



## 2020 STATE OF THE CHAMBER PROGRESS AND GROWTH

## THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The Saguache Chamber of Commerce this prior season had a productive, interesting, and complex year. Transitioning into the new fiscal year the Chamber had a leveling off of membership after continual growth. For the first time the Chamber revenue did not exceed the previous year's total. This changing landscape will require more review as we review memberships and how we can continue to improve the organization in the coming year.

## THE NEW FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Chamber was changed from January to December to April to March in 2020, so the Chamber just completed its first "new" fiscal year. There were several factors effecting the decision to move to a new fiscal year that included the following:

- 1) The placement of our new Chamber Officers, and the State of the Chamber meeting, all take place in April of each year. This has the effect of a new "start" for each year and is a natural place to end one year and begin another.
- 2) The "business" of the Chamber doesn't start until April, when the planning and gearing up for the Summer and Fall festivals begin. Winter is always very slow for the Chamber and with the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year holidays, attendance and Chamber related activities significantly slow down.
- 3) The new Chamber year aligns well with the Saguache County Sales Tax Grant cycle. For several years now, the Chamber has worked with the Board of County Commissioners to apply for funds that help our Saguache County community. With the April to March year, the Chamber is able to apply for, and spend the awarded funds in the same fiscal year. Carrying over funds from one year to the other was always problematic. This is all part of the growth and evolution of the Chamber which was reestablished in 2007 and reincorporated in 2009.

## THE CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP

The Chamber continues to retain a membership of nearly 60 individuals, businesses, and organizations. We have noticed over the last few years that membership has leveled off and is what we can anticipate for the future. This past season we have seen a shifting of our members from the Standard member level to the Premium member level which provides for more revenue to work with each year. This year was also marked by the awarding of our first "Honorary Student Members". This is a membership type designated by the Chamber Board for special circumstances. We were pleased to bring two Mountain Valley School entrepreneurs into our member roles: Ms. McKensie Innes and Mr. Cyrus Van Egmond.

## THE CHAMBER REVENUE MODEL

This is the first year since our inception, that the Chamber did not take in more revenue than the previous year. Part of this was associated with the fiscal year change-over, but we have also seen a sharp drop off in the revenue collected from corporate sponsors and from our main fund raising, the Fall Festival Silent Auction. There are new opportunities for raising funds for the Chamber such as selling advertising on the Chamber website, incentivizing members to sell sponsorships, shifting fund raising to the Hollyhock Festival where the sales of hollyhocks have shown great promise, and/or a change in the membership benefits to provide for increased membership revenue. The Board will be reviewing these options as we move into the

2020-2021 fiscal year. The Chamber has created a robust infrastructure to generate the revenue needed to continue to serve it's mission to the general community.

## THE ONGOING CHAMBER BUSINESS EFFORT

### THE CHAMBER SPEAKER PROGRAM

The Chamber continued its successful Chamber Speaker Program in 2019 and brought the following excellent speakers to share their stories and experience with members and guests:

- May – Miranda Clendening, New ScSEED Development Director
- June – Katharine Walter – Mini Glass Art Gallery
- August – Karen Peeples – Saguache Town Market
- September – Adam Lock – SLV Voices
- October – Laurie Vigil & Miracle Gomez with HEART of Saguache/KV
- November – Amy Engle, Digital Marketing Specialist, BCI Media Services
- December - Lisa Powers – MVS, Suicide Prevention Training
- February – Tim Lovato, Rancher, County Commissioner
- March – Joel & Amber Johnson, Village Pub and Cozy Castle Cinema

### THE SUMMER FESTIVALS

Once again, the Chamber presented three major festivals. This year the Art Festival was moved to June from August to coincide with the grand re-opening of the Ute Theatre. This downtown “walk” to galleries and booths in town was well attended. We estimated over 150 people wandered through downtown and experienced our local restaurants. The grand re-opening of the Ute Theatre was a great success as well. Unfortunately, as is the case with all our outdoor festivals, the June winds arrived in the early afternoon and sent many scurrying for cover.

The July Hollyhock Festival was also well attended, and brought gardens lovers far and wide to the town. Visitors enjoyed taking their self-guided tours through town to view the best overall gardens and the best display of Hollyhocks. The Hollyhock Art contest always brings artists, young and old, to display beautiful flower art that our hand-picked judges evaluate and score. Each year, the Chamber has had great success with the sales of potted Hollyhocks in the Community Building.

