



February '09 Chamber Corner  
by Marji Graf, Executive Director

The Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce serves the Towns of Andover, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Mount Holly, Plymouth and Weston.

The Chamber had a busy January. Our members learned about new marketing strategies from Rob Mitchell of Vermont Community Media at our mixer hosted by Newsbank.

I was at the Statehouse on January 21 representing the views of our members regarding the elimination of Amtrak rail service between Albany, NY and Rutland. There were 34 of us who testified and it was televised on Fox 44 as well as WCAX 3. The Legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee rejected a Douglas administration's proposal to cut the Amtrak Ethan Allen passenger train service to Rutland and replace it with a bus serving the western side of the state from Albany to Bennington to Rutland and Burlington. Members of the committee said they wanted more time to consider the cut in rail service and another one to town highway aid, and said they would take them up again when the full Legislature convenes next month. Thursday, January 22nd was the Chamber Day at the Statehouse and I was joined by Tesha Buss of Good Commons and The Good Bus from Plymouth. We had a breakfast meeting with Dennis Devereux and Alice Nitka to begin a dialogue with our legislators regarding our Okemo Valley member companies. Next Tesha and I sat in on Travel and Recreation Council meeting. We heard a proposal from Fairpoint Communications regarding their 3-5 year plan; Graydon Stevens from VOGA who asked for support for a bill that proposes to permit adults to assume for themselves and their minor children the risks inherent in recreational activities by releasing simple negligence claims arising out of the adult's or minor child's participation in the activity. (I have copies at the Chamber office if anyone is interested), and then we heard a presentation from Mary Nowlan, the new editor of Vermont Life. I took the opportunity to invite her to lunch. We talked about the Okemo Valley and invited her and staff for a tour of the our Valley. She will get back to me with dates. To end the day, I had my Vermont Association of Chamber Executives meeting at the Capitol Plaza Hotel & Conference Center where Governor Douglas spoke to us before addressing the Statehouse. Bruce Hyde, Commissioner, Marketing & Tourism also spoke about budget cuts and the tourism and marketing budget was not being touched.

We welcomed 3 new members into the Chamber in January; Resort Maps, Okemo/ Cavendish Rentals and Classic Flooring.

We invited travel writers for tours of our Okemo Valley and have been working with new member, Kelly Soucia, owner of Vermont Backroad Tours, to offer guests special unique tour packages within our Valley. Resorts can offer tours for their guests through Kelly.

Guests coming into the Chamber office were from NJ, NY, CT, MA, RI as well as Brazil, England and France.

The 2009 Summer/Fall edition of Vermont Vacation Guide is out and we are on the inside front and back covers giving great exposure to the Okemo Valley!

We have our members showcased this month at the Fair Haven State Information Center.

EVENTS in the Okemo Valley include the “Vikings of Ludlow” Winter Carnival January 30 – February 1st. Details are available on our website:  
[www.yourplaceinvermont.com](http://www.yourplaceinvermont.com)

February 13-15 is Chester’s Winter Carnival with details on our website.

Website hits: We are now averaging 7,000 hits per day.  
From July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 website launch through January 24, 2009 = 768,455.00 total hits.  
Event Planning and Calendar of Events were the top requested pageviews followed by services, member directory, shopping, dining and lodging.

In February the Board of Directors will be working on a written strategic plan for the Chamber. Out of that will come our 3-5 year marketing plan. Our second goal for 2009 is to update our policies and procedures.

Our next Chamber mixer is February 11 at Chapter XIV in Ludlow. See you there!

Respectfully submitted,  
Marji Graf, Executive Director  
Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce