



# Four Corners Quarterly

The Newsletter of the Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association

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[www.downtownsmyrna.org](http://www.downtownsmyrna.org)

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## *Help transform the Smyrna community*

*By Jim Hawkins, President*

*The Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association*

*The following article was written by Association President Jim Hawkins and published in the Smyrna-Clayton Sun Times*

We live in challenging times. We may be tempted in this era of economic uncertainty and political bickering to join the chorus of negativity sounding around us. My hope is that we will join in a different movement instead.

My wife Kathleen and I moved to Smyrna nearly 15 years ago, which makes us either newcomers or old-timers, depending on your perspective. In that time we have fallen in love with this community and have come to see that this is a great place. My hope is that we all will join in making this community even better.

We have numerous ways we can join this movement to better our community. Lend a hand to the effort to build a new, updated and larger public library. Volunteer to help in area schools. Recognize that you can make a difference with your dollars and do business locally, which helps the local economy. Discover how you can help strengthen the heart of our community in and through the Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association.

Get involved in the arts - as a performer, an audience member, or both - at the Smyrna Opera House. Serve others through the Smyrna-Clayton Rotary Club, the Holly's Club, your church, the fire company, Habitat for Humanity, or other area groups. Be a mentor for children or youth through leadership in the scouts, Little League, Little Lass, the Boys and Girls Club, and other organizations. Or, if you have a new idea, gather some folks to work with you.

We all have a choice: complain about how things are, or work to make life better. I choose to make a difference and transform our community and our world. Won't you join me?

## *2011 Annual Meeting Recap*

*By Robin Williams-Bruner*

The 2011 Annual Meeting of the Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association was held on Sunday, November 13, 2011 from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. and included a progressive dinner in three of Smyrna's more distinctive private homes.

The dinner began with hors d'oeuvres and beverages at Quentin Schlieder's home at 36 South Main Street and was followed by a delicious buffet dinner catered by Cathy Shaner of Main Street Market in the home of Maria and Jim Newill who reside in the historic Clements Mansion located at 56 West Commerce Street. Then it was on to the lovely home of Cheryl and Larry Thornton for dessert, tea and coffee as well as the Annual Meeting of the Association.



*The historic Clements Mansion was the venue for a delicious buffet dinner at the Association's 2011 Annual Meeting.*

Following dessert at the Thornton's, President Robin Bruner called the meeting to order and reports from the Standing Committees summarized the activities over the past year.

Ruth Bower, Chairman of the Organization Committee noted that the Board continues to meet to discuss its mission, its roles and its activities as a now all volunteer organization, hoping to promote positive cultural and economic change in our historic

## Association Underwrites Community Branding



The Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association provided a \$500.00 grant to the Town of Smyrna toward its recent Community Branding Initiative.

Ben Muldrow of Arnett Muldrow & Associates introduced the community brand he designed to members of the Smyrna community at town hall. The big reveal came after Muldrow spent three days in town researching Smyrna through a series of workshops and getting to know the town through a tour.

The brand will help create an identity unique to Smyrna but it's more than just a brand. The town hopes it will not only encourage people to visit Smyrna but remind them that Smyrna's more than just what's seen driving down Route 13.

The branding project cost \$7,000, half of which was covered by the Delaware Economic Development Office. The remaining amount was paid for with money that was allocated in the town budget for promotional materials

## Save the Date!

The Annual Wine Tasting Garden Party continues to be the primary fundraiser for the Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association. This year the party will again be held under a tent in Quentin Schlieder's garden at 36 South Main Street. The party will run from 4:30-8:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 15, 2012. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us for what has become one of Smyrna's signature annual events. Look for your invitation in August!



*Guests at last year's party enjoyed a beautiful buffet which include many specialties including beef tenderloin and crab cakes.*

## Annual Meeting continued...

downtown while at the same time preserving our history and heritage. What has emerged is a desire and intent to evolve into an organization that supports development efforts, cultural events, and economic initiatives downtown. The Association endeavors to serve as a liaison among the various other groups operating to preserve and protect and to develop our culture, our history, and our economic health.

It was noted that the Association was recognized along with Milford's and Dover's downtown organizations, as one of Kent County's Attractions of the Year Award at Kent County's 20th Annual Celebration of Tourism. A letter of congratulations was received from Governor Jack Markell and by reading will be entered into the minutes of this annual meeting.



*Robin Bruner (c) accepts a Kent County Attractions of the Year award from Cindy Small (l) and Dr. Dan Houghtaling, President of the Board for Kent County Tourism*

Several initiatives are priorities for the Organization Committee in the upcoming year. First and foremost are membership recruitment, tracking and recognition as well as retention. Quentin Schlieder, who returns to the Board and to his role as Corresponding Secretary (and Chief Organizer), has agreed to serve as our membership chair.

Second, with the departure of Larry Koehler, our only paid staff, committee responsibilities and assignment of housekeeping/administrative duties becomes key to our on-going operation.

Finally, the Association is making more effective use of social media in the form of our website and a Facebook® page to promote and support our mission. This is, in this day and age, crucial to the Association's on-going success. This in addition to more low tech methods such as print advertising and

the use of the information kiosk in downtown Smyrna next to the library parking lot.

