



Main Street Program Keeping Its Resilience

By Michael Stein

When many of your activities and programs are centered around community gatherings, the type of environment we've had in the past year will throw up many challenges. But despite all that, Barnesville Main Street Director Bailey Thompson did her best to stay resilient and keep moving forward in promoting the community.

"In looking back on the crazy year of 2020, there is a lot to be proud of in our community," Thompson said. "That's not only with our programs, but almost all of our businesses and organizations in Barnesville faced many challenges in regards to the coronavirus pandemic."

Thompson pointed out that many businesses had to close their doors for a period of time; annual community events had to be cancelled; and in general, "change the way they have done business or put on events for so many years in the past."

"The Barnesville Community is very resilient and is known to come together when the need is great. This year was no different," Thompson

said.

One of the first tough decisions Thompson said they had to make was canceling Showcase two consecutive years.

"The Main Street Board of Directors were faced with the difficult decision if we should go ahead with Showcase or not," she said. "It was a few hours later that guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health came to not hold any events with a large gathering of people. The focus of the Main Street program then turned toward providing current and credible information to our businesses and residents, as well as helping them through trying to conduct business with all of the changes and challenges throughout the year."

Many other Main Street events, including Show 'n Shine and the annual golf tournament fund-raiser were cancelled or postponed.

"Ultimately we were able to get in two Show 'n Shine car shows and the golf tournament late in the summer," Thompson said. "It was also fun to incorporate the

presentation of KVRR's Town of the Year plaque with our last Show 'n Shine of the year."

Thompson added that the beloved rummage sales also were able to still be held for those who wanted to participate.

"Although we had to cancel the community picnic and the Miss Barnesville crowning, it was fun to get together in a few other creative ways, including KFGO's Parking Lot Bingo and the Drive-In Movie," Thompson said.

For Parking Lot Bingo, participants drove to the fairgrounds and called a phone number that allowed them to participate in the conference call.

"Amy & J.J. from the 'It Takes Two' KFGO radio show called numbers and entertained everyone for about an hour," Thompson said. "When participants got a bingo, they simply had to honk their horn to claim their winnings!"

The Drive-In movie was also held on a beautiful night at the fairgrounds. Kids young and old enjoyed watching Toy Story 4 from



Main Street Director Bailey Thompson and Barnesville Mayor Jason Rick display the KVRR Town of the Year award at the final Show 'n Shine event of 2020.

their car or on the tailgate of their pickup.

More than 80 cars were present for parking lot bingo and over 100 attended the drive-in movie.

Moving on toward the end of 2020, it was clear the pandemic wasn't going away anytime soon. Christmas season traditions had to be curtailed or modified.

"We were saddened that Santa wasn't able to make it to Barnesville this year, but we were still able to host the annual Community Tree Lighting Ceremony virtually," Thompson said. "It wasn't the same and we missed everyone who comes out for the event, but we made do with the circumstances we were facing."

Main Street also hosted an online holiday decorating contest for both indoor and outdoor houses.

"This was a fun way to get everyone excited for the holidays and let the community be the judges of the winners," Thompson said.

The Main Street Program also hosted a "Put your Money Where Your Heart Is" shopping local campaign through the holiday season.

"Not only did we hold our annual turkey drawings, but we also had a promotion that if customers got their card stamped at all of the participating businesses they got

their name in a drawing for \$100 Barnesville Bucks as well as many other prizes donated by the local businesses," Thompson said. "The promotion was a great success and went over very well. It is something that we will more than likely do again, possibly more than once every year!"

Main Street & EDA in partnership for progress

The Main Street Program works closely with the Barnesville EDA with projects such as creating a welcoming atmosphere for new residents.

New residents continued to move into town in 2020, and the EDA and Main Street collaborated on welcome bags for those new folks. The bags are filled with coupons and information about the city.

"It's a win for businesses; it's a win for the Main Street program; and it's a win for the new residents," said EDA Director Karen Lauer.

Residents continued to tend to their yards and landscaping last year—probably more so in order to counter the lack of social activities. Main Street, along with the Record-Review, continued to recognize those dedicated green-thumbs with the Yard of the Week.

And because good customer service never goes out of style, whether in good times or bad, Main Street revived its Customer Service Award. The year's honorees were Ricky Reep, a two-year employee of Barnesville Grocery, and Bob Fettig, known to the residential and business community as "Bob the UPS Guy."



Kids of all ages enjoyed getting out for a movie last summer thanks to the Main Street Program.



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