



AUGUST 2007

Executive Director's Message

I am proud to say that I am a part of the Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce. I have served with many wonderful organizations and military units that have made noteworthy contributions to worthy causes throughout America and around the world. But, I say again, I am proud to be a part of the Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce and what this organization has done for Hot Springs, particularly in response to the Alabaugh Fire.

When a major disaster struck our community, destroying lives and homes, damaging property and disrupting our lives, the chamber was at the forefront in helping put things back together. During the disaster, many in our community came forward to assist in whatever way they could, and many of those that came forward are chamber members.

The other day I received a call asking if more people could get involved in assisting with the fire relief efforts. The caller said, "It seems like it is always the same ones in the chamber that get to do things for the community, and that leaves others of us out." I was a bit taken back by the comment, and I answered that these chamber members are the ones who consistently and willingly step forward and voluntarily do whatever needs to be done to make this community move forward.

The response to the Alabaugh Fire was a perfect example. As the Mueller Center opened its doors as a fire evacuation center, here was our own Pati Duff assisting the Red Cross meet the immediate needs of the evacuees from that first Sunday. Throughout the week, Cathy Nelson and Pati continued to assist in any way they could, giving up their work space, answering telephones and questions, making copies, supplying paper, pens, plus doing countless other tasks, all while keeping up with the daily business of the chamber.

Then after the fire, it was the passion of our chamber president, Joyce Farrell, who laid the ground work for bringing the city, county and our financial institutions together to establish a fire relief fund. Other chamber members such as Dave Batchelor, Karen Bent, Daryl Krejci, Casey Derflinger, Don DeVries and our county commissioners and mayor stepped forward to lay the groundwork for a major relief effort that has already put a \$1,000 into the hands of each family that lost everything.

Even in the midst of the relief effort, we as an organization were questioned, "How much are you taking off the top?" The answer is nothing. We are paying for postage, telephone calls and even a credit card processing capability to assist in the relief effort. We do it, not for recognition or personal gain or political power, but because our chamber members love this community, have the will to do the right thing while having a heart of compassion to help those with desperate needs.

So this is why I am proud to say that I am a part of the Hot Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, and you, as members, should be proud to be a part of our organization also. The Chamber has and will always play a major role in insuring that the best is yet to come for Hot Springs.



George Kotti
Executive Director