

Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce

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Come and join us!

Enclosed please find a membership packet for 2021. The cooperative support of our members has made our past success possible. Investing in the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce means you understand the importance of supporting an organization that works solely to make your business more profitable, both for you and your community.

What does the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce do?

We sell Ashland ... in so many ways. We target a diverse market segment of travelers and niche sports enthusiasts through multiple marketing promotions, events and programs.

This last year has been a record year for changes in the way we all do business. In light of the restrictions of COVID-19, here is a review of the Chamber's activities in 2020 and objectives for 2021:

First quarter 2020 appeared to be a stellar year economically. As we moved into March, tourism and tourism related businesses were very strong considering the time of year. Then of course March 17th hit, and things changed dramatically for nearly 60 days. At the Chamber, we immediately decreased staff from 3.5 FTE's to 2 FTE's. JoAnn and I did not miss a day and we worked alternately in the first few weeks from home and in the office. Fortunately, our offices are a considerable distance from each other, and we have an intercom system for communicating. Our priority was to communicate with our businesses!! Here are some details on our communication and promotions executed during the first few months of the pandemic.

- Created daily communiques from March 20th through May 25th; then two to three times per week until September. We did not want to send information unless it was helpful to our business community. Mary attended daily webinars and zoom meetings with Federal, State, Regional, and local leaders as well as organizations who shared the latest information from Government Affairs to Medical information relating to COVID-19.
- Communicated daily with the businesses to create a guide for the public with hours of operations and how businesses were actually doing business. This was from banking to bakery.
- The Chamber re-wrote our Revolving Loan in less than one week to offer businesses an opportunity to apply for a smaller amount of money (\$5,000.00) with no interest and deferred payments.
- Created an aggressive "On-line" \$25.00 Gift Certificate program through our E-commerce site on our visitashland.com website. We have sold over \$10,000.00 in Gift Certificates this year from that site.
- Communicated to businesses about grant programs such as the "We're all In Grants for \$2,500.00 and \$5,000.00 to small businesses as well as Unemployment Compensation under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program.
- Worked with Enbridge to offer extremely vulnerable businesses \$500.00 to apply towards whatever they felt necessary. An anonymous donor added another \$1,000.00, which afforded us the opportunity to award 12 small chamber businesses \$500.00. These were extremely vulnerable businesses such as hair salons, restaurants, bars, movie theater, etc.
- Applied and was awarded a Joint Effort Marketing Grant with the Washburn, Bayfield, and Madeline Island Chambers, to help promote tourism for late spring / summer not knowing what we would experience in the future.
- Partnered with Mari Kay-Nabozny and the NWWIB team to offer webinars in Facebook Live, Tik Tok, and Instagram for small businesses.
- Created a "Shop Local" campaign including the Gift Certificates, Yard Signs posted throughout the community, and radio ads encouraging the support of bricks and mortar businesses
- Worked with state and regional tourism partners to promote outdoor recreation in our area. The message was "Social Distance Naturally".
- Created several new videos including a Girl's Getaway featuring actual little girls; a Best Friends, Mother & Daughter, and Holiday Shopping. These commercials ran in our near markets in Wisconsin and the Minneapolis Metro areas, including Mankato and Rochester.
- Created social media posts with 15 second videos marketing outdoor recreation, waterfalls, and lodging.

- Created a Shop WI Downtowns promotion and logo with our Statewide, Wisconsin Downtown Action Council partners throughout the state of Wisconsin to aggressively encourage our communities to “shop small” with a message of the importance of supporting small bricks and mortar businesses this holiday season. We typically start our holiday Christmas campaigns on Black Friday & Shop Small Saturday in late November. But this year, we started executing them in late October and early November and have continued with the following promotions:
 - Shop Small Win Big
 - 25 Days of Christmas
 - Shop local 7\$15
 - Gift Certificate Incentives online
 - Chamber Dollars promotion
 - 3 Chamber Ladies and a Van delivery for small businesses

Examining the economy of Ashland as a whole is eye-opening. We are very fortunate to have such a diverse economy in Ashland. We do NOT have all of our eggs in one basket! Many business sectors were extremely vulnerable from COVID while others absolutely thrived, and many simply maintained. Manufacturing & Construction have been strong. Financial and Real Estate have hit all time records. I’m thrilled to say that the tourism season that we clearly thought was not going to happen... Happened and in a big way! Ashland typically starts our peak season around the 4th of July. This year, Memorial Day was the start of what would be a steady stream of outside visitors to the area. Occupancy numbers were consistently strong through October. The medical community is back to full speed ahead and this community is so fortunate to have the impressive Administration and Staff at Memorial Medical Center. They have done an excellent job working through this pandemic and communicating to the public along with the first responders and the amazing staff at the Ashland County Health Department under Liz Szot’s leadership. I would also like to thank the many many businesses that purchased Chamber Dollars this year for their employees for Christmas gifts or bonuses. We usually sell around \$65,000.00 in Chamber Dollars and will easily sell over \$250,000.00 this year because of the support of our business community. We are very cautiously optimistic that if we could endure the 2020 roller coaster ride of a lifetime, we will be able to tackle whatever 2021 has in store for us.

