

As we all get back to business after the holidays, with a new president in the White House, new representatives for our area in Congress, three new Orange County School Board members and a new Sheriff for Orange County, it is my hope that with these changes comes a renewed involvement of our citizens in their community and in their government.

If you are interested in learning more about the inner-workings of our local government, every spring the Mayor offers his City Academy, which meets every Thursday evening for 10 weeks and allows participants to learn about all aspects of City government—from Police and Fire to our Public Works and Parks Departments. For more information about when registration will begin, please call the Mayor's Department of Neighborhood and Community Affairs at 407-246-2169.

Another way to get involved on a municipal level is to apply to serve on one of the more than 50 City of Orlando Citizen Advisory Boards. Most City boards are created by ordinance to provide advice and recommendations to City Council on diverse matters of public concern. Some options include boards pertaining to zoning, municipal planning, housing codes, downtown development, the parks system, public art, historic preservation, building and fire codes. To see current vacancies or just to explore the different opportunities, please visit the City Clerk's website at [www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk](http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk) or call them at 407-246-2251.

On a lighter note, there are some great events happening around the City during the month of February that could also serve as ways to learn more about Orlando and all it has to offer. For example, if you would like to spend this Valentine's Day doing something a little different, Leu Gardens will be the setting of an outdoor swing concert on Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. For more information on this and other events taking place at this great City amenity, check out their website at [www.leugardens.org](http://www.leugardens.org).

From February 6<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>, United Arts of Central Florida presents Arts Fest 2009, which offers free arts and cultural events in many different locations throughout Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties. Events range from ballet and opera performances to film and visual art presentations. There is definitely something for every artistic taste, so please visit their website, [www.redchairproject.com](http://www.redchairproject.com), for the full schedule of events.

Also this month, the City will host its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Blues B-Q concert event on Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> from 2-9 p.m. The free event will feature Grammy award winning blues guitarist Johnny Lang as well as other national and local blues musicians. The event wouldn't be complete without many of our local barbecue restaurants serving up their tasty fare for purchase by concertgoers.

On February 25<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m., Mayor Dyer will be giving his annual State of the City address here at City Hall in Council Chambers. Please join me in listening to Mayor Dyer's vision for our City through 2009 and beyond.

Someone once said that only the owner of a business truly cares about its overall success. As a lifelong resident of Orlando, it is my belief that we as citizens own this City, and it is my hope that as owners, we can all contribute to its overall success through our everyday actions and attitudes. So thank you for your continued commitment to our community and for giving me the opportunity to serve you in this capacity.