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TIME OUT

Pandoramonium

'Avatar' opens a box and all the Pandoras come flying out ▶ Page B8

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City tries to refresh image for businesses

Leaders aim to dispel negative impressions

By LARRY HANSON
Daily News Staff

Key leaders from city government, including West Bend Mayor Kristine Deiss, City Administrator Dennis Melvin and Community Development Director John Capelle, tried to assure members of the West Bend Area Chamber of Commerce that the perception of the city being difficult to deal with is false during a two-hour meeting Thursday at West Bend Mutual Insurance Co.

Capelle spent most of the presentation going through a slide show, explaining the city's process for approving new construction of businesses and housing, noting the city has had 467 commercial and industrial developments since 1985 totaling more than \$370 million.

"It's an excellent opportunity for us to communicate and have a good dialogue today about West Bend's economic development, past, present and future," Deiss said.

Capelle defended the city's approval process, saying the average approval takes about 45 to 60 days, as opposed to as long as nine months in the city of Franklin on Milwaukee's south side.

Deiss said she often talks to business owners at ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings and makes a point to ask how their dealings with the city went. She said the feedback she receives dispels the notion that West Bend is difficult to deal with.

"I do think it's perception; I don't think it's reality," she said. "This was one of those perceptions we were hoping to dispel today."

Since the late 1970s, the city has created 12 tax incremental finance districts, 10 in the past 15 years, and have retired two of them. Six of those districts were for industrial or business parks, four were for downtown redevelopment districts and two were for specialty business districts.

The city's panel was asked when the TIF districts are retired, and Melvin said it is set by statute that they are closed when the debt is paid off.

However, TIF 6, which includes the Menards on Paradise Drive, is generating more income than expected, so some of that money is being shifted to other TIFs that aren't performing as well, which is allowable by law, Capelle said.

The next major roadway improvements the city plans will be South 18th Avenue between Decorah Road and Paradise Drive, and Scenic Drive from Highway 33 south to Cedar Ridge Apartments.

The problem with the Scenic Drive project is that half the land lies in the town of West Bend, so the city would need to get financial assistance from the state Department of Transportation or city residents would absorb the full cost of the improvements, Capelle said.

"Things'll be great when you're downtown, no finer place for sure, downtown, everything's waiting for you." – from "Downtown" by Petula Clark



Andrew Link/Daily News Staff

Owners Carrie and Ray Stelzer talk with Dorothy Klink at the Scoop DeVille in downtown Hartford on Friday. Klink worked at the former ice cream shop at the location for 31 years.

DOWNTOWNS COME BACK

Reports of their demise may have been overstated

By LARRY HANSON
Daily News Staff

HARTFORD — Ryan Marsden would drive through downtown Hartford when he was a blackjack dealer at Potawatomi Casino in Milwaukee on his way home and didn't like the look of things.

He had a basement full of sports memorabilia and he had always wanted to open his own store.

Put all three of those factors in motion and Marsden made the decision to open Al's Sportscards and Memorabilia at 71 North Main Street in downtown Hartford.

"Driving through (downtown), I saw all the empty buildings," Marsden said. "It was really sad. There was nothing to bring people downtown any more."

His is one of four businesses that have opened in recent months in downtown Hartford with another expected to be open by the end of the month.

Josephine Minskey, the director of Downtown West Bend Association, reports that West Bend, as well, has seen a surge of new businesses. In the past year eight new businesses have opened, she said.

"We've been very lucky that we have very few open store fronts," Minskey said. "We've got a lot going



Andrew Link/Daily News Staff

Owner Kim Riley organizes merchandise at Ooh La La ... Accessories in downtown West Bend on Tuesday. The shop opened in September 2009.

on right now; we really do."

Marsden said he has received great support from the community since opening his shop, which features jerseys, sports cards and figurines of athletes, in October.

"Actually, it's been really good;

way better than I expected," Marsden said. "They're happy to have a card shop in town."

Ray Stelzer and wife Carrie Stelzer opened Scoop DeVille, a 1950s-themed

Please see **DOWNTOWN/A7**

Be careful about what you post online

Your profile could come back to haunt you

By STEVE SCHUSTER
For the Daily News

As popular social networking internet Web sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Friendster and Live Journal have increased in popularity, law enforcement, attorneys, fraud investigators, employers and recruiters are not only paying attention, but could be using people's profile pages against them.

