

Chamber Channels

A PUBLICATION OF THE AFFILIATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
OF GREATER SPRINGFIELD, INC.

Serving Agawam, East Longmeadow/Longmeadow, Hampden/Wilbraham,
Ludlow, Springfield, West Springfield and the Women's Partnership

January 2009

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**Affiliated Chambers of
Commerce of Greater
Springfield, Inc.**

**1441 Main Street, Suite
133**

President's Message

2008 - What a Year!

At the end of calendar year 2008 we as a local business community and as a region find ourselves in a completely different economic environment than when we started calendar year 2008. Impacted by both national and international factors the Greater Springfield business community finds itself truly buffeted by the diverse economy that is the Pioneer Valley. With health care, higher education, financial services, retail, tourism, and manufacturing, the diversity allows our region to stay relatively strong during periods of economic upheaval that truly impact other parts of the country that rely heavily on one industry. Our local banks have weathered the storm with very few foreclosures in their portfolios, several hospitals have either completed or announced major expansions, the applications of enrollments at the local colleges continue to grow, and we continue to see home construction throughout the region.

As for the Chamber, 2008 was a year of change and consistency and one that continues to see the ACCGS staff work with hundreds of volunteers to move specific projects and initiatives forward for the benefit of our local business community. The following are some examples of those initiatives:

-Due to the involvement of our business volunteers we were able to keep a single real estate tax rate for both residents and businesses in East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Wilbraham, Hampden, and Ludlow.

-The Agawam Chamber produced an advertising campaign promoting the importance of business to the town of Agawam and its residents highlighting the number of businesses, the number of employees employed by these businesses, the amount of taxes paid by Agawam businesses, the amount of contributions to the community by Agawam businesses, etc.

Springfield, MA 01103

(413) 787-1555

SAVE THE DATE

Outlook 2009

Monday, February 9, 2009



This year's 2009 Keynote Speaker will be Congressman John Tanner (D, Tennessee), cofounder of a growing coalition of moderate to conservative Democrats known as the Blue Dog Coalition.

Given the very difficult year ahead this group is expected to influence the shape of much of the legislation considered by the Congress. Congressman Tanner is considered a leader in the fight to eliminate the federal debt. He will be introduced by Congressman Richard Neal.

Go to [the ACCGS website](#) to reserve your space now!



-The Springfield Chamber produced and ran an advertising campaign promoting housing opportunities, and opportunities for small business creation in downtown Springfield.

-The Springfield Chamber worked with Governor Deval Patrick and our State Legislative delegation on moving a "Springfield Bill" in the legislature which would extend the payback for state loan, establish a Chief Financial Officer for the city, and allow residents to vote on a four-year term for the Mayor's position.

-The Agawam and West Springfield Chambers consolidated to establish the West of the River Chamber of Commerce (WRC) doing business as the Agawam Chamber and West Springfield Chambers, uniting their Boards of Directors, events, and sharing ideas that work in each community to the benefit of both communities. In addition, the WRC appointed Erin Corriveau as its first Director of the West of the River Chamber of Commerce.

-The East Longmeadow/Longmeadow Chamber, the Hampden/Wilbraham Chamber, and the Ludlow Chamber consolidated to form the East of the River, Five Town Chamber, and like the WRC united their Boards of Directors and events, establishing a larger presence on the local level. Additionally, the ERC appointed Sylvia Poole as its first Director of the East of the River Chamber of Commerce.

-The ACCGS' 501(C)3 organization, the Greater Springfield Business Foundation, obtained funding and completed a study on the feasibility of establishing a local education fund in Springfield.

-The ACCGS on behalf of all the businesses in communities it represents successfully created networking opportunities for its members by way of producing 10 After 5s throughout the region, 10 salute breakfasts, and hosted its annual Outlook event, Super 60 event, and Annual Meeting event. The Super 60 honored 30 of the highest revenue producing privately held companies and 30 of the fastest growing privately held companies and Kerry Dietz, owner of Dietz & Company Architects, Inc. was presented the second annual "Richard Moriarty Chamber Citizenship" award.

-Chamber President Russell Denver completed the last of the 55 Urban Land Institute Coffee Hour Briefings detailing the development of the ULI short-term economic development plan for the city of the Springfield. The Springfield Chamber undertook in partnership with the city of Springfield, the initial stages of a 20-year economic plan for the city of Springfield.

-The East Longmeadow/Longmeadow Chamber worked closely with the Springfield Chamber to allow the city of Springfield's economic target area to extend into East Longmeadow to the benefit of Hasbro and Lenox to potentially receive tax incentives should they further expand on their current footprints.

