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FEATURED

Indian Land Chamber of Commerce hosts winter gala

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About 150 people gathered to eat, drink, dance and network at the Greater Indian Land Chamber of Commerce's winter gala Saturday, Feb. 4, at Firethorne Country Club.

Chamber President/CEO Mike Neese, who also represents District 44 in the S.C House, took the time to thank the many community organizations that have invested back in Indian Land, as well as provide opportunities for members to connect and serve the community.

Indian Land Green

Neese also announced that Indian Land Green, a nonprofit organization kick-started by the chamber, is now becoming its own entity.

Indian Land Green, which will be led by President Kimberly Magette, will focus on creating trails, green spaces and blueways in the Indian Land community.

Magette, owner of Kimberly Magette Group, said the organization was inspired by local community trash-pickup days, when participants were thinking of other ways to beautify the community.

Neese and Magette said a 20-year survey of Indian Land residents cited the need for more green space and trails as the second biggest issue to address, after growth and traffic.

Fort Mill has the Anne Springs Close Greenway and its trails, Magette said. “And there’s nothing like that in Indian Land. So that’s where we decided that we would love to be able to raise money and bring some money and bring some trails over to Indian Land.”

Magette said the project is still in the beginning stages, but Indian Land Green is close to finishing a map detailing where the trails will be, which she said will be similar to those in Walnut Creek and Anne Springs Close Greenway.

“Six Mile Creek runs right behind here to Walnut Creek, that’s 11.3 miles of trail that we look to be built here in the future,” Neese said. “We probably have got some grants coming up on that as well.”

In making the announcement, Neese recognized Joan Schuermeyer, dubbed the “Energizer Bunny,” due to her enthusiasm and community involvement, for her personal efforts to clean up trash along Indian Land roads, sometimes walking 17 miles a day. She was named the 2022 Volunteer of the Year for Keep Lancaster County Beautiful.

Efforts made by Schuermeyer to beautify Indian Land, and a total of \$37,000 in grants secured by Liz Evans for cleaning up Indian Land medians along U.S. 521, served as the catalyst to launch Indian Land Green.

Neese said the process will take several years to complete, but the chamber hopes to continue writing grants, and add a children's education aspect to the walking trails, as well as a health and wellness component. He also hopes to connect with local conservation organizations to provide guidance on environmental factors during the building process.

Connecting community

While the chamber banquet is annual, Neese said the chamber also hosts multiple events each year, such as quarterly luncheons, featuring visits with government officials and other notables, the annual Ag+Art Tour, a Fourth of July fireworks show, golf tournaments and community cleanups. Such events are sponsored by or in conjunction with local businesses in Indian Land and Lancaster County to promote small businesses and grow local business connections.

That dovetails with the chamber's motto, which is "Connecting our Community," Neese said.

"Now any chamber of commerce has to be very strong on business, and we have to be a pro-business community," he said. "If you don't have a strong pro-business model, it's very difficult for anything else to happen."

Neese applauded the diverse audience and the chamber's member base, which ranges from the local to state level. Many government officials from school board, Lancaster County Council and the S.C. House of Representatives attended, along with local business owners and corporate members.

New state park

Neese also recognized Duke Energy's \$1.3 million investment in a new state park in Great Falls in Chester County, just across the Catawba River from Lancaster County.

Duke Energy signed a lease Friday, Feb. 3, with the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism for the five-island complex, which will become Dearborn Island State Park.

“It’s going to be a wonderful asset for the community. It’s going to be an addition to the whitewater (rafting facility) that’s already coming to the area,” said Tyson Blanton, Duke Energy’s district government and community relations manager. The whitewater activities are to begin March 15, with the initial release of water at Long Bypass Reach.

Neese ended his speech by encouraging everyone to “work hard, play hard,” and enjoy the night of mingling and dancing.

Haley