

Chamber prepares for new event

By Christine Haines chaines@heraldstandard.com | Posted: Wednesday, January 9, 2013 2:00 am

BROWNSVILLE — The Greater Brownsville Area Chamber of Commerce is gearing up for a new event on its calendar for the year.

The chamber last month tossed out the idea of having a spring dinner dance. This month, a dinner committee was formed and a tentative date, May 25, was announced for the event.

“It will be held at the Sons of Italy. We’ll have a combo or a trio playing music,” said Ray Koffler, who is heading the dinner committee.

The dinner-dance will replace the river cruise the chamber had sponsored for more than 20 years before it became too costly because of fuel and other expenses.

Fred Lapisardi of the Market Street Arts Academy said plans are also under way for this year’s Market Street Arts Festival.

“We’re gearing up for the arts festival, which will be the third weekend in May, the week before the chamber dinner,” Lapisardi said.

Lapisardi said he has some vendors and performers lined up for the festival, but sponsorship remains needed.

“What we’d really appreciate is any support we can get from local businesses. If you’re really interested in an arts festival in Brownsville, I’m willing to run it, but I can’t afford to keep paying for it,” Lapisardi said.

Jamie Brackman, an Americorps/Vista volunteer with the Brownsville Area Revitalization Corp., said BARC has several new tenants. Two artists, including an airbrush artist who takes custom orders, have moved into the Flatiron Building.

In addition, state Rep. Pam Snyder, D-Jefferson, now has an office in the former Oddfellows Building, which is owned by BARC. Ryan Belski of Rices Landing is staffing Snyder’s Brownsville office, which is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Brackman also reported that the River Town program will be moving into the lower level of the Flatiron Building in February for the final year of the program designed

to spur economic development through outdoor recreation. Brackman said there has been discussion about having kayak access to the Monongahela River at Dunlap Creek, adjacent to a downtown park that is in the planning stages.

It was noted that a fund has been established for tax-deductible donations to be accepted for the new downtown park being planned by students at Brownsville Area High School on land owned by the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority.

“This is something we really want to work on,” chamber President Frank Ricco said. “We’ve talked about it; we’ve walked around it; now we need to get it done.”