-ACCGS undertook a change in the Chamber Channels newsletter alternating months between the traditional paper copy and electronic versions of Chamber Channels. To date, the change has been received well.

-ACCGS has undertaken a number of email blasts on specific legislative

Legislative Update

The season has come and gone.....no not that season; Tax Classification Season. That's the time of the year, November and December, when every community considers whether to tax businesses at a higher rate than residents through a vote by their local Board of Selectmen or City Council.

There is probably not a more important economic development related issue than this at the local level. I want to congratulate all of our affiliated Chambers for participating in this important vote. I always say, we may not get what we want when we show up, but we almost definitely would have been worse off had we not shown up.

Here is a recap on how the cities and towns voted. East Longmeadow voted unanimously to continue taxing all properties with one single rate. East Longmeadow has perhaps the highest percentage of its property listed as business compared to other communities with one rate. However, with a very nice effort of collecting signatures from Chamber members and presenting those to the board, along with testimony delivered by David Leslie, the single rate was maintained.

Ludlow is another community with a fair amount of business property and has a record of keeping one tax rate with the exception of one year. Chamber member Attorney Carmina Fernandes presented a brief statement that basically thanked the board for their past wisdom and encouraging them to continue having one rate. She was accompanied by John Pedro, and the vote was unanimous.

In Agawam, Mike Grandfield made the presentation to the City Council warning them that they were already close to the maximum amount of the tax burden they could shift onto businesses. He also presented many signed letters of support for the Chamber's position which is to begin to slightly remove some of the burden on business to

issues keeping members informed of issues that have potential impacts upon them including real estate taxation, the new Massachusetts Health Care Reform, to name a couple.

As always, should there be issues or concerns that you have that you believe the Chamber should be more closely involved in, feel free to contact me directly at denver@myonlinechamber.com.

Russell F. Denver
President, ACCGS

Springfield Leadership Institute Slated to Begin February 12, 2009

The 2009 Springfield Leadership Institute presented by the Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield Inc. (ACCGS) and Western New England College (WNEC) will hold its first session on February 12, 2009 and run for 7 consecutive weeks. This program has been presented by the ACCGS and Western New England College for over 30 years. Sessions are taught by members of the WNEC School of Business and are under the direction of Dr. Sharianne Walker and Dean Julie Siciliano.

What You Will Learn

This year's program includes an emphasis on strategies and techniques designed to create high energy and high involvement leadership. Sessions will focus on problem-solving, learning to ask the right questions, and implementing creative and innovative solutions for both non profit and for profit organizations. Participants will also have the opportunity to explore the realities of community involvement with a panel of community leaders who will share their volunteer and governing board experiences. ***The emphasis will be on experiential activities that provide opportunities to identify, develop and refine skill sets for effective leadership.***

SESSION SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

The Power of Impossible Thinking: Transform the Business of Your Life and the Life of Your Business

Participants will learn how mental models define the world and the ability of individuals to solve problems. Based on the book by Wind and Cook, "The Power of Impossible Thinking" participants will look at ways to act upon new models. Examples will be taken from business, education, science, and art. In preparation for future sessions, participants will complete a version of Myers-Briggs Type indicator and the Klein Group Indicator (KGI).

Each Person's Behavior Makes Perfectly Good Sense to Them: Individual Learning and Problem Solving Styles

Participants will diagnose and explore their personal learning and problem solving styles through the Learning Style Inventory (LSIII) developed by David Kolb. Understanding and harnessing our own and others' problem- solving styles can enhance leadership effectiveness particularly in the areas of building effective groups and developing high performing teams. Participants will apply this session's concepts by analyzing a case situation.

Can You Hear Me Now? Communication Strategies for Effective Leadership

Successful leaders understand that communication is one of the key elements of facilitating high level individual and group performance. Participants will explore strategies for crafting clear and effective communications. In moving beyond problems to creating solutions, leaders must utilize their communication skills to encourage involvement, focus

encourage more growth in town. Unfortunately, the Council continued what has become a trend of increasing the burden onto business, and although the end result of increases to tax bills in Agawam might be minimal, it is only because they have achieved the maximum shift allowable and can go no further.

The West Springfield Chamber always has to do the most work based upon the process the town uses during this vote. John Weiss and Al Bryant actually had to appear at three separate meetings over a three week period, testifying each time. While several points raised seemed to embarrass the councilors, the ultimate vote of 5 to 3 was to increase the burden on business, but at a smaller increase than what was originally suggested. Councilors Boudo, Bourque, and Romaniak all voted against this increase.

