



For Immediate Release

Contact: Kathy Gillenwaters, 483-1321

Chamber Membership is Key to Small Business's Success

June 12, 2006 – Craig and Denise Roma knew when they'd found a good thing. The Florida residents and owners of Proforma DHJ Promotions were looking for a place to live – their business could locate anywhere.

“We wanted to live near the Smoky Mountains and had been searching for the right place. When we arrived in Oak Ridge, we knew this was where we wanted to put down roots,” says Craig Roma.

“One of the first things we did was to join the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce. Our experience has shown us that the Chamber is a very good source to connect with a great deal of other local businesses,” continued Roma. “We attended as many events as possible for the first few months: new member receptions, weekly coffees, the Business-to-Business Expo, etc. The great networking events set up by the Chamber enabled us to meet a wide potential customer base.

“We figured it would take us 2-3 years to establish our business in this community. We were wrong – our business grew by over 50% in our first year in Oak Ridge! We accomplished in one year, what our business plan called for in two years.”

Ben Andrews, Chair of the Chamber's Membership Campaign and General Manager of Oak Ridge Utility District said, “Craig and Denise Roma's experience in growing their business is a great example of what members experience as a part of the Chamber. The business contacts are an

*Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce
1400 Oak Ridge Turnpike
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
(865) 483-1321*

invaluable resource in growing a business as well as in strengthening the connection between businesses. Membership really does matter and really does make a difference.”

According to Lee Brooks, Chairman of the Chamber’s Board of Directors and Deputy General Manager of Wackenhut Services, Inc., “The Chamber functions not only as a way to make business contacts, but as the voice of the business and professional community. The Chamber works through a variety of task forces to meet the complex business and community challenges facing us today.”

In addition to the business benefit the Romas have experienced through their involvement in the Oak Ridge Chamber, they have experienced a personal benefit as well.

“Being new to Oak Ridge, the Chamber provided us one of the most important things we could have asked for...the ability to meet *a lot* of different people and make many new friends! It isn’t always about business. When you first move to a new town, you must also make new friends – people to have dinner with, people to hang out with on the weekends. We found the Chamber to be just as beneficial to us in making new friends as it was in helping us meet new potential customers.”

The Romas have spread the word to their families about how much they love Oak Ridge. “About 3 months after my wife and I moved to Oak Ridge, my brother came to visit with his family. They liked it so much that they bought the house across the street from us. They have been living in Oak Ridge for about 6 months now. My mother-in-law also fell in love with Oak Ridge during her first visit. She is now talking about moving here in the next couple of years. That says more about a town than I could ever put into words.”

Parker Hardy, President of the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce summed things up this way, “Not only do Craig and Denise have a story to tell about the positive impact the Chamber has had on their business, but they have also recognized and embraced the quality of life in Oak Ridge that the Chamber works to promote to newcomers. We are pleased to have them as a part of our Chamber of Commerce.”

The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce kicked off its membership campaign Tuesday, June 5. Team captains and their teams will be calling area businesses to share with them the benefits of membership and to answer any questions potential members might have.

For more information or to become a member of the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce, call 483-1321 or visit the Chamber’s website www.orcc.org.

The Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce is a Four-Star Accredited Chamber of Commerce with approximately 700 members.

###