

## Questions and Answers with Meg Salyer

*Automobile Alley celebrates a "Decade of Decadence"*

**Q:** Automobile Alley will celebrate "10 Years of Decadence" on Feb. 8 when Chocolate Decadence 2007 is held at the Hudson-Essex Office Lofts. How was this annual fundraiser first thought up?

**A:** Ten years ago, February was a very quiet month for events. The (Automobile Alley Association) board was looking for a signature fundraiser, and I think during a brainstorming session it was Rand Elliott who suggested the idea of a Valentine theme. What better to serve than yummy chocolate desserts paired with a bubbly glass of champagne — or a deep, rich merlot?

Live Jazz was the next obvious addition. We were anxious to showcase the exciting redevelopment in the district, and Nick Preftakes generously offered the Hudson-Essex Office Lofts as the venue. As the event has developed, we've had such fun incorporating our signature neon letters — and the beautiful red heart logo crafted by Kathy Reynolds. For all ten years, Mercedes Benz of Oklahoma City had been the lead sponsor, and Samuel Gordon Jeweler's has donated the featured door prize.



**Meg Salyer**

Today's Q&A is with the co-chairman of Chocolate Decadence, a fundraiser for Automobile Alley started a decade ago.

**Q:** What do the proceeds go to?

**A:** The proceeds of the event have been used for a number of projects throughout Automobile Alley. One of the most visible is the beautiful street furniture that was placed along Broadway. A portion of the cost was funded through the Business Improvement District, with the remainder paid for with event proceeds. To celebrate the holiday season, we have commissioned a series of neon letters and Christmas ornaments that line the windows on Broadway.

Most recently, Automobile Alley contributed the matching funds for an ODOT Enhancement Grant that created the Centennial Gateway at the 6th Street exit from Interstate 235. As we look to the future, we hope to create a similar gateway into the district at NW 10th.

**Q:** What are the most significant developments under way along Automobile Alley today?

**A:** Take a drive down Broadway today and you will see a couple of fabulous projects underway. At the SE Corner of 10th and Broadway, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation is developing a former surface parking lot owned by Kerr-McGee. Construction is well underway on their very impressive new headquarters building which will be a great addition to the District. Just a block south, also on the east side of the street, a major renovation of the Cadillac Building is almost complete. This terrific project will be home to the Oklahoma City Ballet Conservatory. Another recent announcement was the development of the historic Buick Building into Red Prime Steakhouse.

**Q:** What's in the future for Automobile Alley?

**A:** I would expect, in the near future, to hear a couple of major announcements: relocation of a corporate headquarters to Broadway, and one, if not two, new restaurant locations. I think we may also see some fun retail — all of which will contribute greatly to the vitality of this mixed-use, urban neighborhood.