



## **GARY SYVERTSEN, OLYMPAK PRINTING AND PACKAGING**

My name is Gary Syvertsen and I am the President of OlymPak Printing and Packaging which is located at 847 Howe Avenue in Mora. I have been involved in printing and packaging since 1971 and have worked in all aspects of the industry since that time. I have two sons and five beautiful grandchildren. I like to spend summers in the Nisswa area and have a boat on Gull Lake. I joined the company in 2003 to head the OlymPak division. Our goal along with me and my production leaders is to grow and expand our business in the city of Mora.

Our parent company is Mello Smello, LLC which is a marketing company that makes fun products for kids. Our corporate headquarters are located in Minneapolis and we have another manufacturing facility in Grand Rapids where we make bags and trayliners for the fast food industry.

We are the second largest and only domestic manufacturer of Valentines in the United States. On our products we can display the US flag and tout "Made in the USA". OlymPak Printing and Packaging is the manufacturing arm of the company and we try to make as many products for our divisions as possible to keep the work in Mora. Some of our customers are WalMart, Target, Walgreens, Williams-Sonoma to name a few. We ship our products to as far away as South Korea as well as Canada, Mexico and South America.

We have been located in Mora since 2001 and up until recently not to many people knew what we made or produced in our facility. We hosted a Chamber visit a while back and everyone that attended stated that they really didn't know who we were or what we were for the most part. I am a strong believer in community and getting to know those in the community. We employ many people from the area and appreciate the dedication and work ethic that they provide. We want to be known throughout the community as an employer that provides a safe and clean work environment and the opportunity to grow in the company.

My interest in the Chamber was to work with and meet fellow business people that will work to develop a strong business community. To help to strengthen the city of Mora as a place where people want to bring new business and be a part of the fabric of the town itself. We want to give back to the community and establish ourselves as a company that offers opportunities to the citizens of the city and the county. I just joined the Chamber and look forward to getting involved in the Chamber and hope with my fellow members to make a difference over the next few years.

## **NANCY HELMBRECHT, DANDELION FLORAL AND GIFTS**

*I wanted to be a director for the chamber because I feel it is important for people to join together to do what we can return the town of Mora back to the strong business community it used to be.*

*I was born in Mora, but grew up in the little town of Warman. It once was a town with a store and gas station, black smith shop, thriving granite quarry business (there are 5 or 6 quarries around the town), a church, and a small country school, which I attended through the 6th grade.*

*For seventh grade, I rode the school bus an hour to the big Mora High School. Mora was thriving then with several grocery stores down town, two drug stores, several clothing stores, restaurants, an appliance store, the Crystal, Stenstrom's Jewelry Shop, the hardware stores, a shoe repair shop, a popcorn stand on main street on Friday nights that had the best popcorn, and many other businesses. The town was doing well.*

*During the summer before my senior year, Mom, Dad and I moved to Mora. It was a difficult decision as Dad was a milk truck driver (a country boy!), but Mom wanted to be closer to everything in town. And so changes happen.*

*Some time along the way, Highway 65 was changed to bypass Union/main street. Obviously that brought change.*

*After I graduated, I dated and then married a classmate, Mike Helmbrecht. He went to Pine Tech, and then we, like most graduates of Mora, went to the big city where we could make more money. That still seems to be the trend for Mora graduates.*

*We moved around many times in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area - following jobs, always trying to improve our financial situation, but Mora was always our home. So one day we came to Mora looking for a pop-up tent, and bought a cabin on Snake River. In 2000, it became our home. And so, we are back in Mora, loving the warm, friendly people that know us and what we do. Funny, that's was one of the things we didn't like when we grew up.*

*But now Warman is just a tiny residential area. The quarries are no longer swimmable, and the stores, etc. are gone. Only the country church where I went to Bible School remains.*

*And downtown Mora is struggling. There are empty buildings and tired people. Highway 65, the internet, and the discount stores have taken their toll.*

*But there are some of us that really want to revitalize the main street, and I believe it can only happen if we gather together with ideas, time, labor and whatever else it takes. Statistics show that if the downtown of a community dies, so does the town. It should be important to all the people and businesses in the town and surrounding area. Many towns around us are dependent on what we have, and with the gas prices as they are and probably will be, it is important to create a close community that supplies many of the items people need. I know many people have worked at it many times before, but we can not give up.*

*I wanted to become a director for the chamber, because it is important to me and I feel it is in the best interest of all of the people in Kanabec County and the surrounding area to keep Mora alive.*

*My thanks to the Chamber for giving me the opportunity.*

*Nancy Helmbrecht, Owner  
Dandelion Floral & Gifts  
Downtown Mora*