



2018 STATE OF THE CHAMBER
THE WORK CONTINUES

CONTINUE TO GROW

2017 saw the Chamber continue to grow and evolve as the largest community service organization in Saguache County. Membership numbers continued to hover near 70 members again in 2017. A great accomplishment for a town of less than 500 citizens. Our premium membership levels continue to grow within this member total, demonstrating a continued growth in businesses with the Chamber and incrementally adding more revenue to our membership totals.

Once again, the Chamber received grants from the Saguache Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to help fund the advertising, marketing, and operations of for the three annual Chamber events: The Hollyhock Festival, The Art Festival, and the Fall Festival & Quilt Show. The BOCC also contributed to the Chamber's annual marketing project targeting San Luis Valley (SLV) related publications and Internet sites in order to promote the Town and County of Saguache. The Chamber spent over 60% of its annual budget promoting the town and county, inviting people to come shop, play, and live in our beautiful rural community.

THE ONGOING CHAMBER BUSINESS EFFORT

Generally speaking the "Chamber Year" begins in April of each year when the Chamber President announces the results on the annual Chamber elections and then gives the Annual State of the Chamber presentation to the membership.

The 2017 Chamber year had two Board positions up for election. The two positions were filled by Chamber members, J. Byron Williams and Theo Boudreaux. As dictated by the Chamber By-Laws, all Board members met prior to the April meeting to discuss the assignment of each Board member to an Officer Position. The resulting assignments for the 2017 Chamber year were as follows:

- President – Barry Van Sant
- Vice President – J. Byron Williams
- Secretary – Carita Ginn
- Treasurer – Jean Collier
- Member-at-Large – Theo Boudreaux

Each month Chamber members meet to discuss current events, Chamber events and plans, and to hear from various invited speakers who share their background and passion for the Town of Saguache, Saguache County and the SLV. The General Membership meetings are designed to be informative and interesting social events. The Chamber Board updates members on their latest meetings to ensure members are aware of the items and issues the Board is working on. The Chamber Officers provide updates on any items related to their office, and our invited speakers cover a wide range of interesting topics that are uniquely targeted to our Chamber members and non-member audience.

Our Chamber Speakers in 2017 were:

1. Mr. & Mrs. Dee & Lee Bates – Mill Creek Ranch at Old Cow Town
2. Mr. Eric Grossman – Mayor, Creede, The SLV Branding Initiative Project
3. Mr. Darryl Reinsel – Owner, Darry Reinsel Home Improvements
4. Ms. Lorraine Quintana, Owner, Big Valley Motel and Wigwam Hair Salon
5. Ms. Holly Anderson – Area Director, AirMed Care Network
6. Ms. Liza Marron – Executive Director, SLV Local Foods Coalition

7. Mr. Roland Gyallay-Pap, Development Director, Saguache County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development
8. Ms. Brenda Garcia – Owner, Bear Claw Computer Services and Westwind Cleaning Company
9. Mr. Travis Garoutte – Superintendent, MVS School District RE-1
10. Mr. Steve Stewart & Ms. Cathy Kent – Owners, The Saguache Hotel
11. Ms. Laurie Vigil – Community Coordinator, HEART of Saguache/KV
12. Mr. Ken Frye – Chapter President, The Old Spanish Trail Association

Also, the Chamber Board met at least once a month prior to each General Membership meeting to discuss the upcoming meeting and any other issues or initiatives in the works.

NEW PROJECTS, POLICIES, INITIATIVES, ETC. ACCOMPLISHED DURING THE 2017 CHAMBER YEAR

THE COWBOY & THE HOLLYHOCK

In 2017 the Chamber went through an extensive review and development process to register the Chamber logo, known as the Cowboy & the Hollyhocks, with the Colorado Secretary of State. This trademark registration protects the use of the logo for next five years within the State of Colorado. This milestone is a great achievement for the Chamber as was deemed necessary due to extensive brand recognition the Cowboy & the Hollyhock logo has attained over the last few years.

Also, as part of this effort, the Trademark Committee also developed prototype contracts for both Retail Sales and Consignment Sales of Chamber products. This enables 3rd party resellers to stock and promote the sales of “Standard Chamber Products”. All standard chamber products can be identified by the use of the Chamber logo displayed prominently on the product e.g. cups, caps, t-shirts, scarves, etc.

NEW AND IMPROVED CHAMBER WEBSITE

After 10 years, and late in the 2017 Chamber year, the Chamber released a new and improved website. Efforts began on this project early in 2017. As requirements were gathered and resources acquired the Chamber Board formed a Website Re-do committee in the Fall. After a full day design review the committee felt that the necessary ideas and requirements for the new web site were adequate enough to search and hire a professional website developer to transition the original website to a new development platform and software environment. Once moved, work began on the new website while operating in parallel with the original site. In March 2018 the new website was announced and made available to the public.

THE SAGUACHE SENIOR CARE CENTER INITIATIVE

The Saguache Chamber, for the first time in its history, and after extensive vetting and review, spearheaded a funding support campaign for Valley-to-Valley Senior Care to raise money and garner community support for a new senior care center on the outskirts of the town of Saguache. This Care Center will provide daytime services for the elderly and their families in the area. Essential services are offered that will greatly enhance the quality of life for the elderly. The new care center is also going to provide 24 by 7 elderly care with six rooms available for those needing full time care.

This is the first time the Chamber has “adopted” a major cause throwing its full weight at this initiative in recognition of the need and value this care center can bring to our community. As of this writing,

progress is being made. Grant funding, in-kind support, and the Chamber funding program are all working toward making this happen. The Chamber is hopeful that these efforts result in the groundbreaking and construction of this facility in the 2018-2019 timeframe.

