

Leadership Central Kentucky class explores Clark County-Winchester

Article by Amy Cooper, CBS Companies

Our day in Winchester, Clark County, began at the Clark Co. Extension office with Chamber President, Charmagne Castle, greeting the class and reviewing the day's agenda. Thereafter, the Influential Leader Presentation commenced. Since we begin each session with a presentation about a local influential leader...and myself being the only representation from Clark County for the 2007-2008 class...this task was my responsibility. Thinking about this in December, I took a few moments to consider who really stood out in our community. To me, it needed to be someone who not only is involved in the community, is regarded with respect and integrity by those within their sphere of influence, but is also a real "cheerleader" for Winchester/Clark Co. The person that I felt most embodied this is Bluegrass Community & Technical College Community Liaison, JoEllen Reed. (As it turns out, the class got the opportunity to meet JoEllen later in the day, being that part of our agenda was a tour of the new BCTC campus!) After the leader presentation, we were addressed by Mayor, Ed Burtner, and Clark County Judge-Executive, Henry Branham.

The presentation by Mayor Burtner and Judge-Executive Branham was very insightful! In 2007 the Clark County Community Foundation funded the administration of a 53-question professional survey, which was conducted by the University of Kentucky. This survey covered everything from education, local water rates, and a smoking ban to growth tax incentives and merged county/city government considerations. The survey was given to 414 Winchester and Clark County residents at random. The survey was performed as part of an ongoing joint effort between the Winchester Board of Commissioners, Clark County Fiscal Court and Clark County Board of Education for the purpose of helping community leaders plan for future growth, with insight from the public they represent. These results will be used for a day-long community forum in 2008. The results, and what they mean for future growth and positive change in Winchester / Clark County, are very encouraging!

Next, Dane Garber, Chief Deputy Clark Co. PVA, demonstrated a new computerized Geographic Information System program. He shared stories about how recording plats, property taxes, etc. was tracked in the past versus today. With the new technology, aspects of the program can be utilized by other community organizations and services as well, such as the Board of Education, Police Dept. and Fire/EMS.

After the great presentation and comic relief by Dane, we headed out to see other areas of Winchester/Clark County, starting with a tour of the Ale-8-One Bottling Company. Deanne Elmore, Director of Public Relations, shared with the class the history of Ale-8 and how they have grown over the years. It was great to hear about how Ale-8 is partnering with other vendors in Central Kentucky to offer new product lines, such as salsa and apple butter. Their focus on working with other companies in Kentucky shows their dedication to promoting regionalism! We each left Ale-8 with a cold, freshly bottled Ale-8-One and some tasty apple butter!

We proceeded on to a tour of College Park Gym with Parks Board Member, Scott Hisle. It was really neat to see pictures of the historic building and how through renovation, it was saved from being condemned and is now used daily by various members of the community for basketball games and walking (on the suspended walking track)! Future plans for the facility will be of great benefit to Winchester and Clark Co. as well, with the goal being the addition of an 8-lane Olympic-size swimming pool and exercise facility with circuit machinery and weights. It's nice to see a historic old building given new life, rather than torn down!

We were then off to Hall's on the River for lunch! After a great lunch, and scenic drive beside the Kentucky River, we got the opportunity to tour the Dale Station Power Plant. Ronnie Thomas and his team took small groups of us through the power plant and described how power is



Leadership Central Kentucky class members got an overview of one of the pieces of equipment that BERT (Bluegrass Emergency Rescue Team) uses during their visit to Clark County.

generated, from the beginning...with the intake of coal...to how the final energy product is dispersed all over the country. It was very interesting to see all these processes and learn more about how the electricity we use everyday, (and most of us take for granted), is created! We then traveled back into town and got the opportunity to tour Bluegrass Heritage Museum.

The Bluegrass Heritage Museum is another good example of an old historic building being given new life, instead of demolished! Jack Jones, Community Volunteer Tour Guide, shared the history of the building with the class, and answered questions about the old Guerrant Clinic that occupied the building almost a century ago. He also highlighted some historical facts about Winchester, and gave insight into some exhibits on display. After our interesting stop at the Bluegrass Heritage Museum we traveled back to the Industrial Park for a driving tour of the park and commentary by Charmagne Castle about the local manufacturing business community, and plans for future growth. We then arrived at the future home of the Winchester-Clark Co. BCTC campus.

With JoEllen Reed as our tour guide, we walked around the (under construction) Phase I BCTC building and learned about the plans for future growth and the impact of having a presence of higher education in Winchester / Clark Co. again, will have on the community. JoEllen brought building plans to life, and helped us create mental images of what the future holds for BCTC with her descriptions of what each room will be designated for, and the services and classes that will be offered therein. She also shared some of her personal experiences, where she has literally seen lives changed for the good through education. Her passion is contagious!

After leaving the campus, we headed back to the Extension Office for a presentation by Winchester Fire Chief, Danny Castle, and some the Winchester Fire/EMS staff. Danny and his team gave a presentation about BERT, (Bluegrass Emergency Response Team), and how the entire region of Central Kentucky benefits from this program. It was very interesting to learn about how many other counties work together with Winchester/Clark Co. to be prepared in case of emergency, and how those emergencies are handled when they do occur, (i.e.: Nestle explosion in Mt. Sterling, train derailment in Irvine, etc.). The day ended with a great visual impact, when a huge BERT tent was inflated in the middle of our classroom, to show how quickly a site can be established when an emergency occurs.

Even being from Winchester, I learned a lot about our community, plans for growth, and services/opportunities available! Kudos' to Charmagne Castle and all of the presenters we had the opportunity to learn from on our Leadership Central Kentucky tour of Clark County day!