



# Downtown

# Happenings

An e-publication of  
Downtown Blackstone, Inc.

## February 2011

In this Issue

[Director's Desk](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Committee News](#)

[Business Spotlight](#)

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Program Manager, DBI

## We're Off and Running in 2011!

### Director's Desk

February has come and gone now and it was a cold month but downtown remains sizzling hot! Last month I reported that vacancies had dropped to just 7 buildings from 22 vacant buildings when DBi came on the scene three years ago and that represents a drop of 68%, a positive negative! As we work toward full occupancy downtown, there is always some turnover for one reason or another and although that still occurs, what is different in the latest occurrences of vacancies is that before a "for lease" went up, the vacancies were filled!

For example, last month two of our salon/barber shops, Victoria's Beauty Salon, and Classic Cuts, relocated outside the district. In both cases, their buildings have been re-occupied. Immediately! Flower & Foliage used the space vacated by Classic cuts to cover the temporary demand of Valentine's day and Kim & Andrew Moody are setting up shop at 108 N. Main Street where Blackstone Emporium had a clearance showroom so that they can take the spot vacated by Victoria's Beauty Salon thus expanding their store one building over without skipping a building. They have wanted to do this for some time and things finally worked out and now it is a reality. The bottom line is that space downtown is not staying vacant for very long.

In fact, in addition to the new business that the Moody's are opening, Francis and Sara Gilmore are preparing to open up a new wine shop on West Broad Street across from the Gilmore Environmental Consulting office and next door to UAV Pro RC world. Furthermore, there is also someone seriously looking at occupying the Sheffield Warehouse which is the largest remaining vacant building downtown.

If you have not taken the time to check us out, you need to cruise on down to Blackstone and park and just walk around. Browse some of the new shops and restaurants available. The place is coming to life in a lot of positive ways. The New Era has arrived and I am confident that you will like what you see!

### Google Sketchup Workshop

On February 22nd, I travelled to the headquarters of Frazier Associates Architects in Staunton, Virginia and attended a Virginia Main Street workshop on Google Sketchup and how it could be used within the mission of our organization to promote our businesses. This modeling software enables you to create 3-D models of individual buildings or an entire town and then import them into Google Earth. It has several uses that could be exploited. Sketchup could be a tool for tourism if we link 3-D models to videos of downtown businesses. Or for business recruitment, it would give potential businesses a visual representation of the town's layout and business locations and where they might best fit in. For future planning purposes,

Sketchup could be used to model a long-term vision of what the town aspires to become in the future. Such visionary plans could potentially attract investors with the means to make it happen especially if they catch the vision that is cast. Yet another use of the program could be to create renderings for future facade improvements.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is the learning curve involved with any new software and mastering it takes time and effort so if we were to delve into it, there would be an immediate need for volunteers with the technical skills to help with the project. The bottom line though, is that we are always looking for additional ways to support downtown businesses and we have no fear of pursuing "cutting edge" solutions such as what this program would provide in order to accomplish that.



The photos above are of the headquarters of Frazier Associates, Architects in Staunton, Virginia.



Above, Kathy Frazier leads the discussion on how Sketchup can be utilized in Main Street Community settings.

One key benefit to being a designated Main Street Community is having access to trainings like these that are made available on an on-going basis every year to help communities like ours keep abreast of the latest tips and ideas for Downtown Revitalization. Also, because Virginia Main Street contracts with Frazier Associates, we are able to call upon their expertise for a set amount of Design services that are free to us because it is paid for by VMS.

## Upcoming Events



### TORNADO DRILL

On Tuesday, March 15th @ 9:45 AM the Town will participate in a state wide Tornado Drill. During that time, the town's emergency weather warning will sound for about 3 minutes, AM 1610 (the towns emergency radio station) will broadcast NOAA for about 20 minutes, and the towns **CODE RED** phone system will call all business and residents with a simulated warning message from the town about the drill. Blackstone citizens/businesses to conduct their own tornado drill during this time. More information on how to have your own tornado drill is available at <http://www.readyvirginia.gov/> Also all business and citizens are encourage to visit the following web site to update their **CODE RED** emergency contact information and receive FREE SEVERE WEATHER WARNINGS for updating their information. <http://www.townofblackstoneva.com/CodeRED> Please do not hesitate to call/contact Walter Mac Osborne at 434-292-9617 if you need more information.



