

BUSINESS NOTEBOOK

Downtown Merchants Group

The Stoneham Chamber of Commerce has announced that it will form a Downtown Merchants Group in response to a key recommendation of the Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan, as finalized by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Chamber Vice President Christian Senna of C&S Capital Properties has been named to head this effort for the Chamber and for Stoneham's Town Center Advisory Committee.

"The Chamber of Commerce is very supportive of a focused effort to address the Plan's goal – 'build organizational capacity in Stoneham's Town Center to advocate for continued revitalization and stronger growth', notes Senna. "The Chamber believes it can be of valuable assistance in this effort. Many of the downtown merchants are members of the Chamber and familiar with the resources that are available to promote their businesses in Stoneham."

In May 2014, Town Administrator Dave Ragucci secured important state grant funding for the MAPC to develop a Stoneham Town Center Vision and Action Plan. The Stoneham Town Center Advisory Committee was formed with Town officials, residents, business leaders and other stakeholders, and launched a 6-month collaborative planning process – to identify a vision and accompanying goals and strategies to revitalize and energize Stoneham's historic Town Center. The Chamber welcomes comments, suggestions and participation as it begins this effort. Please contact the Chamber office at 781-438-0001.

Restaurant Week

The Stoneham Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce its first Stoneham Restaurant Week, to take place March 8 to March 14.

"Stoneham has a thriving and diverse restaurant scene, and what an exciting way to showcase it!" said Carolyn Lossiter of Excelsior Realty Group. "This is a wonderful opportunity for the Stoneham community and for an important industry segment of our Chamber membership."

A most edible seven-day event, Restaurant Week will provide the opportunity for Stoneham establishments to showcase their menus, introduce new culinary choices, and price items to attract existing and new customers wishing to explore the local dining scene. Restaurant Week is open to participation for all eating establishments, so diners are encouraged to check out breakfast, lunch, dinner, bakery and other food-related promotions all week long.

The Chamber is working to include participation of all Stoneham restaurants. As restaurants are added, it will maintain a growing list of their promotions on its website www.stonehamchamber.org. Diners are encouraged to check back regularly for further details.

Taste of Metro North

The Rotary Clubs of Reading and North Reading have joined forces for the fourth year to bring the Taste of Metro North to the Reading Memorial High School Field House at 62 Oakland Rd. on Wednesday, Feb. 25, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Some restaurants that will make a presence are Laurie's 9:09 and Sakura in Wakefield, Chopps, Tavern in the Square and Burton's in Burlington,

Davio's in Lynnfield, Red Heat Tavern in Wilmington, Bertucci's, Chili's, D'Amici's Bakery, Fudrucker's, Harrows, The Olde Redding Butcher Shoppe, Portland Pie Company, Reading and Wakefield Public Schools, Sanborn Place-Home Care and Day Services in Reading, Dunkin' Donuts, Heav'nly Donuts, Hillview Country Club, Joe Fish and Kitty's in North Reading.

Tickets for the Taste of Metro North are \$25 (\$30 at the door) or \$50 for a family of two adults and children under 18 (\$60 at the door). They can be purchased on the Taste's website www.tasteofmetronorth.com or from committee members and at Reading Municipal Light Department and at the superintendent's office at Reading Memorial High School. Those who purchase tickets online will be entered into a drawing to win a \$100 gas card from Commonwealth Oil in North Reading.

Area restaurants who would like to participate and non-restaurants who are interested in sponsoring or donating a raffle to the event can contact Priscilla Gottwald or Gregg Johnson or visit the website at www.tasteofmetronorth.com.

The Rotary Club is a civic organization dedicated to giving back to the community. Proceeds from this event will be donated to the Rotary causes.

WeddingWire Couples' Choice Award

WeddingWire, the nation's leading online wedding marketplace, named Spinner Music Productions as a winner of the prestigious WeddingWire Couples' Choice Awards 2015 for DJ in America.

The WeddingWire Couples' Choice Awards 2015 recognizes the top five percent of wedding professionals in the WeddingWire Network who demonstrate excellence in quality, service, responsiveness and professionalism. The esteemed awards are given to the top local wedding vendors in more than 20 service categories, from wedding venues to wedding photographers, based on their professional achievements from the previous year..

