

# Chamber Reports

## January 12, 2011

### Clearwater Beach Chamber of Commerce

December proved to be the most exciting time for The Beach Chamber. We held our Annual Holiday Breakfast meeting at the Hyatt Regency Resort and Spa on December 14 to a full ballroom of over 160 of our members. We had a very full agenda and a lot of information to cover.

DT Minich, the Executive Director with the Convention and Visitors Bureau for Pinellas County, gave us a look at what the marketing for Pinellas County will be throughout the world for 2011. It is a very exciting plan!

Then we introduced Ian LeBlanc with Little Frog Innovations who has worked tirelessly on our new improved Web Site [www.beachchamber.com](http://www.beachchamber.com). We start the New Year with a web site that has many new features, easier to navigate, twelve different languages, and more opportunities for our members to feature their goods and services. You can actually add a video to your listing now.

Part of our new web site includes fresh new photography that was provided by Wayne Cathrel with Belleair Images. Wayne has been very committed to providing our Beach Chamber with new images of the Beach and the current events that take place. We are honored to have his artistic ability showcased in the Chamber's Welcome Center as well as the web site.

At our Breakfast we wanted to recognize the hard work and commitment to improving our Beach to Mr. Michael Preston (Frenchy) for his investment and upgrade of one of the few remaining small lodgings on our Beach. Frenchy purchased the old Olympia Motel on East Shore Drive and has turned it into an Oasis, well, that is exactly what he named it too, Frenchy's Oasis. It is a 15 room efficiency Motel that he totally restored and salvaged the original plaster walls and ceilings, the terrazzo floors, the original tile and much of the fixtures in the bathrooms. His attention to detail is astounding and any guest of the Oasis will feel not only at home but as comfortable as if they were in a 4 star resort. Thank you Frenchy, for saving one of nostalgic resorts on our beach. Frenchy earned the Beautification Award from his peers.

We now know that 2011 will bring the excitement of stardom to our beach. Mr. David Yates, CEO of the Clearwater Marine Aquarium and home of Winter the dolphin was our Keynote speaker at our Breakfast. David not only updated all of us on the happenings of the Aquarium but what it was like during the almost four months of filming "Winter's Tale". The process involved in shooting a Hollywood movie is most fascinating and yet all of this happened without any change to the operation of the Aquarium and their mission to rescue, rehabilitate and release injured sea life. David then surprised all of us with 6 minutes of footage of the movie along with interviews from Morgan Freeman, Ashley Judd and Harry Connick Jr. I must tell you that this movie is going to be a hit, and when I witnessed grown men crying after watching this film, my own tears were no longer embarrassing.

There has been lots of work as we confirm and plan for Restaurant Week. Although the event will be held in May, there is much work to do in advance. The Kick-Off Party will be held on May 6<sup>th</sup>, Friday 5:00 – 8:00 pm on Beach Walk, between the Hyatt Regency Resort and the Beach Chamber office. This is an exciting time for our Chamber as we host the first of many events on Beach Walk.

Our Special Events Committee has been very active and there are a number of events planned for 2011. A Mingle on Mandalay has created a lot of attention and will be one of our most unique Mingles ever. Cars & Coffee Shows, Art Shows, Chalk Walk, etc. are just a few of what we have in store.

### **Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce**

Another extremely successful Outback Bowl Beach Day was held on December 30, 2010. The University of Florida Band stayed at the Sheraton Sand Key. The UF band director praised the level of service they received and the quality of the property. The Penn State Band stayed at the Hilton Clearwater Beach. Their band director also expressed his appreciation for the hospitality that was shown to them. A bonus this year was the Penn State football team coming a week early to practice. They stayed at the Hilton also. The Phillies extended a courtesy to them to practice at the Bright House Field Complex. Beach activities were expanded to include and enhanced Sunsets at Pier 60 which included live music, the showing of the movie *Blindside* outdoors at Pier 60 and fireworks. The days events ran from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM. The hotels, motels, restaurants and attractions experienced a nice spike in business between 12/19/2010 and 1/2/2011 due to this event. The occupancy numbers and economic impact information is currently being collected. We would like to thank our partners, CVB, City of Clearwater, Hospice Foundation, Pier 60 Concessions, CCM, PIE, Allegiant Airlines, Whirl Wind Productions and the St. Petersburg Times.

The CRCC will be holding its next Tourism Partners meeting at the Island Way Grille on Tuesday, 1/11/2011 starting at 8:00 AM. Frank Chivas will be hosting the meeting. Details of our first two Trade Sales Missions of the year will be announced to Mark Travel in Milwaukee and Allegiant Airlines in Las Vegas.

