



**State of the Riverway Community Report
River Arts Center Gallery & Theatre
May 11, 2011 8:00 a.m.**

***“The Sauk Prairie Riverway...Working Together to Achieve
Success!”***

On behalf of the Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce, Village & Town Leadership and our School Board, I would like to welcome you to the first annual State of the Riverway Community Report breakfast. Collectively, we have much to be proud of in our community. The Chamber is proud to promote our community – not just today, but every day. Today, we will reflect on the past year – I think you will agree that this is *Our Time to Celebrate and our time to work together to define our communities future...*It’s been said that Coming Together is a beginning. Keeping Together is Progress. But Working Together is

Success. Today's program was conceived through working together. I, along with the Village & Town Administrators and our School Superintendent, want to share with you our successes, but also our vision for the future. Defining our future takes everyone working together, from the local level, to county and state wide representatives. Today, I am happy to have Chamber board members, Village/Town/County and Statewide Representatives attending and I'd ask that they stand and be recognized. Please join me in thanking each of these individuals for working on our behalf.

Today, we are assembled in a building that took much vision, teamwork and dedication to realize. It was the hard work of many people working together to bring the dream of this center to reality. Today, vision, hard work and dedication are the

cornerstones to the successes we've experienced as we report to you where we've been, where we are today and where we are going.

We all know that these are especially challenging times we are facing, not only as a community, but also as a Nation and in fact on a World-wide level. However, I'd prefer to look at it from the standpoint that breakdowns can create breakthroughs. Things fall apart so things can fall together.

Our first message that we convey today is that the Sauk Prairie Riverway Community is ready and willing to attract & expand our business community. Over the last couple of years, many community enhancement projects were completed, to develop infrastructure to support new and expanding businesses.

In Sauk City, we celebrated the completion of the new municipal parking lot in downtown Sauk; many infrastructure improvements took place, replacing curb, gutters and sidewalks. In the Village of Prairie du Sac, the village installed a new water main along Prairie Street to enhance the water quality and fire protection for the west side of the Village. In addition, The Village is in the design process for a new drinking water well to be located in Westwynde Park. The new well will increase the Village's capacity and eventually replace an aging well that has nitrate levels currently within safe limits, but rising. The Village of Prairie du Sac's water system recently took second place in a statewide taste contest held in Green Bay, WI. The placement can be contributed to the fact that the Village of Prairie du Sac

does not regularly use chlorination for disinfection rather it uses ultraviolet. A recent independent study recently found the Village of Prairie du Sac's water and sewer costs for an average household to be among the lowest in the state. Speaking of upgrades, Merrimac Communications expanded fiber optic cable throughout the Villages to offer additional phone, TV and internet services.

The community has welcomed several new businesses to the area - Sauk Prairie Community Bank, Boardman Hartman & Quale, Amalgam PC and The Psychology Center to name a few. Together we understand that our approach to economic development is based upon the importance of partnerships. We understand what a business owners needs are, and that they are

not always financial. Capital Improvements for 2010 totaled over \$10 million dollars with the expansion of Riverway businesses.

Culver Franchising Systems Inc. is the cornerstone of North Ridge Business Park and we are thrilled to announce that in a few weeks, the Village of Prairie du Sac will be announcing two other tenants to call Prairie du Sac home to their corporate headquarters. The Chamber is committed to visiting every business in 2011 to begin to catalog future growth plans, gaps in products and/or services and what local government and the Chamber can do for them. We know that WORKING TOGETHER is important to the vitality of our community and an important piece of our overall picture.

Working together is critical in maintaining the safety of our community. In 1829 Sir Robert Peel created the Metropolitan Police in England and said the real key to policing is “the police are the people and the people are the police”. Peel believed that prevention of crime could be accomplished without intruding into the lives of citizens. As it was in the 1800s, community policing is still very relevant today. The Sauk Prairie Police Department is dedicated to Community policing based on its goal to prevent crime and promote better police-community partnerships. Community policing requires an investment in training with special attention to problem solving, facilitation, community organization and the identification of resources and use.