### IMPORTANT DBi DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS' MEETING

Mark your calendars! There will be a Downtown Merchants' meeting on Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> from 6pm until 7pm at the Blackstone Volunteer Fire Department on Church Street. All merchants and business owners are invited to come to see how they can get involved and to share ideas and give input to help the DBi Promotions Committee with ideas for a Summer Concert Series. Right now it is just an idea and we are still in "discovery mode". Come out and help us by giving your input on the discussion.



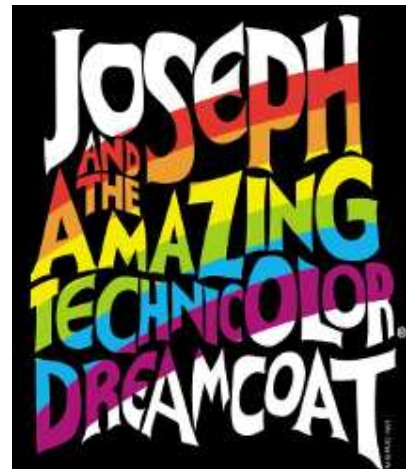
### SCHOOL MUSICAL COMING SOON!

Tickets are on sale now for "Joseph and the Amazing Techni-color Dream coat" from cast members or at the door. The show opens at the Nottoway Middle School Auditorium on Thursday, March 17th and runs through Sunday, March 20th. Tickets are \$10 for general seating and \$15 for a reserved seat. Cast members include: Savannah Thomas, Matthew Bagley, Nick Carr, Maggie Shepherd, Lucas Beane, Erin Coppedge, Colter Womack, Micah Baldwin, Joey Coppedge, Charlotte Walters, Issac Elder, Bethany Baldwin, Alex Flowers, Brenden Smith, Jesse Shepherd, Eve Jones, Jay Carr, Heather Houser, Heaven Imanchinello, Victoria Wood, Madison Gilmore, Lauren Duffy, Wendy Clay, Hoku Womack, Latoya Scott, Kennedy Wilkens-Mitchell, Alyda Jones, Ally Herring, Katie Clayton, Emma Dalton, Katie Meunier

*Produced by 21st Century of Nottoway Schools, directed by Christy Aviles. Alice Allman is music director and Allison Jones is the choreographer. The scenic artist is Alyson Napier. Set construction and sound by Joe Allman and Richie Aviles. Lyrics by Tim Rice and Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber presented through an exclusive arrangement with R&H Theatricals and The Really Useful Group, Limited*

*www.rnhtheatricals.com (<http://teacherweb.com/VA/BlackstonePrimarySchool/MrsAllman>)*

For information e-mail Alice Allman at [fisherallman2@embarqmail.com](mailto:fisherallman2@embarqmail.com)



**BLACKSTONE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNUAL MEETING AND DANCE  
Fort Pickett Officer's Club**

**Friday, March 25, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. to Midnight**

- Cost for the Evening is \$30.00 per person.
- The Theme: "Show Your Team Spirit" (Wear an item or outfit of your favorite sports team)
- The evening will include an awards ceremony, election of New officers and Board Members, Chairperson's annual report, open Bar and Dinner, followed by dancing.
- Nomination forms will be available soon, for the "Business of the Year", "Business Advocate of the Year" and the "Lifetime Achievement Winner"
- Please RSVP to Jane Barnes at the Chamber Office.

**VIRGINIA MAIN STREET COMMUNITY MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Luncheon scheduled for Thursday, March 31st**

Please join us for a celebration of Virginia Main Street Community Milestone Achievements with guest speakers; The Honorable Mary Rae Carter, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade for Rural Economic Development and Jean Carroon, FAIA, LEED AP Author, *Sustainable Preservation: Greening Existing Buildings*. Thursday, March 31st from noon to 2:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Hotel, Empire Room in Richmond, Virginia. Please register online by Thursday, March 24, 2011 at [www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet). Cost is \$40 per person.

**COMMONWEALTH CHORALE AND ORCHESTRA SPRING CONCERT**

The Commonwealth Chorale and Orchestra will give their spring concert on Sunday, April 10 at 3 PM at Crenshaw United Methodist Church in Blackstone. Their program will consist of Gloria by Rutter as well as pieces from Haydn's Creation, Mendelssohn's Elijah, and Mozart's Requiem. The Chorale consists of 60 plus members from Blackstone and surrounding communities. The concert is free and open to the public. (For more information contact Judy Amos at 292-7711.)

