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Bank Seminars Find Right Touch With Businesses

LOUDOUN
Business

By Margaret Morton / reprinted from
Loudoun Business

Over the past two years, John Marshall Bank in Leesburg has watched its series of invitational business seminars for the bank's customers and friends expand and grow in reputation.

The most recent presentation was the Aug. 31 Vine to Wine seminar, held at Sunset Hills Winery north of Purcellville. The first presentation was held in the bank's Leesburg offices on South King Street.

The series, which was the brainchild of bank President Paul Bice, Senior Vice President & Commercial Loan Officer Jim Bowman, and Mike Otto, now managing the bank's Reston office, is proving very successful, according to Bowman.

The idea was to present different speakers giving progress reports on various projects or discussing topics that would be of interest to the bank's customers and friends. "We wanted to have some program of content to present," Bowman said following the Vine to Wine seminar.

That approach of inviting professionals in the business, financial and legal world to cover different topics, all of

whom do it on a pro bono basis, has done well, Bowman said. The expanding attendance has forced a move first from the bank's offices to the downstairs of Tuscarora Mill Restaurant, then to a larger space upstairs and, more recently, to locations in the Purcellville area. The early evening or breakfast sessions, with refreshments and drinks provided by the bank, have covered a variety of topics.

The first presentation in May 2009 featured ARGroup President Brian Chavis, who spoke on cyber security in today's environment and how it affects business owners. Next up was Toth Financial Advisory Group President Tom Toth, who provided an eerily accurate question that is resonating even more strongly today: Recovery-Will It Last? as he surveyed the U.S. economy and financial markets.



The format then branched out in June 2010 to include a four-person panel: Building Your Team to Survive. The seminar included presentations by County Economic Development specialist Steve Hargan, who gave a realistic assessment of the economy; CPA Joe Bullock, of Bullock & Associates, on watching the money; and attorneys Rory Clark, of Clark & Allen, PC, and Bob Sevilla, of

Sevila, Saunders, Huddleston & White, PC, speaking on the legal aspects of business and how to recognize and minimize liability.

Later that year, in September, the breakfast session featured Sen. Mark Herring (D-33) and Dels. Joe May (R-33) and Tag Greason (R-32) who spoke on the legislative changes in Richmond and their impact on business owners.

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In February this year, another panel discussed how to plan for success in the coming year with an eye to the impact of coming tax changes and how to manage book-keeping and taxes against that backdrop. The session featured Kim A. Wolfe, of K.A. Wolfe Competitive Business Solutions, LLC; and accountants Joe Bullock and Frank Stitely, of Stitely & Karstetter.

In May, for the first time, the sessions moved outside Leesburg, this time to Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, where about 70 elected western Loudoun officials, business leaders, and town government staff and others showed up for the Western Loudoun Economic Summit. The breakfast session billed three development projects in town: Roadside Development's Purcellville Gateway Shopping Center at the former Cole Farm; SRB Enterprises' Loudoun Valley Shopping Center;

and Dan Kaseman's planned renovations of the Purcellville Town Hall. At the last minute, the conversion of a brownstone in town to be a new medical practice was substituted for the Loudoun Valley Shopping Center, whose owners pulled out at the last minute.

Vine to Wine featured Virginia Agriculture Secretary Todd Haymore and winery owners Jim Corcoran and Chris Pearmund speaking on the current and future status of Virginia's wine industry.

"I'm very pleased," Bowman said recently, noting feedback has been very positive. "They like the whole atmosphere and the content. We bring in real professionals on topics that are going to matter and that are relevant." Guests give the sessions top marks for being very well done and with excellent content.

If the last two sessions with their higher attendance than the bank had seen before are anything to go by, it's onwards and upwards for the series.

While Bowman said he and Bice had not yet settled on the topic for the next seminar, the two are eying a presentation on commercial real estate in Loudoun, probably in late fall. Rather than focus on specific projects, such as at the Purcellville seminar, two of which later fell through, the session would more likely feature speakers familiar with upcoming projects to talk on what's available and when, as well as focusing on the pros and cons of leasing or buying. Another possibility is to focus on government contracting, which has become a specialty of the bank, plus another recap of the Virginia legislature. ★ *October 2011*