

# **Meridian State of the City Address**

**Featuring Meridian Mayor Tammy de Weerd**

**February 22, 2007 -- 4:00 pm -- Meridian Middle School**

**Title Sponsor: Saint Luke's Meridian Medical Center**

So what is it about a building, a symphony or dramatic performance that gives you the feeling that you are witnessing something extraordinary?

The creation of a masterpiece – or a masterpiece in the making – is complex and we can not distinguish the parts individually. When non-residents hear 'Meridian' the first thoughts they seem to have are of growth or traffic – but then they visit and say 'wow' I didn't know, and did you see...

Meridian is evolving – and it's evolving into something special. Every day here in Meridian, we are creating our future with each decision we make, with each building we erect, with each new business we open.

But there is more to it than these single acts. We must plan and manage; we must build with purpose; we must build with an eye to those who will inherit what we create, and we must create with care.

When an artist does something well, he or she creates art – a piece of beauty that never was before, and but for the artist, never would be. But when an artist -- a master artist-- creates art, a masterpiece results.

Think Van Gogh in oil, Michelangelo in sculpture, Shakespeare in drama, Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture....what these individuals have in common is the spark of artistry, the touch of the master. And they created masterpieces that we, today, can share...can experience.

Are masterpieces only to be found in art? I believe that the feeling that a masterpiece evokes can be found in the glory of a waterfall, the sound of a child's laughter.

§ It can be experienced with friends in conversation, dining and laughing together;

§ in the experience of watching your son or daughter singing a solo - for the first time;

I believe that masterpieces are all around us. Creations so beautiful, visions so luminous, that people want to be a part of them, want to experience them, want to help create them.

I believe that this city - this growing, evolving, beautiful city in transition - has the potential to be a masterpiece. And that each of us, every day in our own way, is contributing to the piece of living art that is.....Meridian.

I believe a community masterpiece must be built upon all of its parts, and is not complete without each of them, working in harmony. It's our partnerships and volunteers; it's our neighbors, friends and children. We cannot create alone.

Our masterpiece is made up of

- neighborhoods and businesses,
- schools and houses of worship.

It is composed of senior centers, fine arts and cultural events, and open spaces. It is made of city government, of community leaders, of businesses and residents.

We are this masterpiece in the making. We, the people, all of us - working together towards a common goal.

Four years ago, I announced my candidacy for Mayor on the foundation of

- enhancing communication,
- strengthening leadership among city staff,
- improving the transportation system,
- expanding and diversifying our economic base, and
- empowering our youth.

Today, I can tell you that there has been significant progress in these areas – as well as many, many others.

These are fundamental pieces in the City's mission of being a vibrant and caring community that is a premiere place to live, work and raise a family.

The state of our city is strong.

Our commitment to communication has resulted in an electronic quarterly newsletter, launched last Spring. We utilize tools such as utility billings, and our 'improved' user-friendly City website where citizens can find information ranging from the City budget - to City Council minutes - to a community calendar.

We have engaged process improvement groups of stakeholders, the bi-monthly 'Coffee with the Mayor', and held community planning charrettes to identify what our citizens want Meridian to look like.

We have implemented employee 'performance accountability' tools that have noticeably improved performance, customer service, and decision making. Our employees know where we want to go, and why.

In transportation, the Locust Grove overpass is under construction; Locust Grove Road is being extended north from Franklin to Fairview.

South of the interstate, Overland Road is under construction; improving the Overland/Hwy 69 intersection and adding lanes west to Linder.

Looking into the future, Phase One of the downtown transportation plan is moving forward – with construction to begin next year. However, a potential public/private partnership could start construction yet this year with completion in 2008! The sooner the better, I say.

We have found the difference a ‘temporary intersection light’ can make, at Meridian and Ustick – from awful to still bad...but much better.

Ten Mile interchange, as I noted last year, took an act of Congress. I can’t thank the Idaho Transportation Department, Senator Mike Crapo and, then Congressman / now Governor Butch Otter enough for their support. I can honestly say - I think I wore them out on this issue.

