

### Come to downtown

To the Editor:

The Tri-Cities have long held great attraction and appeal to residents and visitors alike. Nowhere else can people find the combination of small-town America, Midwest ideals and work ethic, and natural and cultural resources that make the Tri-Cities so uniquely "us." In fact, it is that small-town America feeling and ambience that has drawn thousands of new residents to our valley.

And now, in an ironic twist, some of those same small town attractions – our independently owned "ma and pa" specialty stores and businesses that give the Tri-Cities its unique appeal – are in jeopardy. A combination of a continuing tough economy, increasing competition, high gas prices and the effects of multiple redevelopment and infrastructure projects have put

the hurt on many of the same businesses that drew so many of us to the Fox Valley.

How many times have we in the Tri-Cities been told "Your town is so charming. Welcoming. Appealing. Friendly. Special. Fun." There still is time to help ensure that our communities remain all of the above. Take the time to rediscover what drew you to or kept you in Batavia, Geneva or St. Charles.

Come explore your downtown. In St. Charles, for example, come see the progress made on the First Street redevelopment project.

The first milestone retail and residential building should begin occupancy in July. The Blue Goose has broken ground for its new, larger store and the new owners of Erik & Me and Gramp's Frozen Custard invite you to "discover them again ... for the first time."

Of course, many of your favorites, The Wine Exchange, Bull & Bear Tobacco Shop and

Carnival Snacks still are there. And in other areas of the downtown, come explore new stores such as Eliza Jane, Luxurious Suds, Lucky Dog, Hunter's Restaurant, Figo, Bicycle Heaven and Dawn's Café and Ice Cream Creations.

We all know the challenges presented by a construction zone, but wouldn't you rather confront those on a short-term basis than face empty storefronts downtown?

As my late father-in-law Owen Kane III said when he consolidated his auto dealerships in Aurora to one in Boulder Hill, "Drive a little, save a lot." His philosophy holds true today throughout the Tri-Cities.

You will be helping to save your community's unique and appealing downtown – the very attraction that helped convince you to invest in Batavia, Geneva or St. Charles.

**David W. Richards**

Executive Director Downtown St. Charles Partnership