

Chamber business expo draws lots of interest

By Lindsey Hilty, Staff Writer

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WEST CHESTER TWP. — As township resident Bert Shepherd wandered around the West Chester Liberty Chamber Alliance Business Expo Tuesday, May 11, her umbrella attracted quite a bit of attention.

Other attendees who braved rainy conditions first wanted to know where Shepherd got it. Her answer: She won it in a lollipop pull at the Chamber's booth.

Next, people wanted to know where she found the pizza from Uno's Chicago Grill that she was eating. "Over in that corner," she said, pointing to the far end of the building.

"It's so much fun talking to all the business people," the West Chester Twp. woman said. "I'm from this area."

Chatting with two other retirees who were perusing the marketing materials handed out at the event which drew 105 businesses, she explained what "from this area" meant.

"I'm from here," she said, pointing to the floor of Skate Town. She lived across the street from what used to be the Shepherd farm, owned by her husband's family.

A lot has changed in the area since then, but Shepherd said she enjoys meeting the business representatives. She met her new doctor here last year, she said.

Networking is what it's all about, said Kathy Rambo, vice president/special events for the West Chester Liberty Chamber Alliance.

"We have a lot of the same people, but this year we had a lot of new businesses," she said. "There's a lot of synergy. (Business representatives) all get together and they like to talk. There's always something going on."

Twenty area restaurants served lunch before the event, and numerous organizations and businesses handed out food, pens, water bottles, bags and other promotional materials.

Matt Bishop, sales and marketing director for The Dry Cleaning Shop, said despite tough economic times, his company has been ramping up its marketing.

"It's one of those you-can't-afford-not-to situations," he said. "We want to make sure we're in front of everyone who needs commercial and personal dry cleaning. It's a tight-knit community, so when you are able to network with that community and partner with local businesses, it's beneficial to us."

For Amber Reckner of the Butler County Mental Health Board, free marketing materials are key to potentially saving a life.

"A lot of people take the trinkets off our table, and it has our phone number," she said.

They may not need it now, she said, but some day they may be stressed or depressed and look down at that item and realize they want help.

Joe Hinson, president and CEO of the West Chester Liberty Chamber Alliance, said the energy in the

room spoke to the success and the optimism of business owners.

“They’re starting to see something happening in a positive direction,” he said. “If you didn’t know any better, you wouldn’t think we had a recession based on the reaction of the businesses and the climate in West Chester and Liberty townships.”

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