The project is alive and well; currently in environmental assessment and interchange design; with right-of-way purchase scheduled for 2008. GARVEE funding – critical to Meridian and the entire valley – is an integral part to completing this project. Our legislators’ diligence is absolutely critical to keeping this GARVEE money flowing. We encourage you to contact your representatives.

If you care about the traffic in Meridian – if you have ever complained about the traffic in Meridian – do not take GARVEE for granted. Call your representatives and stress your support.

I make it a priority to meet with new and existing businesses in our community on a regular basis. Economic development is critical in Meridian - diversifying our job base and bringing jobs is essential to the health of our community. Over the last three years we have had major investment in commercial/industrial areas adding 5.1 M square feet, and over \$339 M in market value.

The efforts of many have brought our community to a ‘premiere’ level of self-sufficiency and service.

Two programs or initiatives to engage and empower our youth have grown in program success and impact. You will hear more about Meridian’s Promise and the ‘award winning’ Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council later.

Meridian, true to its mission of being a ‘premiere’ place -- has been recognized as one of the nation’s 100 Best Places for Young People – both as a charter recipient in 2005, and again in 2006. I hope this message resonates with our kids...that they matter!

Recently, a group of teens from Centennial High School put together a video showcasing Meridian. Folks...this is Meridian through the eyes of our youth!

4-Minute Video Produced by Centennial High School Video Students

Meridian is a masterpiece in progress. It is a canvas, reflecting a number of changes, choices...and challenges. Everywhere we look, we can see the effects of our hard work over the last several years. We have much to be proud of, and much still to do.

We are all impatient and we want improvements to our systems to happen immediately; but to create effective, efficient and sustainable programs – it takes time, dedication, and the involvement of many. One of the greatest lessons I have learned - in addition to patience, which is not my strongest virtue – is that persistence is the key.

Any mayor - myself included - must have the strong and informed support of many other people within city government to do the work our citizens expect and deserve.

The Meridian City Council reflects a diversity of backgrounds and shows uncommonly good horse-sense --- (most of the time). The Council works to balance land use decisions between protecting the rights of property owners, the potential benefits, and the good of the community.

I enjoy working with our Senior Management Team. They challenge, problem-solve, create efficiencies, and are able to focus despite being pulled in a number of directions.

Special thanks to these gentlemen - and to our Directors - for your care and commitment to our community.

The City's elected and appointed leaders "walk the talk" by raising the bar in:

- customer service,
- responsive and quality safety service,
- and city excellence.

Now add our talented and dedicated city employees – our tools gain definition.

Let me give some examples.

Every morning, our spirits are lifted by employee of the year Nancy Radford. Nancy works in the City Clerk's office and fields thousands of calls each year – just under 21,000 in fact. I'm sure many of you have talked to her. This office is the 'hub' of City Hall and is busy preparing for a centralized filing system for the new city hall.

In the IT/HR/City Attorney office, enhanced technology throughout our City website has enabled citizens to pay their utility bills, complete employment applications, and file some police reports, all on-line. Staff has also developed an internal communication tool allowing city workers to access news and updates.

E-Government is alive and growing in the City of Meridian!

In our Public Works Division their efforts have not only managed and maintained proficiency during unprecedented growth, but have focused within as well, looking at structure, cross-training and project file management.

They have achieved GIS advances that will continue with even greater emphasis this next year. This tool provides a diversity of uses which cross departmental lines, allowing quicker and easier access to a multitude of information.

We are in the midst of the largest sewer system expansion in our history. The completion of the Black Cat Lift Station was nothing short of genius.

The building is 31 feet below ground level and is structured to withstand 3.5m pounds of 'upward buoyancy pressure' caused by the high ground water in the area – this is the same pressure a bridge support withstands.

We will complete Phase One of the treatment plant expansion this spring with Phase Two on track to double the capacity in 2008. Additionally, the master plan necessary to double that new capacity, handling 19 million gallons a day - or serving a population of 200,000 - was just completed.

Important to note, amidst all the construction and transition, our treatment plant staff received the highest safety award available to facilities in the Pacific Northwest.

