

**The Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce
& Tourism Promotion Agency**

2020-2021 | **ANNUAL
REPORT**



At the Chamber, we have a unique role to play, and can quickly interact with decision makers acting as a strong voice on issues that determine the economic and physical health of our local community. We are continually adapting and responding to the ever-changing needs of our businesses and communities. Like all organizations, 2020 brought challenges that were unexpected and required the Chamber & Tourism office to modify operations, change workplace behaviors, and effectively serve the members and community in new ways.

For the past year, we have collected and shared a large amount of data related to COVID resources and recovery. Tens of thousands of people have viewed our web pages. The Chamber compiled updated information for businesses and the community on safe re-opening, developing plans, offering educational programming, referring businesses to available loans and financial assistance, and other state and federal resources. We sent out weekly emails reaching thousands of people, as we have shared information on recovery, resources, and statistics throughout the pandemic. Sharing the right information in a timely manner has been critical as we move ahead. It has been an honor to work with businesses and our community as we navigated challenging waters together.

We have also worked closely with Wyoming County government, to provide items like PPE to hundreds of businesses, farms, and small organizations to help them open up and safely serve and protect customers and employees. Chamber staff also volunteered at county run mass testing and vaccine clinics.

For over a year, I have chaired the Wyoming County COVID task force made up of representatives from agriculture, business, community services, health, elected leaders, and special guests who have met weekly to tackle issues and find solutions to better help our community. We've shared information, surveyed, planned and implemented policies with government partners to aid in the post-COVID recovery of our community. We also provided a powerful voice at the state and regional levels in an ever-evolving process requiring both patience and flexibility as we seek answers, and strongly advocate for Wyoming County.

Thank you to the Chamber membership and Board of Directors for their strong support and flexibility over the past year as we adapted to assist our members and the community in ever evolving ways. There is a road to recovery and growth ahead, this organization is focused and will be a champion for Wyoming County.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott A. Gardner".

Scott A. Gardner, President & CEO

Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors 2020-2021

Chairman - Norb Fuest, Apple Tree HR & Safety Consultants

Vice Chairman - Hans Kunze, Community Bank, NA

Secretary - Lisa Seewaldt, Ash-Lin's Elegant Rose | Treasurer - Nicole White, Freed Maxick, PC, CPAs

Michael Hardie, Tompkins Insurance | Travis Sick, The Bank of Castile

Tim Brick, Pioneer Credit Recovery | Brock Beckstrand, Upstate Door | Teresa Wright, Five Star Bank

Ashley Hamilton, Complete Payroll | Jacqueline Blujus, Beaver Hollow Conference Center

Hon. Becky Ryan, Supervisor, Town of Warsaw | Jackie Swaby, Arts Council for Wyoming County

Andrew Stang, PrizmTech Document & Technology Solutions | Daniel J. Burling, Burling Aviation Services

Jessica Hibbard, SUNY GCC | Denise Coffey, Glen Iris Inn

Community Investors



The Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Promotion Agency's mission is to serve the members and community; promote and grow the area's economic and tourism assets; and work collaboratively to create an environment that leads to the success and economic prosperity of Wyoming County.



In the summer of 2020, the Chamber hosted a thank you event for first responders. CSS Farms donated specially designed "Thank you bags of chips" that were donated to those working on the front lines on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vision Statement

The Wyoming County Chamber & Tourism is the leading membership organization for local and regional growth, advocacy, and connection for Wyoming County's business community.

Core Values

The core values of the Wyoming County Chamber and Tourism are Leadership, Excellence, Integrity, and Responsiveness.

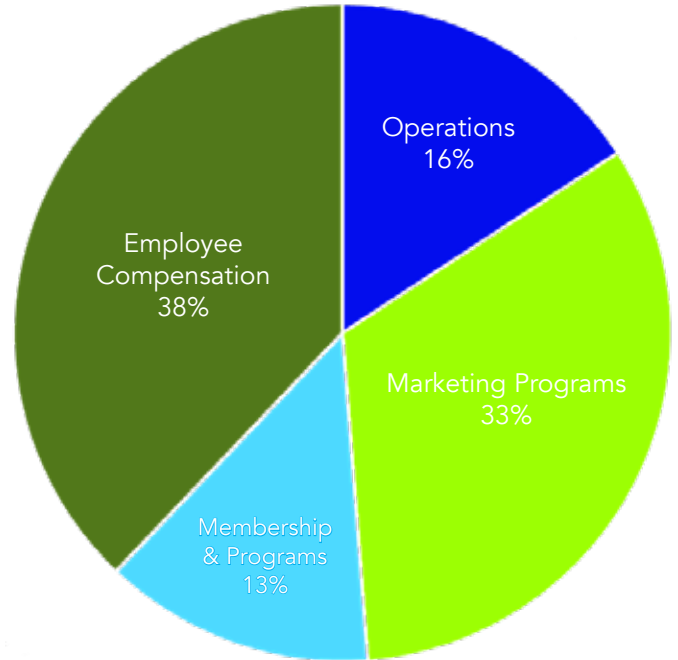
We Provide

The key programs and services of the organization are educational seminars; leadership development; business assistance and guidance; cost-saving opportunities; advocacy; recognition, networking, exposure and promotional opportunities.

