

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – January 2010

Happy New Year from your Chamber staff. I am very excited about a fresh start for our country in 2010 and look forward to a healthier economic outlook across the nation and especially here in Skamania County and the Columbia River Gorge.

I hope that you plan on attending the Chamber's Annual Dinner on Wednesday, January 20 at Skamania Lodge. This dinner meeting is intended to be a celebration – acknowledging our accomplishments in 2009, honoring the Member and Business of the Year chosen by their peers and setting a positive tone for the rest of the year. Plus this year we will be playing “Chamber Jeopardy”. This interactive game will be great fun, give you all the chance to win wonderful prizes and also provide the opportunity to learn more about your fellow members.

2009 was a year fraught with financial challenges for most of the country and the Chamber felt the repercussions as well. We lost our only platinum member due to the economic downturn but gained 40 new members over the course of the year, ending up with a membership 267 businesses, organizations or individuals strong. Annual dues are a huge value when compared to the small investment but only if you avail yourself of our services and the benefits that result. Networking opportunities are endless through the Chamber, through either hosting or attending. And promotional options via our weekly e-mail blast or monthly newsletter are available to all – just share your news with us and we will make sure it is published.

I will be on the road more in 2010, spreading the word about Skamania County and the Columbia River Gorge. The trade show display that was created last year (thanks to a grant from Washington State Tourism) is a great visual representation of the amazing natural scenic beauty we offer. We will also work on a new “lure” brochure to reel in travelers from all over the country and the world. The event schedule is lengthy and we hope to add some shoulder season activities also. The work is never done but the results are so rewarding – whether it is introducing a first-time visitor to the view from Dog Mountain or welcoming an old friend at the 16th annual Brews Blues & BBQs. All with the goal of improving and enhancing the economic, social and cultural environment in this little bit of heaven we call home.

Your chamber staff is up to the task and ready to get work. With your help, 2010 can be a banner year. Let's get started!

Casey Roeder
Executive Director