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### Committees

- **Design:** Kathy Parsons
- **Economic Revitalization:**  
Diane Smith
- **Organization & Finance:**  
Julie Clement
- **Promotions & Marketing:**  
Nikki Sunstrum
  
- **Board Chair, Joel**  
**VanSlambrouck**

Wishing you the happiest  
holiday season ever and a  
prosperous and healthy 2011,  
from your friends at  
Portland Main Street

# On the Street

## Downtown Happenings

Winter already? Happy Holidays!

- ▷ December 6, 4-6pm: Community Dinner, Congregational Church
- ▷ December 13, 4-6pm: Community Dinner, Congregational Church
- ▷ December 20, 4-6pm: Community Dinner, Congregational Church
- ▷ December 21, first official day of winter
- ▷ December 25: Merry Christmas
- ▷ December 26, Boxing Day (for our Canadian & British residents)
- ▷ December 27, 4-6pm: Community Dinner, Congregational Church
- ▷ December 31: Be safe on New Year's Eve . . . wishing you a happy and prosperous 2011

## What's New?

The Portland Riverfest committee has begun planning! The 2011 Riverfest committee includes representatives from a number of Portland groups, including Main Street, the Chamber of Commerce, The Portland Community Arts Council, the Portland Historical Society, area churches, the City of Portland, the Verlen Kruger Memorial committee, horse clubs, and other groups. At its November meeting, the committee selected Julie Clement as committee coordinator and selected the third weekend of August for the event.

"We're very excited about 2011 Riverfest," said Clement. "We want to involve as many local groups as possible this year and show people what Portland is about," she explained. "The 2011 event will focus on what makes Portland unique—our rivers, our people, our history, our downtown, and much more."

The Riverfest committee plans to continue popular events like the Ugly Dog Contest, the horse show, and the bed race, and is studying other events. "The hot-air balloons were a huge hit," said Clement, "But we need to explore whether this is feasible. There are a number of obstacles to overcome, so we're researching whether we can bring the balloons back next year."

"The Riverfest committee would like to explore new events, as well," Clement stated, "especially those that highlight Portland's unique assets." **Organizations that would like to host their own event or activity should contact Clement and then send a representative to the December 16 meeting.** "At the December meeting, we'll discuss all ideas and make tentative decisions on the 2011 events and activities," Clement explained. "This will give everyone a month to work with their organizations to ensure they have the resources—people and financial support—to carry out their ideas."

Clement urged interested organizations to contact her immediately. "We don't plan to add any new events after January," she said, "so it's important to get involved immediately." Groups and individuals may get involved, even if they do not wish to host an event. "We have some great new ideas this year, and we're looking for people to help coordinate them. It's a good way to help make this a successful event without taking on more than your group can handle right now." Interested organizations can contact Clement at [jaclement@cablespeed.com](mailto:jaclement@cablespeed.com) or leave a message for her at Raffael's Marketplace, 647-6710. "Even if you can't help," she stated, "we're interested in your ideas, so please pass them along."

### Maria's Tacos



### "Award Winning Tacos"

205 Kent St  
Portland, MI 48875  
517-647-7600

**Free Taco With This Ad!**

# Meet Your Neighbor: Milt Smith

In Portland's downtown lies a business that has been in Portland's downtown as an icon for decades . . . Smith Music.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with Milt Smith, owner of the business, while he sat at the back table of Jerry's Restaurant during a short break from his store. It was there that I learned how music and technology has transformed his business over the last 63 years.

A father of eight and now in his 80s, Milt's love of music started as a child, where his home was filled with music by his father playing the pump organ. This love of music led to Milt learning how to read music in piano lessons, playing the jaw harp and mandolin, and later playing snare drum for the high school band.

After high school, Milt started his career in the Air Force during WWII, where he worked with radar technology to help our nation's air operation. He then took this skill and turned it into a



business when he returned from the war. His first shop was nestled by the old Portland hotel where he sold and serviced AM radios.

As technology brought music records into being, Milt's love of music made record sales a natural addition to his existing business. From there, Milt continually added new products and services to his business to keep up with technology. Over a period of five years, he added sales and service for black and white TV, frequency-modulation (FM) radio, and color TV.

Around 1960, the Rock and Roll music revolution spun Milt's business into a new direction and location that you can see today

when you walk into his store. The inspiration of the music led Milt to focusing his business on records sales and the sale and service of music instruments, while phasing out all other products and services. Milt was also inspired to pick up his drum sticks again and join a band that played two nights a week in clubs around the region. This proved to be a great complement to his business as he took every opportunity to plug his business with musicians who needed guitars. He used the income that he made from the band to put back into his downtown business to help him grow his business even further. Milt eventually focused his sales into strictly

guitars and music supplies, where he pulled in Michigan customers as far away as Detroit and Kalamazoo. His market area grew even further when a happy customer from Arizona got him an article in *Vintage Guitars*, leading to a few sales as far away as Rhode Island and California.

