

Breathe better by changing to fresher air

By David Stoner

Every time I hear the phrase "the change was a breath of fresh air", I know truer words have never been spoken. Change is good, especially when that change makes us feel better and increases our feeling of wellbeing. Changes resulting from making better choices bring peace of mind. These are the type of changes that make us happier and more productive.

Neighbor to Neighbor

When people say that the change was like a breath of fresh air, I think more about the results of change than the change itself. I want that feeling of renewal that the phase promises. I want to breathe fresh air! Changing the way we think about the air we breathe starts with admitting that there is a problem.

Poor indoor air quality can impact your well being in several ways. Indoor air quality can cause discomfort due to undesired odors or effects as serious as colds, flu-like symptoms, or even

pneumonia and cancer. Dubbed "Sick Home Syndrome" there is no single symptom or cause. However, when the EPA tells us our home's indoor air quality is the fifth most dangerous threat to our family's health and fourth on the list of cancer causes, it is time to admit we have a problem.

There are several contributors to the problem and each need to be identified and addressed. The way our homes have been built in the last 40 years, designed to keep in the cool in the summer and the heat in the winter, has an adverse impact on the health of our indoor air. Tight construction contributes to poor air quality by not allowing our homes to breathe.

The building materials used to build our home and the furnishing we put into our home are manufactured using toxic petro-chemicals that have been releasing gas into our homes for years. The household cleaners and personal care products we use are also full of petro-chemicals. These chemicals become trapped in our tightly built home and we are breathing them in with every breath.

Our health is threatened by at least two other indoor air pollutants. One is biological pollutants. We share our

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homes with many other life forms, such as mold, dust mites, viruses and bacteria. Together these life forms are called biological pollutants. These pollutants become airborne and part of the air we breathe.

Airborne particulate is the most common indoor air pollutant. We all have watched the sun shine through the window and seen the dust particles and pollen dance in the sunshine. This

particulate matter is polluting the air our family is breathing.

We cannot change the way our homes were built or the materials used to build them, but we can open windows and let fresh air in. We can think about the chemicals in the furnishing before purchasing or at least air out the furnishings before they are brought into our homes. Having our homes micro-cleaned by a company like my own, which is named EnviroFix, to remove vast majority of harmful chemicals and kill any biological pollutants is another great step.

We can change the way we clean by using non-toxic cleaners; we can choose personal care products that will not contribute to indoor air pollution. We can control the humidity in our homes, and this will prevent a number of biological contaminants from growing. We can choose a good air filter and change it every six weeks to reduce particulates.

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MIXED DRINKS

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years in developing and implementing an economic development strategic plan for the County. The EDC's strategic plan has been endorsed by all three of its municipalities. Many of Chatham's job and business attraction strategies are dependent upon passage of the mixed-beverage referendum. It was for this reason that the EDC board voted unanimously to ask the county commissioners to put the

mixed-drink referendum on the ballot. This is a golden opportunity for all pro-business segments of the county to work together to obtain this simple win-win tool for jobs and economic development.

Passage of the mixed drink referendum will promote economic development in Chatham County and likely boost the bottom line for local businesses. The following bullet points speak to this issue:

■ **Tax Revenue Without Raising Taxes:** The direct revenue benefit will be in additional sales taxes the county and towns will receive from restaurants serving mixed beverages. Attracting shoppers to our downtowns and commercial centers due to better quality restaurants will provide indirect revenue benefits such as increased commercial and residential property values and greater retail sales taxes.

■ **"Quality of Place":** As the county's economic consultants made clear, "quality of place" is a key driver of rural economic development, including thriving downtowns, commercial centers and rural crossroads centers. Lack of shopping and restaurant choices is frequently cited by Chatham's businesses and residents as one of the key barriers to economic development and business attraction.

■ **Job Growth and Business Attraction:** Economic development experts indicate that entrepreneurs and new growth companies site restaurant choices and thriving main streets, as one of the most important factors in their choice of where to start and/or locate their business. Finally, giving Chatham's local businesses the tool of serving mixed beverages will help them be competitive and expand their businesses.

■ **Agriculture, Eco, Cultural, and Heritage Tourism:** Chatham has tremendous untapped potential for developing jobs and businesses around sustainable agriculture, eco, cultural, and heritage tourism. As county chair, George Lucier referred to in his recent state of the County address, we are blessed with natural assets, highly acclaimed local arts and thriving sustainable agriculture communities, a growing local wine economy, and unique heritage sites, such as the Silk Hope old time community, the Devil's Stomping Ground and Mt. Vernon Springs. Additionally, Chatham has been approached by

tourism events, such as Cycle North Carolina, which asked to host a leg their state-wide event here. The lack of a hotel and other quality accommodations prevented Chatham from hosting that and other lucrative tourism events. Likewise, the lack of local lodging options prevents our community college's nationally recognized sustainable agriculture and green building programs from hosting multi-day conferences. Chatham cannot leverage this tourism potential without attracting quality restaurants and accommodations. And we cannot do that without passage of the May 5th, countywide referendum for mixed beverage sales.

Chatham County's business community is poised to expand and provide more retail choices to citizens when voters approve the referendum on mixed beverage sales on May 5.

For more information concerning the local mixed beverage referendum, check the PRO web site at www.chathamvote4mixedbeverages.org or e-mail randy@voller.org -or- visit one of the many Chatham County restaurants which support the PRO effort.

Jeffrey Starkweather is PRO Campaign Advisor and serves on the Chatham County Economic Development Board. Randolph Voller, PRO chair, is Mayor of Pittsboro, Former Vice-Chair and current ex officio member of the Chatham County Economic Development Board.

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