Another indicator of excellence in the Engineering Division can be found in our water and sewer modeling, developed by staff and City Engineer Len Grady. Private industry comes to us to study our methods and modeling expertise.

Our water and sewer departments are keenly aware of their environmental and social responsibilities and are increasing their efforts to public education and conservation techniques - protecting the precious resources of which our children will inherit.

In the Special Services Division, our Planning Department takes planning and managing growth seriously.

We recently completed a comprehensive planning effort in south Meridian, in which public participation has been excellent. This collaborative plan detailing this distinctive area's future use is making its way through the public process.

Meridian has set the tone for integrating transportation and land use with a Ten Mile Area Plan unique to this region – more than 300 people attended the first meeting! The plan includes specific design criteria – a new approach to this type of planning in Idaho.

As we work with the County in these areas, we will continue to lobby for a TDR program - to allow for opportunities to create open space buffers between Meridian and our neighbors, where it is still possible to do so. I am pleased to hear, from Ada County Commissioner Woods, that this is important to the County as well.

We continue to work closely with our transportation departments – ITD and ACHD - in finding solutions to transportation-related challenges. We have challenges indeed.

There is a huge funding gap for improvements but an abundance of road needs. There is also a lack of viable transportation alternatives that extends the problem.

Meridian's central location accommodates the cross-traffic of the valley – a reality I am reminded of every morning as I pull out of my NW subdivision into a sea of vehicles from neighboring cities.

We are at the table - as always - working hard and advocating creative funding solutions. Partnerships are one solution.

The county's major public/private partnerships are found in Meridian. Winston Moore, Roger Anderson, Ron Van Auker, and David Turnbull have been very important partners – and 'key' to bringing infrastructure improvements; in some cases, years ahead of schedule.

A new and critical public/private partnership project will kick off this year to connect Eagle Road west to Locust Grove, by extending Pine Street. Our thanks to Dennis Baker and his 'Pinebridge' project; which will allow this to happen.

As a region, we must work together for system improvements – cities and counties. Our valley is a vast network of connecting roadways and highways. We can not isolate our own jurisdictions at the expense of an effective system.

To that end, I am pleased to announce that the City of Meridian and the City of Nampa have committed to coordinate land use plans and connect road corridors. We realize that continued growth can present problems not confined to one single jurisdiction and that people have a fundamental interest in the orderly development as a region.

The region just completed a 25-year long-range transportation plan, through the COMPASS 'Communities in Motion' process. We see this effort as a positive first step in implementing the plan and setting a process for others to replicate.

Thank you Mayor Dale – we look forward this process.

In our Building Department, we have seen a slowing in residential permits – however, Meridian still led the valley in housing starts with over 1500 in 2006.

Whatever the number, we focus internally on system efficiencies and customer service, keeping Meridian's process the most user friendly in the valley. We have reduced the numbers of signatures on Certificates of Occupancy and established a commercial 'early start' program.

Our staff understands the impact of delays.

We continue to see strong activity in the commercial/industrial area. We added over 2.1m square feet in 2006; 375,000 more than 2005.

Why is this important? In Meridian, we are taking a different approach to growth – we will target the industries and jobs we want to attract; and then plan the area surrounding them with the types of housing and services needed to support them.

We must focus our attention on the balance of jobs to houses. We have thousands of cars driving 'through' Meridian every day, going to work. Wouldn't it better to go 'to' than 'through'?

We can not build ourselves out of congestion. We need to bring the jobs closer to where the workforce lives; keeping our citizens living, working and shopping in Meridian.

The City's economic development efforts have blossomed over the last three years. We have made it far easier to navigate our municipal processes for new businesses and jobs, while remaining committed to building up, and retaining, our existing business community. We have an at-your-service attitude.

We are working hard to create a diverse economic base of primary and secondary business industries that can withstand the highs and lows in the economy.

Primary businesses are essential for our local economy because they import economic value and jobs to our city. We work hard to attract and retain these critical Meridian businesses such as: Citi Card, Zilog, Western Electronics, Crucial Technology, Computrol, PKG, Great West Casualty; Micro Tool 100, Blue Cross of Idaho, LP, MWI Veterinary Supply, Commercial Tire, Idaho Truss, Food Services of America, Capitol Distributors and many others.