While many industry award winners are selected by the host organization, the WeddingWire Couples' Choice Awards winners are determined solely based on reviews from real newlyweds and their experiences working with Spinner Music Productions. Award-winning vendors are distinguished for the quality, quantity, consistency and timeliness of the reviews they have received from their past clients.

As a Couples' Choice Awards winner, Spinner Music Productions is highlighted within the WeddingWire Network, which is comprised of more than 200,000 wedding professionals throughout North America and abroad.

For more information about Spinner Music Productions, please visit our Website at www.SpinnerMusicDJ.com

Joy Yoga to benefit WEF

Joy Yoga of 195 Green St., Melrose, is excited to partner with Wakefield Educational Foundation in supporting innovative ideas in education. Stop in between Feb. 1 and Feb. 15 for any of the adult classes below and your class fee of \$15 paid in cash upon your arrival will go directly to supporting WEF's fundraising efforts. Please mention WEF at time of purchase. For class descriptions and more please visit www.JoyYoga-Melrose.com.

Wingate at Reading honored

Wingate at Reading, a nursing and rehabilitation center, announced they have been awarded a 5-Star quality rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the highest possible rating. Part of the government's 5-Star rating program, this widely used consumer tool is considered to be the gold standard for individuals needing to evaluate the nation's more than 15,000 nursing homes.

Wingate of Reading's 5-Star rating was achieved from the results of the annual Department of Public Health survey inspections over the past three years. The survey assesses the quality care delivered, nursing staffing levels and outcome measurements. The 5-Star rating, a required rating by CMS, is an important guide in determining placement of a patient or for employment.

"Superior patient care and rehabilitation outcomes are our number one priority so it's encouraging to see this dedication reflected in our rating," said Michael Lincoln, regional director of operations for Wingate at Reading. "I couldn't be more pleased with our staff and we are thrilled to be awarded this recognition for the Middlesex community."

For more information, visit www.wingatehealthcare.com

Networking and Business Expo

Join area professionals from many regional chambers for a networking evening Wednesday, Feb. 4, 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 15 Middlesex Canal Park Road, Woburn.

A pre-event workshop titled "Qualifying Sales Prospects," presented by Jason Hartz of Sandler Training, will be held from 4:30-5:30 p.m., followed by the networking event and expo from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Multi-chamber events yield many attendees, prospects, and contacts, so bring lots of business cards.

Vendor tables are free and are shared with up to three organizations on a first-come, first-served basis.

There will be appetizers and a cash bar.

Tickets are \$10 for Chamber members and \$20 for non-members.

For more information, contact your local Chamber of Commerce.

StonehamBank retirement planning

Baby boomers are beginning to toddle their way into their golden years, and some are discovering

that they are as naive as children when it comes to knowing what their future will look like.

In its ongoing commitment to enhancing community life, StonehamBank is proud to host Kurt Czarnowski, at a presentation specifically designed for those contemplating retirement in the next several years on Saturday, Feb. 28, beginning at 10 a.m. at Billerica Public Library, 15 Concord Rd.

Social Security's retirement program has been a basic part of American life for over 79 years. But, despite the age, the size, and the economic impact of the Social Security system, the myths and misunderstandings about what the program is, as well as what it isn't, are sizeable.

Now, as Baby Boomers reach retirement age, they are beginning to realize that Social Security is going to play a bigger part in their retirement than they had previously thought. But, they are also starting to realize that they don't know as much about the system as they should.

Czarnowski, the Social Security Administration's former Regional Communications Director for New England, will provide a wealth of information about the system, covering topics such as when an individual can begin collecting, how the benefit is calculated and the impact

of working in retirement, as well as several strategies that couples can employ to maximize their Social Security benefits.

Complimentary seating for this extremely informative presentation is limited and will be offered on a first come, first serve basis. Individuals can register online at www.stonehambank.com or through any branch Universal Associate.

Winter Farmers' Market

The Melrose/Wakefield Monthly Winter Farmers Market will hold its next market day on Sunday Feb. 15, from noon to 4 p.m. at Memorial Hall, 590 Main St. in Melrose and will continue on the 3rd Sunday of the month through April, including Feb. 15, March 15 and April 19.

