



Charleston Area Alliance

www.CharlestonAreaAlliance.org

Economic, Business & Community Development • Chamber of Commerce

OCTOBER
NEWSLETTER



Jack Rossi
Chairman

Stuff Happens

Stuff happens. That's the assumption most people make when they hear about 600 jobs being retained at CASC or a new walking tour guide to Charleston's East End (see on opposite page).

ment in area land and buildings, and an expanded tax base for our schools and other important government services.

Our job is to help companies, both large and small, find appropriate land or facilities, develop utility infrastructure to support their operations and work with state and local governments on incentives for setting up shop here. But it doesn't happen easily and it doesn't happen overnight. By the time you hear about a new business opening up, several years may have passed since it first started working with the Alliance.

In addition, confidentiality is critical to most businesses seeking to expand or consolidate operations in a new location. If they are considering West Virginia, they may not want their competitors to know, and we don't want our competing states to know either. That's why you don't hear about deals in the works until the ink is dry.

The same is often true with our community development efforts. Gateway Greenspace and Rails to Trails are just two examples of exciting projects we're working on to improve our quality of space and place. But they also take considerable time, money and persistence to become a reality.

When we have good news to share, we'll be the first to shout it from the rooftops. When we're not tooting our own horn, however, it means we're hard at work behind the scenes getting the good stuff ready to happen. That quiet you may hear is actually the lull before the storm of celebration!

In the meantime, if you have benefited from projects supported by the Alliance, if you believe in our mission, if you share our commitment to creating a better future, please "pass it on" and tell your neighbor, friend or colleague. The more support we have from our members and volunteers, the better we can serve the region and build a more vibrant community and prosperous economy for all.

Take, for example, the **Capitol Market**. Now heralded as one of the area's most successful and popular community development projects in recent history, the Capitol Market faced skepticism and significant fundraising hurdles as it moved from the "that's a great idea" stage to a real live community marketplace. Determined efforts by volunteers from the Charleston Renaissance, one of the Alliance's predecessor organizations, sustained the effort during the seven long and challenging years it took to complete the project.

Keeping the "good stuff" happening is the mission of the Charleston Area Alliance. Through a wide array of economic and community development initiatives, we strive to make the area a better place to live, work and play.

As with the Capitol Market, many of these initiatives unfold over several years. Currently, for example, we are working with three sizable companies that are considering the Charleston area as the site for a new operation or expansion. With these potential businesses would come good-paying jobs, capital invest-

Hiring the Disabled the Right Thing and the Smart Thing

Many employers lack confidence in hiring or managing people with disabilities due to common misconceptions about the **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)**, says Penney Hall, **West Virginia State ADA Coordinator**, who spoke at a recent Alliance CEO Roundtable.

Hall related the example of a worried local employer who brought in an expensive consultant from Washington, D.C. after an employee asked for a reasonable accommoda-

tion of his disability. The resulting accommodation, to elevate the worker's desk a few inches with wooden blocks, total cost of the project is less than \$5 - something the employer could have easily learned himself without the consultant if he had simply asked the worker what he needed.

October is disabilities awareness month. In her presentation, Hall refuted some common myths about the ADA:

Myth: Providing a reasonable accommodation for a disabled employee is very expensive. Reality: 20 percent of accommodations had no cost, and 51 percent cost between \$1 and \$500.

Myth: Disabled people don't need jobs. Reality: Most people, even those with severe

disabilities, do not receive public assistance. Myth: Businesses must hire disabled workers. Reality: The ADA does not require businesses to hire disabled people. It ensures that they have equal access to employment opportunities

Hall reported that 23 percent of all West Virginians have a disability, and that the nationwide unemployment rate for the disabled is 70 percent.

Helping this large pool of potential employees get into the workforce is the job of **Carolyn Summers**, an employment specialist for the **WV Division of Rehabilitation Services** in the Charleston District Office, who also spoke at the CEO Roundtable. Summers facilitates job placement for disabled workers and helps employers who hire

Did You Know?

Did you know that the Charleston Regional Chamber of Commerce is part of the Charleston Area Alliance?

Three years ago, Charleston Renaissance, the Business and Industrial Corporation (BIDCO) and the Charleston Regional Chamber of Commerce joined forces to build a more vibrant community and prosperous economy through a new organization -- the Charleston Area Alliance. The effectiveness of these organizations has been enhanced through the synergies resulting from this merger, and working together, they have made significant strides towards improving the area's economic climate and quality of life.

Although it operates under a new umbrella, the work of the Chamber is as vital as ever. Most recently, your Chamber, which is governed by a separate board of directors and legal structure, has successfully advocated for several measures benefiting area businesses and citizens, including:

- Supporting metro-government legislation giving cities and counties the option of providing metro-services and consolidating governments to provide more efficient and effective services.
- Championing the emergency services levy referendum, which assured access to emergency services for citizens within our cities and rural areas and solidified the public transportation (KRT) system.
- Backing tax modernization efforts that resulted in continued reductions in the business franchise tax. In case you missed it, on July 1, 2007 your business franchise taxes were reduced and will continue to be reduced each year until 2012.

In anticipation of the 2008 legislative session, the Chamber will soon release white papers outlining its position on upcoming issues affecting our business climate. And to amplify its voice on issues of common concern, the Charleston Chamber will unite with the chambers of Huntington and Morgantown through the new Metro Chamber Coalition.