A healthy economy and a growing population attract service businesses that enhance the quality of life in our city and provide a multitude of choices of dining, shopping, health care, banking, and entertainment. Businesses such as: 43 Degrees North, Carrabas, Blue Ribbon Bistro, Sierra Trading Post, A New Leaf 2, Lowes, Treasure Valley Dialysis, Idaho Elks Audiology, Spring Creek Manor, Banner Bank, and new branches for Farmers & Merchants, Key, and Wells Fargo; Majestic Theater and the expansion of Boondocks and Roaring Springs. Coming soon: Courtyard by Marriot, Kohl's, GI Joes, Harley Davidson, Fuddruckers just to name a few.

The City is committed to providing the environment necessary for businesses to succeed. For instance, we are looking to create a medical and health sciences district that targets job-specific industries, which will induce related secondary businesses to build there as well.

We anticipate that this district will serve the health service needs of our citizens and the region with cutting edge technology, research and service that this City – and this State - deserves and requires.

Our economic plan is working. Last year alone, we had 385 commercial permits issued with a market value of \$174M, and increase over the 2005 \$123M new construction value.

We remain committed to our valley's home-grown businesses. We have a number of success stories of small employers that have grown to medium sized, and a number of businesses 'headquartered' in Meridian making a difference - regionally, nationally and internationally.

Here are a few stories we found:

Jerry Frank started Petra Incorporated in 1993 with a vision and a small desk in his Meridian garage. Since that time Petra has grown to employ 100; with projects at Tamarack Resort, the Mission Aviation Fellowship project, the expansion at Blue Cross of Idaho. Petra will be opening their new 'headquarters' office this Spring, just west of Eagle Road. His company is a community partner, and is setting the example as a DrugFree Idaho workplace leader.

NW Bank Technology, 19 years in the valley, moved their headquarters to Meridian three years ago because of our central location; Conveyor Engineering, a Boise-based business since the early 50's, relocated their headquarters to Meridian in 2003. Several of their employees have chosen Meridian, since, as their home as well.

Our business community keeps citizens, in Meridian working and shopping close to where they live - painting a vivid picture of our 'Built for business, Designed for living' approach.

Last Spring, our City Departments and the Office of Financial Management took a focused and in-depth review of the cost of growth. Meridian already collects growth impact fees for parks, water, sewer, and roads (passing road dollars on to ACHD). Through this extensive review, we expanded our fees to include police and fire. Meridian now utilizes every growth tool the state allows. We thank our Impact Fee Committee for all their help.

We will soon complete a fiscal model for the City. This will provide the City Council information on how new development projects will specifically impact our general fund. The general fund supports three specific areas of service: police, fire, and parks.

Our safety services budget amounts to more than 80% of our general fund expenditures. In the last five years we have doubled our workforce in both of these departments.

We take our responsibility to maintain a portrait of safety and service seriously. Meridian remains one of the safest communities in Idaho, thanks to the men and women of the Meridian Police Department.

Our challenge is serving the motorists of the valley in our traffic services area. Nearly 55% of traffic citations were given to non-Meridian residents – demonstrating that Meridian carries the cross traffic and the resulting demand on our services is great.

For 2006, we had just over 2900 reported offenses; but saw a reduction of 5% in reported crime per capita as compared to 2005.

Our Community Services Division is a highly recognized piece of our 'safety' efforts. They received achievement awards from the Association of Idaho Cities and the National League of Cities for our:

- Police K-9 training facility, built through community partnerships; as well for the
- Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition.

Officer Schiehing, Lt. Lavey, Melissa Delaney, and Brenda Murdock are just a few of the many in the PD who make good things happen.

Our Police Department partnered with our citizens in a number of programs - this accounted for over 4500 volunteer hours in 2006! National Night Out involved 22 neighborhoods representing hundreds of neighbors getting to know each other and our safety personnel.

We are pro-active in keeping our community safe -- from our participation on the Canyon County gang task force -- to increasing the City's commitment, through the Mayor's Anti-Drug



Coalition, along with their 50 plus community members that volunteer their time, to educate youth and our workforce....to stay away from drugs.