Many vendors from the Melrose and Wakefield summer markets will be on hand, offering a wonderful array of local, fresh produce, sustainably raised meat and poultry, fresh fish, pasta, dips and

spreads, maple syrup, honey, preserves, teas, spice blends, Fair Trade coffee, and a wide array of fresh baked goods. A selection of artisan vendors offering soaps, candles, herbal products, and more will also attending each month.

Far from the Tree Cider (hard cider) and Wakefield market favorites Tower Root Beer, Mamas' Artisan Bakery, and Kaleidoscope Soap will be joining us at the market on Dec. 21.

Pour Man's Coffee will be on hand each market day, as will banjo duo Ed Britt and Don Borchelt, and Miss Holly will be doing her popular cooking demos. Kids are invited to join Club Sprouts, a great food education program that encourages young folks to try fresh veggies direct from the farmers.

The market accepts credit/debit cards and accepts and matches SNAP benefits up to \$5 at every market.

For more information, see melrosefarmersmarket.org or wakefieldfarmersmarket.org



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CAMP, SCHOOL AND ACTIVITIES DIRECTORY

SHOPPING FOR SUMMER CAMP ONLINE & IN PERSON
By Bette Bussel, Executive Director, American Camp Association, New England

Online camp shopping is a good idea! Especially if you didn't go to camp yourself or if you are not familiar with what's out there these days. ACA New England's 'Find A Camp' online search tool has been designed to be a one-stop shop for day or overnight summer camp. Find the tool at www.acanewengland.org, and the virtual camp fair at <http://www.acanewengland.org/members/member-home/aca-new-england-virtual-camp-fair>

Visit our virtual camp fair
Expect to do everything families can do at in-person camp fairs—and more. Live chat with camp representatives, view videos and photos, browse camp websites and review camp materials—all from the comfort of home or a favorite computer. Families throughout the US and around the world in addition to around the region choose New England camps. We've chosen this virtual platform to serve families focused on finding camps in New England. This is a unique and fun opportunity to learn about camps and find the right one for your child without having to leave the house. The camp fair will be open February 8th from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, and Feb. 9th from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Visit camp websites
It's easy to get to camp websites from the results page of the 'Find A Camp' online search tool, from online camp directories, and from any basic search engine. And once you're on a camp website, you can learn a great deal. Do pay attention to session length and activities and all your family's important search criteria. But, try to dive a little deeper and explore each camp—from their culture to their facilities. Check out the photos—they tell a lot about what the camp looks like, what campers do there, and about what's important in this particular camp. Watch the videos, read the newsletters or the blog written by the director, and even check out their social media.

Online ratings and reviews for camps are not always accurate
You might be used to checking ratings and reviews for products, restaurants, or hotels, but for camps, online ratings and reviews are much more random. Our advice is: if you want to hear about a camp, talk with the camp representatives and with families whose children have attended that camp!

2. Camp shopping in person is equally important. Camp people are easy to find and contact in the winter! They are interested in speaking with prospective campers and families. Seek camp representatives out at Camp Fairs and Open Houses and watch as they interact with your child. For a list of Open Houses and Camp Fairs, visit the families and public page on www.acanewengland.org and click on 'Public Calendar'. We strongly recommend speaking with camp representatives, either in person or on the phone, before enrolling your child.

Visit the Camp
We recommend beginning your search early enough so that you can visit finalist camps when they are in session during the summer before you plan to send your child. Seeing staff and campers interacting at the camp can help influence your final decision.

Word of Mouth
This can be crucial in camp decision-making. Ask the camp to provide you with references—preferably with children the same age as yours or people in your city, town or school. Ask these parents your questions that were not answered by your website review or by the camp's personnel. Ask people you know (school personnel and classmates' parents, neighbors, pediatrician, and the director of the after school program, to name a few) what they know about the camp, this information can inform your search much more than online reviews and ratings.

Provided by the American Camp Assoc., New England, a 501 (c) 3 organization that serves families and camp professionals as the region's leading source for "all things summer camp." For help finding a camp or for additional camp information and resources in CT, MA, ME, NH, RI & VT, visit www.acanewengland.org or call (781) 541-6080.

All camps operated in Massachusetts must comply with regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and be licensed by the board of health of the city or town in which they are located.

To Advertise in this Directory Call Brian at 781-433-7945

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