Bringing in sales from outside the community, Milt emphasized, was critical to his success and is for any downtown retail business. Another key to his success as a downtown business owner has been his ability to build a relationship with the customer. "You have to show that you care about them and what they are interested in and not just focus on trying to make a sale," Milt said. Once he does make a sale, Milt makes sure he keeps that customer happy by providing labor for tune-ups and repairs.

During this year's HolidayFest, Milt used this philosophy and a little creativity to pull customers into his store. Instead of staying

in his store, he went to the customers by standing out on the sidewalk

and striking up a conversation with people walking by. Before he knew it, the store was packed with customers. "It's not like I made a lot of sales that night, but that can grow into sales down the road now that they've been in the store," he said.

As I listened to him tell his story that day, Milt's relationship with his customers and his community became clearer as a customer walked in and gave him a payment, he joked with the waitress, and talked about his interest in any new development in town.

Before printing this article, Milt asked to review it. I carried through on his request and visited him at his store to pick it up and here his review. We ended up talking for an hour and, yes, before I knew it, I was putting a beautiful guitar on lay-away to fulfill a dream I have always had.

Thanks, Milt, for the privilege of interviewing you and for choosing Portland Main Street as the home of your business for 67 years.

- Submitted by Diane Smith, Main Street Economic Revitalization Committee Chair



**If you'd like to shout out a message, contact Main Street Manager Patrick Reagan at 517 647 5027 or by email: [ddamainstreet@portland-michigan.org](mailto:ddamainstreet@portland-michigan.org)**

Around the Block Quilt Shop LLC  
120 Maple Street  
Portland, MI 48875  
517/647-5430



EMAIL-Aroundblockquilt@aol.com

Website: [www.aroundtheblockquiltshop.com](http://www.aroundtheblockquiltshop.com)

Use a "Wish List" to leave suggestions for friends and family.  
And gift certificates of all denomination are always available!

Hours: M W F Sa 10-5 / Tu Th 10-8

LookingGrand Café  
& Bakery

Ed & Linda Trenn  
517-647-4990  
[lookinggrandcafe@att.net](mailto:lookinggrandcafe@att.net)  
117 E Grand River Ave  
Portland, MI 48875

Happy Holidays from LookingGrand Cafe!

# Help Wanted: Jump Start Your Career by Volunteering

Think of it as free education and a free marketing tool. What are you marketing? Yourself.

If the current economic climate has you unemployed, underemployed, or just longing for a new career, you might want to think about volunteering.

Of course, there's always the "feel good" benefit that comes from giving back to your community. But volunteering can bring many more benefits. Here are just a few:

- ♦ **Networking:** When you volunteer, you meet new people, and you do so in a situation where you're all feeling good about what you're doing. The volunteer beside you just might be the CEO looking for a new right-hand person, finance director, or administrative assistant. Even if your fellow volunteers aren't hiring, they know people that you don't, and they can tell those people (employers) that you're available and have great skills.
- ♦ **Training:** Have you always wanted to learn marketing . . . website design . . . fund raising . . . event planning? These -- and many more -- are valuable skills in today's marketplace. Can't afford college classes right now? You can get great experience and training "on the job" when you volunteer.
- ♦ **Resume Building:** A classic complaint from young people and others entering the job market for the first time is this: "How can I get experience when no one will give me a job?" Volunteering can provide you with the same skills you can learn on the job, and volunteering shows a potential employer that you're someone who cares about others. Employers know that volunteers tend to be harder workers, more reliable, and more loyal than those who never volunteer. True fact.
- ♦ **Self Esteem:** When life knocks you down, it's easy to start feeling bad about yourself, and this shows . . . in your demeanor, in your energy level, in your interviewing skills, and everywhere else. Volunteering will put a spring back in your step, and that, too, will show!

You probably have many volunteer opportunities with the groups you're part of -- schools, churches, special-interest groups. But if you don't have those

connections, or if you're looking for some other experiences, think about Portland Main Street. Here are just a few of the ways you can truly make a difference in your own community:

**Event Planner:** We need people to help plan one or more events for 2011 -- the Block Party (spring), Portland Pay Day (all summer), Riverfest (August), Oktoberfest (October), and HolidayFest (November).

**Funding:** We need people to work on a long-term-funding committee -- explore our vision and then help turn it into a financial plan

**Marketing:** We market the Main Street organization and every event and activity we carry out; we need people to help us with all of those marketing efforts

**Human Resources:** Main Street is run by volunteers; someone with human-resources experience (or interest) can help with our volunteer recruitment & retention plans.

These are just a few of the opportunities available throught the Main Street Program in downtown Portland. Volunteer a little (just a couple of hours a month) or a little more--it's up to you. Contact Main Street Maanger Patrick Reagan for more information: 517 647 5027 or [ddamainstreet@portland-michigan.org](mailto:ddamainstreet@portland-michigan.org)

## News from the Design Committee

Portland Main Street's Design Committee is putting the final touches on the Downtown Sign Grant Program application and guidelines.