Prevention and education will lower drug use, which reduces associated crime -- and keeps Meridian as the premiere place to live and work.

We have seen increased service demand and public outreach in the Meridian Fire Department as well, creating unique approaches and strokes on the canvas of service. They, too, have stepped up and met that challenge.

Last February, we opened our fourth fire station. Within months we saw a reduction in our average response time of a half of minute. We currently average 4 minutes and 37 seconds to respond in the city, with an overall average of 4.49 as a combined average for the city and rural district.

In early 2006, the Meridian Fire Department started operating its first Advanced Life-Support Engine Company, with a paramedic/firefighter on board to enhance service to the citizens of Meridian and surrounding rural district.

Adding paramedics to our engine companies was critical to expanding quality emergency care to our citizens we serve, as every second counts in a crisis. We were reminded of that fact by one visitor to Station 3; who brought in a plate of cookies and a story. She explained, she almost became a widow the day before.

But the crew of Captain Sam MacEvoy, Driver Lance Witt, and paramedic Chris Verkerk responded to her home and saved her husband's life. His doctor reported he was mere moments from death. Seconds do count.

The City works closely with our rural fire district - this partnership is critical. They are the drivers behind the construction of a new training tower; and in 2007 we will see construction begin on station #5 on N. Linder road.

Firemen do more than respond to fires and medical calls; they play an active role in assisting our Fire Prevention Coordinator. They do car seat checks, school presentations, and help with training at our safety center. They assist seniors with blood pressure checks and lead the campaign with our 'change out' fire alarm battery programs.

Supporting effective 'life and property' fire safety codes gives the department critical tools for public safety. In May, our firefighters responded to a call at Precision Craft on Broadway.

They found that the fire had been controlled by the building's fire sprinkler system. This mandated sprinkler protection system limited damage and allowed the plant to continue production.

The beauty of our surroundings is every bit as essential as the uses we derive from them; Meridian remains committed to enhancing the livability of our "masterpiece in the making" by preserving our open spaces and building parks.

The Parks Department opened 2 new neighborhood parks this fall to bring the total number of completed parks to 10. Another 64 acres, including the long-awaited Kiwanis Park, will be added by summer; the Meridian Youth baseball/softball complex is set to meet its target to open for tournament play in July.

A partnership between the 'Yanke' family – mother and daughters - and YMCA, opened up Homecourt YMCA last June; a 50,000 sq ft facility with four basketball and eight volleyball courts

The award winning, Adventure Island Playground, just keeps getting better; and underscores the difference a group of committed citizens can make! A new bay swing area was completed last fall, and coming this summer, a new water splash pad will be ready for play. A premier place to be!

Meridian's plans to be a leader in the national 'Step Up to Health' initiative promoting parks to seniors, creating teen outdoor programs, and the creation of other programs - that promote community health and livability.

We pledge that Meridian will be that premiere place to play and live for old and young alike.

Although the Meridian Senior Center is not publicly owned, the City partners with the center with grants to help where we can. We assist with transportation costs, and have doubled our contributions since 2004; we have helped to secure over \$150,000 in Community Development Block grants for needed projects there.

Another critical relationship is with the youth of our community. Will the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council please stand to be recognized.

This group is incredible – and keeps me inspired by their energy. The Chair of the MYAC, RoAnne de Weerd, is here to give an overview of their piece of Meridian's 'masterpiece in the making':

Mayor's Youth Advisory Council – RoAnne de Weerd, President

Thank you Mayor De Weerd (aka "Mom")

My name is RoAnne de Weerd. I feel very honored to be able to represent the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council as chair this year

This group of innovative and motivated teens consists of over 50 students from high schools in Meridian ages 14-18. We are from:

- Meridian High (go warriors),
- Mountain View,
- Meridian Medical Arts Charter,
- Professional Technical Charter,

- Centennial,
- Cole Valley,
- Eagle Academy.

At orientation the question was asked, "Do you have what it takes to step up to excellence and represent the youth of Meridian?" Well, ladies and gentleman, this group definitely has what it takes.

