgndn.com and click on **Hey Neighbor!** for a complete list of them.

Hey Neighbor!

COLONIAL CASA ANNOUNCES A BLUE ELEPHANT AFFAIR!

APRIL 26, 2008

Colonial CASA is launching its "Do Something Blue" campaign for abused and neglected community children - wear the blue ribbon & support Colonial CASA's mission of safety and permanence for all children. Held at Walsingham Academy from 5:30 to 9:30; features blues music, food and drink, and "blue" themed shopping areas throughout the venue. It is NOT an auction, but a tag sale, first come, first serve, with Bluebird (earlybird) tickets available. Please call the Colonial CASA office, 229-3306, or visit the website, www.colonialcasa.org for information.

Hey Neighbor!

HERITAGE HUMANE SOCIETY AUXILIARY - BARK IN THE PARK

APRIL 26, 2008

A Walk for the Animals will be held on Saturday, April 26, 2008 at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Drive from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Raise pledges and win a trip, golf for 4, boarding at the Pet Resort at Greensprings, gift certificates and more! Visit with our many rescue groups, great animal friendly vendors and see some of our Shelter dogs up for adoption. Pre-registration required prior to event to earn guaranteed prizes. Visit our website for rules and additional information. www.heritagehumanesociety.org.

Hey Neighbor!

2008 MONOPOLY® GAME GALA

APRIL 27, 2008

In support of Olde Towne Medical Center and The Williamsburg Symphonia. Presented by "Mr. MONOPOLY," Stephen Shonka of Family Retirement Planning and Wealth Management, this "FUNdraiser" is again generously hosted by Kingsmill Resort and Spa. TowneBank returns as the Banker, providing essential support for the beneficiaries. Entertainment by the Eastern Virginia Brass Quintet. In addition to table prizes, a grand prize will be awarded to one lucky ticket holder. Tickets, \$100 a person or a table of 8 for \$800, can be purchased by calling 259-3250. Hope to see you there. For additional information contact Nancy Marsh, 258-0164 or visit our website at www.monopolygala.com.

Hey Neighbor!

ANNUAL ART ON THE SQUARE ART SHOW

April 27, 2008

The Junior Women's Club of Williamsburg will be hosting their 45th Annual Art on the Square Art Show on April 27th from 10:00-5:00 on Duke of Gloucester and North Boundary Streets in Merchants Square. There will be over 160 artists exhibiting paintings, glass work, iron work, pottery, wood work, photography and jewelry. Art on the Square is one of the club's principal fundraisers to support community art initiatives. Proceeds from booth rentals are donated to visual and performing arts organizations. Proceeds from

the sale of raffle tickets and show posters support our Junior Woman's Club of Williamsburg Art Scholarships. For more information, please visit our website at www.williamsburgjuniors.org.

Hey Neighbor!

WILLIAMSBURG FARMERS MARKET REGULAR SEASON OPENING

May 3, 2008

The Williamsburg Farmers Market will now be open every Saturday beginning May 3 through October 25, 8:00am- 12:00 Noon, rain or shine, at Merchants Square on Duke of Gloucester Street between Henry and Boundary Streets. Free Parking is available at the Francis Street Parking Lot (P6) on Market Days until noon. Flowerbeds and benches offer a tranquil setting for Market shopping while enjoying morning coffee, muffins, music, exhibitors, and the "Chef at the Market." Among the local products available are seasonal organic produce; meats including beef, bison, and pork; seafood, including oysters and crabs; herb and other potted plants; baked goods; honey; mushrooms; cheese; handmade chocolate; and cut flowers. Visit www.WilliamsburgFarmersMarket.com or call (757) 259-3768 for more information on vendors and market events.

ATTENTION NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS!
Please email heyneighbor@cox.net on or before Tuesday, May 6th to be considered for inclusion in the May 22nd issue of *Next Door Neighbors*.

**TICKETS
\$10 EACH
Call 253-7990**

TICKETS MAY ALSO BE PURCHASED AT THE FIRST MARKET BANK BRANCH INSIDE UKROP'S AT 6610 MOORETOWN RD.

YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER DINNER!

 **Rotary Club of The Historic Triangle's**
Ukrop's Dining For Dollars

Tuesday, May 6th, 5 - 8 pm, at Ukrop's - Mooretown Rd.

Help us raise money for PIPE* and other Rotary Charities

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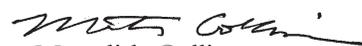
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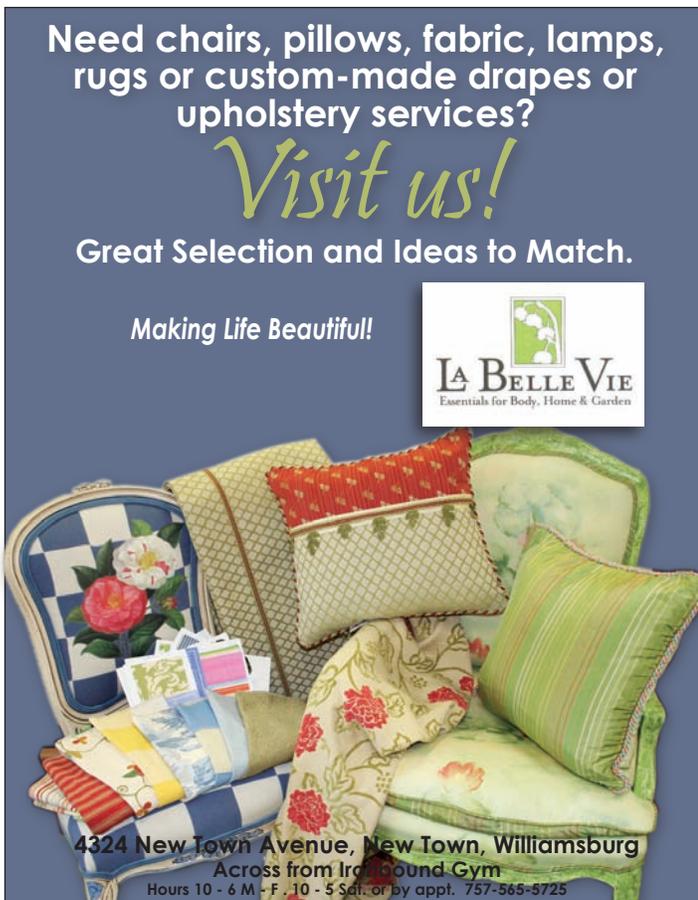
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“Maybe. If your objective is to “move up” to that dream home, then the answer is probably *yes*. Why? As everyone knows, the market has changed. There is now a gap between “asking prices” and “final sales price”.

EXAMPLE:

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Sales Price	\$290,000
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Where you might leave \$10,000 on the table when you sell your home to “move up”, you could gain that same amount back, or even more, on the purchase of your new home.

You Buy Another Home

List Price	\$450,000
Sales Price	\$430,000
Gap	\$20,000

“This is just an example. For specific data relating to the sale of your home and the purchase of your next dream home, call us. **Now just might be the right time to sell and buy!**”

Angela Dougherty, Managing Broker



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