

Mega Mixer gives professionals chance to make new connections

Emily Shearing • Staff writer • May 6, 2010

HENRIETTA — This wasn't just any networking event. It was mega.

More than 200 attendees came out to Wednesday's third semi-annual Mega Mixer event at the RIT Inn & Conference Center. The event was sponsored by 16 area chambers of commerce and the Rochester Young Professionals organization.

Mingling established business owners with new and aspiring entrepreneurs, the organizers started the event to help businesses across the community make new contacts to help spur economic growth.

"We're bringing the young professionals in to meet the established folks but also vice versa," said Jodie Perry, president and CEO of the Greece Chamber of Commerce. "And collectively, we're stronger than individually. Each chamber ranges from 100 to 1,000 members, so when you put us together there are a lot more networking capabilities."

Although the original plan involved an event with just the 760 Greece Chamber members and the Young Professionals, the inclusion of other area chambers provided a better chance to meet business owners in all types of industries, Perry said.

Ben Munson, CEO and co-founder of the newly launched apartment search website newdigs.com, said the mixer was an opportunity to meet people outside of his industry and get out of his networking rut.

"You start going to the same networking group events and faces start to look familiar," he said. "This cuts across a lot of other networking events, so you can meet new people."

Cindi Norbut-Smith, owner of Caring Heart Companions, an in-home senior care service, saw

the Mega Mixer as an opportunity to introduce her business. "It's a great way to meet people," she said. "And everyone's here for the same reason."

In a challenging economy — especially for small businesses — the more people you can meet, the better, said Joan Gaylord, president of the Henrietta Chamber of Commerce and co-owner of Action Towing and Service. "This is also a chance for me to touch base with other chambers and have an opportunity to cross-pollinate our businesses."

And Rochester loves to network, Perry said. "We want people to come to our events to make connections for future business deals. People want to do business with people they know and trust."

In addition to Greece, the participating chambers were Brighton, Canandaigua, Churchville-Riga, East Rochester, Fairport-Perinton, Gates-Chili, Henrietta, Hilton-Parma, Irondequoit, the Penfield Business Association, Pittsford, Spencerport, Victor, Webster and the Rochester Business Alliance, which is a regional chamber.

"My hope is that the cooperation on these leads to further events we can work on down the road," Perry said.

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From left, White Hot Films' Angelo Mancuso of Rochester, Martha Saxby, CPA's Martha Saxby of Mendon and Media Connection's Gloria Smith of Pittsford chat Wednesday at the Mega Mixer in Henrietta. (JEN RYND staff photographer)