

By SABRINA GARRETT

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CedarStone Bank pledged \$1,500 to Historic Lebanon Tomorrow for the next three years at a luncheon presented by HLT and Cumberland University on Wednesday.

Following a presentation by Tennessee Main Street Program Director Kimberly Nyberg about the importance of main streets and town squares as symbols of civic pride, bank vice-president John Bryan said that he and CedarStone President Bob McDonald were committed to seeing the HLT program succeed.

"Our office is on (West) Main Street – we want to see this do well," Bryan commented.

Cumberland University President Dr. Harvill Eaton also encouraged patrons to support their past to promote a promising future.

"People in Lebanon are committed to this community. You got to know where you came from to know where you are going," he said, before unveiling the new HLT logo, designed by John Essary, with Executive Director Kim Parks. "I am so proud that Cumberland University is a key partner in what we are talking about today."

Nyberg grew up on a "main street in Nashville" – the popular Church Street area – as the daughter of a barber shop owner. She explained that the Main Street Program, of which HLT is applying to become involved with, is an economic development program "that pulls on our heart strings."

Main streets and town squares experienced a peek in popularity in the 1940s when downtown areas were "full of people" looking for shops and service. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, the introduction of interstates and trending suburbs pulled the masses away from downtown areas.

“We walked away from our American society,” Nyberg said. “In the 1970s, downtowns tried to compete with new malls.”

During this trial period, shop owners invested in tourism attractions and festivals to encourage locals to experience downtown. Nyberg mentioned three projects conducted in the Midwestern portion of the United States where experts investigated ways to pull interest back into historic downtown areas. Through their study it was discovered that the key components of revitalizing a city’s downtown were organization, design, promotion and economic restructuring.

“It comes down to business and jobs,” she said. “You are not building anything new – just making what you have better. We can have retail, service, art, culture – it is not a retail hub, but it is a place for retail.”

Parks encouraged attendants of the luncheon, which was held in the Arcade on the Lebanon Public Square, to learn more about Historic Lebanon Tomorrow’s goals of revitalization and preservation.

“It has got to be a total community effort,” she said.

Those interested in learning more about HLT are invited to email them at historiclebanon@cumberland.edu or go to their website, www.historiclebanontomorrow.org .