

# The 2012 State of the Chamber Report

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**2012**

# THE 2012 STATE OF THE CHAMBER REPORT

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## THE SUCCESSFUL ACQUISITION OF FUNDS TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS

The prior year, 2010, was noted as the 'year the Chamber was officially reestablished'. With the legalities settled, i.e. incorporation, non-profit status established legal location and mailing addresses, By-Laws, etc. the Chamber was able to focus on implementing programs aimed at the economic development and promotion of the Town and County of Saguache. Several milestones were accomplished in fiscal year 2011 as noted below.

1. Chamber Participation in the Memorial Day Parade
2. Expanded the Board of Directors from four to five Directors per provisions provided for in the By-Laws
3. Applied for and received the first ever Saguache County Sales Tax Grant
4. Applied for and received the first ever Saguache County Tourism Grant
5. Developed the first ever Marketing Plan
6. Supported several important programs and events in Town including
  - a. Rural Philanthropy Days- Sponsor
  - b. Wacipi Pow Wow – Sponsor
  - c. Fall Festival – Participant & Information & Product Sales booth
7. Exceeded Membership recruitment totals by 25% resulting in over 31 Chamber members. Up from 16 during the previous year.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2012 MARKETING PLAN

One of the key accomplishments was the development of the Saguache Chamber of Commerce 2011-2012 Marketing Plan. This plan, which is still in use, helped identify and target different customer segments such as, visitors, travelers, hunters, event goers, etc. who visit the Saguache area and contribute to the local economy. Once identified, several methods were researched to determine how to reach out to these

different customer groups. These included such items as billboards, radio advertisement, internet promotion, print advertisements, and even television.

Once these various customer segments and methods were investigated the Marketing Plan moved these results into the Marketing Plan Implementation section. Here the Board evaluated priorities and developed a project plan and schedules to execute the marketing and promotion of the Town and County of Saguache.

Chamber members drafted print advertisements, radio spots, and roadside banners, Saguache promotional gifts (t-shirts, hats, etc.) and updated packets of materials to new members. The funds from the grant provided assistance to funding the following activities and the advertisements that resulted were used to promote several Saguache area events such as; Rural Philanthropy Days, Fall Festival, the Wacipi Pow Wow and Big Game hunting. The following SLV businesses were engaged to produce various advertisements and promotions.

- KSLV Radio spot
- KBVC-FM Radio spot
- Valley Publishing
- Mountain Mail
- Accent USA
- KRZA Public Radio
- Saguache Crescent

Funds were used to provide a full page advertisement in the Wacipi Pow Wow Program promoting Saguache and welcoming all those who came to attend and participate in this event. A color, quarter page ad did the same and was included in the San Luis Valley Rural Philanthropy Days 2011 Program as well. Radio advertisements and interviews were held on local radio stations and local publishing businesses provided further promotion and information to local and visiting readers.

The Chamber also developed and purchased t-shirts, sweatshirts, and caps with Saguache designs and lettering. The Chamber sold nearly \$600.00 worth of this advertising that is being worn by locals and visitors alike. This ongoing advertising continues to promote the County.

In recognition of the importance that big-game hunters play in the local economy, the Chamber marketing implementation team developed two roadside banners that were placed along the highway on either end of town promoting elk hunting in the nearby mountains. The “Got Elk” banner and the “Welcome Hunters” banners were popular additions to the area during the fall.

## **CHAMBER MEETINGS & BUSINESS CONDUCTED**

During the year the Chamber continued to have the regular General Membership meetings on the first Tuesday of every other month. The Board of Directors also tried to meet every month in between the General Membership meeting. During these meetings discussions were focused on the grant applications

process, the implementation of the grant activities after award, the monitoring and maintenance of the Chamber budget and budget activities, necessary administrative requirements for running the Chamber, the review of established committees to help run Chamber business, and reviewing various items that were brought to the Chamber for endorsement from third parties

A proposal to modify the Chamber meeting schedule was submitted during the Summer of 2011. Given the importance of the various summer events it was suggested that a regular Chamber meeting be held monthly instead of every other month to keep the event volunteers and suppliers up-to-date on planning, acquisition of needed items, and to maintain good lines of communication. As such a General Meeting was held during each of the summer months in 2011. Also during late winter a General Membership meeting was cancelled due to the lack of activity and the availability of members during the December holiday period. Given the seasonal nature of the business activity for the Chamber, consideration for a modified meeting schedule is underway.

