



Downtown Mt. Vernon Development Corporation Newsletter

A Main Street Community

January, February, March 2008

In This Issue

- DMDC Receives Grant from US Bank
- DMDC Receives Recognition at Illinois Main Street State Conference
- Holiday Decorating Contest
- Downtown Christmas Parade
- **Volunteers' Column**
- Lincoln Sculpture Project
- **Granada's 70th Anniversary Celebration**

DMDC Receives Grant from US Bank



US Bank Vice President Jo Ann Joy presents a \$1000 grant to DMDC Executive Director Cyndy Mitchell. The grant will go toward the revitalization of the historic downtown district.

DMDC Receives Recognition at Illinois Main Street State Conference

Lt. Governor Pat Quinn honored Downtown Mt. Vernon Development Corporation with the Special Event Award at the closing banquet of the 14th annual Illinois Main Street Conference, held on Thursday, November 15. At the presentation ceremony for the **2007 Lt. Governor's Awards for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization**, DMDC was honored for **"The District After 5 Residential Tour—A Place to Hang Your Hat"**, which promoted Mt. Vernon as a lively and pleasant place to live. This year's theme, **"Main Street for all Seasons—Strategies for Sustainability"**, was underscored by the keynote address, **"moving Beyond Change"**, presented by Springfield-based consultant Kevin Lust. Other presenters offered expert advice on marketing, promotions, public relations, and historic preservation.



DMDC representatives accepting the award from Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, left, are Mary Ellen Cusumano, Rex Cusumano, DMDC Vice President, Cyndy Mitchell, DMDC Executive Director, and DMDC president Brian Edmison.

Holiday Decorating Contest

Downtown Mt. Vernon was lit up like a Christmas tree on December 1, 2007 and ready for the holidays thanks to all the businesses that participated in the DMDC Holiday Decorating Contest. There were more participants in **this year's contest than last year. Even those businesses that didn't enter the competition outdid themselves with their holiday tinsel and greenery.**

There were three winners, each of whom received a framed certificate. To add to the holiday spirit and encourage more participation, a traveling trophy with Snoopy and a Charlie Brown Christmas tree on top is given to the first place winner who may display it in their place of business for one year at which time they must relinquish it to the next recipient.

The 2007 winners of the second DMDC Holiday Decorating Contest were: The Blossom Shop—first place; Brooke Insurance—second place; and The First National Bank—third place.

Other contestants whose creations added to the festive spirit of Downtown were **Affton's Dance Academy; Campbell, Black, Carnine, Hedin, Ballard & McDonald Law Firm; Easton's Flowers; Expressions; First United Methodist Church; Jefferson County Courthouse; Keep Mt. Vernon and Jefferson County Beautiful; Once Upon A Lifetime; Tailored Pets; The Rex; and Toni Federici.**

DMDC would like to thank Carol Wilkinson and Debbie Wilson, members of the Independent Artists Studio, who judged the competition; Bonnie Jerdon, DMDC Board Member and Director of Tourism; and Barb Hengle, DMDC Board Member.



Debbie Wilson, judge, Barb Hengle, DMDC Board Member holding traveling trophy for first place, Carol Wilkinson, judge



Debbie Wilson, Mike Beard of Brooke Insurance, Barb Hengle, and Carol Wilkinson



Back row from left is Mike Burwell and Rae and Jo David Cummins with First National Bank. Bottom row from left is Liz Clifton, Michaela Burwell, and Gage Cummins

Downtown Christmas Parade

Chairperson Debbie Chiapelli and her organization did an outstanding job making the parade the best one yet. In support of the event, DMDC entered a float in the parade—a red 1939 fire truck decorated with tinsel and Christmas lights. A special thank you goes to the city park department for the use of their truck and the volunteers who assisted with decorating it or who participated in the parade. They are Barb Hengle, Brian Edmison, George Bryant, Derrick Quitsch, David Eadie, and Mary Ann Conner.



DMDC Board Member Barb Hengle and Executive Director Cyndy Mitchell

All Things Considered—Volunteers' Column

By David Eadie, Pastor
First United Methodist Church
DMDC Board Member

Why do people get involved, spending time and energy on DMDC? I can speak only for myself, and I relish the opportunity to do so.

Basically my reason for involvement in DMDC stems from my understanding of the purpose of life itself. I believe a person is blessed to be a blessing. That is, the purpose of life is to improve that which is around you.

I was invited to become a participant in DMDC very soon after moving to Mt. Vernon in 2002. Clearly, downtown is still the symbol of our city and its presence and vitality tells the world much about who we are as a community.

When I was invited to become a member of the board of directors, I accepted the offer. It didn't take long to discover that I had joined a hard working board that was determined to make a positive impact on the heart of the city.

Just look at what has happened downtown since 2002:

- 48 new businesses have opened in or relocated to the downtown and are still in business.
- 34 renovation projects have been completed.
- 3 new construction projects have been completed.
- Over \$6 million has been invested in the downtown area, and surely much more will follow.

That is an outstanding record of recovery for a small city. No, DMDC cannot take credit for all of that, but I know that DMDC is responsible for taking a leading role in changing the perception of downtown as a great place to do business, as well as live and play.

That is why I choose to spend time and effort through the DMDC.

Lincoln Sculpture Project

In honor of the 200th anniversary celebration, the Mt. Vernon Lincoln Bicentennial Committee has commissioned a nine-foot tall bronze statue of Lincoln to be placed on the Appellate Courthouse grounds to permanently and visibly connect the **iconic structure with it's most famous figure**. Since then, the committee, which is spearheaded by Mark Hassakis, has been actively raising funds to procure and install the statue. So far, half has already been pledged toward their goal of \$90,000 needed for the project. In addition to the large sculpture being created and produced by Ohio artist Alan Cottrill, ten original signed and numbered maquettes will also be made. Major donors will receive a statue maquette and their name will be recognized on a permanent plaque. However, all donations are welcomed and greatly appreciated. For more information or to donate to the project, call Mark Hassakis at 244-5335.



DMDC Board of Directors donated \$5000 to the Lincoln Sculpture Project. Left to right: David Eadie, Jay Koch, Rex Cusumano, Dennis McEnaney, Cindy Bevis, Jo Ann Joy, Susan Hughey, Brian Edmison, and Barb Hengle.

Downtown Mt. Vernon Development Corporation
809 Main Street
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

Granada's 70th Anniversary

Congratulations to David Lister and the Granada Center for the Performing Arts Board and volunteers for the outstanding anniversary weekend celebration. It was truly a memorable occasion for this beautiful, historic theater located in the heart of Mt. Vernon. Clockwise from left: the new sign at Granada Center for the Performing Arts; David Lister and Tammy Lovin; Del Herbert; Jeff Howard, Mayor Mary Jane Chesley, Bill Howard, and Sylvia Howard; volunteers Judy Heitmeyer, Barb Hengle, and Lara Griswold.



“If your Business is Downtown, then Downtown is your Business.”

Thank you for supporting your Downtown Businesses!

Mission Statement:

To revitalize and maintain Downtown Mt. Vernon as a commercial and cultural center of the local and regional community.