Free Enterprise Awards May 11

The Board of Directors, volunteers, management and staff of the St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce request the pleasure of your company for the 42nd presentation of the Free Enterprise Awards on Wednesday May 11.

The 2016 Free Enterprise Awards Reception will be held at St. Anne’s Centre. Cocktails, hors d’oeuvres and a social mixer start at 5:00 p.m. The award presentations begin at 6:15 p.m.

The Chamber’s Awards and Recognition Committee had considerable challenges in evaluating several excellent nominations this year. Several that won’t be named this year have been deferred for consideration again in 2017.

We are proud to announce our 2016 winners.

Seven awards will be presented on May 11 with details in words and pictures to be presented at the Awards Reception. For event tickets, please contact the Chamber office at 519-631-1981.

2016 Chair’s Award
Chamber Board of Directors Chair Dan Kelly has chosen to recognize a long-term supporter and Chamber volunteer, Debra Mountenay, for her work and service to the betterment of the community. Deb joined us as a volunteer in 2000, has completed two terms on our Board of Directors, and remains active on our Public Sector Liaison Committee.

2016 Free Enterprise Awards of Merit
A maximum of 3 of these annual awards may be presented in any year. The Merit awards recognize recent or short-term success and achievements.

Garr Auto – John & Suzanne Gurr operate their small business in a way that successfully reflects the best business practices while contributing to the betterment of the community with special events and activities.

St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation – this award reflects exceptional success boosting community pride, and doing it on a shoestring budget. EDC’s #StThomasProud campaign has earned provincial and national honours and we’re proud to add local recognition with a Merit award.

Vesta Parenting Inc. – Co-owners Melanie Taylor and Shawn DeVree launched in 2009 to serve a niche market focused on moms and moms-to-be, maternity, kids and green living. Focused on meeting client needs while growing and developing an exceptional and rewarding business, Vesta is a model many can learn from.

2016 Free Enterprise Master Awards
Recognizing long-term business and community success, the Free Enterprise Master Award is generally a once-in-a-lifetime honour. Up to 3 Master Awards may be given each year. For 2016, the Awards & Recognition Committee has decided to celebrate two individuals for their exceptional success and service.

Bill Graham, CPA, CA – Last December, Bill retired from professional practice; a founding partner of the firm Graham Scott Enns. His successes in business and service to the community at multiple levels put him in distinguished company. Building a business from a team of 3 partners to a ten partner firm with 30 employees is only part of Bill’s success. His dedication and commitment of hundreds of hours to community groups and services is extensive. So, too, but perhaps lesser known, is his direct but quiet assistance to people with limited means and his support as a mentor and leader.

Joe Preston – For a person who started his business career as a driver for Wendy’s Restaurants founder Dave Thomas, Joe has really, really done a lot. And we’re eager to note that his retirement as a Member of Parliament last year has definitely not meant retirement from active engagement in business and community circles. This award is meant to celebrate excellence, and to encourage Joe to do more. His successes in business, government and community service are an inspiration to many.
Addressing roadblocks to business expansion

Report identifies six barriers to growth

The St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), has released a new report that is based, in part, on a survey our Members were invited to participate in between March 3 to April 11. Our researchers also included personal, detailed interviews and input from a variety of sources to validate the observations in the document.

The report, Breaking Barriers: Ontario’s Scale Up Challenge, identifies the major roadblocks preventing Ontario businesses from expanding and presents recommendations to best support business owners in taking their ventures to the next stage of growth. According to the report, based on interviews with nearly two dozen business owners, sector associations, and other organizations, as well as a survey of over 350 Ontario business owners, too few entrepreneurs are continuing to build their business, or “scale up”, in the province.

The report adds to a recent chorus of voices calling for governments, the business community, and other actors to build on the province’s entrepreneurial spirit by creating the conditions to enable our most promising firms to scale up.

To position Ontario for long-term success, the report proposes recommendations to address six specific barriers preventing businesses from growing, which includes a lack of access to talent with scale-up experience, gaps in the right kinds of financing, and lower incentives to growth offered through public programs.

