

## LONG-TIME MEMBERS

# Community service a key to success of BMLA

Photo by Jim Dorsey Photography

By Ariana Kimes

When Baxter Miller joined the Chamber in 1988, he wanted to become a visible member of the Corona business community. Owner of BMLA, a landscape architecture firm, he knew it was possible to have a thriving business in his industry without the Chamber, but also knew that it would be difficult to make a direct impact on the community he served without being a member. He appreciated the fact, he says, that "the Corona Chamber is the only local organization whose only purpose is to promote business success."

Since becoming a member, his involvement has been immeasurable. He served as Chamber president (now called chairman of the board) in 1995, chaired many committees, assisted with the Corona Street Faire and Wings & Wheels fundraisers, and has attended nearly all of the Chamber's events. In fact, he confesses, "Over 20 years it is hard to remember everything that I had a leadership role in, but it was many."

When asked what he would want his fellow Chamber members to know about him, Miller described his upbringing and the examples of good business ethics which he has grown to model. "I grew up in Lompoc, which is a small agricultural town with a large military presence. The community had an influence from a group of business people who understood what was good for business and employees was also good for the City.

"The business owners went out of their way to keep business local and support the economy of their community. They believed as I believe that without healthy commerce



Baxter Miller at his office in Corona.

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the community will decline, putting at peril the qualities and values that make cities like Corona great."

Miller says that in moving to Corona, he and his wife, Debbie, immediately felt the similarities. "I decided that as a businessman I would stand up and fight for good business practices that promote healthy commerce. Taking up a leadership role in the Corona Chamber of Commerce seemed like the best way to accomplish that goal."

Miller has accomplished that goal and created a successful business in the process. BMLA is a landscape architecture firm with a passion for the natural and built environment. The firm designs landscapes for its clients through "respectful and creative collaboration to make that connection between earth and man through planning, design and construction management." It has completed several projects in Corona such as Santana Regional Park, the Eagle Glen parks and the redevelopment of North Main Street. The recognition BMLA has gained from these projects has allowed it to expand its work to projects throughout California and now internationally.

What has made BMLA so successful? Miller was clear about the two things he credits. "The first is my wife, Debbie. She has provided for the financial responsibilities of the business from the beginning. Without her business role, leadership and dedication to the community, little of what I have done would be possible. Second is our commitment to customer service. We provide our clients with expertise and professionalism, not ego. We have found it cheaper to hold on to our existing clients than constantly market for new clients."

Miller's personal business philosophy has certainly contributed as well. "Family first, community second, clients third," he says. "You cannot serve the last two if the first is not happy. My family has been involved in everything that I have done. They are known around the business community, and many clients know my Debbie and our kids. I hope some day to leave them a business to be proud of."

Addressing fellow Chamber members, Miller adds, "Whatever stage you are in your business life, you have a responsibility to make your community better. Always think about how you can advance commerce in Corona. Shop local, eat local, work local."

BMLA Landscape Architecture is located at 310 North Joy St. in Corona. To find out more about BMLA, visit its website at [www.BMLA.net](http://www.BMLA.net) or call (951) 737-1124. 🌐 📞

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