



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This has been a different type of summer for families, focusing on staying safe and healthy by spending more time outdoors and buying everything from bikes to boats. In eastern Baltimore County, we are extremely fortunate to have wonderful parks, an extensive waterfront, and a myriad of outdoor recreational and dining opportunities, all of which have been heavily used this summer. As we prepare for students to return to online learning this fall, we spend this last week trying to make the most of the time we have left and hoping that the good weather lasts well into October.

Your Chamber also has been very busy this summer. Here are some examples:

Providing COVID-19 Support to Local Businesses

Chambers of commerce have been critical conduits between local, state, and federal government and business since the beginning of the pandemic. At the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber, we have:

- Kept abreast of COVID-19 developments, including participating in numerous webinars and regular statewide and county online meetings to better understand the disease and learn and how to deploy the right initiatives to effectively make a difference for our community.
- Provided information to our members through webinars and weekly emails and social media updates regarding grant and loan program availability, job opportunities, and reopening best practices.
- Worked hand-in-hand with local businesses to promote them, advise them and help them survive the crisis.
- Organized an emergency blood drive and drive-thru food drive.
- Served on the Baltimore County COVID-19 Recovery & Reopening Work Group for Business Associations, Chambers of Commerce & Retail Management and participated in weekly meetings of that group.
- Contacted numerous federal, state, and local elected officials seeking assistance for businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- Engaged Chamber member businesses in the County's "Keep Baltimore County Open for Business" campaign, providing them with materials reminding patrons to wear masks and Be Safe to Stay Safe. Items being distributed include face masks, placemats, table tents, window stickers, and lawn signs.

Continuing Revitalization Efforts in Essex

As you may know from previous articles, the Chamber's Eastern Baltimore County Task Force has been working hard to improve the look of the business corridor in Essex. Over the last few months, beautiful new banners were hung on all of the new LED streetlamps along Eastern Blvd. in the Essex business district. "No Littering" signs were hung on all the green trash cans in Essex and will be added to new trash cans, once they are received. We continue to work with Baltimore County to control issues like rat infestation, graffiti, plant overgrowth and trash.

The cube garden and the garden at Homberg Avenue,



which were planted with perennials last year, have been exciting to watch throughout the seasons, as we enjoyed spring bulbs, summer blooms on flowers and trees and are anticipating new beautiful flowers for the fall. These gardens are being weeded, watered, and kept free of trash and debris. Annuals were planted, fertilized, and mulched in all pots and planters and are being watered, weeded, and maintained. While we have some grant funds available to

replace plants as needed, we do not have funds to cover theft. PLEASE report anyone you see removing them from the pots. These flowers and shrubs have been planted for visitors and the community to enjoy.

Power Factor was kind enough to donate a new lighting system for the flagpole in the cube garden, and an unknown good Samaritan provided new American and Maryland flags. Thank you both. When we all work together, we can accomplish many things and really make a difference. In that regard, I would be remiss if I didn't also thank Baltimore County for purchasing all of the new streetlamps and providing a grant for the gateway gardens and new trash cans. Our sincerest thanks also go to the State of Maryland and the Department of Housing and Community Development for grant funding for the banners, signs, flowerpots and planters and many other projects underway in Essex.

Adapting to the New Normal

Like our member businesses, the Chamber is adjusting to the new normal. In this pandemic world, many of us have had to adapt and learn how to reinvent our business models. Organizations are learning how to take advantage of online meeting, sales and fundraising opportunities and are seeking joint marketing opportunities with strategic partners to improve their bottom lines.

At the Chamber, we have been contacted by businesses which never before have affiliated with the Chamber, and now are looking to take advantage of the many benefits membership offers. For a minimal annual fee, members have access to great networking, marketing, learning, referral, and volunteer opportunities and are kept up-to-date on legislative issues and economic development projects. This fall, the Chamber has partnered with APG Media to create a new business, tourism, and community guide, which will have wide distribution through local businesses, apartment complexes, commercial leasing offices, etc. Next month we also will kick off our fall Energy Purchasing Cooperative for members and their employees, for which the energy cost savings have more than paid their dues. We encourage you to join others in our community and discover the value of Chamber membership. Additional details can be found on our website – www.chesapeakechamber.org.

Despite the challenges that many of us (including chambers of commerce) continue to face, we have faith that things are getting better and that the economy in 2021 will improve significantly. We are proud of the way in which our community has responded to this crisis and helped one another and look forward to the day when we can once again safely be together. In the meantime, be safe and healthy, enjoy the rest of your summer, and don't forget to support our local businesses.

Best wishes,

Sharon Kihn

Chamber Executive Director

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CHESAPEAKE GATEWAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
405 Williams Court, Suite 108, Middle River, MD 21220
443-317-8763 • Fax: 443-317-8772

info@chesapeakechamber.org www.chesapeakechamber.org

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