The Sauk Prairie Police Department also uses the philosophy of Problem Oriented Policing. One key element of this is addressing problems rather than quick fixes: it means dealing with the conditions that create problems. An example of this is the Sauk Prairie Police Department's "Lock it or Lose it" program. Many years ago the Villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac were inundated with hundreds of thefts of property and personal belongings from vehicles. The police department staff analyzed many factors surrounding the thefts including; time of day, geographical location, items stolen and if the vehicle was locked or unlocked. It was found that the majority of the cars were unlocked; electronics visible and the thefts were taking place in poorly lit areas. In order to combat this, the police department did public service announcements, worked with local community

organizations, and placed reminders in utility bills and reminded residents to lock their cars, park in well lit areas and to place their electronics out of sight. The police department named this program “Lock it or Lose it”. The police department continues its community partnerships with other programs such as the Chamber sponsored program Business Watch. Neighborhood Watch, National Night Out, and Neighbors against Burglars yard sign campaign are all ways that we work together towards prevention.

While we recognize the importance of working together, we haven’t forgotten how important it is that we PLAY TOGETHER, as well. The Sauk Prairie Riverway is a beautiful community – the Wisconsin River, Lake Wisconsin, the bluffs and their beautiful hiking trails are natural amenities that no one could

have planned for. To promote this area is easy for all that it has to offer; however, we are also lucky to have one of the mid-West most premier ski resorts and lodging facilities –

Devil's Head Resort. In 2010, Devil's Head & Merry Mac's Campgrounds attracted over 100,000 visitors to the area.

Visitors come across the Merrimac Ferry in loads, with over 318,000 cars yearly entering the Village of Merrimac. A good portion of these visitors are most likely in addition to the 1.2 million visitors that visit Devil's Lake State Park. Visitors there can enjoy outdoor activities year round such as fishing, hiking, biking and snow-shoeing.

Visitors also enjoy Riverland Conservancy and Richard A. Grant Park. Riverland offers over 1,800 acres of forest, prairie,

savanna, wetlands and streams in South Central Wisconsin. The conservancy has several trails, educational exhibits and regular activities. The Richard A Grant Park is a 6 acre recreational area on Lake Wisconsin that has been left in a natural state that includes hiking trails and off-shore opportunities for fishing. But to be successful in life, no matter the goal, you need to be well rounded intellectually, physically, socially, spiritually and emotionally. Recreation helps to develop all of these and I am happy to report that the Sauk Prairie Recreation Commission has developed a conceptual plan for a 60 acre recreation center consisting of outdoor and indoor features. In 2010, the Riverway communities had over 3,800 people participate in recreation programs. Since 2006, the recreation department has grown at a rapid pace. At

that time, we were serving 1,400 people a year. As the recreation department grows, the need for facilities grow with it. Currently, recreation volunteers are working to find a location for the complex. The Wisconsin River is a natural asset that has been given to us...our goal for the future is to showcase its beauty and that of our community. The Village of Sauk City is in the process of completing the last section of the riverfront bike & pedestrian trail. Smart growth and planning is essential and we are happy to report that this trail construction was done in 4 phases, with 3 of the phases using a Stewardship grant with 50/50 matching funds and on 1 phase a federal grant that paid for 80% of construction cost. This trail has a completion date of June 30, 2011 and will provide a great area for sitting, relaxing and gaining access to the river. The Village

of Prairie du Sac has also initiated the development of a conceptual plan for a river side park to be located between the Water Street parking lot and the Wisconsin River. The parks committee will be seeking public input as to what the park should contain. To tie together our communities as a Riverway destination, the Chamber initiated a Sauk Prairie Riverway branding campaign with the Villages & Towns of Sauk City, Prairie du Sac and Merrimac communities. Starting next week, you will begin to see banners & entrance way signs adorn our communities that reflect that while we are each unique, we are one Riverway community ready to welcome visitors with a clear message.

As summer approaches, we are fortunate to have a backdrop as beautiful as ours. It provides a great canvas for

community events & festivals. In 2010, our winter guests, the American Bald Eagle made a presence in the community in numbers that we had not seen in quite a while.

