

September 19, 2010

Portland resident named Michigan Main Street Volunteer of the Year

PORTLAND - At the 2010 Michigan Downtown Conference in Bay City, Portland Main Street Board Chairperson Joel VanSlambrouck was recognized as the 2010 "Robert Busby Volunteer of the Year" by the Michigan Main Street Center for his commitment and leadership of the Portland Main Street program.

"I'm humbled and honored to have received this award," said VanSlambrouck. "But this award is not mine alone - it is a reflection of all the volunteers and supporters of the Portland Main Street program and the hard work that they do everyday to make our downtown very unique."

VanSlambrouck, owner of Granny's Gifts in Raffaeles' Marketplace in downtown Portland, has been an active volunteer with the Portland Main Street program since 2006 and was named Main Street Board Chairperson in 2008. VanSlambrouck is also a Portland City Council member, a member of the Downtown Development Authority's Board of Directors, and a member of the City of Portland's Economic Development Corporation.

Laura Krizov, Manager of the Michigan Main Street Center at the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, believes that VanSlambrouck's leadership has been crucial to the success of the Main Street program in Portland.

"Joel has been an outstanding volunteer and leader for the Portland Main Street program. He has always been willing to roll up his sleeves to do the hard work or stand up and make the tough decisions that are required with positive change in the downtown," said Krizov. "I believe Joel's leadership and dedication to the downtown, along with that of many other volunteers, is one of the biggest reasons for the local Main Street program's success."

Patrick Reagan, the Portland Main Street Manager, believes that VanSlambrouck's active leadership style was a large factor in his winning this award.

"Joel is active in everything we do," said Reagan. "Every event that we hold, he's either leading or pitching in to help. Any training that we host in Portland or travel to, he's there to learn lessons that will help the City and the downtown. Joel is simply committed to making Portland better every day," said Reagan.

"We have an amazing group of volunteers in this City," added Reagan. "All of these people - like Joel - really care about their city and their downtown, and that's what makes Portland so special. People in this community don't simply wait or wish for good things to happen; they all work to make the City a better place for everyone."

This is not the first award that the Portland Main Street program has won at the Michigan Downtown Conference. In 2008, Portland won a project-based award for the boardwalk construction project along the Grand River.

"Giving back to the community is very important to me," said VanSlambrouck. "I take a lot of pride in all of the wonderful things that we have accomplished as a city, and I look forward to even greater things in the future."

The goal of the Portland Main Street program is to actively revitalize Portland's vibrant, charming, and unique downtown into a gathering place-one that uses broad-based community support to (1) provide opportunities to entrepreneurs; (2) sustain a strong economic foundation for the region; and (3)

safeguard history, tradition, and a sense of community for residents and visitors.

For more information on how you can be part of this mission, visit the Portland Main Street website at www.portlandmainstreet.org or call the Portland Main Street offices at (517) 647-5027.

- From Portland Main Street
