

WISE Network keeps regular meeting schedule

By Carole Kelly

WISE Network members recently kept their face-to-face second Tuesday schedule, but, in respecting efforts to curtail COVID-19 exposure, the face-to-face was not the regular lunch meeting. Through the web-based video conference tool known as Zoom, the noon meeting was held online, with audio and video enabling participants to enjoy the session. Lunch meetings will be welcomed once again as the community moves from the shelter-in-place directive.

The recent meeting featured a presentation by Clay Mansell, CEO of Mansell Media and publisher of *The Clinton Courier*. Mansell pointed out that his earlier prepared remarks were adapted to fit the times as everyone faces the changes and challenges of the past weeks in businesses and homes. He emphasized the importance of businesses working to stay visible through the dark weeks, predicting that when the pandemic threat lessens and doors open again, opportunities will be readily available.

The WISE Network was formed by Clintonian Lorraine Gilbert, who has been president since 2013 and who had joined the group as a new resident eager to find community. The network evolved from a pre-existing group started by Cindy Taucher and

Jan Cossitt in 2007 called Clinton Career Women. The name was changed to reflect its mission of recognizing the many hats that women wear. WISE (Women who Inspire, Support, and Encourage) includes business owners or business promoters, with all women welcomed to join.

"I was a night nurse at the time, and it was a way to get to know people in Clinton," Gilbert said. "I love the connections I've made, and I feel like I finally have a place I belong."

Gilbert currently works full time as a MICU nurse, is author of *52 Bible Lessons*, and is also an independent consultant for Rodan and Fields.

Other leaders are Kalandria Archie, owner of 1st United Tax and Accounting, Kidz 1st Level Learning Center 2, and Sheer Essence Beauty Salon and Barber Shop; Alma Calix, owner of Calix Interpreting; Dr. Jamellah Johnson, associate trainer of Time to Teach, and Shelly Withers Janous, broker associate/realtor for David Stevens Century 21.

"The goal was to be an inexpensive way for women to network and grow their businesses," said Gilbert. "Every single woman sacrifices something to have a business, and we wanted to create a safe place where women feel empowered. We also want to

cultivate a group where women [who are] considering starting a business can feel free to ask questions. On that same note, we wanted the group to welcome women who just want to support and be supported by other women, even if they have no thoughts of starting their own business. Every woman in our group truly cares for the city of Clinton and all the members."

According to Gilbert, the group has

have lunch, exchange business cards, and discuss their passions. Each meeting also includes a guest speaker, usually a local business owner.

Kalandria Archie, the group's financial director, said, "I enjoy it for the networking and fellowship. It's a great opportunity to get to know other businesses, receive discounts, and advertise your own business."

Gilbert stresses the importance of supporting not only female business owners but Clinton businesses in general.

"If we're not careful, all we're going to have to shop from is Amazon," she said. "We've got to learn to shop local."

Clinton Career Women/WISE Network has more than 400 members in their Facebook group, with twenty to forty-five women in attendance at monthly meetings. Meetings typically take place on the second Tuesday of each month at the Quisenberry Library. Lunches are served for \$12, and people do not have to be members to attend. Membership is \$20 a year and includes a listing on the online directory and special opportunities to be recognized as Business of the Day.

To ask questions or to join, contact Gilbert at 601-460-0522, or visit the group's website at wisewomennet.com.



a diverse set of members, from entrepreneurs and business representatives to stay-at-home moms with side projects and retired Clintonians and other metro area citizens. They look for ways to work with the Clinton Chamber of Commerce, as well as Main Street Clinton, and attend city events together.

"We take part in fun activities to get to know each other better while supporting Clinton," said Gilbert.

The group meets once a month to



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