Facebook was created in 2003 by 19-year-old Harvard University sophomore Mark Zuckerberg.

Since Facebook's birth, other knock-off sites such as lamebook.com have been developed, "borrowing" content from the real Facebook site. Photographs and text from Facebook profiles are copied to Lamebook, in an attempt to mock Facebook pages. While the full user names have been omitted, the republished comments and photos, which are sometimes vulgar, are sometimes taken off of Facebook pages without the profile user's knowledge or consent, raising several legal issues.

Online social networking has many benefits, including staying in touch with friends and family members, reconnecting with old classmates or former colleagues, and even networking to find a new job.

But while some social networking Web sites have been criticized for security flaws, enabling hate crimes, sexual crimes, bullying and fraudulent activity, other aspects – including the dangers of posting too much personal information on a profile page – has gone largely unnoticed.

Washington County family law attorney Bonnie Abramoff said she frequently searches available public records including those on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to determine behavioral issues.

"Lawyers who perform custody work will look for indications of behavioral issues in public records. For example, a parent who is a known alcoholic and who has made a commitment not to consume alcohol, may appear on someone's Facebook page with alcohol (in hand)," Abramoff said.

It could significantly impact the outcome of a case, she said.

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West Bend schools join 'Race' for federal funds

'Race to the Top' will distribute \$4.35 billion to school districts throughout U.S.

By KRISTEN J. KUBISIAK
Daily News Staff

The West Bend School District is pursuing a grant opportunity that could bring \$424,641 in federal dollars to the district.

The U.S. Department of Education has made \$4.35 billion available to school districts through the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The Race to the Top Fund offers incentives to states for implementing large-scale, sys-

tem changing reforms that result in improved student achievement, narrowed achievement gaps and increased graduation and college enrollment rates.

West Bend School District officials took the first step toward securing grant funding last week, when they submitted the necessary paperwork to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction last week.

The Wisconsin DPI took the next step this week, submitting an application to the U.S. Department of Education.

The grant specifies five areas where these dollars can be used: standards and assessment, data systems, effective teachers and principals, turning around struggling schools and science, technology engineering and mathematics.

According to Assistant Superintendent Ted Neitzke, if West Bend is awarded the funds, the district will do the following: purchase a data

warehouse system enabling teachers to collect better data and track student progress; implement higher standards tied to assessment; provide continued training for principals; invest in more rigorous teacher training and staff development; supplement the current intervention training and expand Project Lead the Way at the middle school level.

All but 11 school districts of the 425 in the state committed to grant program, according to Wisconsin DPI Communications Officer Patrick Gasper. The minimum amount awarded to West Bend School District is based on the Title I formula and assumes that the state of Wisconsin will receive \$250 million in

Race to the Top funding. The U.S. Department of Education received 41 applications for the funding.

"In the West Bend School District we are regularly looking for funding to offset costs of our programs and initiatives," Neitzke said. "We are in a position where in order for our kids to be competitive we have to continue to evolve frugally. Anytime a grant becomes available do whatever we have to do to pursue it. Any district that says no to dollars like this is foolhardy."

"Any district that says no to dollars like this is foolhardy."

– Ted Neitzke
assistant superintendent,
West Bend School District

A few concerns about Race to the Top surfaced at the West Bend School Board meeting last week. One concern was whether programs implemented by the grant would be

sustainable after the grant money was no longer available.

Neitzke said the grant would provide seed money for programs the district planned to implement anyway regardless, as well as supplement existing programs.

Another concern was the strings that may be attached to the grant money, which will not be known to school districts until the spring when the first round of grants is awarded.

After school districts are informed of the the expectations for the grant as well as the allocated dollar amount, they will have the ability to withdraw from the grant if the parameters cannot be met.

"I am comfortable with what I know from working with DPI," Neitzke said. "They want this money to get into schools; they just want high accountability about the impact it has."

FROM THE FRONT

Social: Users beware

"The guardian ad litem will take this (information obtained from Web sites) into consideration, and may rely on this information while making a recommendation for custody," Abramoff said.

Hartford Attorney Gary Wickert, with the Matthiesen, Wickert & Lehrer law firm, has been practicing law for 26 years. Wickert said that his firm has many uses for social networking Web sites, including the detection of insurance fraud.