Approximately 1,200 people visit our community on Eagle Days weekend; after the official celebration, we average about 100 visitors each weekend. The Chamber's new Polka on the Riverway festival was in Prairie du Sac this past summer and drew crowds of 1,500 plus. The free family event offers participants an opportunity to experience the small town charm, but more importantly, our strong business community. New for 2010 was the launch of the SPOLKA Adventure Race. Over 60 extreme racers came to Sauk Prairie to canoe, bike & run the 13 mile SPOLKA. Plans for

2011 are to return this festival to the Village of Sauk City and enjoy the new riverfront access. The Wisconsin State Cow Chip Throw continues to be strong and provides a well organized, well attended last hurrah of summer. The Merrimac Community Festival also is a great opportunity to enjoy the weekend admiring our community. In 2011, this annual event will take place August 6th & 7th and will draw many to our community. A new sign of WORKING TOGETHER is our Summer Concert Series. Planning of these free concerts is a joint effort between the Chamber, Village of Sauk City & Prairie du Sac. For 2011, we have added the Village of Merrimac to the planning team, in an effort to provide weekly outdoor concerts around many Sauk Prairie Riverway sites.

Organized recreation activities are abundant, and we appreciate the volunteers who plan and implement these programs. The Sauk City athletic field was upgraded with a new shelter, new restrooms and a grand new entrance to the ballpark. This facility is an economic driver during the spring & summer, as it draws people from throughout the region. Annually, this facility hosts the State Babe Ruth tournament which brings hundreds to our community over several weekends each summer. The Sauk Prairie Riverway has much to be proud of in terms of local athletics and how well we PLAY TOGETHER, both on a regional and state level in our high schools. During the 2009/10 school year, we have seen our girls volleyball team go to state, our boys basketball team followed with a state appearance that same year. Our

swim team remains strong, finishing 7th at state this past year.

One student, Alison Meng, was a state champion in swimming and received a Division 1 scholarship to the University of Illinois. This past winter, we had five students go to state from our Wrestling team. High school facilities continue to be improved, with four ball fields re-graded with new playing surfaces, two dug outs added and our track was resurfaced in 2010.

Playing together helps keep us vital. We don't stop playing because we grow old – we grow old because we stop playing.

The arts are an area that remains rich and timeless in our community. From the young to the old, we have accomplished much. Our middle and high school show choir programs continues to market the Sauk Prairie School District as a

community that values and appreciate the arts. In 2010, the River Arts Center theatre & gallery space was utilized 308 days out of the year. Thousands attended musicals and art openings and the community heard over 80 visiting artist perform in this facility.

New in 2010 was the launch of the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, which is a cooperative of adult artist who are hoping to open Riverway Gallery & Cooperative in the former Eannelli Pharmacy building. Riverway artist were given a platform to showcase their work in 2010 with the launch of 2nd Saturdays on the Riverway. Hundreds of guests visited our community to visit 2nd Saturday locations and learned how rich we are via the arts. This program will expand in 2011, with additional artistic touches

on our community. Another vital piece is LEARNING together. There's a saying that "The purpose of learning is growth, and our minds, unlike our bodies, can continue growing as we continue to live. An important aspect of our ability to attract new businesses is the quality of our educational system. In 2010, Sauk Prairie School District celebrated high test scores and a variety of curricular offerings for students. The schools have implemented the Career Cluster Model that helps students group their required courses and electives into a coherent sequence in preparation for college and careers.

The winter of 2011 has been challenging for Wisconsin and the impact that state money has on the local budget in our school district. We are committed as a community to think about every

option available to meet the high standards that we have set as a district. Our Merrimac Charter School continues to remain strong and enrollment is growing. Since the conversion from Merrimac Elementary in 2006, the student population has nearly doubled to 92 students through the state's open enrollment process and community growth. The Charter School curriculum is inspired by history, culture and the natural resources found in our community. The School District has model programs for Gifted and Talented students, Special Education students, students who are English Language Learners, and a Literacy emphasis. The dedicated, caring staff has been energetically engaged in developing strategies and activities to improve all students' achievement. Curriculum is current and improving to meet the diversified needs of all students.

