

McIntyre takes helm as Chamber of Commerce president

Group plans annual 'Night at the Fort' fundraiser

By Stacy Jones

Like a high-stakes game of tug-o-war, Jamestown has found itself pulled in two directions. On one side is "old" Jamestown, a vocal group that wants to preserve what already exists on the island and to limit change and expansion. On the other side – equally energized and vocal – is "new" Jamestown, a group that sees potential in every lot, shop and landmark.

Annie McIntyre, the new president of the Jamestown Chamber of Commerce, hopes to balance that tug-o-war game with a positive attitude and good ideas.

"Jamestown is at a crossroads," she said. "We need to find a friendly, happy medium. Each side needs to show each other equal respect."

It is quite a task, but McIntyre said she possesses the qualities to help Jamestown focus its vision. By her own account, it will be her individual traits — she describes herself as personable, sensitive and energetic — that will aid her in her new role, even more than her decades of sales experience.

"Annie is vivacious, outgoing and very dynamic," said Donna Kohler, owner of East Bay Bed & Breakfast and executive director of the Jamestown Chamber. "Annie is the type of person who knows everybody. If you don't know Annie, you don't know Jamestown."

As president of the Chamber, McIntyre will lead an organization charged with promoting the community for residents and merchants, while preserving the island's character and flavor. It is not an easy task. But as a 20-year resident of Jamestown and a past resident of Cranston, Newport and New York City, McIntyre understands and appreciates the beauty and history of the island.

She also understands the frustration that long-time residents sometimes feel during the summer months, when they cannot get

James *A Bridge Apart* *A World Away* town

near their favorite island places.

"The construction, the vehicles, can be too much," she said. "Sometimes, I'll be at my house talking on the phone and I'll have to start yelling or move because of the noise." But she has also experienced the tax burden in other communities when opportunities to increase business are passed over and taxes go up.

"If taxes increased, it would be pretty tough," McIntyre said. "If more people bring more business to the island, I'm okay with that. It puts people to work and more people buy things in town."

Among future plans for improvements to the town are more and better access to the waterfront, easier in-town parking, and new sidewalks and pavement for all of Narragansett Avenue, McIntyre said.

But building and expansion is not the only approach supported by the Chamber. Education is a key focus, too. The "Buy Jamestown" campaign is one such example. Started roughly a year ago, the effort's intent is to "educate island residents on the benefits of purchasing locally," McIntyre said.

"There are a lot of misconceptions of what you can and can't do on the island," she said. "When I was commuting to work, I would get up very early and nothing would be open and I crossed the bridge. I did everything off-island — hair, dry cleaning, groceries. I never knew what was here or the services available."

That changed after some inquisitive encounters with local merchants. McIntyre said she discovered

that even if a merchant did not have what she wanted in stock, or kept hours incompatible with her own, most would order the item with a quick turnaround, or schedule appointments at more

convenient hours. Soon, she said, she was getting groceries delivered, getting her hair done, dropping off her dry cleaning and more, all on the island. "Merchants, I found, were very eager to please," she said. "You ask for something and they'll make the extra effort to get it for you."

The lesson to be learned, according to McIntyre, is that residents need to work harder at giving merchants the benefit of the doubt. "Think, is it worth it to go over the bridge?" she said. On the flip side, she added, merchants need to understand that residents' time here is priceless. "Anything they can do to make that time better, more enjoyable, then they

should do it," she said.

McIntyre said that the Chamber's upcoming annual fundraiser is a chance for residents and merchants to celebrate and support Jamestown. This year's event, "Dig It," will be held Saturday, Aug. 15, at the Fort Getty Pavilion. Tickets are \$65 and include dinner catered by Chopmist Charlie's, dessert by Spinnaker's, an open bar serving beer, wine and soda, music by Forty Steps (Jamestown Dr. Joe England's band), and a silent auction during which attendees can bid on items such as vacations, day cruises and art. Proceeds from the fundraiser will benefit the Quononoquott Garden Club, which will use the money to support the Downtown Beautification Project. Last year's event raised approximately \$5,000 for the Jamestown Community Theatre.

The event, said Donna Kohler, is good food, loud music and fun. "It's a wild time," McIntyre

said.

That description may ultimately apply to McIntyre's tenure as Chamber president.

"It will be a challenge, that's for sure," she said. "But that's what life is about, working for what you believe in. Jamestown is a delightful and special place."

TOWN MEETINGS

Monday, Aug. 3,
7 p.m., Town Hall, the Town Council meets.

Wednesday, Aug. 5
7:30 p.m., Town Hall, the Planning Commission meets.

MURPHY'S LAW

Does any rural town in Rhode Island have a police per square mile ratio as high as that of the Town of Jamestown?

Many municipalities with a seasonal variation in population deal with the busy times by adding part-time peace officers, sometimes called constables.

All municipalities in this state have to consider greater efficiencies of operation. That will require cooperation between neighboring communities, and should result in consolidation of certain services on a county-wide or state-wide basis.

Why duplicate what exists nearby? One possible example: all communities in Newport County might use the Potter League to provide animal shelter services.

About twenty years ago, a very knowledgeable observer summed up the frugal approach of Jamestown's to their government as "just getting by". He said that the majority of Jamestown's citizens valued that which in other places might be considered shabby or rundown.

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