During the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners' annual conference last year, a fraud workshop, called Web 2.0 and Social Networks for Fraud Investigation, was conducted to teach fraud examiners how to utilize the latest technology to prevent fraud, according to Fraud Magazine.

With assistance from some of his newer associates, Wickert has learned that using social networking Web sites to conduct investigations "is a wonderful resource," Wickert said.

"We have defended cases where the plaintiff claimed to be totally disabled, and on a MySpace page (he or she) was water skiing on Pike Lake," Wickert said. "It totally guts their case."

Wickert said he has won cases based upon a careful review of public records and Web sites.

"There is a disconnect between the legal process and what people perceive to be an anonymous (medium), such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter. People don't put two and two together."

Many social networking profile pages are private, which restricts access to the general public. Each attorney has his own method of obtaining access to the profile pages. For example, access on Facebook and MySpace by non-governmental entities, including private attorneys, is most commonly obtained by either becoming "friends" with the person on the particular Web site, by viewing the profile page from an existing "friends" account or by subpoena. The attorney practice of "friending" other parties to access private profile information has come under criticism and in some jurisdictions is prohibited by ethical conduct rules, according to the American Bar Association.

According to Washington County Deputy District Attorney Mark Bensen, evidence obtained from social media Web sites has also been useful to Washington County law enforcement officers and the District Attorney's office.

"(We) can corroborate information that we have received (from social networking sites) which can be helpful in the prosecution," he said. "Sometimes we get records from Facebook, and typically we ask law enforcement to (utilize this in the investigation)," Bensen said.

Washington County Sheriff's Lt. Robert Martin said the department uses social media Web sites in its investigations.

"It's used as an investigative resource, (and also) when we do background investigations on employees," Martin said.

Attorneys and law enforcement are not the only people conducting public record searches and using social media Web sites. Recruiters and employers also use similar investigative methods, according to Amy Christ, president of Menomonee Falls-based Achieve Employment Solutions, an executive search firm.

Typically before Christ conducts an online investigation of prospective candidates, they have already completed interviews and reference checks. Online investigations are conducted before executing an offer letter.

"I don't want any surprises and neither do our clients," she said.

Searching Google and looking at Facebook and MySpace pages "helps me confirm that people are who they profess to be," Christ said. "I can usually confirm their location and current employer. However, if I am unable to locate someone through Google, it certainly doesn't count anyone out."

Judy Hudson, owner and legal recruiter with South-eastern Wisconsin-based JMH Legal Search, said that although social networking sites are a recent phenomena, she also looks at candidates' online information prior to placing attorneys with law firms and other corporations.

"I Google and Facebook any candidates that I submit for a position just to make sure there are no obvious red flags," Hudson said.

RECORDS

BIRTHS

Aurora Medical Center, Hartford
Guamero — A daughter, Juelisse Jesusita Zoila Guamero, weighing 7 pounds and 20 inches long, was born Jan. 19, 2010, to April Guantes of Hartford. Maternal grandparents are Denise and Adam Guantes of Milwaukee.

Emmerson — A daughter, Paige Elizabeth Emmerson, weighing 8 pounds, 5 ounces and 21 inches long, was born Jan. 19, 2010, to Bruce and Anne Emmerson of Hartford. Maternal grandparents are Ron and Judy Mielcarek of West Bend. Paternal grandfather is Roger Emmerson of Sheffield, Ill. Paige joins her sister, Dana, at home.

St. Joseph's Hospital, Froedtert & Community Health
Town of Polk
Bleichwehl — A daughter, Gracie Mae Bleichwehl, weighing 7 pounds, 12 ounces and 20 1/2 inches long, was born Jan. 3, 2010, to Amanda and Timothy Bleichwehl of Fredonia.

Ouellette — A daughter, Brooke Elaine Ouellette, weighing 7 pounds, 9 ounces and 20 inches long, was born Jan. 4, 2010, to Karrie and Jeremy Ouellette of Eden.

Whitman — A daughter, Allison Grace Whitman, weighing 8 pounds, 1 ounce and 20 1/2 inches long, was born Jan. 5, 2010, to Denise and Bob Whitman of West Bend.

Hood — A son, Maveric Todd Hood, weighing 7 pounds, 12 ounces and 21 inches long, was born Jan. 8, 2010, to Jennifer and Jeremy Hood of Erin.

