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Task Force to re-evaluate strategies

Downtown revitalization committee to ask, 'Where do we go from here?'

by Michael McCulloh

Although they have accomplished many positive changes for the city of Batavia, the Batavia Task Force Inc. members are looking to the future.

On Saturday, April 27, between 8:30 a.m. and noon, the Task Force will sponsor a workshop at Whittlinger Hall of the United Methodist Church (the entrance is off North Water Street) to consider the question, "Where do we go from here?"

Larry Lund, one of the authors of the Task Force's original downtown Strategic Business Plan, will be present to facilitate the Workshop. Batavia Mayor Jeffery Schelke also will be on hand to update attendees on current and future city projects for downtown.

Task Force Chairman Bill Neuman said the meeting will allow people to brainstorm ideas that could help set the agenda for the Task Force to follow the next few years.

"Downtown revitalization isn't a one-time occurrence; it's an ongoing process," Neuman said. "We don't want to sit back

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—Task Force Chairman Bill Neuman

and assume we're going in the same direction as four years ago. Any good planner sits back once a year and reviews how the plans are going."

The Task Force was started five years ago when 150 Batavians met all day in an Oak Brook motel to discuss the future of their downtown. Since that date, the group has been the driving force behind the funding of a Downtown Strategic Business Plan, the launching of a Bike Batavia media campaign, and replacing the sidewalk on the west side of the 100 block of South Batavia Avenue with attractive brick pavers and a landscaped pocket park.

The Task Force has also been an influence with repaving the parking area behind businesses on South Batavia Avenue, and

for the placement of kiosks and bike racks along bicycle routes.

Many people now associate Batavia with Miles of Smiles (the biking program), which has been cleverly marketed, thanks to the efforts of members, including Marianne Fasano and Leslic Mann, Neuman said.

"Together, we've breathed new life into our downtown. Through the Bike Batavia Campaign, we've spread the word that Batavia is a great place to ride the bike trails, dine and shop. Our Riverwalk, with its Batavia-built Windmills, is the jewel of the Fox. Now, it's time to look to the future to re-examine our strategies," Neuman said.

The group has channelled its revitalization efforts in two different but coordinated programs since meeting five years ago as

well. While the Task Force has looked to improve the downtown, another successful organization, the Riverwalk Committee, took upon itself the task of constructing an attractive riverwalk along the west bank of the Fox River and around the pond.

The committee consisted of volunteers both for funding and for labor. This year, its five-year project should be completed, according to Neuman.

Ted Schuster, a member of the board of directors for the Task Force, said the Task Force has been successful because of the enthusiasm of the people of Batavia, which the group has capitalized on. This enthusiasm has helped spread the word about the many attractions in Batavia, he said.

"We have good programs (that help draw people to Batavia)," Schuster said.

People wishing to attend the workshop are asked to make reservations in advance by calling Schuster at 879-3233 by Thursday, April 25, or by faxing their reservations to the attention of Linda Tamlyn at 879-0710.

Small victories help Vaughn on road to recovery

By Marc Morency

Life is a series of small victories these days for Batavia High School teacher Joy Vaughn and her mother Jo.

The 25-year-old Vaughn continues to improve a year after being seriously injured in a whitewater rafting accident in Costa Rica. Vaughn was an adult chaperone of an independent student trip for spring break sponsored by the American Council for International Studies (ACIS), based in Boston. She was accompanied by fellow foreign language teacher Julie Johnson and nine students.

The incident left her in a coma-like state, which she recovered from, only to face exasperating physical therapy at Marion Joy Rehabilitation Center.

For months, Joy had limited use of her arms and legs, but her extensive therapy has allowed her to walk on her own. She now also is able to perform what most people consider routine tasks. With some assistance, she now is able to help set the dinner table in her family's home and do housework.