Chief among the St. Thomas & District Chamber’s recommendations are for governments to improve businesses’ access to talent in the short-term by creating a scale-up visa to quicken access to essential international managerial talent. According to an earlier OCC survey, 63 percent of businesses that are looking to grow face a talent shortage. The St. Thomas & District Chamber’s latest data also shows growth in local job postings and strong participation in special events such as Job Fairs with record numbers of local employers looking to recruit new talent. The Chamber sees the local situation as having a good news/bad news dimension in that we’re very pleased to see the growth in local employment opportunities and the diversity of jobs open, but we are concerned if employers aren’t able to fill the positions.

The St. Thomas & District Chamber also encourages governments to gain a better understanding of where current gaps exist in the Canadian financing landscape.

Other recommendations of the report include:
• Realign public programs and incentives to focus supports on high-growth firms
• Encourage greater international trade activity by linking more business support programs to trade
• Improve access to public and private anchor customers by leveraging procurement to strategically invest in growing businesses
• Enable accurate measurement and monitoring of the scale up challenge by ensuring collaboration between Statistics Canada and industry groups to collect and publicize relevant data

The OCC’s survey prior to release of our new report also revealed that the cost of doing business remains a top issue for Ontario employers as 69 percent of business owners looking to grow identified this as a barrier. Through its advocacy efforts on other key policy issues, the St. Thomas & District Chamber, in partnership with the OCC, continues to highlight the cost of doing business as a major challenge facing Ontario’s business community.

To view and/or download a copy of our new report, check the News section in the lower left corner of the main page on the chamber website at www.stthomascambon.ca

MOL planning falls blitz

Falls are hurting Ontario workers. In 2013, a staggering 11,814 lost-time injury (LTI) claims resulted from falls – that’s 32 LTI claims per day. Falls on the same level occur most frequently, accounting for 70% of the claims. According to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, falls in Ontario cost more than $73.2 million in 2012 in direct benefit claims costs.

That is why Ontario’s Ministry of Labour will conduct an inspection blitz around falls from May 16 to July 15, 2016.

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) has collaborated with the Ministry of Labour to host a live, no-cost webinar on May 12 to help employers prepare for the blitz. The webinar will provide information on what inspectors will be looking for during the blitz, the industry sectors that will be targeted, and what forms could do to prepare. For details and further info, visit the WSPS website at www.wspsc.ca

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Joining the Chamber Team

The St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce is pleased to welcome Christy Hunking to our staff. Christy joined us on April 18 as our new Member Services Representative – Internal, and will work on the administrative side of the Chamber’s operation including daily work with our new website and on several of our communication products including this weekly Green Mail newsletter and the Chamber’s Business Beat section within Elgin This Month Magazine. She will also have direct connections to our events and services. Christy and her family relocated to St. Thomas in 2012 from Goderich where she was responsible for the operation of the community television channel, including advertising and programming/operations duties. Her skills in computer design & layout work and customer service are a welcome addition to the Chamber team as we renew and grow our online and communications products. Christy can be reached at the Chamber office at 519-631-1981 Extension 526 or directly via email through the Chamber website.

Christy Hunking

The launch of the Chamber’s new website and the continuing growth of communication products such as our weekly Green Mail newsletter mean the Chamber office has a very busy summer ahead in assisting our Members to get maximum benefit from all that we do.

Effective April 23, Lucas Tyson joined the Chamber staff for a four-month co-op/internship. Now through the end of August, Lucas will assist in the design, marketing and delivery of events and take on special duties relating to the promotion and marketing of our new website and all social media. Lucas is enrolled in studies toward a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Digital Marketing at Fanshawe College. Raised in St. Thomas, he has four years of work experience in a family-owned retail electronics business, Century Sound. He has also worked for Staples in retail sales.

Lucas can be reached at the Chamber office at 519-631-1981 or directly via email through the Chamber website.

