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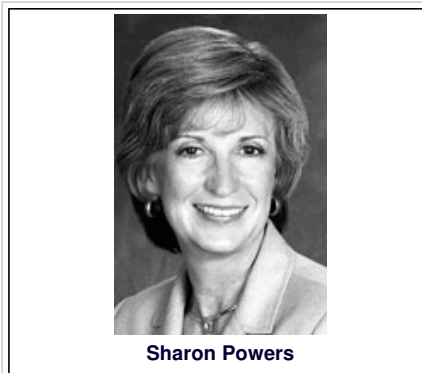
North Las Vegas Chamber rolls out leadership program

Most people have accessed their local chambers of commerce when planning vacations or relocation. But that's often their only frame of reference on chambers. What, they may ask, do chambers do beyond answering questions about local activities and supplying maps? Well, plenty.

Any effective chamber is much, much more.

The North Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, through its boards, committees, members and staff continually work to provide benefits and services to the business community. It provides the tools and resources to help weather the downturn until the economic climate improves in Southern Nevada. The North Las Vegas Chamber, known best for its ability to "connect our member businesses north and beyond," offers myriad opportunities for businesspeople to learn techniques to help improve their bottom lines, including tactics for marketing on a shoestring budget, using local media to get company publicity out and handling human resources issues. Chambers also are tapped into the area's developments and often act as catalysts for change and providers of needed and pertinent information to the community.

Education is a key focus for the chamber. But establishing relationships is paramount to doing business. Members have numerous networking opportunities, whether it's through attending events or serving on committees. Businesses that lack the time or personnel to actively participate still benefit from indirect networking through print and Web site advertising and sponsorship opportunities.



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Effective chambers listen to their members about what matters to them. Therefore, in response to numerous requests over the years, we're rolling out our newest program, Leadership North Las Vegas, in September. Leadership North Las Vegas is a program that focuses not only on developing leadership skills, but also raising awareness of North Las Vegas' assets, challenges and opportunities. The program will consist of eight monthly daylong sessions that will explore history; education; public safety; community assets and amenities; government; infrastructure; and health and human services. Applications are being accepted now for the inaugural class and are available on the chamber's Web site, www.northlasvegaschamber.com.

A primary objective of any chamber is to be the advocate for business and work to create a strong local economy. The North Las Vegas Chamber, through its government affairs and business advocacy efforts, works with elected officials and government agencies' staff to communicate concerns on processes and impending legislation that may cause undue hardship to business.


Our government affairs task forces are working on several initiatives and are preparing for the upcoming legislative session. These members are volunteering time and expertise to help the chamber develop its public-policy agenda for the upcoming year and develop more business-friendly processes within our city. During the 2009 legislative session, the chamber will again use a lobbyist to communicate the chamber's business agenda. Before the session, representatives from our task forces will meet with state and local elected officials to discuss issues that will be important to our business community and to determine elected representatives and candidates' positions on those issues.

Many of these issues will not be new. Transportation and education will top the list, as will the growing unfunded liability of the public employees benefit and retirement fund. At a time when the state's budget deficit continues to increase, finding necessary funding to keep our infrastructure not only intact but growing will be a tremendous challenge for our lawmakers.

Although the other area chambers have decided to travel to Washington, D.C., again this year, the North Las Vegas Chamber felt it could accomplish the same objectives at home. The chamber has invited each of Nevada's congressional representatives to sit down with our government affairs committee members between now and August to discuss what is important to the North Las Vegas' business community and all of Southern Nevada.

Sharon Powers is president and CEO of the North Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce.

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