

# SPBPA Remains the Heart and Soul of

Founded just over five years ago, the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association (SPBPA) remains a vital force in shaping and strengthening the township's business community.

The organization was launched in 1994 by Ray Pardon, the owner of Nuts N' Plenty, who began this volunteer effort with just a handful of fellow business people in the township.

Mr. Pardon has been the first and only President of the association, which was formally established as a non-profit organization in 1995. Today, the SPBPA is approximately 200 members strong, and is governed by an 11-member board of directors and several committees.

The organization's mission is a multifaceted one. One of its primary roles is providing support and encouragement to local business and professional people, as well as representing their opinions and ideas on downtown issues.

In addition, the SPBPA works cooperatively with municipal officials and other area organizations for the benefit of the entire community; offers networking opportunities and low cost promotions for its members, and raises money through dues, contributions and special events to be reinvested back into the township.

A key feature of the SPBPA is its monthly newsletter — distributed to all members along with many non-members and township officials — to keep the public informed of events within the community.

According to Mr. Pardon, the newsletter is used by municipal departments, school and community organizations to relay messages to residents. In addition, the SPBPA submits press releases to local newspapers to keep the community further informed of activities organized by the association and the township.

The association has, since its inception, sponsored various special events to help promote the business district and the overall community. Many of them have already become

favorite traditions during the year that are eagerly anticipated by much of the community. In autumn of 1994, the SPBPA revived the annual Halloween Window Painting Contest after an absence of more than two decades. Since its return, more than 100 middle school students have participated each year in this seasonal activity.

The organization has also helped expand another fall tradition in the township — the annual Scotch Plains Day/StreetFest celebration — in partnership with the Scotch Plains Recreation Commission.

A festive blend of activities for all ages, the event includes sidewalk sales and entertainment for adults and children alike. The SPBPA also donates approximately \$400 worth of T-shirts each year, which are given as souvenirs to participants in the USATF Certified 5-mile road race through the township.

As a further contribution, the association also pays for flyers, banners and other promotional materials for the event.

Members of the organization have also given the holiday season a boost, with SPBPA volunteers dressing as Santa, Mrs. Claus and elves for the township's annual yule celebrations.

During the past several years, the association has also sponsored hay rides on the day of the township's annual Christmas Tree Lighting, and organized a tree decorating contest for local scout troops and a store window display contest judged by members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA, an association of marketing students.

The SPBPA likewise has helped enhance the township's annual Easter Egg Hunt with egg decorating activities, games and prizes, in cooperation with the Scotch Plains Recreation Department and the Junior Woman's Club. In addition, the organization designs and pays for the flyers to publicize the spring event.

One of the most popular events in the township today is the SPBPA's Classic Car Show, begun in 1995, which typically attracts between 6,000 and 8,000 people. It is organized in conjunction with the Scotch Plains-based Emmanuel Cancer Foundation, which holds a craft fair on the same date.

The car show benefits the association's Beautification Program for the township, as well as its Scholarship Fund. The SPBPA's beautification endeavors have included paying for the installation of 65 flower planters in the downtown in 1996, which association members maintain with new flowers every spring and fall, at a cost of about \$2,000.

A scholarship fund begun last year for high school students is supported with proceeds from the car show, as well as the SPBPA's annual dinner.

The association additionally organizes the New Jersey Farmers Market, which is held each Saturday during the summer in Scotch Plains Towne Centre, and picks up the tab for permits, insurance and publicity.

In 1997, the SPBPA teamed up with the high school DECA chapter to create a unique Town Directory, which contained a listing of local businesses and organizations, municipal and school officials, recreation information, a brief history of the township and other useful information.

The SPBPA supports the annual Mayor's Gala by purchasing two tables at the event for its members, plus an advertisement in the dinner booklet. Each year, the Mayor's Gala honors local individuals and organizations whose volunteer efforts in the community have been deemed particularly meritorious.

Over the past several years, the association has contributed money to various local



**CLASSIC CARS...** Winners in the fifth annual Classic Car Show sponsored in June by the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association are called up to receive their trophies. The popular event also included activities such as a dunk tank and petting zoo, along with a Craft Fair presented by the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation.

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