As the second official fiscal year of the Chamber came to a close there were several items the Chamber should be proud of. The increased membership is an indication of the success the Chamber is having. The radio advertisements, the public service announcements, print advertising, etc. is bring more recognition to the Town and County demonstrating that the Saguache Chamber of Commerce is a legitimate force in the area.

## VISION FOR 2012

Looking forward for the year the Chamber has much to accomplish. The Chamber looks to continue to increase its membership base to not only fund the many programs and activities planned for in 2011 but also to implement the tasks. All the efforts require planning and execution by volunteers. The Chamber member-volunteer hours are critical to spread the effort out to a manageable level.

The Chamber budget plan assumes the acquisition of additional grant funds to continue to implement the activities identified in the 2012 Marketing Plan. These funds will be instrumental in the marketing and advertising efforts planned for the year and, again this year, Chamber members will be needed to help design, lead, and execute the plan. This will involve working with graphic artists, publishers', the public media, etc. This will all need to be started immediately this spring in order to get our message out in a timely fashion for the summer and fall.

The Chamber wants to begin execution of our Ribbon Cutting and Business Recognition program this spring. This will require additional resources and planning with Town leaders in order to promote and recognize Chamber businesses. This activity never got underway in 2011 as desired and its implementation may provide the needed incentive to get more members and more membership involvement in the many Chamber activities planned for 2012.

Two major events the Chamber has endorsed this year are the 2012 Wacipi Pow Wow and the traditional Fall Festival. Both of these events take place in September and will bring hundreds of Valley residents and tourists to our Town. The Chamber needs to be ready to promote and support these events later on this

year. This year the Chamber has been invited to work closely with the Town and the Saguache Recreation Board to partner on the Fall Festival. The Chamber is excited about this partnership hopes to grow and promote this event as the Keynote San Luis Valley event for the Town of Saguache.

In order to promote entrepreneurial spirit in the County's youth the Chamber has begun a scholarship and support program to provide funds to students, classes, and schools to foster a business mindset and help provide opportunities for our youth to live and develop businesses and business opportunities here in the San Luis Valley. The definition and planning for these "scholarships", "awards", and "internships" are still being worked out. The goal for this year will be to have these defined and ready for implementation to begin at the start of the new school year in the fall.

In summary, the Chamber has accomplished much in the fiscal year 2011 and thanks to the hard work of our membership the Chamber is now ready to start in earnest to reach out and implement and support even more programs and events in 2012. Most notable is the planned partnership with the Town to provide support, resources, and leadership for the Fall Festival.

The Chamber seeks more members and more participation from anyone who is interested in promoting the mission and purpose as stated in the Chamber By-Law. As a 100% volunteer, non-profit organization the Chamber is only as strong as the members who volunteer their time, skill, and effort to the overall purpose. The purpose of the Chamber is "to promote the business community, to organize civic functions, to provide community services and to encourage tourism and economic development within and for the Town of Saguache, Colorado and the surrounding community, and help promote Saguache County."

Membership in the Chamber is not limited to those who own or run a business. The Saguache Chamber membership is open to one and all.

2012 should be a year of hard work and exciting new endeavors for the Chamber with high hopes for providing renewed awareness of the many unique features, businesses, and activities found in the Town of Saguache, Saguache County, and the entire San Luis Valley region.

Respectfully submitted on this date, April 10, 2012

Board of Directors:     Chris Geydesen, President  
                                  Barry Van Sant, Vice President  
                                  Darryl Reinsel, Treasurer  
                                  Caroline Wolfgramm Irwin, Acting Secretary  
                                  Vacant, Member-at-Large