The Ashland Chamber has an aggressive marketing plan for the first two quarters. Large amounts of snowfall in just our area would be very welcoming!! Fortunately, there are so many activities that can take place with little to no snow! Waterfalls, Ice-Fishing, Murals, Leisure travel, Hiking, Cross-Country Skiing, Fat-Tire Biking, Snowshoeing & Birdwatching. The ideas are endless and there is plenty of room to play outdoors - In January, we will release a new 30 second commercial targeting young couples and will feature a romantic getaway!

Please know that our priority is to sell Ashland and we will fervently continue to sell Ashland in a safe & natural way!!

Thank you for your continued support of the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce

Promotions and Promotional Material

The Ashland County Visitor Guide acts as the fulfillment piece for our marketing and we contract with 5- Star Marketing, a brochure distribution company, to place brochures in several WI and MN markets in all four seasons. In addition, we will partner with Bayfield & Madeline Island to have a large presence in the Beloit Welcome Center. Along with the visitor guide, we also print the Ashland Mural Walk brochures, and the Ashland Shopping & Dining Guide. ALL retail businesses with a storefront are listed in the shopping and dining guide, however, Chamber Members are given the opportunity to have a description of their business in the guide.

We currently administer 10 websites and a Facebook Page – www.visitashland.com is our main website and the County’s website is www.travelashlandcounty.com. WhistleStop, Apostle Islands Inline, Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival, Superior Vistas Bicycle Tour, Ashland Bay Days, Chick-umeagon and Muralbrick Road correspond with our Chamber and County sites.

Along with promoting the abundance of outdoor activities and events, the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce continues to promote and invest in the sustainability of our historic downtown. We create events throughout the year that invite both tourists and locals to visit Historic Main Street and see the many stores, restaurants, museum, and beautiful murals, that are primarily located in the 8-block Main Street Business District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Ashland is becoming more and more of a destination because of the promotions, events, recreational opportunities, tourism businesses and the recognition of being the Historic Mural Capital of Wisconsin. Our location on Lake Superior and

Chequamegon Bay lend itself to partnering with our neighbors Washburn, Bayfield, and Madeline Island. The Chequamegon Bay Chambers meet regularly and work together to promote the bay to travelers in our areas.

Thank you for partnering with us through your membership, volunteerism, sponsorship, and investment in Ashland
.....*The Heart of Chequamegon Bay*. We know you have already found yourself *next to the water!*

Help Promote our Artesian Wells and cut down on plastic bottles!! We have been promoting the clean, cold, crisp, clear artesian well water for several years and highlight our water in both the visitor guide and our television commercials.

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce offers so much to our members. Please review the many chamber benefits listed below. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is a full-time, fully-staffed Chamber. The Board of Directors is dedicated to keeping you informed on programs and issues that are important to your business, community, and the region.

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Mission Statement:
“We Sell Ashland”

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce exists to identify, highlight and promote Ashland and the surrounding area. We accomplish this through:

Sponsoring special events and promotions designed to emphasize the diverse recreational, educational and tourism opportunities in our area.

Supporting a solid diversified economic base – one that ensures a healthy business climate and a prosperous, progressive community.

Collaborating with public and private sectors aimed at improving the quality of life in the Ashland area.

Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Benefits

Business After Hours As soon as we get the GREEN LIGHT

A great way to showcase your business for any reason. Use this venue as a way to thank the business community, introduce new management, or promote a new business. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is a partner with you in this event to create awareness of your business to our membership.

Business Retention and Expansion

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is committed to growing the Ashland economy and consistently looks for programs that will help grow and sustain our economic condition. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce focuses on promoting the Ashland area in the fields of marketing, financial opportunities, and expansion of our business community. The Chamber Revolving Loan Fund differs from current programs available through the Ashland Area Development Corporation. Loans are available from \$5,000-\$15,000 and job quality is considered equal to job creation, meaning an independent business owner equates to one job created.

Chamber Dollars

Service, professional, retail, food, beverage, lodging ... it doesn't matter.