We understand and do not take lightly that we are the future's leaders as scary as that may sound. We want to take part in making Meridian a 'priceless masterpiece'.

The Youth Council was created: to engage the youth in our community in the decision making process and to have the opportunity to have a voice in our own future.

We take an active part in many city committee, such as:

Meridian's Promise, the Parks Commission, the Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition, Traffic Safety Commission, and the Historical Preservation Commission.

Keeping a healthy community is vital, that is why we serve on city committees. Not only are we part of the decision making team in Meridian, we also contribute all together hundreds of hours in community service.

This past year we have taken part in activities around the city. From the Boys and Girls Club's End of Summer Party, DrugFree Idaho's Youthfest, and the Scarecrow Festival, to raising 1500 pounds of canned food and \$5,000 for the Meridian Food Bank in our project Haulin' for the Hungry.

Recently we went to the library and read to children about Martin Luther King, Jr. on Human Rights Day. We also presented a puppet skit and danced with the kids.

No one can do everything, but everyone can do at least one thing – it adds up. Teamwork is key when it comes to special projects. Currently our council is working on a few projects that we feel need to be addressed.

Meth is at the top of our list. Every day we go to school seeing the destruction meth use has on students and their families. This needs to be stopped. So, in collaboration with Channel 7 and the Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition, we are organizing youth events throughout the month of March as part of the March Against Meth campaign.

This council has turned out to be a great success from how it was three years ago. Our efforts and contributions to the community helped Meridian win the 100 Best Communities for Young People designation two years in a row. We are beginning to become a dependable source to the community.

Just recently the council headed a sub-committee to help the Parks Department with its bicycle problems at the skate park. As a whole council, we came up with solutions and the Parks Commission is currently in the process of considering them all.

The Parks Department gives us an opportunity for our voices to be heard to help design parks. Right now we are working on designing the new Borup Park.

These are just a few of our past accomplishments and future goals, however, the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council would not have been able to succeed at the capacity that we do if we did not have the amazing support from Mayor de Weerd, Ron Coulter, Peggy Gardner, Shelly Houston, Jennifer Bokenkamp, Joey Schueler, City Council members; and of course, the community of Meridian.

Mayor De Weerd has put in countless hours to ensure that we have a voice that is heard and a guided vision for our community and future; and there have been other city leaders that have helped keep our group involved. The great community of Meridian has been open to supporting us and our projects, and looking to us for answers for the future.

For more information about our past and present events or how to get involve please visit our booth. This is a very short summary on the many events we have been involved in.

Thank you for letting us represent the youth of Meridian.

This is an incredible group of young adults that received state and national attention for their efforts. They are a diverse group that have different interests, vary in age; but have the common goal of wanting their voice heard and are involved in our community in a profound way.

I hope by now, many of you have heard of Meridian's Promise.

Meridian's Promise is focused entirely on our youth. Last year we launched our 'Promise Partner' program. The growing success of this program is another reason we were recognized as one of the 100 Best Places for Youth. Will our Promise Partners please stand to be recognized?

These partners demonstrate their commitment to providing one or more of the Five Promises to Youth in a number of different ways. We ask that each of you here today consider what role you can play in fulfilling our five promises to youth.

Caring adults.

Safe places.

Healthy start.

Marketable skills and education.

Opportunities to serve.

Another 'Caring Adults' promise program is the Mayor's & CEO's Kid's Book Club. This month, Micron CEO Steve Appleton gave our kids a 'priceless' gift.

He was a scheduled sponsor at the Meridian Library, to join me in discussion of 'Ella Enchanted'. Our book club started at 7pm. He knew he would have to travel and be in Virginia the next morning by 6am to conduct a tour of a Micron facility with President Bush. Not only did he participate in the event, share stories, and sign books afterwards – he showed the kids they were as important as the President and that 'leaders are readers.' That is a 'caring adult'!

Other CEO 'readers' have been: Larry Chetwood with Meridian Ford; Debbie Bennett with Beniton Construction; Gary Dyer of Blue Cross; Dennis Johnson with United Heritage – This program is only half way through!

