

**SOUTHWEST ZONER TIGARD YAMHILL  
REAL ESTATE AGENT LEADS CHARGE TO FIRE UP OTHERS IN BUSINESS**

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**SHERWOOD**

Summary: Ron Kachergius takes over the Sherwood Chamber of Commerce, where he wants to boost involvement

Having relocated from Tigard two years ago, Ron Kachergius is a relative newcomer to Sherwood. But his name is all around town.

Especially since Flag Day last month, when Kachergius, a real estate agent, spent the predawn hours planting 1,100 flags -- each 30-inch staff flying, in addition to the Stars and Stripes, his business card -- on front lawns all across Woodhaven, where he serves as president of the homeowners association.

On Tuesday, the 60-year-old Kachergius officially took office as president of the Sherwood Chamber of Commerce. Hours before he delivered his acceptance speech at the chamber's annual banquet last week, Kachergius talked about the challenges of doing business in Sherwood and his vision for the chamber over the coming year.

So what was the thinking behind those American flags?

Since Cruisin' Sherwood was going to be on Flag Day this year, and I was going to have a booth advertising myself as a John L. Scott agent at the show, I thought it would be neat to give something of value to folks as a way to remember me. Given my involvement with the Woodhaven Homeowners Association, and my background in law enforcement and the military (a Vietnam veteran, Kachergius had worked as a police officer and a private security guard in Illinois, California, and Oregon), I thought it would be a nice, patriotic gesture, as well as a way to market myself.

Weren't you worried that people might object to what you were doing?

I knew I was going to get some complaints; no matter what you do, you're not going to please everybody. But with one exception, everybody enjoyed it. A lot of people still have those flags in their yards.

Does this say anything about how you'd like to market the chamber to the community?

Not absolutely. . . . I'd prefer that my constituents come up with the ideas, but if they don't, I'll come up with the ideas. I can either be the catalyst or the catalytic converter.

I want my year as board president to be interesting, enthusiastic and fun. What we do as a chamber is serious work, but we can take some of the pressure off by having a little fun.

Do you think of yourself as a rebel?

I've always been a rebel. Years ago, they used to say, "You're off the wall." Now they call it thinking out of the box.

Here's one example. At our monthly breakfast networking meetings, we all stand up and introduce ourselves and talk about our businesses. Month after month, I heard everybody say, "And I give a 10 percent discount to chamber members." Well, that's all well and good. But one day, I stood up and said, "Rather than give 10 percent back to chamber members, for the next six months I'm going to give 10 percent of my income back to the chamber."

I'm here to promote the chamber. As the chamber grows and is more successful, then the business community will be more successful.

What's your vision for making the chamber more successful over the coming year?

That's the easy part: to increase membership and services, stimulate involvement from members and broaden community awareness of local businesses. I'd like to start a new luncheon group called Munch and Master, where business people come to learn new tools that will make them more successful as entrepreneurs.

What's the hard part?

To stimulate members of the board to come up with their own ideas, rather than just have me as leader saying, "Here's where we need to go." I need to be the "ataboy," to give them encouragement and kudos.

In all the teaching I've done as an instructor at the American Red Cross over the years, I've always gotten compliments for my enthusiasm. My biggest gift to the board and to the chamber will be as a facilitator.

Didn't you win the Portland Police Bureau's Medal of Valor 10 years ago?

In 1993, I was director of security at Red Lion Columbia River when I was involved in a rather sad occasion. One of our employees had been shotgunned to death, and because of my training, I tackled the individual with the shotgun as he was reloading, handcuffed him and held him until police arrived. He had 21 shells and was about to go to Eugene to kill somebody else. I had my 14 minutes of fame. This will be my last minute of fame.

What are the challenges facing businesses in Sherwood these days?

Getting people to shop more in Sherwood and increasing the diversity of our businesses, especially in Old Town. We need to give people a reason to want to go downtown so that downtown doesn't turn into a ghost town.

As an agent at John L. Scott, when I ask clients why they want to live in Sherwood, they always say it's because of the quaintness of the city. I know the community doesn't want Sherwood to become huge, to outgrow its little-town feel. It's a delicate balance to keep that ambiance. This is Illyria, the mystical town from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" that's synonymous with Shangri-La.

At the banquet tonight, Lorrie Bldgood is going to hand off the president's gavel to you. What's the first thing you're going to do with it?

I'm going to adjourn the meeting and see who wants to go first at karaoke.

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Caption: Photo by ROBERT BACH of The Oregonian staff

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