Zum — A son, Boston Michael Zum, weighing 7 pounds, 14 ounces and 20 1/2 inches long, was born Jan. 8, 2010, to Crystal and Jason Zum of Slinger.

Clemens-VanBeckum — A daughter, Mya Elizabeth Clemens-VanBeckum, weighing 6 pounds, 1 ounce and 19 inches long, was born Jan. 10, 2010, to Jessica Clemens and Steven VanBeckum of Hartford.

Jessel — A daughter, Emma Margaret Jessel, weighing 6 pounds, 7 ounces and 19 1/2 inches long, was born Jan. 7, 2010, to Jessica and Allen Jessel of West Bend.

Rank — A daughter, Kunzie Brielle Rank, weighing 8 pounds and 20 inches long, was born Jan. 11, 2010, to Tracy and Benjamin Rank of Kiel.

Peterson — A son, Lucas Raymond Peterson, weighing 7 pounds, 14 ounces and 20 1/4 inches long, was born Jan. 11, 2010, to Sarah and Erik Peterson of Cambellsport.

Wamsley-Bohn — A son, Mason Alan Wamsley-Bohn, weighing 6 pounds, 15 ounces and 19 1/2 inches long, was born Jan. 12, 2010, to Jamie Wamsley and Marcus Bohn of West Bend.

Mercier — A son, Austin James Mercier, weighing 7 pounds, 3 ounces and 20 inches long, was born Jan. 14, 2010, to Crystal Fredrick and Andy Mercier of West Bend.

Pintor — A son, Michael Reilly Pintor, weighing 6 pounds, 10 ounces and 20 inches long, was born Jan. 15, 2010, to Maureen and Michael Pintor of West Bend.

Doede — A son, Mitchell David Doede, weighing 7 pounds, 9 ounces and 20 inches long, was born Jan. 16, 2010, to Kelley and Chad Doede of West Bend.

LOTTERY

Thursday WISCONSIN
SuperCash: 5-7-9-19-26-30
 Doubler:
Pick 4: 6-0-3-6
Pick 3: 0-2-5
Badger 5: 7-10-18-25-28

ILLINOIS
 Pick Three-Midday - 3-8-0;
 Pick Three-Evening - 6-1-1; Pick Four-Midday - 3-3-5-3; Pick Four-Evening - 8-3-7-7; Little Lotto: 4-7-9-31-32.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Friday, Jan. 22 West Bend
What: WASHINGTON COUNTY SEPARATED, DIVORCED AND WIDOWED MEN AND WOMEN MEETING.
Where: Holy Angels School, 230 N. 8th Ave.
When: 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Cost: Free.
Info: Jan. 22 meeting will include a pot luck dinner (bring dish to pass), followed by a social/fun night; financial report will also be given. For more information, contact Mary Ciocarelli at 334-3766.

Sponsor: Washington County Separated, Divorced and Widowed Men and Women.
Saturday, Jan. 23 West Bend
What: WINTER SNOWSHOE NIGHT HIKE.
Where: Riveredge Nature Center.
When: 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Cost: Members: \$5 for adults, \$4 for children; non-members: \$7 for adults, \$5 for children.
Info: Snowshoeing under the winter night sky. Enjoy the beauty of a nighttime snowshoe hike. Discover the creatures active after dark and explore the night sky. All ages will enjoy this event. Riveredge will provide the snowshoes, or you may use your own. Dress for the weather and wear insulated boots. If there is not enough snow, we will still go out and hike. Hot drinks will be served afterward. Space is limited. Call Riveredge to reserve your spot.
Sponsor: Riveredge Nature Center.

Dundee
What: DUNDEE SPORTSMAN CLUB ALL LAKE FISHERIE.
Where: Sportsman Clubhouse.
When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Cost: TBA.
Info: Dart tournament, food, raffles and refreshments.
Sponsor: Dundee Sportsman Club.

Town of Trenton
What: WINTER CELEBRATION VENDOR FAIR.
Where: 6851 Beck Lane.
When: Noon to 4 p.m..
Cost: Free.
Info: Come shop all the great vendors while enjoying food catered by Tastefully Simple. The following vendors will be in attendance: Tastefully Simple, Miche Bags, Body Magic, Tupperware, Pampered Chef, Passion and Jewelry by Design. Call (414) 779-0273 for more information.
Sponsor: Town of Trenton.