Most importantly, the parents tell me that their kids are reading more than they ever have; and their test scores are showing it!

One of the City's efforts in the 'Healthy Start' promise is through the Mayor's Anti-Drug Coalition. An upcoming program of note has the valley joining in a unified voice that Meth and other drugs are not welcome...

30 second Anti-Meth PSA produced by Eagle High School Video Students

30 second PSA promoting upcoming March Against Meth events.

KTVB-Channel 7 is partnering with the City of Meridian and the Mayors Anti-Drug Coalition, DrugFree Idaho, and City of Nampa. The 'March Against Meth' is a campaign to raise awareness valley-wide of the issues our communities face because of substance abuse and the affects of Meth – and the cost to our communities. KTVB is bringing national expert and motivational speaker Milton Creagh to talk about this challenge. We hope you will join us on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

This effort, however, is about more than just one night. Other cities, businesses, places of worship and organizations are joining us in building events and awareness leading up to Creagh's finale event.

In Meridian, we will kick off the Response 'Dog Tag' program for our middle school students, with businesses giving discounts to celebrate their drug-free pledge. The Boys & Girls Club will start the 'Meth Smartz' program, and they will also hold a community health fair on March 20<sup>th</sup> at the Meridian club.

Cherry Lane Christian Church is hosting BSU player Marty Tadman to speak on March 16<sup>th</sup> at their Celebrate Recovery group. New Heritage Theatre will offer a 'sneak peek' in April of their newly scripted 'Tuned Out' response program that is solely focused on substance abuse.

We can't stop there. We all need to be part of the solution for our 'Healthy Start' promise to youth – for healthy communities; to fight this war that is bigger than we imagine. We have built a strong foundation here in Meridian, but we must keep the message alive and maintain the momentum for months and years to come.

Think about what you, your business, or organization can do.

The youth of the valley – and their Mayors - have stepped forward to ‘March Against Meth’ – the Mayor’s Youth Councils of Meridian, Nampa, Caldwell, Eagle and Wilder - through the Treasure Valley Youth Partnership, are coordinating a ‘Not Even Once’ poster contest for school clubs and youth groups with a cash award of \$1,000 for the winning entry.

The students are producing and will provide daily announcements March 1<sup>st</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> in high schools across the valley about the dangers of drugs.

They are also organizing a community rally and ‘march’ one hour prior to the Creagh event on the 21<sup>st</sup>, requesting ‘young and old’ alike to show their support. Step up and MARCH with us!

Our Promise to our communities. Meridian’s Promise: To our youth. To their Future.

What is your promise to youth? How can you join efforts with the sweep of the red brush on our canvas – a picture of promise to every child? We want our ‘red wagon’ displayed throughout our community, a symbol of hope and that we care. Be a Promise Partner.

Vocal Performance of “The Heart of Every Child”

The heart of our community – our downtown, is beginning to show the results of our planning.

The Meridian Development Corporation, currently being lead by former Councilman Shaun Wardle, along with the City are a solid team committed to energizing the downtown core.

Last year buildings were coming down, this year they are going up.

Construction will begin soon on a new City Hall that will utilize pieces of our past in the design of a building and plaza that will serve our community for generations. The remnants of the old Creamery building will be used to construct a public plaza we envision as a gathering place to meet neighbors and attend community events.

We intend to build this right. ‘Dirt is expected to fly’ by the end of March; with project completion August of 2008.

The City’s design guidelines and a people-friendly street-scape plan presented last summer reflect the vision of a downtown core where people want to be.

We have investors that desire to renovate old buildings that are not ‘beyond saving’, bringing new life and vibrancy for public use. The old McFadden and H&H buildings on the corners of Second and Broadway have been sold. You may have noticed that work has begun on McFadden building on the NW corner.

Then there are projects that where buildings can’t be saved; one of those was the old Double D Silo building on Main Street – demolished last year. Oaas Laney recently purchased the warehouse next door to this cleared site and will be re-designing a mixed-use, mid-rise project to incorporate their expanded space.