### **Dunedin Chamber of Commerce**

The Jolley Trolley service to Dunedin continues to be a big boost for the community. Ridership is above expectations and visitors are definitely taking advantage of the link from Clearwater through Dunedin, Palm Harbor and Tarpon Springs. Feedback has been very positive. Residents of the communities are also using the Trolley.

Dunedin's Holiday activities were successful. The Boat Parade, Holiday Parade, Old Fashioned Christmas and concert activities drew many visitors to town.

Tourist visits at the Chamber's Visitors Center are strong thus far in January. The Chamber will also be open on Saturdays starting Saturday, January 8 thru April. Winter activities like the art show the weekend of Jan. 8 bring thousands of new visitors to Dunedin and the Chamber staff, volunteers and Board are ready to help them have a great experience in Pinellas County.

Dunedin celebrates Diversity Week starting January 15. There is a Unity Breakfast on Sat., Jan. 15, at the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center, followed by a Diversity March, then entertainment in Pioneer Park. The "I Have a Dream/MLK Play Day" is Friday, Jan. 21, at the MLK Jr. Rec Center. There are activities all week at the Dunedin Public Library. The Chinese New Year Celebration will take place Friday, Jan. 21, beginning at 7 p.m. in Pioneer Park, downtown Dunedin. Saturday, Jan. 22, will be the Latin Celebration, 7 p.m., Pioneer Park.

"History Comes Alive," sponsored by the Dunedin Historical Museum, celebrates Dunedin's history with reenactments of events and historical personalities at the beautiful and historic Dunedin Cemetery on Saturday, Jan. 22.

Dunedin's Green Market is opens on Friday, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., in Pioneer Park.

### **Largo/Mid-Pinellas Chamber Report**

#### **New Largo Community Center Celebrates Grand Opening**

The new Largo Community Center opened its doors to the public on Sunday, Jan. 9. The new facility will be a central attraction for visitors to the area with its many program and event offerings. At 30,000-square-feet, the signature complex has multiple dance studios, a ballroom with seating up to 700, indoor and outdoor lounges, and game rooms.

#### **Mid-Pinellas Women in Business Expo**

The Largo/Mid-Pinellas Chamber is closing out exhibit space sales for its annual Women in Business Forum/EXPO. It takes place on Wednesday, March 9 from 3 to 8 p.m. at the Largo Cultural Center. The program is dedicated to women entrepreneurs, business professionals, opportunity seekers, work-at-home moms and women re-entering the work force. The forum portion features a panel of professionals who will address issues pertinent to today's business woman. It's followed by the Women in Business EXPO of women-owned and women-focused businesses.

#### **Chamber Busy with Visitors**

Since the Thanksgiving holiday, the Largo/Mid-Pinellas Chamber Visitors Lobby has been extremely busy with calls and visits exceeding numbers not experienced since 2007. Many are tourists from the Midwest and increasingly from location in mid and eastern Canada. The Chamber is distributing as many as 50 Mid-Pinellas maps and its business & area attractions directory daily.

### **Palm Harbor Chamber of Commerce**

We are happy to announce the Jolley Trolley now comes to Palm Harbor! We thank our county commissioners and others who helped us obtain this service for our area. Our Palm Harbor Chamber and Old Palm Harbor Main Street participated in the kick-off and celebrated in our downtown area Nov. 17. We are selling daily bus passes at our chamber office at 1151 Nebraska Avenue and have met with Jolley Trolley representatives to discuss advertising and other event ideas for the trolley and our communities. We have a new website and w

Our Community Guide Membership Directory is in the "works" and will be available in late February for visitors, residents, businesses, members, etc.

#### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**36TH Annual Palm Harbor Fine Arts and Crafts, Festival** held once again the first weekend in December in our historic downtown area. The event was attended by residents, visitors, businesses and artists. The festival was founded by Bill and Louise Hoskins. The show was juried and prize money was awarded in various categories. Also, portions of the Festival's proceeds will be for the Bill and Louise Hoskins Visual Arts Scholarship Program awarded to a local student pursuing a career in visual arts. A Student Art Competition was added to the festival and award money was given to the top 3 student artists. The theme for the art competition was recycling and featured art created from recycled books, magazines from our Palm Harbor Library.

**Palm Harbor Community Holiday Parade** was held Dec. 11, 2010, *Sponsored by Palm Harbor Rotary Club.* And Presented by The Greater Palm Harbor Chamber of Commerce, Palm Harbor Historical Society, Old Palm Harbor Main Street, Inc., and Palm Harbor Parks & Recreation.

Another annual event to add to the quality of life in the community! Brings many residents and visitors to the area. Children visited with Santa at the end of the Parade.

**EVENING EXTRAORDINAIRE, "A MOMENT IN TIME,"** will be held Feb. 18 at Countryside Country Club. The public is invited to attend this premiere Wine and Food Sampling Auction.

