

LINDA SPITZER ZAHN – ASPIRE Heritage Award - 2018

The Severna Park Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1957. It is now the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce and last year they celebrated their 60th Anniversary. The Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce holds the annual Independence Day Parade, a great tradition that draws thousands of attendees.

Linda S. Zahn became the Executive Director in May, 1990 and retired at the end of January of 2018 after 27-1/2 years. A Business and Community Guide was created by the Chamber as a community resource in the early 1990's. Today Linda is selling ads for this guide in her "retirement". The membership has grown substantially over the last 27 years. New activities have been created including Signature Mixers which expose Chamber members to notable people in the County who affect our daily lives, community beautification projects, and the Holiday Trade Fair which is held at the Earleigh Heights Vol. Fire Dept. where businesses can display and/or sell their products. Another program she started is Successful Women in Business which holds an event for business women every month. Linda also started Taste and Sip which is held at our local Homestead Gardens every November, and there is an annual tree lighting where a decorated tree near the Chamber is lit. The Chamber is involved in a Shop Local initiative created to build community support for local businesses. A Shop Local festival is held annually in Park Plaza with vendors and entertainment. For the last several years the Chamber has participated in National Night Out, a national program to help build and nurture the relationship between the community and our police and first responders. There is a yearly golf tournament which is a fund raiser for the Chamber and has traditionally been a "sell out". Linda also approached Severna Park High School and was instrumental in the formation of the current Business Advisory Board. Other Chamber projects over the years have included annual Youth Leadership Conferences, and a program to combat graffiti vandalism.

Linda Zahn grew up in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia near Harrisonburg. She met Steve Zahn at a church outing at Lost River State Park in West Virginia where he was a life guard. They were married in 1972 and moved to Morgantown, W. Va. while Steve was getting his master's degree in environmental engineering. Steve took a job in Annapolis and they moved to Crofton where their 2 children, Adam and Alicia, were born. They moved to Shipley's Choice and Linda became involved in volunteer work. The Chamber was looking for an Executive Director, and Meg Anderson strongly encouraged Linda to apply. She got the position which she initially ran from her home. The owner of the Register Property on Holly Avenue died and Skip Carr suggested that the property would be a good office for the Chamber. Pat Troy had started ASPIRE, and Linda one of the founding members of the original ASPIRE organization. ASPIRE raised \$25,000 to help the County purchase the building and grounds, which are currently the Chamber of Commerce office and the Green is a part of the B&A Trail Park.

Linda is devoted to giving back to the community, and currently serves on the Board of Opportunity Builders, and is actively involved with Orphan Grain Train. We wish her well in all her endeavors.