I am excited to announce one of the 'tenants' of this project and a large donation. Oaas Laney has committed to a donation of up to \$1M of in-kind and cash contributions towards project costs an approximate 24,000 square foot Boys & Girls Club facility.

This will answer a huge need in our community and kick off the capital campaign in a big way! The Boys & Girls Club of Ada County Board just recently accepted this offer and will be detailing next steps with Oaas Laney in the coming weeks.

We hope the community steps up and gives generously during this capital campaign. The current facility was at capacity within months after the doors opened in 2003; the need for more room is immediate. The Meridian's Boys & Girls Club has touched lives and changed possible outcomes one child at a time.

I am also pleased to announce our 'charter' Arts Commission members. This balanced, talented and creative group have been selected to develop a structured plan of 'excellence' to define and promote fine arts and cultural events, and recommend resources and funding mechanisms to City Council to enhance and coordinate efforts in this important area.

Meridian is rich in talent within our own city limits. The Arts Commission will have a number of groups they can work with and utilize as resources as they pull their plan together.

Our community has recently benefited from recent art-related projects such as the Meridian Gateway sculpture; and the recently donated artwork in Seasons Park by former Mayor Bob Corrie and his wife, Jerri.

We are sure to see more projects of this type adding to the character and giving value to our city entryways, and our parks and plazas.

I appreciate all the pieces and parts of creating 'community' – bottom-line - it's people and relationships that make things work. All over Meridian, people are working together and getting things done – and done right. They are creating a masterpiece right before our eyes.

It's our volunteers, the people who give countless hours to our city, our Chamber of Commerce, our schools and our places of worship, that provides the passion, the artistry, and the strong sense of community that makes Meridian a true work of art.

#### Legacy Award Presentation

Each year, the Mayor's Community Legacy Award goes to a citizen who demonstrates a long-time commitment to this community by volunteering, supporting and building a legacy for future generations.

This year's Legacy Award recipient fulfills that commitment and more.

He is no stranger in Meridian, and is most likely known by every person in this room. He has probably knocked on your door and welcomed you at some point - encouraging your involvement in Meridian in some way.

He has served Meridian, supporting and empowering youth, inspiring others to service, and building 'our community' through the Chamber, Kiwanis, city committees, and a number of other involvements.

He has welcomed new business and, supported existing ones, for 25 years. His legacy is found in our schools, through Kiwanis youth programs - that are community cornerstones; and also seen in projects like Generations Plaza and the City's Centennial project.

It's for these reasons, and more, that we honor Terry Smith, with our Mayor's Community Legacy Award. Your service, and generosity of spirit, inspire us all.

Terry will you please come forward?

In closing, creating a masterpiece, like building a community, requires time, patience, tenacity. It requires dedicated staff, a strong business community, top-notch education facilities, arts and culture, a vibrant downtown, involved youth, places of worship, entertainment and recreation. It offers choices – of where we want to live; where we want to shop; and how we can get there.

It also takes committed people who care. All of the parts combine to create the whole picture and reveal the masterpiece.

The masterpiece to be remembered is not created in a short period of time; nor should we expect it to be. A waterfall sculpted by nature over centuries and is ever changing. Changes to the physical shape are slow and not easily recognized, but the events of the change are numerous and constant. After all, the "Mona Lisa" took 4 years to paint, over 500 years ago.

The Meridian community is vibrant and alive with creative energy, passion and spirit - truly a masterpiece in the making. Today, you have heard and seen many players in this community. We take our roles seriously, as public servants and good stewards of the public trust.

We are committed to our vibrant and caring community that is a premiere place to live, work and raise a family.

It is essential to continue to work together, to communicate, and to think regionally and act locally, and understand that we are all co-creators of this masterpiece.

We remember, and take seriously, that a masterpiece is not created without learning from mistakes along the way – we are taking notes. Trust we will stay focused on the desired result.



It is a pleasure and honor to serve this community; I hold the importance of this - right behind my faith, and the importance of my family.

I hope the voters of Meridian support me this fall, allowing me to continue serving Meridian as your Mayor in the coming years and working with you all in creating our 'Meridian' masterpiece. My heartfelt thanks to you all.