

Stony Plain & District Chamber of Commerce: we mean business — small business!

Submitted by **Stony Plain & District Chamber of Commerce**

They may be small, but the presence and impact of small business in our community is huge.

Of the over 500 members of the Stony Plain and District Chamber of Commerce, 90 per cent are small businesses and 80 per cent of those would be considered micro, with five or fewer employees.

There is no single profile for these businesses — they span a wide variety of industry sectors, including agriculture, retail, finance, construction and technology, they span generations, from young entrepreneurs to businesses that are now on second or third generation family ownership, and their customer base spans a geographic reach from Stony Plain to the rest of the world.

The services provided by Chamber of Commerce to these businesses are as diverse as the members themselves.

The backbone of the Chamber's services is advocacy. In spite of their significant contributions to society, small businesses often feel they lack influence.

The Chamber of Commerce amplifies

small businesses into a collectively strong voice that demands to be heard. So far in 2016, the Stony Plain & District Chamber of Commerce has devoted over 150 hours to advocacy and political engagement, including meetings with elected officials, organizing and facilitating action groups, and collaborating with the Alberta and Canadian Chambers of Commerce to advance policies supportive of small business.

While advocacy is the backbone of the Chamber of Commerce, a host of programs have evolved to give members a hand with day to day operations.



Members of the Stony Plain and District Chamber of Commerce are also members of the Alberta and Canadian Chambers of Commerce and have access to discounted services that have been negotiated with provincial and national vendors.

For example, many small businesses find it challenging to get affordable insurance and benefits plans.

The Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan is a not-for-profit plan that is designed for small business and even offers plans tailored for our farmers.

Member-to-member deals, group dis-

counts, and special offers are all part of the Chamber of Commerce member advantage.

In today's digital age, people are finding it increasingly difficult to connect on a personal level.

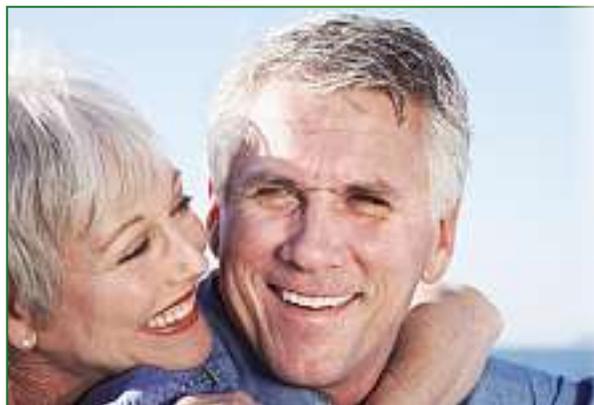
Generations ago, trade took place at the market, deals were sealed with a handshake, and character was integral to business decisions.

While the digital age has opened the window of opportunity to international markets, the Chamber of Commerce is ensuring the door to our neighbours stays open as well. The Chamber offers networking, socials, education, and collaboration — all designed to connect our members on a personal level.

At the Stony Plain & District Chamber of Commerce, we don't just celebrate small business, we are defined by small business — by its character, diversity and strength.

We understand that our small businesses aren't just numbers — they are the hopes, dreams and sacrifices of those who live, work and breath our community spirit.

Our vision, as a Chamber, is to support a strong and vibrant business community, and at the heart of that community is small business!



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Hear to Help!

It's been 11 years since Dawn Friend opened up Grove Hearing Clinic, a family-run business that provides and repairs hearing aids for the City of Spruce Grove and the surrounding area.

Dawn recalls the decision to open her own practice, at a time when the City of Spruce Grove was barely a city at all. "I saw a need for a full time hearing clinic here as there was none at the time. It was a big decision," Dawn says, but one she felt she wanted to make. "I'm a Saskatchewan girl who has made Alberta home for over 40 years. I've lived in Parkland and Lac Ste. Anne area for 15 years. After working in Edmonton it made sense to build a business here."

Eleven years later, it's clear that her decision to open her own practice has worked out.

"I think the reason a lot of people come to us is because they know we genuinely care," she says. The services and lower prices she provides prove that. Dawn provides hearing aids to low-income seniors at no cost. In house servicing of hearing aids are also

provided at no cost. "People often ask me how I keep my business going when I never charge them. I tell them that I'm not here to get rich. I'm here to help and make people happy. It's not often you get something for nothing these days!"

Despite this generosity, business has seen its success and has steadily grown. Starting out at the back of Grove Drug store in 2005, Grove Hearing Clinic has moved twice, finally ending up in Westland Market Mall in 2012. Dawn assures this location is their final destination.

The clinic houses one full time Hearing Aid Practitioner as well as a full time receptionist.

"My greatest joy is working with my daughter who multi tasks as receptionist, office manager and practitioner assistant," she says.

It's all part of the family-run, locally owned dynamic that sets Grove Hearing apart from the rest.