

# Merchants Guild wants to put downtown Waynesburg on the map



By C.R. Nelson January 29, 2016



*Members of Waynesburg Merchants Guild, which represents 15 downtown businesses, are busy planning events to lure shoppers downtown. Newly elected officers are, from left, Secretary Linda Winegar of Artbeat Gallery, Vice President Kristy Vliet of 5 Kidz Candy, President Donna Presock of Purse-N-Ality Creations and Treasurer Lauren Stauffer of Ruff Creek Crafts. - C.R. Nelson/For the Observer-Reporter [Order a Print](#)*

WAYNESBURG – Last year, a group of local shop owners got together and dubbed themselves the Waynesburg Merchants Guild before brainstorming ways to attract new customers to the downtown business district.

The brainstorming came up with novel ways to enhance the shopping experience – from a men’s night to selling ready-made Valentine’s Day gifts to Christmas shopping days with refreshments and prizes given away at participating stores.

Small business Saturdays were coordinated and advertised by members that worked with Waynesburg Prosperous & Beautiful and Greene County Tourism to better reach the public.

The customer response to the Christmas open house was “fantastic” and the guild is hoping to add similar events in the coming year, said newly-elected President Donna Presock of Purse-N-Ality Creations.

It is not easy to sustain a business in a small-town setting unless shoppers are drawn in, both from the area and off Interstate 79. Presock dreams of the day when Greene County has signage on I-79 similar to those used by tourist-savvy towns such as Asheville, N.C., to attract shoppers.

Word of mouth is good, but “we need to put Greene County on the map,” Presock said.

The guild’s first official meeting Monday produced officers, new ideas for events and a membership form, which Presock and others are taking around to other businesses asking them to join. As a group, members can afford full pages of advertising, both inside and outside the county, and buy promotional brochures to put in racks at motels and welcome centers, guild Vice President Kristy Vliet of 5 Kidz Kandy said.

“Getting more members will bring in more ideas for what we can do to make shopping fun and help our businesses grow,” she said.

The guild will be actively involved with Waynesburg Prosperous & Beautiful’s summer and holiday open houses, and it has submitted a grant proposal to Greene County Tourism for a marketing grant for a multi-fold brochure promoting guild member-owned businesses along with a map of downtown Waynesburg.

The upcoming “Cabin Fever Sunday” chili cook off competition Feb. 28 will give

winter weary shoppers a chance to socialize while sampling chili and voting for a favorite at participating shops. The \$5 wristband for the event is a fundraiser for the guild.

Formal and impromptu meetings are held on Mondays at 5 p.m. inside 5 Kids Kandy. Linda Winegar of Artbeat Gallery said they're also working on ideas for spring since Easter is early this year.

"We're planning an 'Egg'stravanga like we did last year with face painting, bunnies, crafts and fun things for kids," Winegar said. "If you have any other ideas, let us know."

For more information or to join the guild, call 724-627-0552 during business hours or leave a message.

---