Lucas Tyson

Annual MP / MPP Luncheon June 28

Federal MP Karen Vecchio and Provincial MPP Jeff Yurek will be our featured speakers in the Chamber’s annual MP / MPP Luncheon on Tuesday June 28.

Tickets are advance sale only and available now from the Chamber. Order by phone at 519-631-1981 or send us an email request to mail@stthomas-chamber.on.ca.

The event opens with buffet food service from 11:30 a.m. to 12 Noon. Presentations from our guests start at 12 and lead to an open question-and-answer session. The event will conclude by 1:30 p.m.

Smile Theatre Presents

CANADA IN LOVE

AT METCALFE GARDENS

MONDAY MAY 30TH AT 7PM

Call to reserve your spot 519-631-9393

Shred it safely

The St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce, Elgin Business Resource Centre and the St. Thomas Seniors Centre are helping St. Thomas Police mark Police Week with a free document shredding service. Drop off any old documents and we will destroy them safely and securely for you.

Tuesday May 17, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
St. Thomas Seniors Centre, 225 Chestnut Street

Thursday May 19, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Elgin Business Resource Centre
St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce
300 South Edgeware Road (at Burwell)

This offer is open to all. It’s our way of helping everyone be safer and secure and prevent fraud and identity theft.
Of sound mind, or possibly not?

by Monty Fordham

Lawyers sometimes must deal with questions surrounding a client’s “capacity” to make their last will and testament. This situation arises, more often than not, with elderly clients, and from time to time in relation to persons who have experienced some mental health issues in the past. There are two types of capacity: legal capacity and testamentary capacity.

Generally, all persons who are of legal age may make a will mapping out the disposition of their assets upon their death. Exceptions are made for persons who are married or in the armed forces. Assets upon their death. Exceptions are made for persons who are married or in the armed forces.

In other words, almost every adult has the legal capacity to make a will. Seems pretty straight forward doesn’t it?

However when the focus turns to testamentary capacity, the road takes some unusual turns. In an 1870 case known as Banks v. Goodfellow, the court ordered that, to have testamentary capacity a person must a) understand what he or she is doing (i.e., preparing a will); b) comprehend and collect the nature and extent of his or her property; c) understand and identify the persons who will be benefitted by the will; and d) understand and identify the claims of persons excluded by the will and the extent of property being given to persons included in the will.

Later, a 1937 case summarized the test as follows: “What is required is that the testator must have such memory and appreciation as to be able to carry in mind and appreciate the extent and nature of his estate and the persons who normally should be the objects of his bounty.” But are the standards set down so many years ago adequate to determine issues of mental capacity in 2016?

The Alzheimer Society of Canada has determined that, in 2011, there were some 747,000 Canadians living with a cognitive impairment, including various degrees of dementia. And nearly 15% of Canadians over 65 years of age are affected by some form of impairment. Barring any significant advancements in treatments or prevention, the total figure will rise to 1.4 million by 2031. Locally, the Alzheimer Society’s Elgin St. Thomas branch confirms that, by 2020, there will be over 1,600 people here diagnosed with dementia.

Now for the tsunami. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada states that, in 1971 the percentage of Canadians over 65 was 8%; in 2011, 14.4%. In 2031, that percentage is projected to be 22.8%. (Oh, those pesky baby boomers). So what can we do to ensure our wishes are eventually carried out by our personal representatives without challenge to our mental capacity when we drew our will?

When wills are challenged, it is usually on either or both of two grounds: undue influence by a third party, or lack of mental capacity on the part of the person making the will. But who bears the onus of proving these things? Well, in the case of “undue influence” it is up to the person challenging the will to prove, on a civil standard, that someone influenced the individual to an extent that the will did not contain his or her true intentions. However in the case of “mental capacity” the onus is reversed. In other words, the mental capacity to make the will must be proven, again on the civil standard, by the person or persons putting forward the will.
Need a travelling companion?