Hartford
What: THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR
Where: Schauer Arts & Activities Center, 147 Rural St.
When: TBA.
Cost: TBA.
Info: The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Littel Cloud and the Mixed-up Chameleon by award-winning illustrator and writer, Eric Carle, are retold on stage using a black light. For more information, call 670-0560 or visit www.schauercenter.org.
Sponsor: Schauer Arts & Activities Center.

West Bend
What: Chili Social and Book Sale.
Where: Cedar Ridge Apartments, 113 Cedar Ridge Drive.
When: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Cost: \$5.50 for lunch, \$6 for a quart of chili to go.
Info: Enjoy a warm lunch, browse the book sale and take a tour of Cedar Ridge.
Sponsor: Cedar Community.

Monday, Jan. 25 West Bend
What: MORAINES CHORUS.
Where: University of Wisconsin-Washington County.
When: each Monday from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Cost: \$10 per semester.
Info: New members welcome. Rehearsals are every Monday evening. For more information, contact Peter Gibeau at 335-5216 or peter.gibeau@uwc.edu.
Sponsor: UW-WC.

Richfield
What: U.S. REP. JIM SENSENBRENNER'S TOWN HALL MEETING.
Where: Richfield Village Hall.
When: 7 p.m.
Cost: Free.
Info: Sensenbrenner will seek input on important issues that will be discussed in Congress.
Tuesday, Jan. 26 West Bend
What: RIVEREDGE PHOTO CLUB.
Where: Riveredge Nature Center.
When: 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Cost: Free.
Info: The photo club brings together those who enjoy photography and wish to take better pictures through practice.
Sponsor: Riveredge Nature Center.

West Bend
What: MORAINES SYMPHONIC BAND REHEARSAL.
Where: University of Wisconsin-Washington County.
When: each Tuesday from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Cost: None.
Info: New members welcome. Rehearsals are every Tuesday evening. For more information, contact Daniel Ackley at 335-5226 or daniel.ackley@uwc.edu.
Sponsor: UW-WC.

OBITUARIES

Mildred M. Wilkens, 94

Mildred M. Wilkens, (nee Eisentraut), 94, of West Bend, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010, at Samaritan Health Care Center in West Bend.

She was born on June 3, 1914, in Kewaskum to the late Theodore and Ella (nee Aurig) Eisentraut. On Sept. 4, 1945, Mildred was united in marriage to Henry Wilkens. Henry preceded her in death on June 14, 1995.

Mildred worked as an assistant cashier at the State Bank of Fredonia.

She is survived by nieces,

nephews, other relatives and friends.

Mildred was preceded in death by her parents; and her husband, Henry.

Visitation will be at the Myrhum-Patten Funeral Home, 1315 W. Washington St., West Bend, on Monday, Jan. 25 from noon until 2 p.m. with a committal service to follow at Washington County Memorial Park.

Online guest book and condolences may be found at www.myrhum-patten.com.

HOMETOWNHEROES

Air Force Airman Joshua G. Prostek graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force



Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training

in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

He is the son of Colleen and Gregory Prostek of Hubertus.

Prostek is a 2007 graduate of Hartford Union High School.

Air Force Airman Taylor J. Bauer graduated from basic military training at



Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program

that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

He is the son of Sandy Bauer of Germantown and brother of Tiffany Bauer of Champaign, Ill.

Bauer is a 2009 graduate of Milwaukee Lutheran High School.

Navy Seaman Matthew J. Seamandel, son of Mary E. and James A. Seamandel of Grafton, recently completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training

Command, Great Lakes, Ill. During the eight-week program, Seamandel completed a variety of training which included classroom study and practical instruction on naval customs, first aid, firefighting, water safety and survival, and shipboard and aircraft safety.

An emphasis was also placed on physical fitness. The capstone event of boot camp is "Battle Stations." This exercise gives recruits the skills and confidence they need to succeed in the fleet. "Battle Stations" is designed to galvanize the basic warrior attributes of sacrifice, dedication, teamwork and endurance in each recruit through the practical application of basic Navy skills and the core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. Its distinctly Navy flavor was designed to take into account what it means to be a Sailor.

Seamandel is a 2003 graduate of Grafton High School.

Navy Seaman Apprentice Adam R. Strucel, a 2008 graduate of Slinger High School, was recently promoted to his current rank upon graduation from recruit training at Recruit Training

Command, Great Lakes, Ill. Strucel received the early

promotion for outstanding performance during all phases of the training cycle.