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce distributes over \$65,000 a year in Chamber Dollars. (This year, we will sell over \$250,000.00). Chamber Dollars are spent at member businesses and redeemable for full value from the Chamber. This is an excellent way to **promote local spending**. Your name will appear on the Gift Certificate List, which is enclosed with each Chamber Dollar sale. **Chamber Dollars promote local spending!!**

Monthly Newsletter – Will resume as soon as events and promotions in the community increase. Until then, we are using our E-Blasts each week and more if needed to communicate with our Chamber Member Businesses.

This monthly publication highlights topics most pertinent to our Chamber and its members. The newsletter is sent via email and snail mail. A great place to send in **FREE** news tidbits about your business under “Business News.” (Some restrictions apply.)

Weekly Eblast

Each week we email our membership and others that have signed up to promote events in the Chequamegon Bay area. Businesses can email us an event for the eblast. (Some restrictions apply)

Website Listing

As a membership benefit, all members receive a **FREE** listing and hyperlink on the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce website. Our website allows you the opportunity to have up to 4 photos on your page and to have a map available to your business through Google maps. Websites, Facebook accounts and e-mail addresses are highlighted, allowing visitors to link directly to your site. We also highlight the Business of the Week on our website and our Facebook page in conjunction with the radio promotion. **Our website is another great way to promote our area and another excellent, efficient way to promote your business:** www.visitashland.com

Newsletter Advertising Opportunities

For only \$75 and 475 copies, a Chamber member can place an advertising insert in our monthly newsletter. This is a great economical way to reach potential customers. (Some restrictions apply.)

Bulk Mailing Permit

Direct mail to potential customers is one of the best forms of advertising. The Chamber has a bulk mailing permit, which is available to our members for use **FREE** on large mailings of 200 or more. Using the permit can save up to .18 per piece.

Mailing Lists

Our membership list is available **ONLY** to members at no cost. (Mailing labels are available at a charge of \$15.)

Display your Brochures

Promote your business by displaying your brochures in our reception area racks.

The Chamber Map

City of Ashland maps are available at the Chamber office free of charge to members.

Visitor Guide

Ashland County Area Activity & Visitor Guides are available free of charge. Ask about advertising opportunities in the visitor guide. 45,000 copies are printed and the guide is the main fulfillment piece for the Ashland County marketing Campaign.

The Experience/Ashland Shopping & Dining Guide

Retail storefront and dining members receive a **FREE** listing and description in the area Shopping & Dining Guide, which is distributed throughout the community, in locations such as the hospital and clinics, as well as to the many visitors who travel to our area. Another **FREE** advertising opportunity for your business.

Business Directory

The Chamber Business Directory lists **all** Chamber Member businesses with a description, another **FREE** advertising opportunity.

Wedding Planner Brochure

A brochure listing Chamber Member businesses to help couples make plans for their wedding. This is also a great piece to promote larger meeting spaces and businesses that cater food and beverage.

Business Recruitment Tours

We offer personal tours for business recruitment. Whether a new physician or C.E.O. of a company, we will take the potential candidate on a guided tour through the area and familiarize them with our community with excitement and professionalism.

Business Referral System

Chamber staff gives referrals to Chamber businesses in response to the thousands of telephone, personal, and written inquiries each year.

Weekly Business Spotlight – “Business of the Week”

A 30-second commercial spot is created by Heartland Communications Group and played throughout the week. Businesses are drawn from our pool of members. This is an excellent way of creating awareness for our business and is heard throughout the region. An excellent value of over \$150 for **FREE**. The Ashland Chamber partners with Heartland Communications to feature 52 businesses throughout the year.

Chamber Annual Dinner and Person of the Year

This annual event highlights the past year's accomplishments and the upcoming year's priorities for the Chamber. The event

also recognizes the Person of the Year. This person is nominated by the public and voted on by the Chamber Board of Directors.

Ribbon Cuttings/Grand Openings/Ambassadors

We are so excited to announce three new businesses in Ashland!! El Charro, Beads to Blooms, and The Gitch Nutrition, recently opened in Ashland and on Main Street. As soon as it is safe to hold ribbon cuttings, we will celebrate with these businesses!!

New and existing businesses receive ribbon-cutting photo opportunities and community-wide exposure for grand openings, groundbreaking ceremonies or special anniversaries. Ambassadors get a chance to see new businesses. Businesses get the chance to receive great *FREE* publicity for new things happening in their business.

Relocation Packets

Relocation packets include specific information about the community and Chamber members.