The lower value of the Canadian dollar against the US buck has produced a noticeable decline in the number of people leaving the country for personal reasons like vacations or shopping, but there’s also a noticeable upswinging in outbound trips from Canada for business reasons.

If you’re looking at cross-border travel for sales purposes, and planning to take or ship samples of products to demonstrate, you could be in for some cumbersome paperwork and dealings at the border. Unless, of course, you know about Carnets (pronounced Car – nays) and how the Chamber of Commerce can be a huge help.

Business travellers can make their lives easier by carrying an A.T.A. Carnet, the virtual Merchandise Passport. From the Netherlands to New Zealand to the U.S. and the U.K., Carnets can save time, effort and expense for any business traveller crossing international borders. Around the globe, in any of more than 100 countries and territories, Carnets may be used for commercial purposes which require temporary export of Canadian goods as commercial samples, professional equipment and/or for demonstration purposes at fairs, trade shows and exhibitions.

Here in Canada, these customs documents are issued exclusively by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce through our offices in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

A Carnet lists the goods you wish to have covered for the country or countries you intend to visit. Each Carnet is prepared specifically to meet individual requirements.

Diverse Canadian businesses plus organizations in the arts, sciences, sports, media, fashion industry and other fields use the Carnet for a variety of reasons.

Carnets eliminate complicated and time-consuming Customs procedures. They eliminate the need for travellers to prepare national entry forms or purchase a bond for security purposes at each Customs station. With a one-year period of validity, Carnets can be used for multiple entries in and out of participating countries.

The Canadian Chamber’s participation in the worldwide Carnet System is administered through the International Bureau of Chambers of Commerce in Paris, France. The Carnet System is recognized in over 100 countries & territories worldwide. Our national Chamber issues approximately 3,000 Carnets per year and serves a client list dealing in everything from commercial samples, to the horses in the RCMP Musical Ride and touring Canadian rock stars’ musical equipment.

For more information, we invite Members to check details on the Canadian Chamber of Commerce website at www.chamber.ca (click on CARNET at the home page) or to pick up a brochure at the St. Thomas & District Chamber of Commerce office, 300 South Edgeware Road in the Elgin Business Resource Centre. We’re open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The Canadian Chamber’s web-site has extensive information on unique or special circumstances regarding all countries that accept Carnets, and we strongly recommend viewing the extensive and detailed information they have posted for public viewing. You can also view CARNET info webinars there.

The required application documents are now available electronically in Excel and MS-Word format. A complete listing of all countries and territories participating in the Carnet System, and details regarding specific expectations and procedures for each country, may be viewed on the national Chamber website.
Your teen in the driver’s seat

By Janet Palmer

In a few weeks, I will face the daily question from my teen, “Can I drive?” How did I get here? How did this sneak up on me so quickly? Since I do not have the ability to reverse time, I need to focus on preparing both of us for this next stage in our lives.

Finding that balance between giving our children some independence, having the confidence to lend them the family car and, above all, keeping them safe, can be overwhelming. We all know parents who are or who have recently been in the same situation with their teens. We see them every week at hockey practice, baseball games, or horseback riding lessons. These moms and dads tend to know more about my day than my husband ever does. Talk to them, share experiences. They may be able to give you feedback on fees or experiences with driver training courses available here. You can also search the Chamber of Commerce business directory on their new website for the names of local registered professionals. Just search “driver training” to connect or link to websites for additional info.

Creating a parent/teen driving contract is paramount. Sit down and discuss the rules contained in the contract. Let your teen be a part of the process so that they can understand the reasoning behind them. This contract should reflect each level of the driver’s licence: G1, G2 and full G license. You will need to learn the graduated licensing rules and laws, for example, those surrounding passengers and night driving. Make sure the contract includes items such as rules to limit distractions from loud music or eating and drinking while driving and banning electronic devices altogether. New cars now come equipped with teen settings for the control panel limiting functions and removing distractions.

