

YOU Won!!!

An Emporia Main Street board member recently came up to me after they learned about awards being presented at the Kansas Main Street Symposium and congratulated me on the wins. I quickly corrected them, and reminded them that our membership and volunteers won, not me. You see, without our members and without our volunteers I can't do a whole lot. That's why, if you look at the pictures in this week's e-mail you will notice several different community members that attended the conference and received recognition. Staff does work hard for YOU, but without you, Emporia Main Street would not receive the recognition and praise lauded upon us at this past weeks symposium. It just wouldn't be right for me to lean on volunteers and then say "look at me" when things get done. That's why I say YOU won. The following release explains the "wins" in more detail:



The Kansas Main Street State Symposium held October 21-23 in Leavenworth, Kansas garnered major recognition for the Emporia Main Street Program. In direct competition with 25 other Kansas Main Street Communities, Emporia Main Street brought home five major awards, second only to the host city of Leavenworth. Categories of awards received ranged from a Community award, three Kansas Main Street Awards, and a first in the twenty-four year history of Kansas Main Street: a Secretary of Commerce Award in Community Economic Development.

The Kansas Main Street Community Award for Emporia recognized Tracey Graham of the Emporia Farmer's Market. This year was a record setting year for the local Farmer's Market, and included additional vendors, entertainment and amenities in the 700 Block of Merchant Street. By working together, Emporia Main Street and the Emporia Farmer's Market addressed concerns of local merchants, added new lighting to the market and increased visibility. Emporia Main Street is constantly searching for partners with complimentary goals, and Tracey Graham was identified as an important and cooperative partner in the success of the Emporia community.

Emporia Main Street received three Kansas Main Street Awards in the areas of Business Development, Public/Private Partnerships and Volunteer Development. In the area of Business Development, Emporia Main Street was recognized for creating a "Home Based" business level membership. By engaging entrepreneurs at a basic level, Emporia Main Street fostered new business opportunities and encouraged expansion. Since the inception of the Home Based Business Level in July, two former home based businesses have entered traditional store fronts and the potential exists for more Home Based business expansions in the near future.

The continued positive relationship between Flint Hills Technical College and Emporia Main Street earned a Kansas Main Street award for Public/Private Partnerships. Emporia Main Street and FHTC teamed up to produce the largest "Start Your Own Business" class in the history of the program this past spring. Several entrepreneurs continue to open store front businesses as a result of business training through this joint effort. More recently, Flint Hills Technical College and Emporia Main Street teamed up to solicit bike rack designs from the community and will utilize the FHTC welding programs to produce attractive Emporia racks for area bicycles.

The Emporia Main Street Adopt-A-Garden Project was recognized by Kansas Main Street for Excellence in Volunteer Development. Community volunteers adopted a total of forty-six gardens throughout the downtown Emporia Area as a result of this new program. By working with local Master Gardeners and the local extension service, volunteers were provided with information that aided in the beautification of the Emporia Community. Business sponsors made donations which rewarded outstanding garden development and several hundred man hours were donated over the spring, summer and fall by a dedicated volunteer force to create beautiful floral displays for the entire community to enjoy.

For the first time in the twenty four year history of the Kansas Main Street Program, the Secretary of the Kansas Department of Commerce elevated an example of community economic development for special recognition. The award recognized Emporia's advanced efforts in the area of Community Initiated Development, which formulated an overlay district to encourage the redevelopment and revitalization of a portion of the downtown area and Cory Haag, for his outstanding Granada Lofts project. The CID project continues to encourage upper story development through unique zoning, produces uniform lot lines and identifies "subdistricts" for the purpose of creating business clusters. Cory Haag and his family created a multilevel mixed use development on a vacated lot in downtown Emporia. The Granada Lofts contains thirteen apartments and three commercial spaces. At the time of opening, all residential spaces were occupied and the commercial spaces included Jimmy John's Sandwiches and Bravo Salon.

Take a moment to pat yourself on the back! You made all this recognition possible, and beyond that, you make positive community change happen. At the beginning of membership drive in June, I let members know that our organization is all about YOU. That's still the case, and let me be the first to congratulate you on what YOU did! The awards are more evidence that small steps lead to BIG impacts.

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