

# DOWNTOWN ADVOCATE ANNUAL REPORT

*This report was presented to the Board of Trustees at the close of 2015. It describes the specific activities associated with the placemaking strategy that underlies the Advocate's overall efforts.*

## **ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **Merchants**

- Held regularly scheduled meetings with merchants to seek input and involvement and build consensus on needs, direction and initiatives.
- \*Maintain business owner email list for regular communication regarding downtown issues, initiatives and events.

### **Landlords**

Continue efforts to build ongoing relationships with landlords of unrented storefronts, in order to ascertain needs and preferences and connect them with potential business owners.

### **Markets**

- Met with Farmer's Market and merchants to discuss ideas to promote business, market offered veggie valet, increased push to have shoppers park in commuter lot, offers of merchant inclusion in email blasts and at market tables.
- Present on numerous occasions at farmer's market to promote downtown events, and distribute holiday gift guides.
- Helped promote Flea Market and merchant Sidewalk Sales via press and social media.

### **Community: Residents, Boards, Commissions and Organizations**

- Communicated with residents via Village and Mayor email blasts
- Downtown Collaborative: met regularly with this established group of involved residents (everyone is welcome), to discuss business development, shop local initiatives, and other issues that pertain to the downtown.
- In addition to meeting with many individual residents, over the course of 1st year, have met and/or communicated with the Seniors group, The Arts Commission, RiverArts, Andrus, The Historical Society, the Conservation Commission, the Library, The Beautification Committee, the Village Board, the Village Clerk, the Recreation Department, the Building Inspector, the Chiefs of Police and Fire, the Hastings Education Foundation, the DPW, the Ambulance Corps, Youth Advocate, and the schools.
- Met with local realtors, architects, and members of the planning board to explore possibilities and tactics to attract businesses.
- Conservation Commission: served as liaison between the Commission and the business owners as a conduit for information and feedback as it related to the plastic bag ban, managed the reusable bag rollout to the merchants; and liaison for the Solarize program.

### **Sponsorships**

- Developed new sponsorship materials for Friday Night Live
- Replaced BP (former lead sponsor) with local sponsorships.
- Located sponsorship of \$4,300 for 7 Friday Night Live events (December 2014, April, May, June, October, Friday Night Dead and December '15) paying for all seven of them almost entirely via local sponsors and/or the income generated from the events themselves.
- Routed \$3,635.85 to the new Downtown Fund. This included \$788.85 in donations and unused Crawl passes and \$2,800 from a local benefactor broken down as follows:
  - \$300 for most improved store front to be awarded in January 2016
  - \$500 for most improved store front in 2016 (to be awarded January 2017)
  - \$2,000 for construction of a kiosk at the Five Corners
- \$2,700 sent to the Food Pantry from the Village Crawl: (\$1,700 in Dec 2014 and \$1,000 Dec 2015)

\$10,636.85 Grand Total in Sponsorships or other funding

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:**

*A top priority and a large part of my focus has been reaching out to landlords, potential business owners, and residents to facilitate filling the empty storefronts in the Village downtown.*

### **Filled Spaces:**

- **Penny Lick Ice Cream Company** opened for business in September 2014. I worked directly with business owner Ellen Sledge and the landlords Mr. and Mrs. Kim to make the connection and support the choice of this addition to our downtown business community.
- **Scribble Art Workshop** Encouraged business operator Sasha Schwartz to operate in Hastings-on-Hudson when she was searching for a space in the Rivertowns; supported her launch via social media, press and inclusion in the June Friday Night Live.
- **D. Thomas Fine Miniatures** had signed their lease in Movie House Mews before I began and I worked with the owner Darren Scala to create awareness in support of his grand opening and have included his store in downtown events and posts throughout the year.
- **Fitness Gallery** - supported owner Jody DeCrenza's opening, via press contacts and social media/marketing materials during the holiday season following her November opening.
- **Family to Family** - connected Pam Koner with the landlord for a lease signed for a street level space across from Antoinette's Patisserie at 19 Division Street.
- **Non-Profit #2** - I have connected a second local non-profit with the landlords of 19 Division Street and they are in the process of negotiating a lease for potential occupancy in the space adjacent to Family to Family.