Include an agreement which makes it clear that, should they find themselves in a situation where their safety is threatened, they can call you for a safe ride home, without question. Any parent would rather drive across the province at 3 a.m. to bring their child home safely than face the unthinkable. Reinforce the fact that you want them to call you for help and that you can refrain from being angry and defer any discussion on the poor choices that led them to the situation in question for a later time. It is also important that they know who they can contact in your stead, regardless of the time or circumstance, if they are unable to reach you. Clearly explain the consequences should any of the conditions of the contract be broken.

Teach them responsibility and ask them to contribute to car care and the expense of driving. I’m a fan of the barter system in my home. I will happily trade labour for gas money.

How will your young driver affect your insurance? Certified drivers’ training courses will help offset the insurance costs by way of discounts and by awarding your young driver additional years of experience as long as they maintain a clean driving record.

Generally speaking, it is cost prohibitive for a new driver to own or be assigned a vehicle for their exclusive use. If and when your teen is looking to purchase a car, the type of car and coverage required will greatly affect the rates. Your insurance broker gladly will help you navigate these waters when the time comes.

This column appears regularly in Business Beat and has been submitted by Janet Palmer, CIP, RIB (Ont). Janet is a Broker/Advisor with Reib & Associates Insurance and Financial Services Limited, 462 Talbot Street, St. Thomas. Questions and comments on this column are welcomed by the writer at 519-631-3862 or via e-mail: info@reibandassociates.com
Long-term happiness: You and your customer

by Christina R. Green

When it comes to customers, most businesses are longing for a strong relationship for years to come. Who wants a one-night stand kind of customer who breezes in and out of your world barely around long enough to hear you say, “Thank you for your business.”

Acquiring customers is costly. You’re wise to want to retain them.

Retaining them means keeping them happy and interested in you over time. The second part – over time – is the kicker. Anyone with a pulse can figure out how to keep a customer, or potential customer, happy for a moment but it takes a plan to stay on their mind when they’re not currently in the market for what you offer.

That’s where courtship comes in. Many people assume courtship is about landing a customer, and it can be, but it’s also about keeping them interested in between purchases. Here are a few ideas to keep your business at the top of your customers’ minds:

Create an e-newsletter

This is an easy way to stay top, IF you can find worthwhile content for your audience. Let’s take it back to the relationship analogy. A love letter (or text, in today’s world) is a wonderful way to stay close to the person you like. If you talk about things they find interesting, peppered in with a little flirting, your communication becomes the kind of thing your beloved will show friends. However, if you talk incessantly about yourself or a topic they have no interest in, their attention will soon wane.

You need to address topics they’ll find entertaining, inspiring, or educational and you need to do this from the start. It doesn’t take long for people to lose interest if you’re presenting them with something they don’t value.

Haven’t got time (or energy) to do a design/build process for a newsletter of your own? Then consider being part of something like the Chamber’s weekly newsletter by submitting a newsworthy item the Chamber could want to share with Members. Same rule applies to the Chamber’s public Facebook page. Members are always welcome to post content there. You might also consider placing content in an ad format in the Chamber’s Green Mail newsletter or looking at the new ad options in the Chamber website.

Become a free resource

Most of us talk about content marketing as if we just invented it. For this reason, a lot of business people are hesitant to embrace it because it seems like a novelty and a trend, and they’re uncertain whether the tide will change, so they wait. But content marketing, or providing resources for your audience, to establish you and your business as an expert in the industry is nothing new. In 1895, John Deere (yes, that John Deere) published a magazine for farmers called Farrow. His goal was to become a resource for his customers by providing helpful tips to maximize production. It took the rest of the world a little time to catch on to how well this type of marketing works.