The decline in overall property valuation in Springfield set up a very difficult battle with Springfield's dual tax rates. An early number was floated that was totally unbalanced against the business community and through two days of making phone calls, and testimony at two hearings by Russ Denver, Steve Roberts, Fran Cataldo, Bob Bolduc, and Victor Woolridge, the final numbers adopted were below what was originally suggested but not at the level requested by the Chamber. This higher number passed on a 6 to 3 vote with Councilors Rooke, Tosado and Stebbins opposing it.

Hampden has always had a single tax rate and a letter from David Leslie was delivered thanking the Board for their attention to this issue and support for the one tax rate. The resulting vote was unanimous to keep one tax rate.

In Wilbraham, Terry Nelson delivered signed letters of support to the statement he delivered advocating for a single tax rate in a town that is seeing growth of its business properties. There is always a citizens group that advocates for a split rate in this town, but once again the business

energy, resolve conflicts, and develop resources to build a living solution for today and tomorrow.

Leading in the Community

The efficacy of the community organization is largely based on the efforts of volunteers and board involvement. This session will explore the most important attributes and responsibilities of board members, the realities of volunteerism, and strategies that encourage high involvement of board and committee members.

Leading through Strategic Planning

The long-term survival of organizations increasingly depends on the ability of their leaders to think and plan strategically. Participants will practice strategic management by developing a mission statement, defining strategic goals and identifying strategies for success. The session will close with an overview of the strategy scorecard concept, which keeps board involvement focused at the strategic level.

The Leadership Challenge

Leaders are most effective when their style of leadership recognizes and responds to the needs and expectations of the followers. In this session, participants assess their own leadership style and work on strategies for increasing their effectiveness as leaders.

Going Forward After Leadership 2009 - Leadership and Effective Participation in Groups

During the last session of the Institute, participants will explore their leadership and group participation styles through a dynamic learning process. The Klein Group Indicator (KGI) is a new group psychology instrument published nationally in 2005. It examines an individual's performance in four critical domains: leadership, negotiation orientation, task focus and interpersonal focus.

INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICE

Each participant makes the commitment to serve for at least one year either on a community service organization's Board of Directors or in another leadership role. The ACCGS will work toward having Leadership graduates serve on Boards of Directors of various civic, business and social service agencies.

Tuition

Tuition costs \$825 per participant. This includes a day trip to Boston and graduation dinner. For any questions about the program, application process or tuition, please contact: Lynn Johnson, Executive Assistant, Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield, Inc. at 413-755-1310 or at Johnson@myonlinechamber.com

Location and Session Schedule

The institute runs for seven consecutive Thursdays from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. beginning February 12, 2009 and concluding in April with a recognition dinner and graduation ceremony. All sessions are held in the TD Banknorth Conference Center. Parking will be validated.

All applications must be received by Friday, February 6, 2009. If further information is needed please contact: Lynn Johnson, ACCGS, at 413-755-1310 or at Johnson@myonlinechamber.com

community prevailed in having one rate for all properties.

As far as Longmeadow goes believe it or not, with only about 5 % of all the property listed as business, there is always a debate on having two rates, even though the result would save a resident very little money while pushing a very large increase onto business. Again David Leslie delivered a well thought out argument against the establishment of two rates and on a 4 to 1 vote (Selectmen Paul Santaniello voted against this and therefore for two rates) the Chamber position prevailed.

Please take time out to thank these volunteers for their efforts and the men and women on Boards of Selectmen or City Councils for their support where appropriate, and where they have been identified above. This is an annual undertaking and one that needs volunteers to at least attend the meetings if not offer testimony. Contact you local Chamber now to be put on a list to be contacted for the next tax classification season.

Chamber to Host "Brown Bag Luncheon" on Pending Federal Legislation

Last month's federal election promises to bring many changes to Washington come January. Organized labor and its Congressional supporters are preparing to push the passage of laws that would dramatically change the American workplace. At the forefront of this labor agenda is the "The Employee Free Choice Act." This bill would replace federally supervised secret ballot elections with authorization cards for union organizing, would mandate arbitration of first contracts rather than collective bargaining, and would increase penalties on employers only.



Photo provided by the Agawam Office of Planning and Community Development.

Career Day in Agawam

On Wednesday, December 3, 2008, the West of the River Chamber of Commerce held its first Career Day for 7th Graders at the Agawam Junior High School. Over 18 companies participated in this program. The 360 7th graders were divided up into groups of 20 to visit each of the companies during the morning hours. At each facility the students and their teachers were given a complete tour and information concerning what that company manufactures or does. The company spoke to the students about course studies and careers in their particular industry.

