

# Don't dare say 'that won't work' to the chamber directors

There are a few common expressions that just aren't allowed at the Dublin Chamber of Commerce office.

"That's not the way we've always done it" or "that won't work" – either expression is likely to result in a reprimand to anyone who would dare not to be a little daring.

"One of my favorite philosophers – Pat Leatherwood – says that if you keep doing things the way you've always done them, you'll get the same results you've always gotten," quoted the chamber's executive director Karen Wright. "The thinking of the chamber board is that times have changed, priorities have changed, economic conditions have changed – and sometimes you just need to think outside the box."

Wright believes the current board of directors is daring enough to do just that.

"This board is adventuresome, creative and dedicated to helping build a thriving business climate in Dublin," she said. "Sometimes that means taking the best of the past and putting a new shine on it. Or sometimes it means just starting over with a new idea."

As examples, Wright mentions that the community doesn't traditionally have a major observance of St. Patrick's Day on March 17 unless it falls on the weekend of the festival. This year, several events will be held on Wednesday, March 17 since many visitors want to be in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day. The chamber has also invited the carnival to come to town early so that children's rides will be available that evening, which falls in the midst of spring break. (Details of the downtown activities will be announced soon.)

A number of fresh ideas have been applied to the Miss Dublin pageants, which are set for Thursday and Friday nights, March 18 and 19. "We are especially excited to have Emily Greenway Akard, a former Miss Dublin and Pretty Peggy Pepper, coordinating this event. Her priorities are exactly those of the chamber: to create a pageant which is fun and low-stress for the girls and to crown young ladies who will become ambassadors for the community."

This year's St. Patrick's Festival will be on Saturday, March 20. It is expected to kick off with a 5K run hosted by Titan Fitness Center, followed at 10 a.m. by the annual parade, after which the activities will shift to the city park for entertainment, food, games and

various sporting events. One of the most popular of the annual events, the Highland Games, will be sanctioned this year which is generating additional excitement.

In the meantime, chamber volunteers are coordinating the annual chamber banquet, set for Feb. 25. Almost every element of the banquet has a new approach, Wright said.

“First of all, we have moved it from the cafeteria to the Rotary building just to have a new look, and we are going to brag about our community through our speaker, the entertainment and the food fare. Margaret Hoogstra, executive director of the Texas Forts Trail, will be guest speaker and her topic focuses on the substantial tourism benefits which Dublin has to offer. Entertainment will be the premier showing of the new Dublin video which was funded in part by the Dublin Economic Development Corporation and the chamber. The video, produced by Mike Simpson’s 828 Media, is a recruiting tool for tourists, new business and new residents. And its seldom-seen approach to the community is guaranteed to instill pride among local residents.”

Another unusual approach to the banquet is that the community’s businesses, organizations and individuals are invited to prepare a “taste of Dublin” for the evening meal. “We want to feature what Dublin has to offer and it has been such fun to hear the creative ideas which are coming forth. Green Creek’s United Methodist Church will showcase its own cooks and some of their ‘frequently requested recipes’. Three Sisters will provide fabulous breads, Clay’s Processing will prepare meat samples, Dr Pepper will provide DP cake, as well as beverages, of course, and you can be assured that Erath County dairy products will be center stage, as well. It’s an unconventional approach which has generated a lot of enthusiasm and we hope we will be able to keep ticket prices down through this means of showcasing our community.”

Chamber officers and directors will be introduced at the Feb. 25 banquet. Officers are David Leatherwood, president; John Powell, vice president; Luanne Schexnider, secretary, and Mike Jurney, treasurer. Directors are Lori Dodd, Amy McDonald, Deanna Turley, Steve Hightower, Margaret Morris, Chino Rodriquez and Mary Haley.

Throughout the remainder of the year, the chamber will be involved in such community events as a candidates forum, Cowboy Culture Celebration, Dr Pepper birthday celebration, back-to-school breakfast, safe trick-or-treat and Christmas.

In the meantime, the Dublin Dollars program will continue as a means of encouraging shopping with member businesses. The “paper money” dollars can be redeemed at participating chamber members’ businesses, dollar for dollar, through the chamber. About 50 chamber members currently participate.

“Each event we sponsor or are involved with is screened through the perspective of the chamber’s mission statement,” Wright said. “We are here to support business and to help create an atmosphere in which businesses can succeed. That means that some events which didn’t adhere to that mission statement have been abandoned in favor of those that do.”