

Annual Report 2010

Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce

Presented February 8, 2011



Mission Statement

The mission of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, through the efforts of our membership, shall be to contribute to the cultural, social and economic development, growth and sustainability of Blowing Rock while preserving the charm and character of the village.

Report on Activities for 2010

Membership Development, Promotion and Activities

- In 2010, fifty-six new members joined the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce.
- The Chamber continued to recruit new members and continued to distribute membership packets and brochures.
- Concierge 101 was hosted in May at Tanger Shoppes on the Parkway featuring nearly 30 Chamber members in a “trade show” for the fun things to do in our area.
- The Annual Chamber Picnic was held June 1 with nearly 150 in attendance. For the second year, we asked for a small donation (\$2 per person) to offset costs for every person beyond two per company.
- There were eight Business After Hours. They were hosted by: First Citizens Bank, Sweetgrass, Bistro Roca, Christopher’s Wine & Cheese, Grandfather Mountain (co-hosted with the Boone Area, Avery and Beech Mountain Chambers), Holiday Inn Express of Blowing Rock, United Community Bank and Crestwood. 2011 Business After Hours are booked.
- Ribbon Cuttings were hosted at: Climbing the Walls, Rustic, and Doncaster Outlet.
- Chamber staff resolved to visit every chamber member in 2011.
- The Membership Committee hosted a question and answer session with Blowing Rock Town Officials and the Blowing Rock Country Club.
- In November, the Membership Committee hosted a Chamber Open House at the Chamber of Commerce for new and potential members. Five new members joined as a direct result of this open House.
- The Membership Committee reorganized and invited new committee members following the board retreat in November. The reorganized committee has taken on several new tasks for the upcoming year, included the 2010 Awards Presentation (which takes place in February of 2011) and the annual Chamber Picnic. The Membership Committee reviewed and redesigned the Awards for the Chamber, including adding a Green Business Award, clarifying criteria for awards, removing the Christmas decoration awards and combining the Renovation and Construction Awards. The Awards presentation was combined with the 2010 Annual Meeting and moved to a more business friendly, economical luncheon format.

Visitor Center Activities and Sales

- The Blowing Rock Visitor Center is jointly maintained by the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Development Authority.
- Tickets sold at the Visitor Center: all tickets for the Blue Ridge Wine & Food Festival, Symphony, and Blue Ridge Heritage Days tours and movie tickets. The Visitor Center also sold St. Mary's Tour of Homes and Winterfest tickets as a courtesy.
- Merchandise sold by the Visitor Center includes *Postcards of Blowing Rock, Volume II*, *The Village Tapestry*, note cards for the Historical Society, CDs, cook books for the Fire Department, Chamber Throws, Picnic blankets, Tote Bags and Mitford Merchandise. The 2010 Christmas Ornament, which celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway sold very well.
- Distributed 300 phonebooks.
- Maintains lodging availability for members, and directs visitors and callers to appropriate lodging.
- Maintains promotional materials for members and directs visitors and callers to appropriate member visitors and services.
- Mails Blowing Rock Visitor Information Guide and Directory to all visitor requests for information, 3028 in 2010.
- Distributed Visitor Information Guide and Directory to North Carolina Welcome Centers and other Visitor Centers across the state.

Finance and Sponsorship

- Appendix A to this document is the independent auditor's report for the Fiscal Year ending in 2009. The report for 2010 will be available next year.
- For 2010, the Chamber finished with revenues of \$95.
- The Finance Committee worked to develop sponsorships through the Chamber Partner program and for events.
- Produced quality sponsorship packets.
- Working toward 501c3 status for the Blowing Rock Chamber Foundation, important for the continued growth of chamber sponsorships.
- The Finance Committee developed new merchandise for the Chamber, including picnic blankets, tote bags, and throws.
- Chamber Partners program was launched for 2010, this sponsorship program helps to support the Chamber activities and allows Partners special opportunities to be featured at and attend Chamber events. Partnerships can be purchased at two levels: Gold (\$3000) and Silver (\$1500).
- The Finance Committee recruited Partners through meetings and a special dinner at Crippen's.

- There were 12 Partners for 2010:

Gold Partner:

Rock Barn Golf and Spa

Silver Partners:

444 Inc.

Appalachian Regional Healthcare System

Boxwood Lodge/Blowing Rock Inn

Chetola Resort at Blowing Rock

Crippen's Country Inn

Enterline & Russell

First Citizens Bank

Greystone Insurance Assoc. Inc.

Last Straw

Lyons Real Estate

Reynolds Blue Ridge

United Community Bank

Economic Development and Growth

- The Economic Development Committee worked with town council to relax parking requirements for businesses in the Central Business District.
- The Committee also worked with council to establish "town center" district and worked with downtown partnership and DOT to lessen impact of 321 construction on businesses
- The Blowing Rock Farmers Market expanded and remained in the Wallingford Street location for the season. The Chamber hired a part-time coordinator for the Farmers Market. At its peak, the Blowing Rock Farmers Market attracted nearly 700 people to downtown on Thursday afternoons.
- Lead by the Economic Development Committee, the Chamber sponsored trial auctions during summer, modeled after the popular auctions in Blowing Rock of the past.
- The Economic Development Committee initiated "themed month" effort to extend season for merchants and is working with the Events Committee to develop these. The Economic Development Committee resolved to work toward plan to attract upper end lodging to town center; a plan for better penetration of residential market by local businesses; a consistent proactive solicitation of business recruitment; and work toward the development of plan for effective retail mix for Main Street.