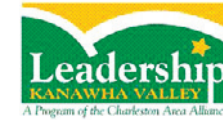
It may be operating under a new structure, but Charleston Chamber's commitment to its business members and the community is stronger than ever. Your membership in the Alliance ensures that the Chamber's tradition of advocacy and service will continue to meet the many challenges ahead.

the disabled to take advantage of tax credits, training reimbursements and other benefits available to them.

Hiring the disabled is "the right thing to do, and the smart thing to do," she says.

For more information, visit the ADA information center: www.adainfo.org; the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) <http://janweb.jcdi.wvu.edu/>; or the WV Division of Rehabilitation Services, www.wvdrs.org.

CEO Roundtables are luncheon discussions presented each month by the Alliance to educate members and the community about current issues affecting business. The next CEO Roundtable will be held November 1.



Third class of Leadership Kanawha Valley begins session

Participants in the Leadership Kanawha Valley program started the 2007-2008 session in a unique way. Facilitated by a team from **North American River Runners**, participants became acquainted through a series of exercises that took them out of their comfort zones and transferred them into a new frame of mind.

Sponsored by **Chesapeake Energy**, Leadership Kanawha Valley prepares future generations for leadership roles. The program will develop, inform, train and enhance potential leaders and help them understand the issues and needs of our community.



Calendar of Events

November 1
CEO Roundtable -Economic Forecast
Embassy Suites

November 15
Business After Hours
Ramada Inn, South Charleston

November 23
Downtown Charleston ArtWalk

November 30
Think Tank 17.2

To register, or for additional information, please visit www.CharlestonAreaAlliance.org or call 304-340-4253.



Twenty-seven talented students from the University of Tennessee kick off three days of community service to Charleston charities during their fall break earlier this month. Representatives from the American Red Cross, YWCA and the Charleston Area Alliance, along with Charleston Mayor Danny Jones, welcomed the energetic volunteers with a thank you breakfast at the North Charleston Community Center.

East End Walking Tour Brochure Steps Out

A self-guided walking tour of the East End brochure highlighting the rich architecture and fascinating history of Charleston's oldest and most diverse neighborhood is now available.

With detailed descriptions and color photos, the 16-page guide is a great resource for residents and visitors interested in learning about the historic East End. Among the highlights are stately homes of former West Virginia governors, unique multi-family dwellings and distinctive commercial buildings.

The self-guided tour is over four miles long, but has been broken down into four easy segments that can be enjoyed all at once or one at a time. It includes a map of

parking areas for each segment as well as distance totals for those who may want to run or walk the tour.

The colorful and bold brochure was designed by **Rob Cleland**, a well-known Charleston artist who has worked closely with East End Main Street on other projects. His work includes the notable East End art mural, Out and About, located at Elizabeth and Washington Streets.

Volunteers and staff from the **East End Main Street Program**, the **Kanawha Valley Historical & Preservation Society**, **West Virginia State University** and the **Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau** worked countless hours on researching and compiling the tour. This project received generous support and encouragement from **The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation** and the **Sustainable Kanawha**



Valley Initiative. The Printing Press of Charleston also helped make this project possible.

The free brochure will be available to visitors at local hotels, attractions, West Virginia Interstate Welcome Centers, East End businesses and the Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau. To receive a copy, visit these businesses or contact the Charleston CVB at 304-344-1241; visitorinfo@charlestonwv.com.

Alliance Board Member Sally Smith of Bowles Rice McDavid Graff & Love, left, welcomes Secretary of State Betty Ireland to a September Professional Women's Council luncheon at Edgewood Country Club. Ireland encouraged the sold out crowd to pursue leadership positions in business and government.



'Cultivating Art\$ to the Max'

Think Tank 17.1, "Cultivating Art\$ to the Max" introduced attendees to "social enterprise." **Justin Rothshank**, founder of **The Union Project** in Pittsburgh, described how he and a group of volunteers restored a prominent community building into a neighborhood gathering and working space for artists, community builders and people of faith.

The Union Project is an incubator for four art enterprise businesses. Rothshank cited the key components for their success: committed founders, great building, thorough business plan, and volunteer management. He explained that without a solid business plan, funding would have been nonexistent.

Rothshank's comments and those of **Dr. David Wohl** and **Martha Mozinga** ignited a discussion on ways to develop a similar project in Charleston. The Alliance's Community Affairs Team will facilitate further discussions in the coming months.

Article by Joseph Jones, Charleston Area Alliance Chair, Community Affairs Team



Thank you, Renewing Members

Daniels Law Firm
Dinsmore & Shohl
EZ to Use Big Book
GAI Consultants, Inc.
Gardner's Drycleaning & Laundry
Jacobs & Company
Lane & Young
Marshall Miller & Associates
Marty's Tire Store
Minardi Eye Center, Inc.
Monarch Service Corporation
Northwestern Mutual Financial Network
Panera Bread
Pauley, Curry, Sturgeon & Vanderford
PIA Career Services
RC General Contractors
Rollins, Cleavenger & Rollins
Schoenbaum Family Enrichment Center
Serentas Dental Care Solutions Service Plus, Inc.
The CTC at WVU Tech
The Real Estate Book
The Resort at Glade Springs
The Salvation Army Valley Gardens, Inc.
Walker Express, The Cat Rental Store
Wellington's
West Virginia Federal Credit Union
West Virginia Health Care Association
WV Radio Corp. of Charleston
Young Floral Company