

Talking Technology

Three business leaders thanked

By Steve Burns, Capital News contributor

As we head into the busy December months, I enjoy taking the time to reflect on the past year.

In particular, I have been reflecting on the leadership skills of three individuals that are responsible for leading the business leaders of our community.



These three individuals deserve to share my newly created Leadership Excellence Award:

Bonnie Bates Gibbs is chief executive officer of the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce

Bonnie continues to lead the chamber (www.kelownachamber.org) with passion and perseverance through difficult issues and difficult times.

Over the past few years of my involvement on the chamber board, it has been a privilege to work with Bonnie.

In my opinion, this has been a watermark year of outstanding achievements for Bonnie and the chamber.

From the implementation of a new hotel tax commencing Jan. 1, 2004, to the government's decision to not lease the Coquihalla Highway, to successfully passing a resolution at the Canadian Chamber to reduce excise taxes for Canadian wines, to being honoured by her colleagues as Chamber Manager of the Year, to finally hearing the positive news that the Bridge will proceed, this has been an outstanding year for Bonnie.

Both Bonnie and Ken Ficocelli, chamber president in 2003, worked tirelessly and have made a huge difference to our business community over this past year.

Robert Fine is executive director of the Economic Development Commission of the Central Okanagan

Since Robert relocated to Kelowna from Kamloops a number of years ago to join the Economic Development Commission (www.edccord.com), he has, simply put, hit the ground running.

I have been amazed at what he can accomplish in a day. Robert is innovative in coming up with ways to help attract and retain businesses in the Okanagan.

One such company was so impressed with the tireless work done by Robert and his team; they decided to move to their company to Kelowna.

From helping the Western Star Suppliers diversify their businesses to working with the Film Commission on the Western Star site location to helping businesses make a relocation decision to surveying over 100 local business on their critical issues and how the EDC can help to quantifying the impact on businesses of the Okanagan Mountain Park fire, Robert spends countless hours helping businesses and promoting our community to the world.

As if that wasn't enough, Robert is an infamous Sinatra singer—check out his Web site www.robertfine.com.

Margret Horvath, executive director of the Okanagan Science and Technology Council (OSTEC).

Under Margret's leadership of the OSTEC team (www.ostec.ca), it is finally gaining the exposure and recognition that it so deserves.

It is not easy transitioning OSTEC to a member driven organization but Margret has taken on the challenge and led the organization very well.

OSTEC has asked a lot of Margret and she continues to deliver. Over the past year, many high technology companies can point to Margret and OSTEC for the seeds of their success.

For instance, Margret introduced the ALTURA Growth Fund to Enquiro Search Solutions, Inc., which resulted in their recent announcement of a \$750,000 investment in Enquiro.

Margret helped to bring the Academy of Technology CEOs to the Okanagan this summer and is spearheading the Okanagan Innovation Awards in 2004, which will recognize outstanding innovation in the science and technology community.

From the new high technology study to tax credit seminars to investor ready events to the launch of the Angel Forum to numerous networking events, Margret continues to demonstrate leadership in one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy. On behalf of our business community, thank you Bonnie, Robert and Margret for your outstanding leadership over this past year.

I think that we should all take the time to call or email them just to say thank you.

Call Bonnie at 861-1515, Ext 31 or bonnie@kelowna-chamber.org; Robert at 868-5234 or rfine@edcc-ord.com; Margret at 712-3343 or margret@ostec.ca.

While 2004 will bring many challenges, with the continued leadership, commitment and guidance of Bonnie, Robert and Margret, our business community can look forward to a very prosperous new year!

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