The Fall Festival & Quilt Show, our September festival, has become the marquis event of the year for the Town of Saguache. The live entertainment was exceptional and lasted for over five hours in Otto Mears Park. We estimated that nearly 300 people attended this festival.

### THE CHAMBER GIFTING PROGRAM

The Chamber continued in its efforts to help fund various activities and persons in the community including the Annual Easter Egg Hunt and Balloon Toss, the MVS Young Entrepreneurs program, the new Cinco de Mayo celebration, the Christmas in July celebration, the Annual Pow Wow, and the Annual Thanksgiving dinner.

## ONGOING PROJECTS, POLICIES, INITIATIVES, ETC.

### THE EAGLE LINE SHUTTLE

The Saguache Chamber continues to support and promote the new Eagle Line Shuttle service that provides transit services to Salida and Alamosa once a week. The Chamber was instrumental in creating the Western San Luis Valley Transit Committee (WSLV Transit) and was a charter member. In 2019 the Chamber, transitioned from a member of West SLV Transit to an active and ongoing supporter. In June of 2019 West SLV Transit completed a study of the transit needs on the west side of the San Luis Valley and is now working with CDOT and the Chaffee Shuttle to expand and implement new routes in the SLV.

### HIGHWAY 285 STREETSCAPING AND WAY-FINDING

In April of 2019, the Chamber decided to help ScSEED (the Saguache County Sustainable, Environment, and Economic Development organization) pursue a new project to beautify, enhance safety, and improve the business climate of the one-mile stretch of Highway 285 between the town borders of Saguache. The Chamber entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with ScSEED to use the Chamber resources to market and promote this important project. In May 2019, ScSEED and the Town of Saguache were granted a free workshop, called Downtown Streets, to kick off this project. After several community meetings, surveys, and a final report, this project has now been elevated the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important project in CDOT's long term transportation plan for the SLV. The Town of Saguache was just awarded over \$38,000 to pursue the architectural drawings and renderings of a proposed new look and development project while moving along Highway 285 through the Town of Saguache.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

A third initiative the Chamber took on in 2019 was to help the Chamber itself and Chamber members become more immersed in the field of Social Media; recognizing the tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Podcasts, Instagram, etc. The Chamber sponsored two social media speakers and one social media workshop in pursuit of this objective. Mr. Adam Lock, of SLVoices came and spoke to membership about methods of Podcast promotions. Ms. Amy Engle of BCI Media Services came and spoke to the membership about the use of digital media for communicating with others and promoting digital services. And finally, Ms. Stephanie Beuchler in concert with Saguache Works gave a one-day workshop on how to create your own business page on Facebook. All of these presentations helped provided a vast amount of clarity and how social media is used in today's business world.

## LOOKING AHEAD

### BUSINESS CHALLENGES

In these very challenging and difficult times, we hope everyone is staying safe and well. The Saguache Chamber of Commerce has served the community successfully over the years; and we have a great sense of responsibility for the well-being of all who call Saguache home. In the months to come the Saguache Chamber of Commerce will continue to monitor the Coronavirus/

COVID-19 situation in order to provide our businesses, their employees, and Saguache residents with the latest information, guidance, and resources available.

As this will be a very complex time financially for many businesses, we will continue to strive to assist our community as needed in the coming months. We encourage you to continue to support our small businesses, as they are the backbone of our community. Many of our small businesses are still open, as of now, and they need your support.

## ECONOMIC SUPPORT

The Chamber will be specifically reviewing and vetting information on vital economic support to small businesses needing assistance in overcoming the temporary loss of revenue due to the current pandemic. This will include support networks, working capital grants, and alternate vital economic support in the coming months.

## CONCLUSION

We look forward to a very positive year of continued development with the tentative scheduled Annual Hollyhock Festival, Arts Walk, and Fall Festival & Quilt Show. The community will continue to see our presence on social media and active advertising and promotions of our local businesses and community programs. We will continue to fine tune our website to provide the best interactive experience for our audience and community businesses in the coming year. Our Chamber Speaker Program will be put on hold until further notice. However, we look forward to bringing new speakers to our community once our social distancing requirements are lifted.

As always, we look forward to working with our wonderful volunteers and community members throughout the season. Thank you for another great Chamber year and we, the Board, look forward to working with you to make 2020 another great year.

Warmest Regards,

President – Elvie R. Conley, Jr., M.A.

Vice-President – Theo Boudreaux

Treasurer – Jean Collier

Member at Large – Carla Quintana

Secretary – Carita Ginn

\*Contributing - Outgoing President - Barry Van Sant