



2019 STATE OF THE CHAMBER SPREADING OUR WINGS

FLYING TO NEW HEIGHTS

The Saguache Chamber of Commerce has now completed its twelfth year of operation and 10 years since its re-incorporation in 2009. Since our first meeting, when six individuals sat around a table in Anne Nielsen's old real estate trailer-office on 4th Street, the Chamber has grown to over 60 members each year and has become a go-to community-service organization for the Town of Saguache and surrounding areas.

The 2018 Chamber year was another year of progress and action on the part of your Chamber. While continuing to spearhead the three major Saguache Summer Festivals (the Hollyhock Festival, the Art Festival, and the Fall Festival & Quilt Show, the Chamber took on the projects and new initiatives as well.

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 Chamber continued its successful Chamber Speaker Program in 2018 and brought the following excellent speakers to share their stories and experience with members and guests:

- Mr. Ken Frye – Feb. 2018 Old Spanish Trail
- Ms. Katrina Murga – May 2018 Aventa Credit Union
- Ms. Lisa Rosen – June 2018 Colorado Sports Ranch & Refuge
- Ms. Laura Archuleta – August 2018
- Ms. Heidi Wong – September 2018 Ute Theatre
- Mr. Mike Wheeler - October
- Ms. Kim Smoyer – November
- Mr. Mike Brill – December Alpine Valley Music
- Mr. Tom Monaco – February - SBDC

The Chamber also continued its commitment to the community by offering monies to the following organizations and individuals to help in the pursuit of their worthy efforts:

- MVS School Ski program
- Easter Fun events
- Azlyn DeHerrera - Colorado Student Leaders Institute
- HEART Christmas in July
- HEART Thanksgiving Dinner
- Pow Wow
- SLV Local Foods Coalition
- Saguache Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Bill Donahue family

One of the new projects was to create a new online presence for the Chamber by creating a new Chamber website at saguachechamber.org. This new website was designed by your Chamber Board

and Salida's Mark Wiard, of Mark Wiard Web Works, to use the latest features and techniques to improve the experience for those who wish to learn more about the Chamber and the Town & County of Saguache. Features such as an intelligent online store, active slide shows, and online entry of membership forms and more were added to our site. The Chamber also partnered with Mountain Valley School to add a Video Library in 2018 to document our Chamber Speakers and other special events. Working with MVS the Chamber has been working with student, Mackenzie Innes, as our videographer. Mackenzie has become the Chambers primary documentarian and continues to roll video for the Chamber at all its important events. The new web site has had over 9,600 visits since its inception in February of 2018 and currently averages 25 visits per day.

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.

ONGOING PROJECTS, POLICIES, INITIATIVES, ETC. DURING THE 2018 CHAMBER YEAR

Another initiative the Chamber took on in 2018 was the pursuit of bus services for Saguache and all citizens on the west-side of the San Luis Valley. The Saguache Chamber joined with the Town of Saguache, Saguache County, the Town of Center, the City of Monte Vista, the Town of Del Norte, and Rio Grande County to form the Western San Luis Valley Transit Committee. All 7 parties signed a memorandum of understanding in June of 2018 to agree to share the cost of a grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), to collect data and demonstrate to CDOT the need for bussing (transit) services along the westside of the SLV. In particular the study is to look at the Gunbarrel Highway coming north from Monte Vista through Saguache as an important travel corridor in need of bussing services.

In concert with this effort, the Chamber began working with the Chaffee Shuttle in Salida to discuss implementing a route that would take westside residents to Salida and Alamosa for essential services like shopping and medical care. As such the Chaffee Shuttle became active with the West SLV Transit Committee and agreed to be the fiscal agent for the West SLV Transit Study and agreed to contribute a shuttle bus to the West SLV run routes twice a week along the west side of the valley. On June 5, 2015, the Eagle Line Shuttle was born. Thanks to Executive Director Connie Cole, of Neighbor to Neighbor (the Chaffee Shuttle) and Tim Chittum, Volunteer Driver, the Eagle Line Shuttle service began operation running two route per week from the Town of Del Norte to the City of Salida on Tuesdays, and from the Town of Saguache to the City of Alamosa on Wednesdays. To date, this service has been highly successful transported an average of 6 citizens a day between these major service centers.

Another major initiative the Chamber continued with in 2018 was the support and promotion of Valley to Valley Senior Cares' pursuit of a senior care campus here in Saguache. In September of 2017, the Saguache Chamber Board approved the ongoing pursuit to promote and achieve the construction of the Saguache Senior Care Campus just outside of town in Saguache. Working with Valley to Valley Executive Director Eve Braden, the Chamber conducted an initial fund raiser to help bring visibility and awareness to Eve's dream and vision to bring professional day and night care for our seniors and respite care for their families, locally here in Saguache. Today, all seniors must take 100-mile round trips other towns to get this kind of care. It's Eve's goal to build the local senior campus to keep our seniors close to home and ease their burden.