2020 Income



2020 Expense



Like every business and organization, 2020 year brought unique financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chamber took advantage of available funding resources where available including the Payroll Protection Program funding, the NYS Shared Work Program, and restricted all spending during the year to mitigate the loss of revenue.

Most revenue generating programmatic events were canceled or postponed indefinitely. Membership remained generally stable, however, the full impact of the pandemic and its effect on business-membership retention is still not fully known. The Tourism program saw dramatic financial impacts due to reduced county spending and a drop in bed tax revenues.

With recognized decreases in funds and careful management of spending, the Chamber managed through the 2020 year into 2021 with a careful plan to move forward. Management and our Board of Directors are focused on maintaining a stable budget to deliver positive returns on investment from the membership and partners. The organization's budget priorities will be to utilize revenue responsibly. The Chamber will maintain a conservative budget that continues to focus on contractual obligations, member services, programming, and marketing promotions.

The Chamber's 2020 compiled financial statements will be completed by Freed Maxick CPA's and presented to the Board of Directors in late summer for approval.

Serving the Members, Helping our Community

This year's annual report reflects a unique set of circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic at its impact on the organization. When the pandemic hit our communities and mandatory shutdowns began, the Chamber took a leadership role and quickly pivoted to operate under four guiding principles: navigate, inform, plan, and advocate. Throughout the past year, we navigated volumes of information bringing it to our businesses and community. The Chamber has kept various sectors well informed on the issues critical to helping leaders and businesses make decisions about their operations and what steps to take at each phase of the pandemic.

Planning was critical from the earliest days of the shutdowns to guide decision making to the approach to re-opening phases and how to prepare for an uncertain future. Lastly, advocacy was a vital role that we took on. Our job as an organization was to stand up and speak out for our business communities for the overall physical and economic health of our greater communities.

Early in the pandemic there was a great deal of information being communicated from the Federal, State and Local authorities. The Chamber recognized that our County needed a comprehensive repository that would provide critical up-to-date information during the crisis. In early March, the Chamber proactively established the Covid-19 Crisis Resource web page – providing information on everything from where people could



get masks & equipment, what emergency and disaster recovery loans were available, and links to Federal, State and Local websites providing updates and resources.

We also fielded hundreds of phone calls and emails, acted as an advocate and a sounding board, and looked for solutions to help our businesses overcome challenging circumstances.



As the crisis turned to recovery, we again identified the pressing needs facing our business community. Understanding the importance of assisting these businesses through the re-opening process, we developed the Re-Start Wyoming web page.



Along with the work on the ReStart Wyoming Task-force, the Chamber compiled updated information for businesses and the community on how to safely re-open, creating safety plans, various loan programs available, and other resources. We provided immediate updates on the state's phased re-opening plans and connections to state, federal, and county resources.

In addition, we provided sample plans and guidance from multiple industries to help a variety of sectors within Wyoming County. In concert with these guidelines, we also compiled a series of templates to assist businesses with developing re-opening plans.

As a component of the web resource pages, the Chamber created a sign-up form and distributed PPE to hundreds of businesses and individuals to help them get back to business and safely welcome back their customers.

We have also made every effort to continually communicate with our businesses with regular email updates sharing resources, updating on what is new at all levels of government, valuable webinars, grants and financial aid, as well as new programs we are running to provide visibility and assistance to businesses.

As an early response to the pandemic, the Chamber developed a restaurant take-out/delivery website directory to help struggling businesses share the information with their customers in one comprehensive listing. The Chamber also set-up a web based shop local gift card campaign to provide much needed cash to small businesses and make it easier for consumers to buy all their gift cards in one location. Over \$3,000 in sales were directed to local business as a result of the gift card campaign.

The Chamber also launched the annual Shop Wyoming an Win campaign for 2020 with a focus on spending dollars locally to help our small businesses. A record number of 782 shoppers participated by submitting receipts totaling \$579,545, and generating estimated sales taxes of \$46,363 during the promotional period.



The 2020 Wyoming County Business Directory and Community Guide was again distributed to more than 20,000 households and business in and around Wyoming County. Our annual publication features all of our members and serves as a reminder to consumers to shop local and keep vital tax dollars in Wyoming County. The Directory is also used as a marketing and relocation guide for many of our businesses when recruiting out of town employees.

During the pandemic, we also published three editions of our bi-annual Chamber newsletter with the Daily News, sharing stories and information with nearly 30,000 readers.

We were able to host the annual Pride of Wyoming County Ag Dinner in early March, celebrating with 350 individuals and presenting the 2020 Ag Business of the Year to the Boxler Family for their contribution to the community. Unfortunately by the time we would have celebrated the annual award winners, we were unable to host in-person events. The Chamber “took the show on the road” and were able to visit each business

and personally congratulate them. Butter Meat Co. in Perry, was awarded the Most Promising New Business. Tackbary's Trophies and Gifts in Warsaw was the 2020 Small Business of the Year, and the 2020 Large Business of the Year was Countryside Electric. Letchworth State Park was awarded the 2020 Tourism Business of the Year, and Windy Brew in Sheldon was the Tourism Business of the Year. Each business was featured in a YouTube video and were highlighted individually on our Facebook page. We are excited to get back to celebrating with everyone in 2021.