Events Production

In 2010, the Chamber hired a new staff member, a dedicated Events Planner Position. Co-funded with the Tourism Development Authority this position has responsibility for the planning and execution of tourism related events such as: Symphony by the Lake, the Blue Ridge Wine and Food Festival, Winterfest, Blue Ridge Heritage Days (2010 only). Billie Rogers accepted this position in June, 2010.

Volunteer Relations

- Volunteers were treated to dinner in appreciation for their hard work, hosted at the Hayes House.
- Purchased vests for volunteer safety at events.
- Appointed a (volunteer) volunteer coordinator who maintains a database and communicates with potential volunteers.

Symphony by the Lake

- Symphony by the Lake at Chetola is produced by the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce.
- 2010 saw audience of around 3000.
- Hot air balloon rides were added to the Symphony.
- The Symphony of the Mountains of Kingsport, TN performed in 2010, they were very well received and are returning for 2011.
- Sponsorships were sold for the programs and the hot air balloons.
- All available patron tents were sold, a total of 27.
- The event increased its profit margin over 2009.

Blue Ridge Wine and Food Festival

- Billie Rogers chaired the 2010 festival.
- The 2010 festival will featured events spread throughout downtown with tastings and events.
- Approximately 1500 people attended the Wine Festival.
- Around twenty North Carolina wineries and six distributors participated in the Grand Wine Tasting.
- Wine Maker Dinners were hosted in area restaurants
- The Scavenger Hunt included fifteen downtown businesses.
- Fire on the Rock Preliminaries at Crippen's were popular during the winter and included twenty chefs.

Holiday Glow Time and Hometown Holidays

- For a second year, the Chamber worked to promote the Holiday Season with the GlowTime marketing campaign. A poster and ads were produced to draw visitors to town.

- The Events Committee and Business Support Committee worked together to put together several components for the event including marketing for businesses already doing special services and adding carolers, bonfires, hot chocolate, cloggers and many other items to bring locals and tourist to town for holiday shopping.
- The Events Director arranged and did several media releases and interviews to promote event.

Blue Ridge Heritage Days

- 2010 was the 75th Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway
- Blowing Rock hosted an event to honor the Parkway September 17 – 19, 2010.
- Melissa Pickett of Blowing Rock Inn chaired this event.
- The Chamber Partnered with Blowing Rock Historical Society and BRAHM to plan the event.
- Tours were hosted of Blowing Rock which focused on history, architecture, “underground” history, ghost stories and churches.
- A Friday Night outdoor movie was hosted, Disney’s Cars.
- Main Street Blowing Rock was closed for an event all day for the first time in fifty years.
- Around 50 vendors were set up along Main Street, including local artists and Main Street shops.
- Hosted five bands, story tellers and speakers on the Laurel Lane stage.
- Hosted a free street dance, around 200 people attended. This dance was called by Phil Jameson, a member of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and NC Humanities Council.
- The Events Director did follow-up with Chamber members and towns people after event to field critiques and criticisms.

Concert in the Park

- Five Concerts in the Park were hosted in Memorial Park this year: May 16 (Cans and Pans Steel Drum Band), June 20 (Grandfather Mountain Pipe Band), August 15 (The Silvio Martinant Swing Band), September 12 (Blue Notes Dixieland Jazz Band) and October 3 (Die Rhinelanders).
- Concert in the Park attendance can be as large an audience as 500.

Blowing Rock Winterfest

- In 2010, the Chamber acquired the management of Blowing Rock Winterfest, a four day festival promoting tourism in the slower winter months. The 2011 Winterfest was managed by the Chamber
- The Events Director assembled the committee to plan, organize, and execute the event.
- Winterfest will continue to support area charities.

Art in the Park

- Art in the Park is coordinated by a staff member who also serves as the Director of Membership Services.
- Art in the Park completed its 48th season in 2010; shows took place on May 15, June 12, July 17, August 14, September 11 and October 2.
- This was the first season in which all six shows took place on the Wallingford Street Parking Facility and American Legion area.
- Art in the Park was advertised in local media and in Southern Living Magazine.
- There were approximately 35,000 patrons over the six shows.
- In 2010, approximately 315 artists applied for Art in the Park. Approximately 300 applied for the 2011 season before the deadline of Dec. 31, 2010.
- Volunteers help us with parking, serving breakfast, helping artists find their way around and many other jobs.

