

# THE BUSINESS NEWS

Serving Brown, Calumet, Door, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano & Winnebago counties

March 31, 2008

www.thebusinessnewsonline.com

Vol. 5, No. 24 \$1.00

## Deflecting Favre's pass

Branding group aims to capitalize on national attention that quarterback brought to Green Bay

By Sean Schultz

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One man doesn't make a football team, and one organization does not constitute a brand.

So, while the Green Bay Packers and all of Packer Country will miss Brett Favre's presence in future seasons, the organizers of the Green Bay Branding Initiative are undaunted in their efforts to develop an "authentic brand" for the Greater Green Bay area, despite the star quarterback's recent retirement announcement.

"This is an opportunity to build upon his legacy and the momentum he and the Packers have brought to our city," said Donsia Strong-Hill, co-chairperson with Mike Hildebrand of the branding initiative. "Brett has been very good to us and for us. We can't allow ourselves to

### Selling the city

This is one of a series of articles on the Green Bay Branding Initiative



LaViolette

### LaViolette sets sail on a new fund-raising effort

Doug LaViolette, owner of a consulting business known as Tenfold, also devotes much of his time to fund raising.

Last year, he helped raise funds to bring the Congressional Medal of Honor Society Convention to Green Bay. Today, he is leading an effort to raise money for a series of public events leading up to the formal military commissioning early next year of the USS Green Bay.



Mike Hildebrand, co-chair of the group working to develop an "authentic brand" for the Greater Green Bay area, stands near the statue of the legendary Packers player Earl "Curly" Lambeau outside the stadium named for him. The group hopes to promote the area for all that it has to offer.

The Business News photo by J.A. Robb

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cost, Doney said. Larger employers are now

doing new things and implementing longer term strategies."

Smaller employers don't have the same opportunities. "For those guys, it's still all about the premium, which is why HSAs have been so strong around here," Doney said. "That's about all they have — unless they join an association or chamber plan. Chamber plans, like the one in Appleton are growing because, well, there's no where else for them to go."

Bill Welch, president of the Appleton Chamber of Commerce said The Chamber Plus Health Plan, which has been in existence for 15

organization to join this effort — small or large. As we grow, our capabilities of greater influence on the marketplace will expand."

To manage costs, CEOs and business owners continued to focus on two basic strategies:

- 1. Forty-nine percent absorb some of the costs into their regular business operations,
- 2. Sixty-three percent shift some of the cost to their employees.

Other strategies include: reducing healthcare coverage (16 percent), changing health networks (5 percent), and changing insurance companies (4 percent).

said they considered discontinuing benefits.

"That's a last-ditch strategy," Doney said. "If 95 percent of the market offers health insurance and you don't, it can't be a good for recruiting, retaining, and growing your business. Then, where are you?"

A better strategy, Doney believes, is to invest as much time studying the health-insurance issue as CEOs do with other important issues in their business.

"I'm not sure people have taken the time to really study it," he said, "but that's changing, and we're seeing new thinking, but if 20 percent of the CEOs around here are considering dropping their

plans, we've definitely reached the breaking point."

Handling it all is a balancing act. It requires finding the appropriate balance of passing some costs to customers, shifting some to employees, educating the masses, encouraging consumerism, promoting wellness — and all the while keeping the ship afloat.

Wegge is a faculty member at St. Norbert College and a partner in IntellectualMarketing.

# Branding/Packers have joined effort to promote region

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fade into oblivion. As an honor to him, let's not let all that he gave us go to waste."

Instead, suggests Strong-Hill, a partner in the Godfrey & Kahn, S.C., law firm, "Let's talk about what else we have here. This is an opportunity while we're in the national spotlight to talk about who else we are."

The Green Bay Packers are among the many community leaders involved in the branding effort and they are fully behind the plan to promote the region for all that it has to offer beyond being a prime place for football, Strong-Hill said. "The coaching staff and players who come here need to know their families are going to be accepted and welcomed into the community, not simply because they are associated with professional athletes, but because they are genuine people."

She pointed to several new restaurants in the

Green Bay area, "not just franchises, but started from scratch." She listed Plae Bistro in Bellevue, Urban Frog in its new location in Green Bay, and the new Quincy's in Green Bay.

Strong-Hill pointed to cultural opportunities like the Pulitzer Prize photographic exhibit at the Neville Public Museum and a new Children's Museum scheduled to open in downtown Green Bay. The Oneida Tribe of Indians has unveiled its Veterans Wall on West Mason Street at Pleasant Lane.

"The Oneidas are part of the Greater Green Bay community and participate in almost every regional opportunity," she noted.

The Oneidas and the other members of the branding group looked favorably on the unveiling by Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle of the "Originality Rules" tourism platform at a recent tourism conference.

"Other entities, tourism or economic

development, cities, and villages can use it as a launching point," Strong-Hill suggested. "We were well on our way in Green Bay before that announcement but it dovetails nicely with what we are doing. We don't see any conflict and we can identify with that platform."

The branding effort includes widespread surveying by Matousek and Associates. Some of the early results suggest that those surveyed view Green Bay comparable to famous Hollywood stars. Strong-Hill offered these interpretations:

John Wayne: "Always on the right side, standing up for others."

Julia Roberts: "Very pretty. Takes care of others, down to earth, unassuming, and authentic."

Tom Hanks: "He can play any role, versatile and funny."

Strong-Hill said more survey answers are still being sought, and invites readers to go online to the branding Web site to complete the

brief questionnaire at [www.brandgreatergb.com](http://www.brandgreatergb.com). Matousek will compile and interpret and survey results in late spring.

The Initiative has pledged to raise \$1.5 to \$2 million over the next three years through private donations from the 11 local communities that will benefit.

Strong-Hill expects Brett Favre will be back in Green Bay, serving as "the elder statesman for the Packers." Like those other larger-than-life stars, and like the branding effort itself, Favre is viewed locally as the real deal, despite earnings and accolades.

The branding group can use his model and give it right back to the community.

"It's exhilarating to be in a meeting and see how everybody freely gives their impressions and is prepared to argue for what they think is right and edgy and what they think is needed," Strong-Hill said. "It's urgent that we remain authentic."