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THE ARDMORE AGENDA

A quarterly publication of The Ardmore Initiative

56 East Lancaster Avenue • Ardmore, Pa. 19003 • 610-645-0540
www.ardmoreinitiative.org

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

By Mike Silver

I hope that you all enjoyed the holidays with friends and loved ones and are looking forward to 2009. During these difficult economic times we want to assure you that your business district authority, the Ardmore Initiative, along with our partners, The Ardmore Business Association, First Friday Main Line, and Lower Merion Township are committed to helping you survive in this challenging climate. We soon hope to be able to announce receipt of a major grant which will be used according to the five year plan which we presented to you last summer. These funds will be dedicated to Marketing and Streetscape initiatives, as well as to continue our Façade Grant program. Our Board and staff continue to work hard to seek additional funds to help you improve your properties, and to advocate on your behalf to Lower Merion Township. We are planning a significant expansion of our web site to include more tools and information to help our property and business owners. We are also working with the ABA to present a series of workshops and articles designed to help our business owners do more with less. We are planning some exciting community events for 2009, which we hope will drive shoppers to your doors and we support First Friday Main Line's tireless efforts to increase foot traffic through their monthly artistic and cultural offerings.

If you see a theme emerging here, you're correct. This theme is partnership and cooperation. Regardless of your political affiliation, it's difficult to disagree with our new President who reminded us that the responsibility to move ourselves and our country forward falls on all of us. Closer to home, no one organization can ensure Ardmore's success. We must all work together to accomplish our common goal of a vibrant, thriving downtown which meets the needs of residents and visitors alike. Please tell us how we can best help you - our doors and our ears are always open!

Sincerely,
Mike

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

On Friday, December 5th, the streets of Ardmore were aglow with lights, music and good cheer! Santa arrived in Schaufele Plaza in true Ardmore style on the fire truck, where he was welcomed by throngs of children and their families.

Special thanks to all who made the evening possible: **Shreiner Tree Care Services** for the donation of the holiday tree, **Mack Emanuel** for donating the holiday dreidel, **Merion Fire Company of Ardmore** for providing Santa's sleigh, **Joe Stefankiewicz and Susquehanna Bank** for refreshments, **Jeff Kwait of Gould's** (Ho Ho Ho!), and last but not least, the students of Ardmore's own **Regina Angelorum Academy** for their lovely caroling. The holiday spirit was truly alive in Ardmore!

Photos courtesy of Carla Zambelli.



SAVE THE DATES!

Thursday February 19th 830-10am in AI office: Tax Tips by Deborah Skolnick, H & R Block Important tax tips for 2008! Because of the ever-changing complex tax laws that are often targeted to specific businesses and occupations, there may be saving opportunities you could easily miss. Deborah will present the latest information to help you get all the deductions and credits to which you are entitled. **Investment Tips- Rob Burnham, CF Ward Associates** Brief discussion on investment strategies with a new administration and 2009 IRA & Pension Plan Limits. Please RSVP by Feb. 16 to Christine@ardmoreinitiative.org or call 610-645-0540

Thursday March 5th 830-10am AI office: Join us for a roundtable with our local banks & learn how they can help you with your credit needs. Participating banks include Beneficial Savings Bank, Bryn Mawr Trust, Citizens Bank, Sovereign Bank, St Edmond's FSB and Susquehanna Bank. Please RSVP by March 2 to Christine@ardmoreinitiative.org or call 610-645-0540

TIPS FOR TOUGH TIMES

By Christine Vilardo

In this economic climate, there is no shortage of advice from experts on how small retailers can survive. Some of this advice is helpful; much is not. Let me begin by saying there is no magic bullet. Some of the advice which follows is simply common sense, some information may be new to some or to all of you. It is information I have gleaned from a variety of sources and in some cases, refutes some of the advice we are all getting elsewhere. I hope that it will spur you to think and act a bit differently.

“Never let them see you sweat”: The experts tell us to “remain positive”, “be upbeat with our customers”. While this is good advice, I find it is always best to be honest with customers. They read the newspapers, they hear the reports of retail doom and gloom. Your customers have a vested interest in your survival; they want you to remain in business. Being truthful with them about the difficulties you are facing, without instilling the fear that you may one day simply close your doors, is a delicate balancing act, but it is a balance worth seeking. Being honest with your customers allows them to feel they have an important role in your continued existence, and by extension, in the well-being of their community. That said, even if you don’t know how to make payroll, pay the rent or pay your vendors, and all you want to do is throw up your hands, it is still important that your store be clean, well-stocked, well-maintained and inviting. Continue to change your windows regularly, decorate for holidays (and there is *always* a holiday!). You may be worried and depressed, but you don’t want your customers to get depressed when they come in to your store. Now more than ever, it is critical that *every* customer have a positive experience with you.