Business Support and Development

- The Business Support Committee developed and hosted three How to Grow When It's Slow Seminars: 1) E-Commerce and Marketing 2) Writing Employee Manuals 3) Customer Service.
- New members were added to the Member to Member Discount Program and a Member to Member Discount card was distributed to every member, promoting local shopping.
- Worked with local businesses to distribute SBA Economic Disaster Loan information following the difficult winter.

Community

- Hosted Shred It Day with First Citizens Bank
- Executive director maintains volunteer relationship with Rotary, Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show, and the Hayes Center.
- Leadership Challenge moved to a biannual presentation. There was no new class in 2010. Alumni participated in the Town Cleanup on April 24.

Chamber Publications and Communications

- *The Village Current* keeps our members informed of Chamber events and issues, in 2010, twenty-one issues were published. *The Village Current* is an average of four pages long.
- In addition to news and updates for the Chamber and business related articles, The Business Support committee provided a regular column.
- The Chamber also publishes a weekly update in *The Blowing Rocket* called the Chamber Connection, which gives everyone a glimpse of Chamber activities and events, in addition to our regular press releases and news stories.
- The Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce maintains a Facebook page to communicate with members.

- The 2010 - 2011 edition of *The Visitor Information Guide and Directory* was released in May 2010, it included a complete rewrite of much of the information and redesign. The Visitor Information Guide and Directory included about 59 ads and was 89 pages long.

Board & Staff Activities and Development

Activities of the Board

- Litter Sweep, twice per year. Litter Sweep is in its fifteenth year.
- President Nancy Santay represented Blowing Rock at a meeting with Governor Bev Perdue in Boone regarding Small Business and Banking.
- Engaged in strategic planning during the November Board Retreat.
- Actively began to seek a new facility for the Chamber Offices, in conjunction with the Tourism Development Authority.

By Laws Changes were made in October of 2010:

- Elections Process was changed to a nomination and slate of candidates' format.
- The Board moved to a bimonthly meeting schedule for 2011.
- Clarified that business board seats are retained by a business and are represented by an employee.

Members of the 2010 Board of Directors

- Nancy Santay, President, Cabin Fever
- Margaret Holder, Vice President, Chetola Resort
- Linda Gilleland, Secretary, Greystone Insurance
- Deborah McDowell, Treasurer, Mountaineer Inn & Log Cabins
- John Aldridge, Individual Representative
- Tim Miller, Blowing Rock Frameworks & Gallery
- Betsy Collins, Individual Representative
- Don Hubble, Individual Representative, Appointed in February 2010
- J. B. Lawrence, United Community Bank
- Cathy Robbins, Tweetsie Railroad
- Doug Pegram, Village Real Estate
- Cindy Milner, Bistro Roca
- Dick Goosman, Meadowbrook Inn
- Christopher Brantley, Christopher's Wine & Cheese
- Julie Robertson, The Last Straw
- Genie Starnes, Individual Representative
- Cathy Williamson, Kilwin's Chocolates & Ice Cream
- Steven Price, Westglow, Appointed in July 2010
- Joellyn Gibbons (Resigned), Individual Member
- Missy Watson, Westglow, (Resigned)

- Dan Phillips (Resigned), Individual Member
- Jerry Burns (Deceased), Individual Member

Two new members were elected for 2011:

- Melissa Pickett, Blowing Rock Inn
- Chelsea Garrett, diSanti, Watson, Capua & Wilson

Staff and Office:

- Executive Director graduated from the US Chamber's Institute for Organizational Management, a four year program, and is now designated as an IOM.
- Co-Hosted (with Boone Area Chamber) the CACCE Annual Management Conference at Chetola.
- Co-hosted (with Boone Area Chamber) the Western Carolina Chamber Executives retreat at Crestwood in November.
- Executive Director represented Blowing Rock at the Legislative Day for Tourism in Raleigh.

The Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce is a member of or affiliated with:

- The US Chamber of Commerce
- The North Carolina Chamber of Commerce
- The Carolina Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives
- The Western North Carolina Chamber of Commerce Executives
- High Country Host
- Watauga County Economic Development Commission
- Boone Chamber of Commerce Education Committee
- Reciprocal memberships are maintained with the Boone Area Chamber, the Ashe County Chamber, and the Wilkes County Chamber.
- Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee/NC DOT
- Regional Commission for STEM Initiative
- Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

The Staff of the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce

Charles Hardin

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Stephanie Keener

Membership Services & Art in the Park Coordinator

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Billie Rogers

Events Director

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Marcia Vaughan

Travel Counselor

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Contact Information

Chamber Business: 828-295-7851

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Visitor Information: 800-295-7851

Winterfest information (toll free): 877-295-7801

Blue Ridge Food & Wine Festival information (toll Free): 877-295-7965

Mailing Address:

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Blowing Rock, North Carolina 28605

Physical Address:

7738 Valley Blvd.

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APPENDENIX A: 2009 INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors
Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, Inc.
Blowing Rock, North Carolina

We have audited the accompanying statements of financial position of Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, Inc. (a non profit organization) as of December 31, 2009 and 2008, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, Inc.'s management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with U.S. generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce, Inc. as of December 31, 2009 and 2008, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles.



May 21, 2010