Ashland County Affiliation

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is the administrator for the Ashland County tourism budget. The website www.travelashlandcounty.com is provided by the county and accessed by thousands of interested persons. You can order a free copy of the very popular Ashland *County Sportsman's Map or the new Ashland County Inland Lake Map at www.visitashland.com or www.travelashlandcounty.com.*

Northwest Wisconsin Regional ITBEC

The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce continues to partner with the Northwest Wisconsin division of the state's International Trade, Business and Economic Development Council (ITBEC) to promote tourism opportunities within our region. We market to all segments from silent to motorized sports and with a focus on the many trail systems throughout northwest Wisconsin. Check out the website at www.northwestwisconsin.com.

Board Representation

Mary McPhetridge was appointed to the **Governor's Council on Tourism** in 2018 for a 3-year term. In addition, Mary is the President of the **Wisconsin Downtown Action Council**. A Statewide Wisconsin Downtown Advocacy Organization.

Harbor Towns

Wisconsin Harbor Towns Association is a partnership of 18 Wisconsin Great Lakes harbor communities, formed to enhance their image and develop economic impact by promoting tourism through water-based, land and cruise ship recreation to the Wisconsin Harbor Towns. Harbor Towns was recently awarded the prestigious State of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Trailblazers award in the "Outstanding Partnership Initiative" category. Check out the website at www.wisconsinharbortowns.net.

Co-op Advertising

You are entitled to participate in the State of Wisconsin Department of Tourism co-op advertising programs. The Department has negotiated special discounts with media in the Midwest. Some examples include Pioneer Press, Midwest Living, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Chicago Tribune, Madison Newspapers, and Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Your investment helps the Chamber support a variety of Chamber-sponsored functions and events in the community. The Chamber also works with other local organizations on community issues and acts as the destination and tourism liaison for Ashland and the surrounding area. Our office receives hundreds of phone calls pertaining to area information and destination services. **Chamber members are always promoted and referred over non-members.**

As you can see, there are many great benefits that come with your membership.

Our membership dues **continue** to remain among the **lowest** in the region. We will continue to support and promote our Chamber members statewide, regionally, countywide and locally.

If you have any questions about our dues, the direction of the Chamber, or any of our programs and projects, please feel free to give us a call. We hope you will see that membership in the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce is an excellent investment in your business and your community. We welcome you!

After reviewing the enclosed materials, please:

- * Return your payment of dues.
- * Complete and return membership update form.
- * Complete and return your website update form. Please be sure to include your website, Facebook and email address. Also email us up to 4 photos to place on your business page.

Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce staff:

Executive Director – Mary McPhetridge
Office Manager – JoAnn Erickson
Customer Service Specialist – Ellen Turnquist
Public Relations & Customer Service Specialist – Maribeth Monroe

Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors:

Executive Board Members:

John Beirl, Northern State Bank, President
Rick Forsythe, Chippewa Valley Bank, Past President, Secretary
Mike BeBeau, Xcel Energy, Treasurer
Karen Hansen, Memorial Medical Center, Vice President

At-Large Members:

Paul Bretting, C.G. Bretting Manufacturing
Todd Chingo, AmericInn Conference Center
Tina Miller, Inn at Timber Cove
Lisa Gervais, Cobblestone Inn & Suites
Bill Kacvinsky, Ashland Construction

Ex Officio Members:

Brant Kucera, City of Ashland
Erik Olson, Ashland School
Betsey Harries, Ashland Area Development Corporation

**Annual & Special events promoted, sponsored and/or coordinated
By the Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce:**

- *Memorial Medical Center WhistleStop Marathon & Half-Marathon*
- *Memorial Medical Center Cruisin' the Corridor*
- *Apostle Islands Inline Marathon*
- *Ashland Field Day*
- *Northern Wisconsin's Largest House to House Garage Sale*
- *Chequamegon Bay Birding & Nature Festival*
- *Downtown Days*
- *Ashland Bay Days Festival*
- *Customer Appreciation Day*
- *Garland City of the North Christmas Parade*
- *4th of July Parade*
- *Girls' Night Out*
- *Witches' Night Out*
- *Ashland Easter Egg Hunt*
- *Book Across the Bay*
- *Superior Vistas Bike Tour*
- *Chamber Night at ABC Raceway*
- *3rd Thursdays*
- *Trolley Tours*
- *No Snow Snowman & Scarecrow Contests*
- *Ashland Mural Fest & Car Show*
- *Chick-uamegon Women's 1-mile/5K/10K*
- *Shop Small Win Big Promotion*
- *Shop 7\$15*
- *25 Days of Ashland Christmas*
- *Horse-drawn Sleigh Rides*
- *Pictures with Santa or a COVID Friendly Santa Parade*