**Announcements:**

The Courier-Record is pleased to welcome your new, renovated, or relocated business to this area. As one of the state's most widely-read community newspapers, we want to work with you to make your venture a total success. As one of the area's most proven advertising vehicles for your message, we want to work with you to make your new venture a total success. As an introduction or re-introduction to the community, we're offering your business a FREE ribbon-cutting event, which will help to kick-off your opening with a bang, or remind readers of your recent opening/relocation/renovation. We will conduct and photograph the event with you and your staff. A photo and caption will be published in the Courier-Record. (This offer does not apply to ribbon-cuttings arranged/hosted/sponsored by organizations other than the Courier-Record.) We're glad that you chose this area for the home of your new business, and we wish you every success! The Courier's new offer applies to any new business, renovated business, or relocated business since November 1st, 2010. (For more details on this offer, it's important that you contact Doug Fellows, Advertising Account Executive, (434) 292-3019. Email Doug at: [dougf@courier-record.com](mailto:dougf@courier-record.com) )

## Committee News

### The Promotions Committee

We are researching how other Main Street Communities conduct Concert Series so as to put together a similar event for Blackstone. We are still in "discovery mode" and right now this is just an idea that we are excited about for several good reasons. We invite all business owners who have their business located downtown to attend the upcoming Merchants Meeting for more details (see upcoming events).



### The Organization Committee

The Organization Committee meets monthly with the primary job of fundraising. A mailing campaign is currently in progress and businesses have already received a request to donate to DBI. A residential solicitation to donate to improving Blackstone will be mailed during the months of March and April. In addition to the mailing campaign, the Organizational Committee is anxious to help the Promotions Committee with some great summer ideas! So stay tuned!

### The Design Committee

We welcome our newest committee member, Debbie Borum and we look forward to her contribution to the group.



#### Design Tip for the month:

When it comes to your windows and window displays, remember "less is more". Avoid hand-written signs. In fact, if you are open for business, resist the temptation to cover a large portion of your display windows with paper or signs. Keep most of your window area open so a view to the inside is available to someone walking or driving by. Remember, you want to project an uncluttered professional look that will attract and not turn away customers who are comparing the look and feel of your shop to those in malls and shopping centers or other stores downtown. Display windows should be kept clean and should give passersby a view of the great merchandise you have inside. Save your signs for the inside of your store and let your awesome window displays draw them in.



### The Economic Restructuring Committee

As merchants and/or property owners, it's important that we keep our storefronts clean and inviting. Our storefronts and display windows are a primary marketing tool in enticing customers to buy our products/services. In addition, we must be aware that we are part of a greater storefront: the Downtown Blackstone Shopping District. Our shopping district can function much like a mall where business owners work together to attract customers and maximize profitability.

If your business cannot offer all of the items/services that customers desire, recommend that they visit your downtown neighbors. Let them know that we are all part of a friendly, small town community that strives to satisfy their needs. Let's give shoppers a reason to spend their dollars in our downtown business district. If it's lunch or dinner time and your customer has finished shopping at your store, recommend that they visit one of our many local restaurants. Restaurant owners should do the same for their retail/service neighbors. Let's create a positive team mentality in downtown. By working together to promote one another, we will all be more profitable.

## Business Spotlight: Main Street Cabinets Inc.

Main Street Cabinets Inc. is a subsidiary of J.L. Companies Inc. In fact, the initials J.L. in the company name stand for "Joshua and Lisa" Johnson, the husband and wife team that started the company in 2007. As the name implies, J.L. Renovations can do home renovations and construction jobs of all sizes. Main Street Custom Cabinets is a concept that grew out of Lisa and Joshua having the desire to offer their clients more by saving them time while offering a more personal atmosphere in which to create their project. The facility at 302 South Main Street opened in 2010 and features a wide selection of materials to choose from for your project. You will find everything you need here as well as samples of designs to get your creative juices flowing.



Pictured above l-r: Diana Battaglia, Lisa & Joshua Johnson

When you enter the shop, you are met by a very tasteful display of beautiful cabinets, granite samples, laminates, Cambria etc. There are tile displays, hardwood flooring, and even a little art gallery where local photographer, George Bailey, displays his work. To help pull all of this together, there is a cozy in-store design center which is equipped with the latest technology to give the customer a computer generated design of their project enabling them to see the layout of what it will look like installed in their home. Your project can be custom-designed and manipulated until it meets the desired result on computer and then crafted according to the chosen design. If you can dream it up, they can create it! This is a service never before available in Blackstone and one that is rare even in larger metropolitan areas!