This effort is ongoing. In February of this year, Valley to Valley, with the assistance of the Saguache County Commissioners and the Saguache County Road & Bridge, broke ground on land 1.6 miles north of town. The ground now displays a large “Future Home” sign to alert those along HWY. 285 that good things are happening here in Saguache. This winter the Saguache Chamber partnered with Joyful Journey to pursue the large fundraiser for the building. Eve has been pursuing this major event since we first began our fundraising efforts in 2017. On March 5th at the Joyful Journey Hot Springs & Event Center, the Chamber and Joyful Journey hosted a Mari Gras fundraiser for Eve’s Saguache Senior Care Campus. Sponsors and donors came in great numbers. The evening was a resounding success with over 100 attendees and over \$10,000 collected, with more donations still coming in. The hope is that this year, Valley to Valley will finally attract the large donor organization’s that will take her over the top to finally begin to build out this wonderful dream of hers.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN 2018

- Web development project completed, went live in Feb. 2018
 - Get website data
 - 25 views per day
 - 9,611 All Time
- Transit Alliance Summit held to discuss Bustang
- Saguache Chamber joined the SLV Combined Chambers effort
- Saguache Chamber decorated Otto Mears Park for Christmas
- Community Calendar developed for 2019
- Spring & Fall 2018 Sales Tax Grant submitted and awarded
- Video Taping of Chamber Speakers began (McKenzie Innes, student filmmaker)
- Theo Boudreaux, via Joyful Journey, sponsored radio ad campaigns for the Chamber
- Chamber sponsored a “Meet the Candidates” forum, Anne Nielsen & Hillary Conroy March 31st
- Began Monthly facilitating of the West SLV Transit Committee meetings
 - Submitted Grant Request to CDOT to study transit needs on the westside of the SLV
 - Conducted a WSLV Transit Survey
 - Started the E
 - Grant was awarded
 - 12 Week Study officially began on March 27, 2019
- Held the Combined SLV Chamber meeting in Saguache
- Ribbon Cutting for Wapiti in March 2019
- New Chamber products introduced for 2018
- Chamber acquires an enclosed trailer to store items
- Vimeo account created to house large videos from speaker program
- Policy change to eliminate January and July general meetings going forward.
- New Date and Committee lead for Art Festival
- Chamber & ScSEED partnering on new hwy285 Streetscaping project through town
- New Board Members elected – David Smalley, VP and Carla Quintana Member at Large

MISSING MEMBERS

2018 was also marked by the departure of long time Chamber member and advocate, J Byron Williams, owner of the Smith Market Gallery. Byron sat on the Chamber Board and contributed to the vision and mission for nearly 10 years. In the fall of 2018 Byron sold his studio and home and moved to Oregon to be closer to family and to receive the health care that was really unavailable locally here in Saguache.

We already miss having Byron's quiet wisdom walking our streets and conferring with us in our shops and meetings, but we will always have his lasting legacy on display just 1.6 miles north of town where Byron donated 10 acres of land for the development of the future Saguache Senior Care Campus.

And finally, on a sad note, we also lost a long-time member and advocate in Bill Donahue. Bill and his wife Barbara have attended Saguache Chamber meetings month after month and year after year. We lost Bill, suddenly, in January of this year and we will miss having his smile and humor around town and at our meetings. Bill was particularly famous for his great Santa Claus portrayal during the holidays. He will be missed.

LOOKING AHEAD

OUR WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the objectives of creating the new website was to help move the Chamber into the Social Media arena. While most of us are "Baby Boomers" and from the great generation that brought you the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Apple II, the IBM PC, and the Internet, we seem to struggle with this whole "social media thing". Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, etc., etc. We are hoping that in 2019 we can do a better job of "connecting" with our millennial sisters and brothers to help us stay up with the changing world in which we communicate and exchange ideas.

Likewise, with our new website we have at our fingertips new tools to help us understand what people are looking at and how we can better "sell" ourselves and our Chamber. We see now what people coming to our site are looking at and what they are looking for. We also see what members are getting the most attention and who would benefit most with additional advertisements and exposure on our site. As such, we will be rolling out a new advertising program in 2019 that will provide opportunities for advertising on select pages and locations within our website. This would provide a new revenue stream to the Chamber to help keep our membership dues down and to provide the opportunity for the Chamber to grow and expand into new territories as they emerge.

ADDITIONAL TRANSIT SERVICES

On March 27 of this year, the Chamber and the West SLV Transit Committee officially kicked off our westside transit study. Using the grant award from CDOT we have hired transit consultant, LSC Transportation Services, to conduct this study. Contained within this study is data that will be submitted to CDOT to help fund and extend new services within the San Luis Valley. One targeted service that is being sought is the introduction of the Bustang Outrider, interregional bus service, up to Gunbarrel corridor. This service would stop in Saguache and take riders north to the front range and southern destinations such as Pagosa Springs, Durango, and beyond.

This 12-week study will also offer suggestions for new routes within the SLV and suggestions for how to connect to other existing services within the valley such as the Eagle Line Shuttle, Colorado Rides, and Red Willow services.

And finally, the study will offer suggestions on how to sustain services within the valley. This might include creating a regional transportation district or creating a variety of other intergovernmental services that could support the ongoing movement of citizens and visitors around the valley and into and out of the valley.

SAGUACHE SENIOR CARE CAMPUS

The Chamber will continue to work with Valley to Valley on its efforts to build the Saguache Senior Care Campus. We are working with Valley to Valley to help pursue the final funding needed and we are looking for a Saguache representative to sit on the Valley to Valley Board of Directors to help monitor and support progress on this effort. The Chamber is dedicated to Eve and her mission and will continue to provide support whenever and wherever it is possible.

CONCLUSION

The Chamber volunteer is the real hero of this organization and we simply cannot do it without you!

The Saguache Chamber of Commerce is 1st a *Community Driven Organization* and 2nd a *Future Driven Organization*. We believe that Saguache will be best served by promoting a robust and active community-centric focus and that the future of Saguache is dependent on the building blocks of civic pride and citizenship. And, that this organic growth and opportunity will spawn the growth of existing businesses and incentivize others to join the cause.

Thank you for another great Chamber year and we, the Board, look forward to working with you to make 2019 another great year.

Sincerely,

Barry Van Sant, President

David Smalley, Vice President

Carita Ginn, Secretary

Jean Collier, Treasurer

Carla Quintana, Member-at-Large