

Creativity being tapped for Brownsville comeback

By Christine Haines HeraldStandard.com | Posted: Wednesday, March 14, 2012 2:00 am

BROWNSVILLE — Of the six communities participating in the River Towns project, Brownsville has the least river access, according to the president of the Greater Brownsville Area Chamber of Commerce.

The project, which includes Point Marion, Greensboro, Rices Landing, Fredericktown, Brownsville and California, is designed to spur economic development through outdoor recreation. At Tuesday's chamber meeting, chamber President Frank Ricco said that while Brownsville has access at the wharf, a concrete wall prevents boaters from accessing the community at other points along the shore, so the Brownsville River Towns committee needs to do things differently, tying in with existing plans.

Ricco said the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, which has acquired some downtown buildings through eminent domain, intends to tear down the former Health Mart building within the next three months.

"That's where we hope to put a park in there, and the high school kids are involved in this project and want to build a stage there. I want to go further than just a stage. I want to make it a park with grass and trees, and possibly a little bit of a walking trail," Ricco said.

Ricco said the project is going to take a lot of money and work, and he would like to see the chamber doing what it can to help the project.

"We're working really hard right now to move it ahead," Ricco said.

Meanwhile, Fred Lapisardi who runs the Market Street Arts Academy introduced Susan Sparks to the chamber members as the executive director of the nonprofit Friends of Market Street Arts.

"I find money in unique places," Sparks said.

Sparks is in the process of coordinating the Dali+Gala fundraising event Saturday, March 24, to raise money toward the cost of this year's Market Street Arts Festival in May.

The fundraising event will include music, photos converted to look like Salvador Dali paintings and an actress portraying Gala Dali, the artist's wife and model.

"I'm an artist, a visual artist, but I also worked in marketing for 20 years," Sparks said.

Sparks said she served on her first nonprofit board of directors in 1978 and landed her first grant in 1979.

"The arts are an incubator and an instigator in bringing back communities," Sparks said.

Sparks said last year's Market Street Arts Festival drew about 1,000 spectators and she would like to see that number double this year.

"The thing I liked last year was that all the vendors were local and no two food booths were serving the same thing," Lapisardi said.

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