

State/Region

Chamber of Commerce annual dinner held

By Shanna Shipman
Times correspondent

PEKIN — A marketing campaign attracting newcomers to Pekin and new roads allowing them to travel here are among the past year's successes celebrated at the Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner event last night.

More than 300 area business people, family, and friends attended the dinner held at Pekin Community High School, bidding farewell to the past year's board members and welcoming the new.

Retiring board president Ron Miller called the Chamber of Commerce transportation committee a "driving force" behind improvements to local infrastructure, most noticeably Veterans Drive, the finished portion of an extensive ring road project

a renowned Marigold Festival, in enhancing the lives of Pekin residents.

His bottom line: "Life in Pekin is good, and it is getting better."

This message is being portrayed on the local airwaves, too, in a \$48,000 marketing campaign put forth by the Chamber of Commerce marketing division.

Newly appointed chamber president Buster Hanley was eager to praise the campaign focused on the ad line, "Pekin, What a Pleasant Surprise."

Through the attraction of new residents to our community and new employees for local businesses, "We all benefit," Hanley said.

Speaker

After reflecting upon a year of hard work, attendees were reminded by keynote

speaker Todd Hunt, business humorist and self-confessed "recovering anal retentive professional," how to increase their effectiveness

while also recognizing the humor sprinkled throughout a fast-paced business world.

The key to Hunt? Communication, he said.

Claiming to be "anal retentive in the good way," and one of the 43,475,826, or so anal retentive professionals in America today, Hunt said, "If you are anal retentive, good for you.

If you are not, good for you, too. Just be who you are, because once we accept ourselves we become tolerant of all of those people out there

who can't communicate."

Included on the list are apathetic fast food employees and annoying telemarketers, parodied by Hunt with painful accuracy that brought knowing laughs from the crowd. Amid the laughter he taught golden rules of effective communication, such as "remembering where your listener is coming from" and not "forgetting to think."

Quoted from his collection of 136 "stupid signs" sporting brainless mantras like "This door must remain closed at all times," for example, Hunt aimed to prove that people are in fact not thinking. And he picked on his own kind, showing that

in the business world — where mailing codes are more significant than your name and common sense gets left in the dust in the name of productivity — we could all benefit from a little more attention to detail.

Hunt shared simple tactics and rules of business etiquette, perhaps illustrated best by the most annoying of daily interactions: voice mail. Excess verbiage is the culprit, according to Hunt, who left a frustrated, if not longwinded, but true-to-life, impersonation of a voice mail message. "You may leave a message after the beep — Duh!"

The point was not lost. Imagine what one could accomplish in the 240 hours wasted each year on voice mail alone.



Robert Stoops / Times staff

Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce dinner keynote speaker was business humorist Todd Hunt of Chicago, a "recovering anal retentive" on the east side of town.

Miller also touted the importance of certain "quality of life events" in Pekin, from the Fourth of July fireworks to