

Making Barnesville A Better Place For All

By Michael Stein

Main Street USA is much more than sidewalks and storefronts. Under the umbrella of a national organization, Barnesville's Main Street program exists to make the town a better place for residents and businesses.

Main Street Director Bailey Thompson is excited to see a lot of new and continuing developments in the business community. Collaboration is one of those things.

"We're starting to get business leaders together to discuss what's working for them and what's not," Thompson said. "The result of that will be creating more awareness of what we have right here in Barnesville. If we all work together, we'll become more viable as businesses."

Thompson said greater awareness of the Main Street program has resulted in more businesses seeing it as a place to go for help, rather than just paying their dues.

"If they need help, we are here," Thompson said. "We can help with things like marketing and social media. We've had lots of inquiries over the past year. Quite a few have reached out to Main Street."

Listening and sharing ideas can often lead to innovations

and added products and services. Thompson cited the Barnesville Grocery's addition of "to-go" meals and Cottonwood Designs adding personalized clothing, craft classes and an upstairs bed & breakfast.

During the past year, Main Street hosted a small business training session.

"We heard how small businesses can emphasize greater customer service than a big box store," Thompson said. "The concept of 'shop small' is about more personalized service and helping the community."

Thompson pointed out that the agency is now the oldest continuous Main Street program in Minnesota. "Operating much like a chamber of commerce, but under the EDA's direction," Thompson said, "our mission is to make Barnesville better as a whole by focusing on the city's visual aspects and events and enhancing the relationships between residents and businesses."

Main Street's current goals include changing the perception of shopping locally to improve the retail climate, becoming a louder voice for local businesses on community issues and bringing new events to the city.

The Main Street's 2018 activities



The 2018 Community Picnic was held on a perfect summer evening. One of the highlights of the event was Sanford's air ambulance tours, which attracted kids of all ages.

included the following:

- A successful membership drive resulting in 77 members, 32 friends of Main Street and \$9,532 in dues
- The 26th annual Showcase event with 39 booths and three "kids in business" booths
- The annual Golf Tournament, which had 21 teams participate, and revenue of \$3,427
- The Community Picnic, which served more than 650 people and included the Miss Barnesville pageant
- Planting and maintenance of downtown flower planters/baskets

and volunteer watering

- Area-wide rummage sales, Miracle on Front Street events, Yard of the Week, Holiday Home Decorating lights contest, five Show 'n Shine events, T-shirt fundraiser, Breakfast with Santa, retail promotions, Home Show booth.

Of course, those types of activities will continue throughout 2019. Thompson said the area-wide rummage sales in particular is one that gets a lot of attention and "gets to be a pretty busy weekend."



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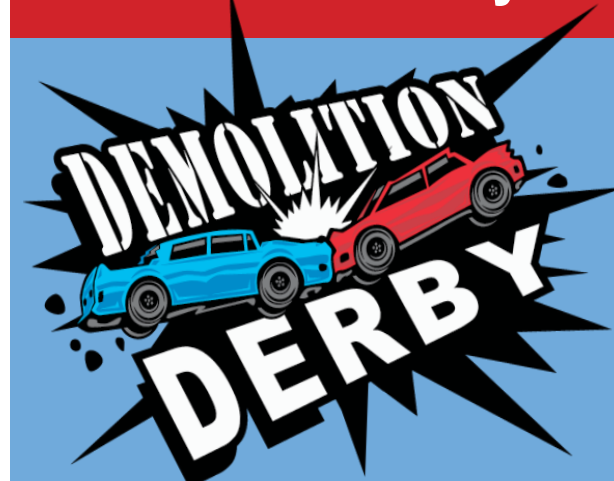


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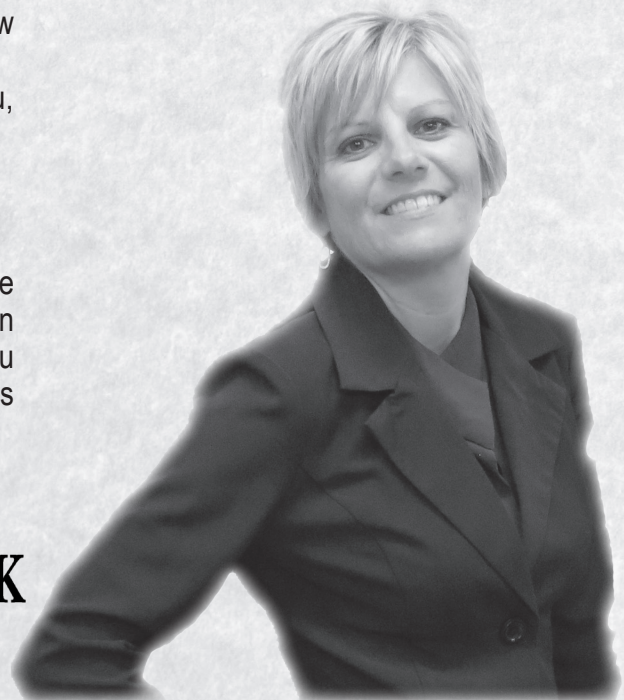
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