The co-curricular offerings provide opportunities for students in athletics, the arts, music and clubs.

While in today's economy there are indeed many challenges, I would argue that these challenges give us a time to heal together. Speaking of healing, the Sauk Prairie Riverway is fortunate to have first class healthcare options in our community. Founded in 1956 by community citizens who saw the need and understood the importance of local access to hospital care, Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics has cared for the community's health needs, while at the same time, carving out a very unique niche. Today, two-thirds of patients who come to our hospital have traveled from beyond the zip codes of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac. Like us, they know we have something very special here. The hospital employs 435 people and contributes \$44 million in

total income to the community. Recently, our local Intergovernmental Planning Committee and SPMHC recommended a site location for a new hospital campus. This investment is expected to exceed \$50 million, the magnitude of which our community has not seen for a very long time. With six orthopedic surgeons on staff – unheard of for a rural hospital – the hospital draws patients from across the country for hip or knee replacements. Since opening the Joint Replacement Center in 2008, their numbers of orthopedic surgeries has increased 68%, while at the same time, showing impressive improvements in patient outcomes. In 2010, SPMHC made numerous investments to improve patient care. They purchased a PACS system which acquires and stores digital medical images so they can be accessed 24/7 by your physician from any location.

Our hospital is continually working to improve the community's health. Through its foundation, with the help of the Sauk County Public Health Department, they've put dental sealants on the teeth of students in our schools. Hospital staff has also taken community health into the classroom, discussing the importance of protecting student's hearing when using iPods and mp3 players. Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital & Clinics is committed to quality and our community's health needs as demonstrated by numerous awards received, including just this week being presented with the Amerinet Healthcare Achievement Award for Community Impact & Innovation for their efforts to incorporate locally grown and produced food into patient meals, as well as its cafeteria and clinic break rooms.

It's been said that the more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate. Celebrations abound here in the Riverway community, whether they are ribbon cuttings for new businesses, fireworks for the 4th of July, enjoying music with friends at one of our summer concerts, or yes, celebrating Cow Chips. It's the people of our community we truly celebrate and acknowledge today. In 2010, the Chamber recognized 7 businesses and/or individuals for their contributions to our community.

When most construction companies are struggling to stay afloat, Frey Construction & Home Improvement continues to add employees (a 10% growth in 2010). They are known for great customer service with a 68% repeat client and referral base.

Named NARI's 2010 Contractor of the year, Scott Frey and his employees were named the 2010 Large Business of the Year.

If there is an event in the Sauk Prairie area, you can bet that Marietta Reuter or one of her staff are involved with helping to brand the event and/or providing top notch customer service, extremely quick turn around on orders for all types of marketing products – with that service, there is no wonder that Tools of Marketing was named the 2010 Medium Business of the Year.

Committed to community, the Ballweg Family and employees operate their business with excellent customer service and a true desire to help. EverReady Electric volunteers their time and resources for almost all community events behind the scenes.

The 2010 Small Business of the Year Award went to Ever Ready

Electric and we congratulate Les & Peg Ballweg on being a true model of success.

The 2010 New Business of the Year Award went to Straight Forward - not only did Straight Forward start a new business in one of the most challenging times in recent years, but they have continued to add jobs, adding 68 new jobs in 2010. Leadership begins at the top and Rod Schwaegel and his leadership team develop their staff for outstanding performance but also an understanding of supporting community.

Ted Klein was recognized as the Business Person of the Year, for his contributions to the local economy and advancement and aims of the Chamber and to the welfare of the community. Ted and Amy, owners of Green Acres, have been instrumental in supporting community events.

Ken Meyers, owner of Cedarberry Inn, was named the Chamber's 2010 Volunteer of the Year. Involved in numerous business & charitable organizations within the community, Ken was recognized for giving over 112 hours in 2010 to the Chamber alone.