Diversify: In conversations with you, many of you have told me that, while one area of your business is suffering, another component is getting you through. For instance, sales may be down but service is up. Certainly not every business has this variety of components, but think creatively. Can you expand your merchandising to bring in complementary product lines? Include a service or rental component? Is there an educational aspect you can tap into? Can you create a special informational event for your customers? Can you offer value added perks and benefits? If expanding in these directions is not feasible for you, can you find other outlets to move merchandise? Can you sell online or use EBay or craigslist? Don’t snub your nose at these— many reputable businesses use these options to move merchandise.

Negotiate: Now is the time to negotiate with all of your vendors, service providers and creditors. Are you getting the best rates for your phone service, Internet service, trash pick-up, etc.? Just as shoppers are negotiating with you, you can do the same with your vendors. Can they lower your interest rates, review your service plans, give you better payment terms? If there are no shoppers coming in, you don’t have the excuse that you are too busy!

Examine your books: Do you keep good financial records? Are you on top of your receivables? Remember, the squeaky wheel gets the grease! Are there customers you need to nudge to pay up? Do you need to be more or less stringent about extending credit, using layaway, etc.?

Examine Everything: Are your store hours appropriate? When are you busiest? (Do you know?) Do you need to be open more hours? Fewer? Different days? Are you open on Sundays? On First Fridays? Can you sublet space to another small or complimentary business?

Cross Market : Are you spending your advertising dollars wisely? Do you collect your customer email addresses? There are many low-cost and effective email marketing companies out there. Constant Contact is just one of them. Also, postcards are one of the most cost-effective advertising pieces you can send. Our local printers can print these for you inexpensively and there are on-line companies who can do this as well. Are there other local businesses who serve the same market as you? Are your business cards in their stores? Are theirs in yours? For example, a bridal store should have info on our local jewelers, printers, gift stores, cake-makers, florists, travel agents, etc. If you offer children’s music lessons, do your customers know where their children can also take dance, karate or pottery classes? Active people often engage in more than one sport— are all of our sporting goods stores promoting each other? Are there ways several businesses can team up to participate in ads, trade shows, joint mailings, etc.?

Loyalty Programs: Advertisers are quick to tell us that now is not the time to cut back. However, look at how and where you are spending your advertising dollars. We all know that word of mouth is the best advertising— should you redirect your advertising dollars into rewarding your customers for referrals or for their loyalty? For instance, can you offer a free gift or gift certificate for a certain number of referrals? Or offer a gift certificate when a customer reaches a spending milestone with you? Creating and managing a program like this may take some extra time but is well worth it for the good will it generates with your customers.

Educate yourself: There are some excellent marketing professionals out there who publish free weekly E-newsletters for which you can sign up. Check out www.RickSegal.com and www.excelsiormarketing.com for starters. Do your industry or trade organizations publish helpful newsletters? Are you on those mailing lists? For free general business assistance check out Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) at www.score.org. Also, check the Small Business Development Center at the Wharton School, www.pasbdc.org. Finally, watch for more workshops and seminars from the AI and the ABA in the coming months.

Ardmore Initiative Board News

The Ardmore Initiative is pleased to welcome new and returning Board members. We thank them for their service to our community!

Joe Stefankiewicz, Manager of Susquehanna Bank
Anna Durbin, Law Offices of Anna Durbin
Larry Gee, General Manager of Suburban Square
John Durso, Manager, St. Edmund’s FSB

Ardmore Initiative Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 4pm in the Caucus Room of the Lower Merion Township Administration building.

We want to keep you informed! Please send an email with your email address (and those of your employees, friends or colleagues who may wish to be kept “in the loop”) to Christine@ardmoreinitiative.org

SAVE THE DATE!

**Ardmore Business Association
Annual Membership Dinner**



**Tuesday, February 24, 2009
Primavera Pizza Kitchen
7 E. Lancaster Ave.**



\$27.50 ABA members & spouses/partners, \$37.50 non-members
Make your reservations NOW for this important event.

Our guest speaker will be **Carl Dranoff** from Dranoff Properties. He will be giving an update on the Ardmore Station Project/Redevelopment. We will also discuss what is going on with the ABA including our Website project and upcoming events.