The Sign Grant Program, similar to the facade grant program, is a competitive award of 50% match, up to \$1,000 per award, for business signs that meet the goals of the program.

Way-finding signs are at the sign-maker's, and soon, you'll be seeing these signs go up around downtown. This is the first phase of a multi-phase program of way-finding signs around town.

*Downtown Portland*  
at  
**JERRY'S**  
Karaoke Thursday  
Nights  
Dec 2nd and Dec 16th  
Live entertainment  
9pm until min-night  
"Rush Hour"  
Dec 4th  
"Bailey's Comet"  
Dec 11  
"We Three Strings"  
Dec 18



Honeybee Designs is a women's boutique that features the Portland Raider logo & the St. Patrick School Shamrock logo tastefully placed on each trendy garment. You can visit [www.honeybeedesigns.net](http://www.honeybeedesigns.net) and we are located inside of Perfect Balance salon at 110 E. Bridge Street, Downtown Portland! Questions? Contact the Queen Bee at

[honeybeedesigns@rocketmail.com](mailto:honeybeedesigns@rocketmail.com)

## Country Cupboard Floral & Gift

268 Kent St

517-647-7320

[www.countrycupboard  
portland.com](http://www.countrycupboardportland.com)

# News from the Economic Revitalization Committee

The ER Committee focuses on business recruitment and retention. Call Patrick Reagan today to be part of this committee and work with Chair Diane Smith to make downtown Portland strong!

## This Building is not Empty; It's Full of Opportunity!

Have you ever driven through a downtown with FOR SALE or FOR LEASE signs that came in every color and shape . . . and some even hard to read? The Main Street program has developed a great sign with this tag line that downtown property owners can use FOR FREE to market their vacant buildings. Contact Patrick Reagan, Main Street Director, at (517) 647-5027 or [ddmainstreet@portland-michigan.org](mailto:ddmainstreet@portland-michigan.org) for more information.

## Portland Has an Opera House?!

One of Portland's hidden treasures is the former Portland Opera House located above Jerry's and PCMI in downtown Portland. The Main Street Program is looking for community volunteers to work as team to see if the Opera House building can be brought back to life to serve as a draw to the downtown. Can it be used for a dinner theatre or for special events such as a dinner and music night? The options are endless, with part of Portland's history hanging in the balance. Contact Diane Smith, Main Street Economic Revitalization Committee Chair, at 616 527 5319 or [dismith@msu.edu](mailto:dismith@msu.edu) for more

# And the Winners Are . . .

Congratulations, HolidayFest winners!

## WINDOW DECORATING CONTEST

Judges' choice - **Raffaeles' Marketplace**

People's choice - **Duff Chadwick & Associates**

Runner up (Judges' & People's choice - **Catherine**

**Hort Law Office**

## CHILI CHALLENGE

Judges' choice - **Scott Smith**

People's choice - **Julie Clement**

The Portland Main Street volunteers

would like to thank you -- the residents in and around Portland -- for helping to make downtown Portland

strong. While other cities struggle with ever-increasing vacancy rates in their downtowns, Portland is leading the way in rebuilding its historic foundation. Here in Portland, you clearly recognize how important a downtown is to a small town, and we thank you for your support.

As you make holiday and 2011 purchasing decisions, please stop to think about your friends and neighbors downtown . . . their doors are open! Happy Holidays, Portland! Thank you!

# Thank You

Christmas? A birthday? Something else? We have what you're looking for.

- New & used books for children, young adults, and everyone else
- Vintage & collectible kitchenware (Armetale, Blue Ridge, Spode, Stangl, Bakelite, Waterford, and more); vintage cutting boards, crocks, & wooden bowls
- Le Crueset cookware (new & vintage)
- Gift certificates
- Pipka Christmas collectibles
- Paint-your-own pottery or fuse a glass ornament or dish for a one-of-a-kind gift
- Guitar lessons

# Raffaeles'

- Specialty teas by Republic of Tea
- Unique gifts, including one-of-a-kind pieces by area artists & artisans
- Custom framing--a photo of you . . . something you drew or stitched . . . a prized possession . . . a favorite jersey . . . "You name it; we frame it!"

Open M-F 9:30 - 7, Sa 10 - 4, & by appt.

New at *Half-Baked*

## Fused Glass!

Create a beautiful glass ornament, candy dish, or night light

Stop in to see some samples and then learn how easy and fun it is to create these

beautiful pieces of glass art

Yes, you ARE an ARTIST!

December 13-18, special

"Try-It" projects at great prices for Christmas.

*Half-Baked*

In Raffaeles' Marketplace

143 Kent Street ~ Portland ~ 517 647 6710 ~ [www.raffaelesmarketplace.com](http://www.raffaelesmarketplace.com) ~ Raffaeles' Marketplace on Facebook