You needn’t worry if the subject matter you choose to focus on is directly related to what you sell or only loosely so. John Deere knew that if farmers were more successful in producing more crops, they’d have more money, and need help mechanizing the process. The beauty behind his content marketing strategy was that he helped his audience and created a happy problem (now they needed a more efficient way to operate) that his company could then solve for them. You also see this when companies that make flour, for instance, hand out cookbooks that contain recipes with what else? Flour. Remember, effective content marketing does several things:

• satisfies your audience because you are providing them with information they need
• helps them know, like, and trust you
• makes you a resource and an expert in the industry you serve
• creates a need for your services or product

Offer discounts for return customers

Nothing says thank you like a loyalty discount for past purchases. However, most businesses that offer them place an expiration date on the coupon or discount that is not very far in the future. They believe this drives business but there are certain products people won’t stockpile. In the end the discount expires before the customer uses it and the nice gesture is thrown in the trash. Consider eliminating the expiration date on the coupon, and instead, send them an email reminder periodically. At the very least, if you must use an expiry date, make it far enough in the future to allow flexibility.

If you don’t want to go the route of the discount (some businesses are morally opposed to them, like Apple), create a wow moment by placing something extra in their order. Ideas range from happy quotes to free samples. There’s a solution for every budget but it’s a nice surprise when they receive the package or you hand them the bag.

A final tip about nurturing your relationship with your customers

Customer relationships are like personal ones, except that they’re a lot less forgiving. In order for customers to stay faithful to you, you need to provide them good reason by remaining attentive to their needs and giving them things they find valuable. If you keep them at the top of your mind, they’re likely to do the same for you.

This article has been submitted to the Chamber and Business Beat by Christina R. Green. She teaches small businesses, chambers and associations how to connect through content. Her articles have appeared in the Midwest Society of Association Executives Magazine, NTEN.org, AssociationTech, and SocialFish. She is a regular blogger at Franklykenny.com and the Event Manager Blog. She’s a bookish writer on a quest to bring great storytelling to organizations everywhere.
New Members

Central United Church
135 Wellington Street
St. Thomas, ON
Phone: 519-631-3503
Email: centraluc@bellnet.ca
Web: www.centraluc.ca
Contact: Pastor Troy Van Ginkel

Buyers Guide Categories: Church; Agencies & Associations; Music Instruction; Community Services

Products & Services: The Chamber welcomes Central United Church as a re-joining Member with strong interests in community service. We’re also pleased to see Pastor Troy Van Ginkel return as an active member of the Chamber’s St. Thomas – Elgin Safe Communities Coalition. Established in 1897, Central United is known for its beautiful stained glass windows which have been featured in many magazines and books. As well, the sanctuary of the church is noted for having “amazing acoustics” and has been referred to as a “mini Massey Hall”. Not surprising, as both Massey Hall and “amazing acoustics” and has been referred to as a “mini Massey Hall”. Not surprising, as both Massey Hall and

Elgin Mall Dental Office
417 Wellington Street, Unit #53
St. Thomas, ON N5R 5J5
Phone: 519-637-1811
Email: elginnaldental@bell.net.ca
Website: www.elginnaldentaloffice.ca
Contact: Dr. Gajender Ahlawat DDS

Buyers Guide Categories: Dentists and Dental Services

Products & Services: Elgin Mall Dental Office welcomes patients of all ages. Their team of trained dental professionals will assist you in all aspects of your dental treatment with a focus on personalized dental care and preventative dentistry. Elgin Mall Dental Office can improve the function, health and appearance of your smile while enhancing your self-esteem. Some of Elgin Mall Dental Office services provided include dental hygiene, root canals, periodontal care, dental sealants, children’s dentistry, whitening, crowns & bridges, check-ups & cleanings, and cosmetic dentistry. Evening and weekend appointments are available plus 10% discount for seniors and direct billing to insurance companies. They have been serving the St. Thomas community for over 25 years. Ask about their 20% discount for all Chamber Members (including all employees and immediate family).

All smiles
Kathy Cook Noble accepts the first door prize draw at the Chamber’s April Business After 5 at The Columbus Club in St. Thomas from St. Thomas Ford Lincoln co-presidents Bruce Dumouchelle (left) and John Stollery, co-hosts of the event with the club. Linda Stevenson later won the main prize, a Lincoln Dream Date including a Lincoln for a weekend and a $100 meal voucher from STFL.