**Palm Harbor Citrus Festival** is being planned for March 10-13 in downtown Palm Harbor on Florida and Georgia. St. Patty's Day food and drink will be part of the festival festivities on Saturday, March 10 sold by our downtown restaurants. The festival also includes the selection of the Palm Harbor Citrus Festival Queen, Dancing with the Stars, the Palmsbury Bake-off, vendors, historic presentations, and a 4 day carnival! A great attraction for visitors and community! Save the Date and come on out!

### **Safety Harbor Chamber of Commerce**

The Safety Harbor Christmas Parade was held on December 18<sup>th</sup>, Main Street, downtown. A flock of firetrucks started the spectacle, followed by decorated City vehicles, marching bands, dancers, civic clubs, City officials, and the exciting performances of various entertainers. Crowds (locals and from Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Pasco counties) 3 to 6 persons deep, lined the sidewalks from Bayshore Boulevard heading East to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The Safety Harbor Chamber of Commerce was well represented by the featured Grand Marshals, Darlene Trieste, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Betsy Byrd a two time Past Chairman, and well known local artist Stacy Roth, owner of Harbour Arts. After the festivities, there were many folks stopping in our Visitors Center to shop and comment on the parade.

### **Seminole Chamber of Commerce**

~ No Report

### **St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce**

The St. Petersburg Area Chamber continued to promote Pinellas County area destinations throughout the month of January.

The Visitor & Information Center is busy this January promoting and providing information for several exciting events including:

The Dali's new building Grand Opening on 01.11.11

Martin Luther King, Jr Festivities including the Parade

The launch of International Baseball Spring Competition in St. Petersburg beginning in February.

Along with many other wonderful events, museum programs and nature opportunities being offered in St. Petersburg and Pinellas County.

The Official Visitor's Guide for St. Petersburg is in production. It should be available in late January/first of February 2011. This publication has a wide distribution to visitors into the Chamber Visitor & Information Center, potential visitors through phone or web request, National AAA Travel offices and

the State Welcome Centers. This year's edition will include an enhanced web version located on the Visitor pages of [www.stpete.com](http://www.stpete.com)

The St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce's new President & CEO will be named by the middle of January.

The Chamber is preparing for a year-long "Salute to Tourism" initiative. More to come.

### **Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce**

December was filled with planning for the 2011 year. Our Tourism Committee has increased their travelling Sales Mission to 3 in a year; Advertising opportunities via co-op have been increased and the first one launched Jan/Feb edition in Florida Lifestyles Magazine with some editorial. We have secured two more editions with editorial as well.

Plans are in place for a Thank you Campaign to launch in March.

The Chamber's annual dinner is scheduled for January 20th with Keynote Speaker US Senator Bill Nelson, this will be held at the Sirata Beach Resort and Conference Center.

### **Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce**

The Chamber of Commerce is noticing a very nice influx of both visitors and new residents from the soon-to-be frozen tundra. After last year, it's very nice to see!

January 6<sup>th</sup> was our 105<sup>th</sup> Epiphany. The cross was caught by Louis Pappas from one of Tarpon's favorite families.

Second Saturday was celebrated at the Sponge Docks with a VW Festival and the New Year's Resolution Party sponsored by Snap Fitness and Verizon Wireless.

On January 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>, The Sponge Docks will host their 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Arts and Craft Festival from 10:00 to 5:00 both days.

A Concert by "Elvis Presley Richards" and Friends - will be held on Saturday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30pm! This will be an evening filled with all of your favorite Elvis songs...so sit back and enjoy! Light desserts and coffee will be served following - please donate your favorite home-baked goodies! A donation will be requested at the door.

**SUNDAY MORNING FARMER'S MARKET** – The Sunday Morning Farmer's Market will be open from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm in the parking lot on the corner of Tarpon and Pinellas Avenues (Alt 10) in the Historic Downtown. There is a great selection including fresh produce, food, pastries, coffees and smoothies, crafts – just about anything you would like and it is growing every week. M and F and the Florida Folk Society will be entertaining from 10am to 2pm.

**ALA CARTE BRUNCH** – 10:00 am – 2:00 pm every Sunday at the Tarpon Springs Yacht Club, 350 N. Spring Blvd.

**Upper Tampa Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce in Oldsmar**

The City of Oldsmar approved a minor variance on the development plan for the construction of a fifth major hotel – Hampton Inn and Suites. Construction is expected to start within the quarter. This will add another 112 rooms to Oldsmar’s growing hospitality industry.

The chamber will initiate a nine session business training program titled “Pathway To A Great Business” on January 18. The initial topic will be Business Planning Skills Combat Style presented by Chamber President/CEO Jerry Custin.