

WestShore Business

The Chamber Perspective

by Mike Wicks



The WestShore Chamber of Commerce, the publisher of WestShore magazine, is at the centre of everything 'business' in the five municipalities of Langford, Colwood, View Royal, Metchosin and Highlands. The role of the Chamber is not only to help businesses grow and prosper, but to help the local economy to grow as well. A healthy Chamber of Commerce, means a healthy business community!

As such, most businesses with a keen interest in the community join the local Chamber and involve themselves heavily in Chamber activities, and take advantage of all that it has to offer. One such business that epitomizes this commitment to working toward a healthy business community is newcomer to the WestShore, Craftsman Collision Group, which consists of 29 shops across BC.

Craftsman Collision recently opened an impressive 20,000-square-foot shop at 1746 Island Highway in Colwood and the WestShore branch

is their third shop in Victoria. Three more locations will be opening shortly, two in Calgary and one in Kelowna. During an interview with founder and owner Bill Hatswell he commented "What recession?"

As for why Hatswell chose Colwood, he credits the influence of his regional manager Bernard Gooding, a local resident who saw that the positive growth happening on the WestShore reflected the company's belief that now is a perfect time to grow a business – when there are tradespeople available to do the work and property is well priced. That and the fact that the perfect building became available when the Salvation Army moved out of its location on the Colwood strip. It was just the right size, had great neighbours (car dealers!) high visibility and lots of traffic. As Hatswell says, "My three golden rules for a location are visibility, density and access, and the Island Highway site had all three in spades!"

The building wasn't move-in ready though, so Craftsman had to spend close to \$2 million on leasehold improvements and equipment; laying new floors, rewiring the building and completely renovating the rear compound. When operating at full capacity, something that Hatswell says will take about two years, the shop will be repairing around 3,000 cars a year and bringing in annual revenues of \$5 million while employing 25 staff.

With this positive and progressive attitude, Craftsman will fit in well with both the philosophies of the Chamber and the WestShore in general! Craftsman Collision is a well-established company; Bill started the business thirty years ago and now has over 400 staff. The Colwood shop has hit the ground running in its support of the business community by immediately becoming a proactive member of the WestShore Chamber and by sponsoring the Chamber's Awards of Excellence – Citizen of the Year Award! In addition they have supported this magazine by taking a full-page advertisement. This ties in well with Hatswell mantra: "Customer satisfaction is number one!"

Craftsman Collision isn't the only new business to open in the WestShore recently; the region seems to be attracting many great new businesses that have quickly become part of the WestShore Chamber family.

It's impossible to mention all the businesses that have joined the Chamber since the last issue of WestShore; many of them are specialist business-to-business operations that quietly go about their business, but there are quite a few that have become involved in Chamber and community activities and may be of interest to our readers.

Little Thai Place has opened its third location in the Reflections condominium development and is a welcome addition to the culinary diversification we are increasingly seeing here. Judging by the large number of people that can be seen enjoying great Thai food whenever I pass by on Veteran's Memorial Parkway, they seem to be extremely popular!

The Andrew Sheret group has opened a fabulous new '**Splashes**' retail outlet at 895 Langford Parkway. With 21 locations in British Columbia, Andrew Sheret is yet another well-established company recognizing the massive potential of the WestShore for business growth.

Steve Drane has opened a **Harley Davidson showroom** in the WestShore at 2940 Ed Nixon Terrace; this 31,000-square-foot facility (with a 20,000-square-foot showroom) yet again shows a solid commitment by a well-established and highly successful business to this growing and progressive community.

On the business-to-business side of the equation **Legacy Line Painting** has chosen the WestShore to launch its business. Although a new company, the employees are all highly experienced line painters, so if you have parked your car recently, or driven around the community, the lines

you drove between are likely to have put there by someone at Legacy!

Highland Pacific Golf is Victoria's newest public golf course with nine holes ready to play and the full eighteen due to open next spring. Doug Hastie, BCPGA's Teacher of the Year, recently took over as Director of Golf and General Manager of the course.

A few other of our new members you might want to check out when visiting the WestShore include: Old Style Repair (automotive repair); SellOffVacations.com (in the Millstream Village); Mister Sweeper Vacuums (in Hatley Centre, Colwood); The UPS Store (WestShore Town Centre); Straight Up Roofing (in Shirley north of Sooke); and Seriously Creative (an established web design business).

In spite of setbacks in other regions, WestShore developers are still moving ahead with great new housing developments, some of which are featured in this magazine, including La Vie, an exciting development of condominiums that are part of the Millstream Village development; the second phase of Waterstone, a large luxury condominium project at the junction of Sooke and Jacklin roads, and Parkdale Creek, on the corner of Glen Lake Road and Parkdale Drive, the first phase of the Westhills project. The Lookout at Royal Bay in Colwood is selling its remaining few town homes located on a bluff overlooking the strait of Juan de Fuca, with stunning views of downtown Victoria, Mount Baker and the Olympic Mountains. And there's more development on the way – watch for information on the amazing Skirt Mountain project in our December 2009 issue.

All of this has resulted in a rash of home furnishing stores opening or relocating to the WestShore, including Jordan's Furniture, Ashley Furniture Homestore, Six Mile Furniture, End of the Roll and Trail Appliances, to mention just a few.

Without question, the WestShore is one of the fastest-growing regions in BC and we as a Chamber are working hard to keep up. Our businesses are progressive and believe in offering great customer service – come and check us out – you'll be surprised at how much we've grown lately!

In the fall, we will be publishing a membership directory. This very useful publication will be available at retailers and other locations throughout the WestShore. If you can't find a copy just contact the WestShore Chamber office (250-478-1130).

Finally, during Small Business Week in October we'll be holding the WestShore Business Showcase - a trade show that will offer both Business to Business and Business to Consumer sections, appealing to just about everyone in the community! This will be a marvellous opportunity to see what WestShore business is all about! Check out our web site (www.westshore.bc.ca) in the coming weeks for more information. 