Speaking of volunteerism, our non-profit groups are rich in volunteer hours. The 2010 Non-Profit of the Year award was given to the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society for their efforts in re-creating how they connect with locals and visitors to our community. Events in 2010 were created to bring history to life and the volunteers of this organization are to be commended for the creativity and dedication shown.

You may have heard some folks talking about the Water Street Reimaging Program. You may be asking yourself, What is it exactly? It's a program in which the Chamber is seeking to improve the façade of the downtown business district and attract and bring life back to the Water Street Corridor. We are currently in the informative phase, gauging interest and gaining an understanding of the project scope. We have personally visited all the businesses up and down Water, and will be reaching out to landlords and those we were unable to talk with directly. There is grant and TIFF dollars out there, the Chamber is seeking to facilitate a downtown revitalization. We will also be seeking your input as business leaders to ensure this project is a success.

For most of the visitors to the Sauk Prairie Community, the Highway 12 bridge is most often their first impression of our community. As many of you are aware, the structure is already in dire repair. The Chamber has reached out to the DOT, Governor's Office, and local representatives to ask for a solution to the rusting of the railing, staining, and crumbling of concrete. While it is early in the process, the DOT has responded and visited the Chamber office. We will continue to work with the DOT to ensure visitors to our community are greeted with the enthusiasm and spirit that truly reflects our community.

We have heard a lot of positive happenings in the Sauk Prairie area, and it is in large part due to you – the residents and business owners. So, who exactly are we? This slide

defines the geographical area, based on the 2005 UW-Baraboo market review. Currently, the Sauk Prairie Area is out pacing the U.S. and State averages in growth in many areas.

Currently, our population growth percentage is nearly double that of Wisconsin as a whole. While home values have dropped across the country, it is important to note that vacancies are on the decline for our area, with a potential turnaround on the horizon. The area currently has an estimated 93.5% employment rate, nearly 60% of the area's work force is considered white collar. Drilling down a bit deeper into the specific jobs, we find our top five employment industries are in construction, retail trade, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and accommodations and food service.

And further, we look into who makes up the Sauk Prairie resident population, we can analyze what people like to spend their time and resources on. What do the residents of Sauk Prairie like to do, watch, listen to, and read? Sauk Prairie households are comprised of three main tapestries. They are defined as being; Green Acres, Main Street USA, and Rural Resort Dwellers. Now I know some of you have heard those terms in the past – but here is a better understanding of what those classifications mean.

Green Acres Households tend to pride themselves in Do-It-Yourself projects around the home. With the pride in homeownership, the love of the outdoors and outdoor activities are also common. Main Street, USA is exactly what one might think. It is the most common tapestry in the United States.

They are still Do-it-Yourself people, but also enjoy utilization of the local library and partake in traditional American sports activities with their children. It is probably easy to understand why Rural Resort Dwellers rounds off our top three tapestries.

With the influence of the lake and river, and so many natural amenities in the Sauk Prairie Area, outdoor activities and getting out and relaxing are a big part of who we are.

As you have heard today, there are many pieces that make up the PUZZLE of our lives. Working Together, Playing Together, Learning Together, Healing Together and Celebrating Together. The keyword throughout is TOGETHER. To quote Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "What I do you cannot do; but what you do, I cannot do. The needs are great, and none of us, including me, ever do

great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and TOGETHER we can do something wonderful.”

So, I submit to you today that the current state of our communities are strong. We will meet our challenges with strength and creativity, and our future will be amazing as we embrace it together. At this time, we would like to give you the opportunity to ask any questions of our assembled panel of community administrators. We have Todd Baker, Chamber President and Dave O’Brien, board member available to assist you with a cordless microphone. Please raise your hand and they will come over to you.

(Moderated Q&A with panel members)

Vicki Breunig, Alan Wildman, Ron Lins, Shellie Benish, Tim McCumber, Craig Bender

After the moderated Q&A:

Thank you all so much for joining us today. In closing, thank you for sharing time with us to hear good news from the Sauk Prairie Riverway...*Where all the pieces come together!*