

Newry business awards launched with optimism



■ 'SHOW CONFIDENCE': Dr. Conor Patterson, head of the Newry Chamber of Commerce

BUSINESSES in Newry were urged yesterday to put their best foot forward and "show confidence" in the future.

The call came from Dr. Conor Patterson, president of the city's Chamber of Commerce and Trade.

He was addressing more than 120 guests at the launch of the Greater Newry Business Awards, which will take place in the city on June 16.

The biennial awards competition will recognise the efforts made by businesses to promote Newry as a place synonymous with product quality, good service and

customer care.

The awards come against the backdrop of a recent dissident republican car bomb attack on the city's courthouse.

"This is a key time for Newry to put its best foot forward, to show its confidence in the best of its businesses and in the future of this great trading community," Dr. Patterson said.

"If your business is a local independent or multi-national, trading as a manufacturer, retailer or service provider, whether it employs two people or 200, there will be a category for you."

Newry mayor John Feehan said the competition provided

"a great opportunity" to celebrate the successes of the city's businesses.

Tony McAllister, representing principal sponsors Amey-Lagan Roads, said the awards initiative offered his company a chance to acknowledge the support it receives from the community.

■ If you would like more information or to request an awards brochure contact the Newry chamber office on 028 3025 0303 or email info@newrychamber.com. Organisations can also enter online at www.newrybusinessawards.com.

Easter boost lifts retail to 4-year high

RETAIL sales growth hit its highest level for nearly four years last month as firms received a welcome Easter boost, according to new figures.

The latest snapshot from the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and KPMG revealed the total value of sales surged by 6.6 per cent in March – the strongest growth since April 2006 – while growth hit 4.4 per cent on a like-for-like basis. But the BRC said the sales rise was only half as good with the effect of Easter stripped out, implying underlying sales growth of around 2 per cent, as "pre-election uncertainty" continued to hamper spending.

Helen Dickinson, head of

retail at KPMG, said: "The timing of the majority of Easter spending, falling into the March 2010 period but in April last year, has boosted this month's figures and makes year-on-year comparisons difficult. "Without this uplift a gloomier picture would have emerged – concern about the future continues to weigh on consumers' minds and the outlook for spending remains uncertain." Competition between supermarkets saw "the most intense March for eight years for promotional activity", the BRC said. Food price inflation has slowed in recent weeks as retailers fight to get shoppers into their stores.

SAGE & THYME ... YOUR RECIPE FOR SUCCESS



Thyme Training is one of the leading Sage accredited accountant partners in the UK. The Craigavon based company is the training division of Mary Mackle & Co Chartered Accountants. Mary explains what Sage Training can do for your business.

• Q What is your core business?

• A First and foremost we're an accountancy practice servicing a varied portfolio of clients for the past twenty years. An interest in Sage led me to undertake extensive training and now I'm a Sage accredited accountant partner. Thyme Training is currently offering certified training courses on Sage accounts and payroll at our training suite in CIDO Innovation Centre, Craigavon and other venues throughout Northern Ireland. We also specialise in on-site training scheduled to suit the client's requirements. The full range of Sage products are available on-line at www.thymetraining.com.

• Q What makes Thyme Training stand out from its competitors?

• A Thyme Training as a one-stop shop for Sage. Our team of accountants can give you pre-sales advice to help you choose the package best suited to your business. We offer substantial discounts and can include installation and full training and support packages.

• Q Many businesses already have a Sage system. Why do they need training?

• A Sage software can be an invaluable business tool when used correctly. However, we come across many businesses who aren't making the most out of the system and the records they present end up no more useful than a bunch of dockets in a carrier bag! We aim to help our clients get the most out of their existing Sage system or help computerise their manual records using Sage.

• Q The government has made it compulsory to file VAT and PAYE returns on-line. How can Sage be used to make these processes easier?

• A The most recent versions of Sage Accounts and Payroll enable users to input HMRC credentials into the programs and on-line filing can literally be done at the push of a button. We are currently running training courses to help clients get up to speed with on-line filing. The next course on PAYE year end filing is on 21 April.

• Q Who uses your service?

• A Our clients range from small firms who need help to overcome the day-to-day practicalities of running a business, to larger companies who recognise they can't afford to waste money on complicated or time consuming Payroll or Account systems. Noel Hegarty of The GAA Store www.thegaastore.com says deciding to use Thyme Training was one of the best decisions he ever made. "The training we had from Thyme Training was just what we needed – convenient, thorough and tailored to our business. The assistance with our Sage Accounts system has ensured its smooth and accurate running. We were particularly confident in the training as it was delivered by qualified accountants. Our staff have a more in-depth understanding of Sage and from a management perspective, I have the knowledge to use Sage to monitor the business more closely."

• Q What other services does Thyme Training provide?

• A Thyme Training provides Payroll Bureau and Bookkeeping services. We also provide staff for temporary and ad-hoc assignments.

• Q Where would you like to see Thyme Training in 10 years time?

• A I'd like to build on the reputation we already have as one of the top accredited Sage providers to businesses in the UK and Ireland. I'd also like to develop the good relationship we have with other accountants to the point where they choose Thyme Training as their preferred Sage training partner.

www.thymetraining.com

THYME training

sage Accredited Accountant Partner

"Sage and Thyme – your recipe for success"

QUALITY THYME

Customised training designed to get you up to speed with Sage.

- Appraisal of your current system.
- Recommendations on implementation of Sage software.
- On-site training
- Three months telephone support

SPRING/SUMMER 2010 COURSES

SAGE PAYROLL YEAR END

Book now for SAGE Payroll Year End Half Day Course
21st April at Thyme Training HQ, CIDO Innovation Centre Craigavon. 9.30am -1pm
Course Fee - Normally £120 - Special Offer £100 & vat

Call us to arrange an appointment if you would like a member of our Payroll team to assist you with filing on-line at your own premises

SAGE 50 ACCOUNTS

Bookings now being taken for a range of Sage 50 Accounts courses
Registration and information evening Tuesday 20 April.

CIDO Innovation Centre, 73 Charlestown Road, Portadown BT63 5PP

Course fee - Normally £260 & vat - Special Offer £240 & vat

Attractive discounts on the complete range of Sage products.
Visit our website or call us on 02838392999 to discuss your requirements.

www.thymetraining.com

In uncertain times, talk to a certain bank.

Northern Bank Limited Registered in Northern Ireland (RSB) Registered Office: Donegan Square West, Belfast BT1 6J5.
Northern Bank Limited is a member of Danske Bank Group.

Northern Bank