

Greater Darlington Chamber of Commerce names executive director

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By Dwight Dana, reporter
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A veteran in the trenches of marketing and advertising has taken the reins of the Greater Darlington Chamber of Commerce.

Susan Alexander of Lamar is the new executive director of the chamber, which serves Darlington, Lamar and Society Hill. Alexander has worked in advertising and marketing since leaving her hometown of Charlottesville, Va., during the early 1990s.

“Darlington County has a lot of potential and the wheels are starting to roll,” Alexander said during an interview in her office. “We’ve got Interstate 20, and Interstate 73 is coming. I’m envisioning two little areas, Lamar and Society Hill, benefiting from this.”

Alexander said many proactive people already are in place to assist in these endeavors.

“Lamar has always been sitting there off I-20 and people just seem to drive by. It’s a perfect area for growth,” she said. “Society Hill is the same way, with I-73 coming that way. Everything is linked to transportation and the ease of accessibility.”

Alexander has been in Darlington County for 10 years.

“I’ve been involved with Darlington County businesses during this time,” she said. “I’ve celebrated their successes and sometimes cried harder than they did over their losses.

“The bottom line is I’m connected to businesses over here. They know I want to know what I can do to make things better.”

And in that same vein, Alexander wants to know, “Where did we go wrong?”

“I’d rather start out with criticism, knowing I have something to work with to step up to rather than coming in on an even playing field,” she said. “And it’s the same with the chamber. I want to know everything we’ve done right and everything we’ve done wrong. I want to know what the chamber can do to help improve life in Darlington County.”

Alexander intends to make one-on-one contact with all the chamber members, some 400 of them joining as the result of a recent membership drive. She said she even plans to contact non-members.

“I want to get feedback from them,” she said. “I want them to let me know what they want, whether it be seminars, workshops or other areas of interest to them.”

The Greater Darlington Chamber of Commerce's mission is "to be a membership organization dedicated to meeting the needs of Darlington, Lamar and Society Hill by nurturing the growth and development of new and existing businesses through education, community involvement and business alliances."

And Alexander said her responsibilities as executive director are to work closely with city, county and state officials to accomplish this mission.

Among other efforts, she said, the chamber plans to hold workshops, seminars, learning luncheons, mentoring programs and annual events. She also is developing new programs.

"I'm amazed at the varying degrees and levels that this job has," she said. "There is a lot more to it than I thought it would be."

But Alexander is confident she is up to the challenge. Along the way, she was a sales, marketing and event planner for Skyline Swannonoa Inc., a hospitality industry in Virginia.

"That's probably where I learned the most," she said. "You've got to have a plan for everything to be successful"