While the Economic Restructuring has suspended its activities at this time, the Association continues to advocate for the development of business in the historic downtown. Established retail businesses such as Sayers Jewelers, Smyrna Sporting Goods, Sheridan's Irish Pub and Restaurant continue to serve as anchors for our economic base. Economic growth is seen in the success of unique retail businesses such as Bailee 21 and Heart of Smyrna and the addition of a dental office, embroidery business (relocating from Smyrna Mart) and a photography studio to established downtown service businesses such as the exercise studio and spa as well as the banks, and other financial services like Records Gebhart Insurance.

In October the Association approved and awarded a grant to the Town of Smyrna to support the branding initiative.

Most recently it should be noted that a vacant business, Wally's BBQ, which had become an eyesore is undergoing a major transformation and we look for better things for that southern entry into our downtown. Vacant and deteriorating buildings and businesses downtown continue to be of concern to the Association.

As the Association transitions even more to a role as an advocate and watchdog it is our hope that we will be accepted as a voice and participant in vetting and recruiting businesses that are appropriate and sustainable in our downtown. It should be noted that Association Director and previous President, Maria Newill and husband Jim, hosted a cocktail party to meet and greet owners of a distillery business considering locating downtown. Last November, the Association launched a shop local campaign, and in our monthly ads in the *Delaware State News*, continued to promote living, playing, shopping and thinking locally.

Janet McClure is Chairman of the Promotion Committee. On May 21, 2011 a Town Wide Yard Sale was held in conjunction with Rotary Club Car Show. The Association sponsored a promotional ad in the Car Show Program.



The Firefly 5K, chaired by Association Vice President Ruth Bower and Gary Sturlir, was held on Wednesday May 25,

2011. The event brought many participants and spectators downtown for a race sponsored by a variety of local residents and businesses, including major sponsor **Christiana Care**. The proceeds from the race, \$3,316.00, benefitted the Smyrna Police Athletic League, as it has since its inception.



*The 2011 National Night Out event was a well attended family friendly event.*

On Tuesday, August 2, 2011, National Night Out Co-chairs Quentin Schlieder and Ruth Bower worked with Smyrna Police Department to hold this annual "block party." The night was again a success in bringing residents, businesses, public safety organizations, and community groups together for the evening. **WSFS** sponsored the hot dog stand and the Association offered complimentary popcorn. Janet McClure and her group of hardworking Caravel students again offered a variety of games and prizes for children which were sponsored by **Mike Kwiatkowski Plumbing and Heating**.

The planning committee again organized a successful evening of great food, wine, and camaraderie on Sunday, September 18, 2011 in the lovely gardens of Quentin Schlieder and Henry Stewart. **Larry's Liquors** again sponsored our wines for tasting. The Association Board and membership decorated the tent and donated great food as well as lovely items for the silent auction which was well organized and presented by Janet McClure and her daughter Olivia. The concerted effort and generosity of all raised over \$4,400 for use by the SDRA to preserve and enhance our downtown, and to sponsor, promote and enhance our historic downtown and its cultural events.

The Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association is also one of number of Smyrna businesses and organizations to take out an ad in the Smyrna pages of the 2012 Kent County Profile - a collaborative effort of the DE State News and the Kent Economic

Partnership. In January the Association also sponsored the free showing of the movie GONE WITH THE WIND at the Smyrna Opera House to support that organization's major annual fundraiser, The Arts Cotillion. In addition we sponsored a basket for the Cotillion's silent auction.

The Design Committee is chaired by Susan Wolfe. The Committee has been working on revising the walking tour, façade grants and promoting historic Smyrna's real estate market. The 2011 façade grants were presented to Allan and Melanie Ryder for their work in restoring their home at 117 West South Street and to Joe and Shirley Sheridan for their impressive improvement of their Irish Pub and Restaurant at 44 West Commerce Street.

The Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association selected Missy Vaughn as the winner of the 2011 "Ellen Sayers Beautification Award." The Award was presented at the Association's Annual Meeting to recognize her dedication in enhancing and maintaining the landscape at Belmont Hall has enriched the experience of visiting one of Smyrna's greatest historical sites

The Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association selected Jennifer Merrill for its 2011 Star of Smyrna Award. Merrill was selected for her outstanding work to promote the new Duck Creek Regional Library and for her previous service to many other community groups including the Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association. The success of many of these endeavors is directly linked to her enthusiasm for our community. It his hard to understand how she finds the time raising a family and being an adjunct professor at the University of Delaware!

***The Smyrna Downtown  
Renaissance Association  
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***President Robin Bruner (l) presents the Star of Smyrna Award to Jennifer Merrill (r) for her work to promote the Duck Creek Regional Library.***

The meeting concluded with the election of new officers and Directors. The following were elected to three year terms beginning January 1, 2012 and ending December 31, 2014: Jim Hawkins, Bill Wagner, Bob Peck, Quentin Schlieder, Kyna Baker, Rose Sarkissian and Maria Paris Newill.

Jim Hawkins was elected President, Ruth M. Bower as Vice President, Peggy Snow as Recording Secretary, Quentin Schlieder as Corresponding Secretary, William Wagner II as Treasurer and Susan Wolfe as Assistant Treasurer.

The Annual Meeting was great fun and an opportunity to recognize those who have done so much for our Community. There still are many opportunities to serve as a volunteer at an event, or even to become a Director of the Association. If you are interested, please call (302) 653-6449.

***Go Green! If you would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail, please contact us at our new telephone number, 302-653-6449 or by e-mail at [gcsjr@comcast.net](mailto:gcsjr@comcast.net)***