This year affected our ability to host all in-person events after March, but we still offered many seminars and informational sessions via Zoom. We hosted the state mandated sexual harassment training for our members and their employees. We also hosted a number of other seminars including Digital Marketing and Beyond with Tom Lyon from Lyon Global; and a special seminar on the effects the pandemic was having on individuals' mental health and ways to deal with it, partnering with Wyoming County Mental Health and staff from Wyoming County Community Hospital.

As things began to open, we were able to restructure our annual Wyoming County Job Fair and host the event in the fall as an in-person event. We also partnered with employment attorney Kimberly Harding for our Employee Handbook seminar at the end of the year.

We restarted the “Discounts & Deals” program, a free promotion aimed at consumers where members offer a “discount or deal.” The program has grown steadily over the last two years and we now have more than 35 members participating. The 2021 Discounts & Deals flyer is live on the Chamber's website and available for download.

While much was different throughout 2020, the Chamber continued to adapt and respond quickly to the ever-changing needs of our businesses and community impacted by the pandemic.



Eric J. Szucs
Director,
Tourism and Marketing

The past year brought significant challenges to the tourism community nationwide and its impact was recognized within the tourism program within Wyoming County. We successfully managed tourism operations – even with significant cuts to our NYS Matching Funds budget. This necessitated creative and cost effective strategies, but our goal remained the same: to sharing our story and provide support, assistance and act as an advocate for our tourism businesses as we all navigated the pandemic.

The last year brought new opportunities and some positive developments within the tourism program. With more visitors initially staying at home, there was significant interest in outdoor experiences and restaurant availability in Wyoming County. New blogs were regularly added providing culinary updates and outdoor adventures, and a regular frequency of postings captured and maintained interest. As a result, the tourism website saw a dramatic increase in traffic. Website usage (May 2020 – May 2021) saw 67,000 sessions (15.4% increase); 56,000 users (17.5% increase); and 152,000 page-views (18.8% increase). In the same reporting period, there were 2.7 million impressions (359% increase); and 42,200 URL clicks (326.7% increase).

The tourism program’s social media channels also saw tremendous growth during the May 2020 – May 2021 time period. Facebook “Likes” increased from



4,484 to 6,273, a 40% increase. Instagram also saw an increase from 1,291 to 1,801 – another 40% increase.

A key project launched in 2020 was Fresh Air Adventures (FAA). This GLOW Counties initiative launched with the theme, “From the Falls to the Finger Lakes.” The initial four counties collaborated tourism resources to maximize traction in the marketplace. This project included a new regional website & branding; new social channels (Facebook & Instagram); and the addition of Allegany County as a participating partner – stretching the Fresh Air Adventures region from Lake Ontario to the Pennsylvania border.



In September, Endlessly Outdoors in Perry officially cut the ribbon at the new tourism business location.

Post-Covid initiatives include the finalizing of a FAA marketing and promotional strategy for 2021 which promotes our region as a vacation destination and highlights the major attractions we offer. It also builds out web content creation including blogs, itineraries, materials for social channels and promotional partnerships with regional and statewide organizations like I LOVE NEW YORK.

The tourism program also began work on a comprehensive destination assessment with Famous Destination Marketing. This project is an Economic Development collaboration between Tourism, Chamber, IDA & the Business Assistance Corporation (BAC). The key components of the study will include rural destination assessments; stakeholder interviews, and public/private presentations. Then an analysis of current work will be performed to help us identify strengths, weaknesses, and tourism economic development growth opportunities. When finished, we will have a disciplined strategic plan as we look at the landscape post-Covid – that will assist our partners, identify new development opportunities, and most importantly outline a strategic plan we can use moving forward with the support of our economic development partners & legislators.

As we market our way through 2021, our primary strategies have been a focus on organic and paid digital media. The central themes and demographic groups include drive-markets and families; promoting culinary experiences, outdoor adventures and opportunities; promoting “Buy Wyoming County Grown” and local producers; and keeping the public informed on updates involving events and other returning activities that were canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic. As the year progresses, we we’ll expand our target markets to include national



In October, Prehistoric World in Perry officially cut the ribbon at the new tourism business location.

and international visitors as people become more comfortable leaving their “home bases” and borders open.

For the remainder of the year we will continue to focus on supporting and assisting tourism businesses; providing advocacy; discuss cooperative digital marketing opportunities; launch digital marketing & promotional campaigns; grow tourism’s digital footprint; establish greater website enhancements; leverage regional tourism/economic development collaborations; and seek new grant opportunities to help us achieve our long-term goals.

We will also be producing a short-run of 2021 travel guides which should be completed by July 2021 – and these will be shared throughout New York State, along thruways, at information centers, in strategic locations like Letchworth State Park and mailed at no cost to any tourist who is interested in visiting Wyoming County.

Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Promotion Agency

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