For more information, contact Harry at Harry's Treasures at 610-642-4775 or email Garyweisbandcpa@verizon.net

Please RSVP by February 15

Business name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____

Email: _____

Attending _____ **Total Due:** _____

Attendee Name(s): _____

Please return this form with check payable to "Ardmore Business Association" to ABA, c/o Gary Weisband CPA, 12 Cricket Ave. Ardmore, Pa. 19003 or drop off at Harry's Treasures, 22 E. Lancaster Ave.

News from the ABA

Thanks to ABA members. . .

MAPES HARDWARE, Matt Malloy and Natalie Cerulli of ROUNDSTONE and Martin Kane of MCCLOSKEYS TAVERN for their continued graffiti eradication efforts. Thanks to ABA members' dollars, several buildings have been repainted including the Earlington Club and the Rittenhouse Electric warehouse.

Join the Ardmore Business Association

Dues are \$125 per business, \$350 for corporate members.

Please send check , payable to Ardmore Business Association to ABA, c/o Gary S. Weisband, CPA, 12 Cricket Avenue, 2nd Floor, Ardmore, PA 19003.

Septa Pass-Perks: Use of public transportation is on the rise. The AI & ABA encourage you to take advantage of a free opportunity to reach new customers and increase sales through Septa Pass-Perks. Simply create an offer, valid for Septa pass holders and Septa will post it, along with a link to your web site, free of charge. For more info, visit www.septapassperks.org, contact Amy McCue at 215-580-7645 or at amymccrue@aol.com

Latest Façade Grant recipients : A la Maison, Petunia's Designer Consignment Boutique and Walter Brutsch/KC Cleaners. We thank them for their efforts to improve their storefronts!

Deadlines for newsletter inclusion: As our blast faxes and E-newsletters are becoming more popular, many more of you are requesting that we include your newsworthy items and events. Our goal is to publish The Ardmore Agenda, our print newsletter quarterly and our blast faxes and E-newsletters bi-monthly on (or close to!) the 1st and 15th of the month. In order to include your event, please send us your information at least 7 days prior to these target publication dates.

Welcome! Stop by the office and say hello to Celia Stoddard. Celia joins the Ardmore Initiative as a part-time administrative assistant. Celia is the mother of 2 and an Ardmore resident. Welcome, Celia!

ABA membership is strong.

Below is a list of our current members.

Main Line Honda
Piazza Acura of Ardmore
St. Edmonds Federal Savings Bank
Kimco Realty Corporation
Ardmore Toyota
Beneficial Bank
Bryn Mawr Trust Company
Infiniti of Ardmore, Inc.
Ardmore Paperback Book Shop
Harry's Treasures
Kings Collar, Inc.
Party Land
Giannini Jewelers, Inc.
Haws and Burke
Philadelphia Nanny Network
Orion General Contracting
Pennywise Thrift Shop
Bernie's Hair Studio
Swain Online, Inc.
Silver & Silver, Attorneys at Law
McCloskey's Tavern
Ruby's Diner
Orndorf & Associates
Chadwick & McKinney
Brownies 23 East
Charles F. Ward
Main Line Coin & Stamp
Rittenhouse Electric
Kimberly A. Timmons
Merion Art & Repro Center
Ardmore Pizza
Ardmore Animal Hospital
Rossi Shoe Service
Christopher J. Murray, CPA
Louis Lawnmower, Inc.
Sabrina Ann
Stocktrans, Inc.
Cardone Printing
Ardmore Auto Body
YMCA
J Centofanti Master Tailors & Shirtmakers
Gregory FCA Communications
Browse Around Thrift Shop
Salon True
Anna Durbin
Screenmatter
JB Merrick Apothecary
Dr. Vac & Sew LLC
Daly Termite & Pest Management
First Church of Christ, Scientist
Human Zoom
Mapes 5 & 10
Mapes Toy Store
Anthony C & Company
Gary S. Weisband
Dr. Larysa Bilyk Optometrist
Relax Therapeutic Massage Studio
Joseph D Boyle Agency
Suburban Office Supply

Ardmore Updates

Welcome New Businesses. . .

Ardmore now has its own BYOB French bistro! **A la Maison** opened at 53 W. Lancaster Ave. (484-412-8009) and early reviews are excellent! A la Maison is a wonderful addition to Ardmore's already varied restaurant scene!

Main Line Smoothie has moved to 28 W. Lancaster Ave. (rear) with an expanded menu of smoothies, protein shakes, decadent (yet healthy) desserts, a self-serve waffle station and more! Check out www.mainlinesmoothie.com for more information.

Leisure Fitness at 5 E. Lancaster Ave. has reopened under new ownership. We are happy to see that this long-established business will remain in Ardmore!