In the Junior High School auditorium before the tour started, Alan Rogers, Chairperson of the West of the River Education Committee, introduced various speakers to the students. These included Agawam Mayor Sue Dawson, Superintendent of Schools Mary Czajkowski, State Representative Rosemary Sandlin, West of the River Chamber President Al Bryant, and the Junior High School Principal, Mr. Robbins.

The cost of the busing of the students to and from the facilities were paid by the Chamber. Most of the companies that were visited by the students were also set up by the Chamber committee members. Special thanks go to the Education Committee participants: Mike Moreau, Melissa Pinkerton, Gina Fusick, Bonnie Massoia, Anne McKenzie, Deb Hunter, Alan Rogers, and also to the Guidance Department personnel at the Junior High School.

This is the first joint effort by the combined West Springfield and Agawam Chambers of Commerce since the merger. By all accounts, the career visits were a great success and the students came away with a lot of information about the companies that they visited. Alan Rogers and the Education Committee members would like to thank the following companies for their enthusiastic participation in this event and hopes to make this an annual event:

Agawam Fire Department, Agawam Town Hall, Balise Toyota, Berkshire iPower, Berkshire Heating and Air Conditioning, Bridgeport National Bindery, Career Technical Center, Chez Josef, Dave's Soda and Pet Food City, Fitness First, OMG, Quill Office Supply, Simmons Mattress, Suddekur, Toner Plastics, United Bank, Whalley Computer, and Six Flags of New England.

The Chamber feels that it is vitally important that the students realize the size and scope of local companies in their community and that many of these companies employ local residents and are significant taxpayers.

The Legislative Steering Committee of the Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield will spend more time this year looking at these federal issues than has been done in the past. To begin these efforts, this important brown bag luncheon seminar has been scheduled.

Attorney Timothy Murphy of Skoler, Abbott & Presser, P.C. an expert on Labor Law, will be the presenter. Tim is also a member of the Chamber's Legislative Steering Committee and the Chairman of that group's Work Place Issues Sub-Committee. Please join us to learn more about the possible federal legislative changes on the horizon for 2009.

Date: Friday, January 9, 2009

Place: TD Banknorth Conference Center

1441 Main Street, Springfield

Time: 11:45 AM to 1:15 PM

Cost: \$15.00 - A Box Lunch Will Be Available

You may make your reservation on www.myonlinechamber.com or via return email to Johnson@myonlinechamber.com or fax to Lynn Johnson at 413-755-1352.



Lt. Governor Timothy Murray to Address ERC

Lieutenant Governor Timothy



7th Grade students at Hasbro Games before being taken on a tour conducted by Roz Burtch, Benefits Coordinator. Staff photo.

7th Graders Tour East Longmeadow Businesses

Recently, fifteen East Longmeadow businesses opened their doors to over 200 7th graders from Birchland Park Middle School, the ASL Learning Center and Willie Ross School for the Deaf. These tours, conducted over two days, are organized by the East Longmeadow/Longmeadow Chamber of Commerce Education Committee and the school to expose students to the workplace environment. According to program coordinator Ann Rutherford "this is an opportunity for students to connect what they learn in school to the workplace. They see first hand how the skills they are learning each day are used in the "real" world. These tours also give them an understanding of the many different jobs, skills, and talents needed within a company."

The Education Committee would like to thank the following companies for their help with this valuable learning experience:

Big Y
Body Works Unlimited
Carlin Combustion Technologies
Hampden Engineering
Hasbro Games
Healthtrax Fitness & Wellness
Jewish Geriatric Services
Lenox/American Saw & Manufacturing
Maybury Material Handling
Reminder Publications
Robert Charles Photography
Stop & Shop
Tarbell Associates
Veritech Corp.
W.F. Young, Inc.

Murray will be the keynote speaker at the East of the River Chamber of Commerce "Legislative Breakfast" on Friday, February 6, 2009. His Honor will be discussing the administration's view on the year ahead. In addition there will be an update from the ACCGS' Legislative Steering Committee on the Legislative Agenda for 2009.

The breakfast, sponsored by Eastfield Mall is being held at the Ludlow Country Club. Tickets are \$20.00 for members and \$25.00 for non-members and may be purchased on line at www.myonlinechamber.com or by faxing Diane Swanson, Events Manager at 755-1322.

For more information on this event or the East of the River Chamber of Commerce contact ERC Director Sylvia Poole at 755-1318, or email: poole@myonlinechamber.com.



Barbara Perry, Reminder Publications, Ellen Albano, Eastfield Mall, Gloria Faria, Chicopee Savings Bank, Kenn Delude, Westmass Area Development Corporation, Joe Lawler, Gaudreau Group, Brady Chianciola, PeoplesBank. Staff photo.

