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WESTFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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I Almost Didn't Join The Westfield Area Chamber Of Commerce

By **Peggy A. Rothbaum**
WACC Vice Chairman

I'm serious. I almost didn't join the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC). In fact, I said "No" three times first. As a psychologist and writer, I just didn't see the relevance of the Chamber for me. I finally went to an event because I was invited, repeatedly, by the persistent host. It was standing-room only. The people were incredibly friendly and interesting. Being with such a variety of community professionals was a new experience for me. The annual fee to join the WACC is relatively inexpensive, so I allowed myself to be persuaded to join. After all, what did I have to lose besides a little money?

It turns out that being part of the WACC is all about what I have to gain. And I

mean in ways that I never anticipated. I volunteer for projects and committees, which allow me to use my professional skills in exciting new settings. For example, I now write for additional audiences and apply my research skills to strategic planning and public relations. I have met people from many different professions, with whom I now have opportunities to collaborate. I have always enjoyed clinical and research teamwork. Now I enjoy it in the community.

I love learning about how communities function and how problems get resolved with an eye toward the greater good. Co-chairing the non-profit committee lets me apply some of my most cherished values to benefit the community. A March 30 WACC event promises to kick off an exciting initiative bringing together area non-profits and businesses to explore and share mutual interests. There is more good will and generosity of spirit in our communities than I ever realized.

Don't get me wrong, the WACC is not without our challenges. We have been working hard, and continue to work hard, to revitalize our Chamber. That has been an exciting process as well. And let's not forget that I have a business to grow and develop just like every other WACC member. Learning new skills and meeting new people is certainly an avenue to let other professionals get to know me so that I can expand my business.

Last, but certainly not least, the WACC is a lot of fun. Being involved in the WACC is a great way to get a break during the workday, relax after work, have some laughs, and socialize with interesting people. The breakfast tasting at Turning Point on February 28 boasted a huge turnout and yummy food.

Please join us at our next event, which promises to be lovely. It will be at the beautiful James Ward Mansion from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 24. The event will feature delicious food and an interesting speaker. Hope to see you there!