Petunia's, a designer consignment boutique has opened at 22 Ardmore Ave. (610-649-4005). Visit them for high end designer clothes and accessories at reasonable prices. Petunia's joins the other antique, thrift and consignment stores that make Ardmore a bargain hunter's dream!

Farewell to . . .

Sylvia Berkow Consignment Shop

Township News: Visit www.lowermerion.org for updates on Township projects. You can also sign up to receive press releases, announcements and agendas of Township meetings by clicking on "E-Subscriptions" of the home page of the site.

Ardmore Initiative office renovations: We have recently renovated our office to improve our functionality. New display racks and business card holders were installed to help promote our local businesses. Please drop off a supply of business cards and literature about your business.

Cigarette Litter Prevention Program: Please contact the AI office if you would like an ash urn at your property.

Commercial Space Available: For information on commercial property for sale or rent, visit our website or contact the township retail coordinator, Heidi Tirjan at (610) 645-6295 or htirjan@lowermerion.org.

Commercial Property Improvement Grants: The Ardmore Initiative and Lower Merion Township offer grants for façade improvements and ADA accessibility renovations. For more information, visit www.ardmoreinitiative.org, call The Ardmore Initiative office at (610) 645-0540, or Eric Persson at Lower Merion Township at (610) 645-6184.

New parking fees: Parking violators will now be fined \$17, with the exception of Handicapped Parking violations, which are \$50 and violations in the Lower Merion High School zone, which receive a \$30 fine. Six-month parking lot permits now cost \$210. Despite this small increase, you and your employees can still park for less than \$1.25 per day and leave the metered spots in front of your store for your customers. For more info, call LMT Parking Services at 610-645-6230

Energy Efficiency Funds available: The Small Business Energy Efficiency Grant Program, administered by DEP's Office of the Small Business Ombudsman, provides a 25% reimbursement grant, up to a maximum of \$25,000, to enable Pennsylvania small businesses (businesses with 100 employees or fewer) to acquire certain pieces of equipment or adopt certain processes that promote energy efficiency. Well-designed energy efficiency projects can help small businesses cut operating costs and increase competitiveness, while simultaneously reducing Pennsylvania's energy demand. The reimbursement grants can be applied toward the cost of purchasing and installing numerous energy efficient items and systems, including geothermal heat pumps; energy efficient HVAC, lighting, and refrigeration systems; insulation and air sealing projects. Applications will be accepted Jan. 12- May 1, 2009 or until funds are exhausted. For more information or to apply, please visit:

<http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/energyindependent/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=543714>

First Friday Main Line

February and March events: FFML is changing it up during the winter months. We will focus on one signature event for each of these months instead of events at all of our venues. **Friday, February 6th**, is a showcase of local restaurants. **First Friday Foodapalooza, is a culinary competition at the Haverford Estates from 5:30-8pm.** Local chefs from Ristorante Positano, Café San Pietro, Primavera Pizza Kitchen, J.R Monaghan's and more will present a signature dish for judging as well as a tasting menu for attendees. Chaddsford Winery will host a wine tasting. Tickets are just \$10 and proceeds benefit FFML.

Throughout February we will also be hosting our Main Line Loves You contest and on **Friday, March 6th**, **FFML celebrates Mardi Gras with "Carnivale"!** For more info on all of these exciting events, please visit www.firstfridaymainline.com.

**The Ardmore Initiative
Board of Directors**

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Charles F. Ward, CF Ward Associates

Staff

Christine Vilardo, Executive Director
Linda Suter, Administrative Assistant
Cecilia Stoddart, Administrative Assistant

Upcoming events . . .

- ☆ **February 16— Tax Tips & Investment Strategies (see page 1 for details)**
- ☆ **March 5— Bankers Roundtable (see page 1 for details)**
- ☆ **February 24— ABA Annual Dinner (see page 3 for details)**
- ☆ **March 6— First Friday celebrates Carnivale!(5 pm to 10 pm) www.firstfridaymainline.com**
- ☆ **April 3— First Friday (5 pm to 10 pm) www.firstfridaymainline.com**
- ☆ **May 1— First Friday (5 pm to 10 pm) www.firstfridaymainline.com**
- ☆ **June 5— First Friday (5 pm to 10 pm) www.firstfridaymainline.com**
- ☆ **June 6— Ardmore Blossoms Spring Celebration**

Contributors to The Ardmore Agenda are Christine Vilardo, Linda Suter, Nicole Ratke, Nancy Scarlato
For more information or to submit news, call (610) 645-0540, fax to (610) 645-0662 or e-mail linda@ardmoreinitiative.org.