### **Remaining Spaces:**

For the key remaining empty spaces in the Village, I am working with landlords to identify potential clients. These include:

- **A&P** –Food Town has emerged and is going through the bankruptcy court approval process
- **555 Warburton (Hastings House)** Provided potentially interested buyers with the current owner's contact information. At such time as the main level is ready to be rented for commercial use I look forward to courting potential business owners in this key location.
- **19 Main (former Prime Restaurant)** Various stages of connecting the landlord with as many as five established, successful, restaurateurs and he will also begin working with a realtor in January.
- **Former Chelsea's Closet** In the process of connecting businesses with the owners.
- **Former Crossroads Realty/County bridge construction office (Main Street)** - This property is now available as the County will no longer need it for the office for the bridge work. There are at least two interested potential renters with a vision for the space investigating it now.
- **Former Manor Market (Warburton)** Building is in the process of being purchased and there is interest from more than one potential business owner.
- **45 Main Street** Plans are moving forward for a café: a meeting is set for early January.
- **Former French Press (Movie House Mews)** - Available, limited cooking facility.
- **Former Gem Cove (corner of Spring)** - Available

## **PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS:**

- Arranged additional weekly co-mingled pick-up in back of Steinschneider lot.
- Worked to get two large garbage receptacles behind two businesses in Steinschneider parking lot, encouraging them to remediate the land behind their stores and make these positive changes.
- Improved Juniper Plaza public space with two new planters, improved tree pits, two Juniper evergreen shrubs, one cherry blossom tree, a cigarette disposal unit, and re-painted benches, working with Ms. Maggiotto, Meg Walker, Downtown Collaborative, DPW, and Alex Sze of Juniper.
- Successfully appealed to Board of Trustees to consider a new street sweeper for the downtown.
- Worked to secure two additional cigarette disposal units at the VFW and on Warburton.
- Decorated empty windows, working with landlords and Upstream Gallery & Historical Society.
- Secured funding for a kiosk for Five Corners from a Village benefactor.

## PROMOTIONS AND EVENTS

- **Destination Hastings:** Created a marketing and social media platform designed and developed to draw positive attention to the downtown - including logo, banner, and social media site. Invented inaugural event under this umbrella - the Holiday Village Crawl, which involved 40 downtown businesses (restaurants, art gallery, shops), had over 400 people, and raised over \$1,700 for our Food Pantry
- **Friday Night Live:** Planned, coordinated and fundraised for the following 7 events:
  - o December 2014: Village Crawl; \*April 2015: Literary FNL;
  - o May 2015: Spring Crawl;
  - o June 2015: Outdoor Adventure (partnered with Boy Scouts;
  - o October 2015: Rock -n - Roller Derby (rescheduled to June 2016 due to rain);
  - o October/Nov 2015: Friday Night Dead (fundraised only)
  - o December 2015: Village Crawl (raised \$1,000 for our Food Pantry)
- **Social Media:**
  - o Developed Destination Hastings facebook platform (currently over 700 likes) (+ Twitter and Instagram) and event pages and worked Facebook community pages to bring attention to downtown events (FNL, art openings, and myriad other downtown happenings)
  - o Began series of Do You Know facebook posts highlighting local businesses (all businesses in the Shop Local Gift Guide will be featured over time).
  - o E-blasts: Mayors Message, Village Email and School System to promote downtown events of general interest.
- **Press:**
  - o Multiple articles in the Enterprise, the Daily Voice, and the Patch highlighting events and initiatives. Promoted Best of Westchester Hastings nominees Have begun to make connections to connect area businesses to upcoming pieces in Westchester Magazine, Journal News, WAG Weekly & more.
- **Village Chalk Wall** - utilized this creative space to promote downtown events.
- **VFW Plaza** - made use of this central location for the RiverArts Music Tour, music after the Farmer's Market in July, Friends of Reynolds field lemonade stand event, helped Penny Lick's with this location for grand opening event, and the Recreation Department's hot chocolate and holiday sing along.
- **10706 Pop-Up** - facilitated space for pop-up consignment shop, Fall 2015.
- **Meet The Merchants** - inaugural event 11/15. A walking tour of the downtown businesses, all shop owners on hand to meet, greet and offer tours and refreshments. Covered in an Enterprise article.
- **Shop & Drop Movie Nights** December 2014 and 2015. Community Center event hosted by the Recreation Department at the JHCC.
- **Shop Local Holiday Gift Guides and Messaging**
  - o Updated online guide and created physical piece distributed at markets, shops, and Antoinette's
  - o Reminded community of the many local businesses that participate in Small Business Saturday
  - o Multiple messages to the public re: shopping local via the Village email system, the press (Enterprise), and social media.
- **Holiday Parking and Lights** Advocated for augmenting these initiatives that make shopping downtown more attractive/inviting for the holidays
- **Most Improved Store Front Contest** - new annual promotion funded by a Village resident/benefactor. Business Owner will receive check (first award \$300, 2016 award \$500) and certificate as winner.
- **Destination Hastings Map & Brochure** – Working on a professionally designed map and brochure of Village. Target print date Spring/Summer 2016 to be distributed at restaurants, stores, markets, municipal building, community center and train station as well as in neighboring villages/hotels.
- **Street Work/Repairs/Movie Filming** : Worked to help minimize conflicts of interest between film crews and other outside entities and the downtown businesses during peak shopping days/hours.