Main Street Cabinets and Countertops offers the best in service utilizing private dealers and an upscale shop with exclusive technology without the expensive price tag that you would expect.



"We offer our quality cabinets and services at a price that is very competitive with big box stores that lack the same level of customer service" say owners Joshua and Lisa. Indeed personal service is what distinguishes downtown businesses from big box stores.

l-Shiloh Maple Kitchen Island with granite top, r- 3/4 solid wood dovetail drawer construction with soft close option



So who is the typical customer for their products and services, you may ask? That answer would be anyone seeking value and quality for their money and that should include everyone. For those customers who appreciate one on one personal attention and value service this store is sure to meet their needs.

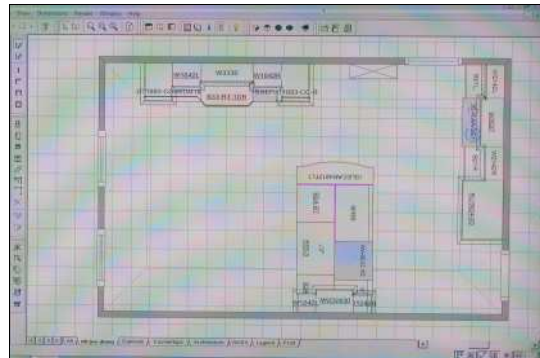
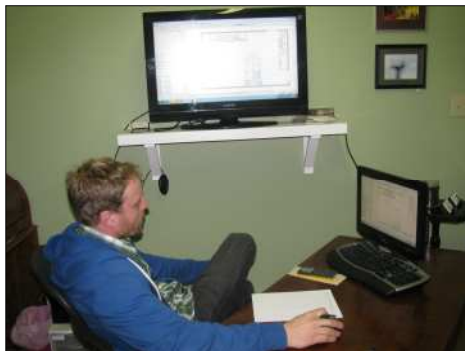
We asked if there is anything special that they would like the public to know about Main Street Cabinets and Countertops as a business. The Johnsons responded "We are dedicated to our profession and enjoy what we do and it shows in the experience we give each client". Well spoken. Give them a try if you are in the market for upgrading your kitchen cabinets or any other construction project for that matter.

Store hours are Monday through Friday, from 9am to 6pm and 10 to 4pm on Saturday and after hours by appointment. Diana Battaglia provides office support, as well as research and development. Everyone has a distinct role. Owner Lisa Johnson handles marketing, management and customer relations and husband and co-owner, Joshua Johnson serves as designer and contractor. So for all your commercial and residential cabinetry needs stop by Main Street Cabinets or visit their website at [www.mainstreetcabinets.com](http://www.mainstreetcabinets.com).

"/As I see it" art display by George Bailey



Lisa points out the Shiloh selection center while Diana shows off the premier Marazzi Porcelain tile display and the eco-friendly bamboo flooring in the foreground.



Above: Joshua Johnson illustrates what a computer aided kitchen design looks like. If you can envision it, they can make it!

### **2011 Fundraising Campaign progress as of February 28th**

Downtown Blackstone Inc. is proud to report the addition of nearly 65 new jobs and 25 new businesses to the Historic District since 2007! There has also been over \$3.4 million dollars in private investment downtown and the vacancy rate has been reduced by 68% in that time! Our impact is measurable, visible, substantial and ongoing! We promised to publish our donor list in the newsletter as well as on our website. As we continue to receive donations, we will update the list monthly. If you or someone you know would like to support this cause, please make note of the mailing address and e-mail address listed below.

Donations are tax deductible and can be made by check payable to D.B.I. (107 W. Broad Street, Blackstone, VA 23824) or use paypal online. Our website address is [www.downtownblackstone.org](http://www.downtownblackstone.org). Donation levels are as follows:

**Friend Of Downtown (Up to \$49)**

**Blackstone Supporter (\$50 to \$99)**

Homefront Appliances

**Downtown Advocate (\$100 to \$499)**

Dunc & Myra Quicke, Shirley Wilkins, Lynn Shekleton, Joe Allman, Teefey & Teefey P.C.,

**Blackstone Partner (\$500 to \$999)**

**Revitalization Benefactor (\$1,000 to \$4,999)**

**Revitalization Leader (\$5,000 or more)**



### **The DBi Mission Statement:**

"D.B.I. will provide leadership in developing and promoting Downtown Blackstone as an inviting place to visit and shop, a productive place to work, and a profitable place to invest."

Visit us online at: [www.downtownblackstone.org](http://www.downtownblackstone.org)