East of the River Chamber of Commerce Hosts Holiday Breakfast

The East of the River Chamber of Commerce (ERC) representing the towns of East Longmeadow, Hampden, Longmeadow, Ludlow and Wilbraham hosted their first joint Holiday Breakfast. David Leslie, Chairman of the ERC and Controller of Glenmeadow Retirement Community welcomed more than 150 business and town leaders to the event.

The breakfast, sponsored by Eastfield Mall, was held at Elmcrest Country Club. Stressing the importance of Chamber membership, David took the opportunity to introduce new members - Automated Tax

Services, LLC, Convergent Solutions, Inc., David Kurlan & Associates, Elements Therapeutic Massage, Jos. A. Bank, Kate Gray, Inc., Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, Morgan Stanley, Primary Focus, Rick Forgay Leadership Institute, Spoleto Restaurant, Summer Wind Productions, Town Planner of Hampden County, and United Bank - East Longmeadow, before turning over the program to Chief Greeter Joe Lawler of the Gaudreau Group Insurance and treasurer of the ERC.

Kenn Delude, President of Westmass Area Development Corporation gave a presentation on the "Ludlow Mills" project. This project will be developing the "Ludlow Mills" into a multi-use facility.

PeoplesBank was the morning's "Speaker Sponsor". Brady Chianciola, Assistant Vice President and Regional Manager had the pleasure of introducing the guest speaker - Rob Peck. Rob is founder and C.E.A. (Creative Education Advocate) of Zestworks - a speaking, training and consulting firm whose principal focus is the 3 T's: Teamwork, Tolerance and Tenacity. Rob's guiding belief is that high spirits mean low attrition, and when workplace morale goes up, energized job performance fuels organizational growth.

Keeping the holiday tradition, Chamber members contributed gifts to the Save Our Kids Youth Center. The Center is a non-profit agency located on Eastern Avenue in Springfield. Their mission is to help inner city, high risk youth ages 6-17, by providing educational enrichment programs, life skills, tutors, mentors, and nutritional meals and groceries. All of their programs are offered free of charge. Some of their programs include providing Thanksgiving baskets to needy families and putting on Christmas parties for hundreds of children at low-income, After-School program sites. The Feed Our Kids Program provides nutritional food to children and their families. Over the past 14 years, this program has provided food to over 45,000 children and their families. In addition to the gifts donated by members, Brady Chianciola, Assistant Vice President and Regional Manager of PeoplesBank presented the Center with a \$500.00 donation.

Holiday music was provided by alto saxophonist - Joe Wilson.

For more information regarding ERC events including the Legislative Breakfast on February 6, 2009 at Ludlow Country Club visit the Events Calendar on the Chamber's website, www.myonlinechamber.com or contract ERC Director Sylvia Poole at 755-1318, or email: poole@myonlinechamber.com.



Paul Plummer, Assistant Principal, Kathy Hill, Principal, Ann Rutherford all from Birchland Park Middle School, Dr. Edward Costa, Superintendent of Schools for East Longmeadow. Staff photo.



*Brady Chianciola, PeoplesBank,
Irene Blanchard, Save Our Kids
Youth Center. Staff photo.*



Joe Wilson, musician. Staff photo.



Rob Peck, Zestworks. Staff photo.

ACCGS Calendar

January 6

Springfield Chamber Board of Directors, TD Banknorth Conference Room, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

January 7

ACCGS Breakfast, Springfield College- Alden Street, Springfield, 7:15 a.m. - 9:00 a.m., \$20 Members, \$25 Non-members

January 9

ACCGS Legislative Steering Committee, TD Banknorth Conf. Room, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

January 14

ACCGS After 5, Holiday Inn- Holyoke, Whiting Farms Room, 5:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m., \$10 Members, \$15 Non-members

January 15

ACCGs Board of Directors' Meeting, TD Banknorth Conference Center, Springfield, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

January 21

ERC Board of Directors' Meeting, The Gardens of Wilbraham, Community room 2, Lodge Lane, Wilbraham, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

*

Women's Partnership Meeting- Business Expo., Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, West Springfield, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

January 22

Agawam Business Spotlight Tours, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

January 27

WRC Board of Directors' Meeting, Captain Leonard House, Agawam, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

January 28

Executive Power Networking, Tower Square, 1500 Main Street, Springfield, 7:45 a.m. - 9:45 a.m., \$20 Members, \$25 Non-members

*

Women's Partnership Board of Directors Meeting, EDC Conference Room, Springfield, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

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