THE WESTERN SAN LUIS VALLEY TRANSIT COMMITTEE INITIATIVE

In early 2017, the Chamber learned of new developments within the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to bring bus service to the San Luis Valley. As a remote community, with few services, it was a natural fit for the Chamber to pursue CDOT about this initiative and investigate the possibilities of bringing transit service to the important Gunbarrel (Hwy. 285/Hwy. 160) travel corridor. As such, working with the Town of Saguache, the Town of Center, the City of Monte Vista, the Town of Del Norte, Rio Grande County, and Saguache County, the Chamber has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with these entities to create the Western San Luis Valley Transit Committee and submitted a request for a grant from CDOT to conduct a study of the Gunbarrel corridor. Neighbor to Neighbor, the 501c corporate owner of the Chaffee Shuttle in Salida, has agreed to be the fiscal agent for this effort. The goal is to gather the data needed to impress upon CDOT to include this travel corridor in future implementations of the Bustang Outrider service, and to provide data to third-party providers who might be willing to establish smaller shuttle services to our town.

OTHER IMPORTANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Chamber Officially took ownership of the Christmas Decorations project at Otto Mears Park and purchased many new lights and decorations and decorated the park.
- The Chamber updated and released the new Saguache Business Tear-off Map
- The Chamber's new Product Refresh Committee had its first-ever release of a new Standard Chamber Product line
- Helped Support the Creation of a new SLV-wide Chamber Coalition
- The Chamber wrote and released its first-ever Chamber Position Statement to address the unfortunate turmoil on Saguache Town Board
- Chamber entered into an agreement with SLVFD to open the first-ever beer garden at the Fall Festival & Quilt Show
- Chamber sponsored the first Ribbon Cutting ceremony in several years
- Working with Mountain Valley School the Chamber has begun videotaping Chamber Speakers

LOOKING AHEAD

BIGGER & BETTER FESTIVALS

Again in 2018, the Chamber is acquiring funds and has already established festival committees to continue to grow and promote our festivals as a keynote feature of what we do. All of our committees are staffed with dedicated and experienced volunteers who the Chamber has worked with to identify improvements, strategies, and funding requirements to make the Chamber of Commerce-presented-festivals the best they can be. The Chamber believes these festivals are essential, in that they serve all components of our mission to *"promote the business community, organize civic functions, provide community services, encourage tourism, and economic development"*.

FORMAL TRANSITION TO APRIL TO MARCH FISCAL YEAR

After 10 years of operation as a Chamber, it has become evident that the real Chamber "year" is from April through March of the following year. This falls in line with the activities "life-cycle" of the Chamber

as well as the funding model of the Chamber. As such, during fiscal year 2018, the Chamber Board of Directors will be working with our Treasurer to transition our annual budget from a calendar year fiscal budget to an April to March fiscal year.

REVIEW THE MEMBERSHIP MODEL TO POTENTIALLY INCREASE REVENUE

With the advent of the new Chamber website, the Chamber will now be able to measure the success of the website and determine which pages on the site are used the most. With this additional data there may be opportunities for members to purchase a higher-level of membership to create more exposure for their businesses. Likewise, there may be opportunities to sell advertising on the website. As such a committee to review the membership levels and rules is planning to meet in the fall to review this data and determine if the Chamber can raise more revenue through its website. Ultimately the Chamber Board would like to reduce its dependence on grant funding to fund its mission.

WEST SLV TRANSIT STUDY PARTICIPATION

The Chamber President is the project manager for the West SLV Transit Study, should it be awarded to the West SLV Transit Committee. As such, the Chamber will be involved in acquiring a transit consultant and monitoring the progress of the selected consultant on the study. This effort should be ongoing and concluded sometime in 2019.

SAGUACHE SENIOR CARE CENTER PARTICIPATION

The Chamber will continue to monitor and support Valley-to-Valley Senior Care in the pursuit of this important project.

CONCLUSION

On a sad note, the Chamber year was marred by the loss of one of our most devoted supporters, Ms. Kate Vasha. Ms. Vasha was not able to devote a lot of her time to the Chamber, but she was always an ardent supporter and she could always be relied upon to back the Chamber members and mission. Ms. Vasha was a powerful force in Saguache government and helped establish many important activities that are still vibrant and active today in our town. She will be greatly missed.

It was a busy year. Our festivals were bigger and better than ever. Our Board and Committees tackled many new important business problems; creating new policies and business practices to help smooth the way for future Chamber Boards and members. The Chamber took on major economic development related initiatives that should bring more jobs, business and services to the community; as well as additional revenue to the town and county.

But once again we must recognize the selfless sacrifice of our members own personal time and money contributed each year to make these things happened. Again in 2017, the Chamber members and other community members donated over 1400 hours of effort into our community putting on events, seminars, and donating time and monies to needy individuals, businesses, and organizations.

The Chamber is entirely run by volunteers. The level of effort contributed by volunteers in 2017 is a testament to the community. However, in order to achieve our goals of 2018 to get bigger and better and to expand our outreach and services, the need and importance of volunteers continues to grow. There are current openings in several areas identified in the Chamber Roles Matrix where more help is needed. Please consider becoming a volunteer and assuming one of more of these roles. The Chamber volunteer is the real hero of this organization and we simply cannot do it without you!

Thank you for another great Chamber year and we, the Board, look forward to working with you to make 2018 another great year.

Sincerely,

Barry Van Sant, President

J Bryon Williams, Vice President

Carita Ginn, Secretary

Jean Collier, Treasurer

Theo Boudreaux, Member-at-Large