Training which included classroom study and practical instruction on naval customs, first aid, firefighting, water safety and survival, and shipboard and aircraft safety. An emphasis was also placed on physical fitness.

The capstone event of boot camp is "Battle Stations."

This exercise gives recruits the skills and confidence they need to succeed in the fleet. "Battle Stations" is designed to galvanize the basic warrior attributes of sacrifice, dedication, teamwork and endurance in each recruit through the practical application of basic Navy skills and the core values of Honor, Courage and Commitment. Its distinctly Navy flavor was designed to take into account what it means to be a Sailor.

Navy Airman Recruit Joseph D. Torres, son of Angela A. Miller of Rubicon, and David H. Torres of Murrieta, Calif., recently completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training

Command, Great Lakes, Ill. During the eight-week program, Torres completed a variety of training which included classroom study and practical instruction on naval customs, first aid, firefighting, water safety and survival, and shipboard and aircraft safety. An emphasis was also placed on physical fitness.

Air Force Airman 1st Class Jacob C. Baures graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

Baures earned distinction as an honor graduate. He is the son of Teri Baures of West Bend.

The airman is a 2009 graduate of West Bend West High School.

Air Force Airman Conrad A. Castro graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

Baures earned distinction as an honor graduate. He is the son of Teri Baures of West Bend.

The airman is a 2009 graduate of West Bend West High School.

Air Force Airman Conrad A. Castro graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

He is the son of Conrad and Veronica Castro of West Bend.

Castro is a 2009 graduate of West Bend West High School.

Downtown: Coming back

ice cream shop, next door to Marsden's store on Dec. 11 to coincide with the downtown's Midnight Madness.

"The response has been very good," Stelzer said. "A lot of people come in here and they go back to when they were younger."

Of course, what Hartford can offer to prospective merchants is the ideal location at the intersection of highways 60 and 83.

"This spot right here is perfect," Marsden said, looking out at the intersection of Main and Jackson streets, where there is a stoplight. "People have to stop. It's impossible not to see our shop."

Twelve thousand cars pass the intersection where the highways cross every day, Hartford Chamber of Commerce director Kim Infalt said. In addition, the Mine-shaft Restaurant is known around the Milwaukee area and brings people from out of town into the downtown area.

Infalt has seen 14 new members join the chamber in the past year, including eight new businesses.

"We're happy to see new business pop up," Infalt said. "And we've had some significant ones, like the Gardens of Hartford opened that big facility."

In addition to the location, Infalt thinks the people of Hartford make it a nice place to do business, as well.

"Our quality of life is very high in this area," Infalt said. "We're in the heart of Washington County so we're only about 45 minutes north of Milwaukee. We have a lot of quality workers here, as well, who want to work close to home. We're not too far from the big city, but we're far enough that you can see the difference."

The appeal in downtown West Bend, according to Minskey, is two-fold. First, the storefronts are available at lower rents than most strip malls. Secondly, there is more foot traffic because people tend to park and walk around more.

Other businesses that opened in recent months in Hartford include True Expressions, a party supply

"I think things are turning around and people can see that Hartford is a place to open a business."

— Judith Bernd
 Hartford BID director

store, and Birds on Deck.

The business growth is a little surprising considering the torrent of bad economic news over the past couple of years.

"There has been quite a bit of that," Stelzer said. "It still makes us nervous, but the response everyone has shown so far, it's been a very positive thing."

The couple, who is at the store from 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. some evenings, has a way of avoiding unpleasant economic news.

"We don't have any news on the speakers into the store, so we don't know what's going on any more," Stelzer said. "It helps that we don't hear all the bad news."

Infalt said she thinks the bad economy is helping to provide more stable owners.

"If someone's serious about starting a business, they might have to do more homework," Infalt said. "They might have to do more work as far as going to the bank and getting loans, but now is definitely the time. There's a lot of buildings that are open for rent. If they need funding, they have to have a very solid business plan."

Hartford BID director Judith Bernd thinks the new businesses are a sign of a turnaround.

"I think things are turning around and people can see that Hartford is a place to open a business," Bernd said. "We have a very good flow in the downtown area. We don't have these little side streets in our downtown. We're one solid downtown, so when we have an event and I want to close the street off, I've got north to south and that's where everything is."