

## Why Join the Chamber

We often get asked, the questions “Why Join the Chamber” or “What’s the Chamber do for me, my business or the community”?

### **We Work for You**

The Chamber’s mission is to build a dynamic and sustainable organization to serve the Business, Workforce, and Economic Development needs of all in Manistee County. The Chamber was established in 1916 and strives to drive change and growth throughout our area and that’s what our organization is still all about today. The Chamber Board of Directors Chamber Ambassadors, Staff and Volunteers are the boots on the ground individuals fulfilling this mission.

### **We Support Local**

Supporting local businesses is a priority of the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has hosted 11 grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremonies so far for the year, over \$7 million has been invested by these business in our community for a creation of over 40 new jobs. We would like to thank the following businesses: Save-A-Lot, Amor Sign Studios, Inc., Blarney Castle EZ Market, Manistee Beverage Company, West Shore Bank, Lighthouse Title, Love Your Event & Manistee Bridal, the Blue Slipper Tavern, United Way of Manistee County/Project Read Northwest, Sunset Valley Resort and Iron Fish Distillery. Let’s all support local!

### **We Foster Leadership Development**

The Manistee Area Leadership Program commenced its third year, graduating 12 participants for a total of 35 since its inception. Their community project was the Big Day of Serving, with over 60 projects all over Manistee County and over 400 volunteers that helped make this day a success for the community. This program creates long lasting relationships, assists with employee retention and community pride and development. The graduates of this program have gone on to be leaders in the community and in their prospective businesses. We are proud to announce a few of the graduates are in the following leadership roles: Chamber Board of Directors, Downtown Development Authority Board, Habitat for Humanity Board and the Manistee Housing Commission. These individuals are the future leaders of this community, and we applaud them for their efforts and thank their employers for investing in the program.

### **We Advocate on Your Behalf**

The Chamber has dedicated resources to be a full partner in the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance. What does this mean for you as a business owner, organization or school? This group supports maintaining Pure Michigan campaign funding levels, defending post Labor Day school start, expanding and improving administration of the H2B seasonal visa program, competitive taxes for growth, production of sales of craft beer, wine and distilling industries.

In addition, we understand that One Size Does Not Fit All for Northern Michigan and collectively we have a stronger voice together in Lansing with our legislators. Our top legislative priorities are Rural Business & Community Development, Workforce Housing Initiatives, Access to Childcare and Talent Attraction and Training. We have a dedicated Government Relations Director, and make 2-3 trips to Lansing annually as a group. Early this year, we held a luncheon for the Governor and his staff the day of the State of the State address, along with hosting a legislative reception in Lansing. Early this year we met with the directors and their staff from the following departments, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

### **We Take a Stand**

The Chamber took a stand and supported Renew Onkama's efforts by pledging \$1,000 to assist the Portage Point Inn against lawsuits that were being filed. The Chamber Board of Directors understands the importance of economic development, job growth and having a developer that is invested in restoring the inn and making it a viable year round business for the Onkama community. We love the Portage Point Inn!

### **We Support & Provide Economic Development**

Economic Development is a hot topic and can mean many different things to many different people. The Chamber Board of Directors has made it a priority moving forward as an important function for the Chamber to take a more active role and focused approach. This is not a new function of Chambers, as many of our colleagues throughout the state and country are leading the charge in economic development. We have secured funding to support these efforts and want to thank these funders; the Industrial Development Corporation, Filer Credit Union, Munson Healthcare Manistee Hospital, and our anonymous funders for supporting the Chamber's role in leading our community forward.

The Chamber organized and hosted a Developer Day, with the theme of "Drop Anchor, Cultivate a Community", and came together in partnership with the City of Manistee, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and West Shore Community College (WSCC). As a committee, priority sites were selected for development and showcased to developers, along a walking tour of downtown. We now have an active list of developers in the state and beyond and we continue to follow up.

### **We Support Workforce Development**

In the spring, the annual Business & Career Expo was held in partnership with Launch Manistee. Over 400 students came to the Expo prepped and ready for career exploration, along with applying for jobs and internships. There were 45 different exhibitors in attendance. After the student portion, the expo was open to the public for those seeking jobs and wanting to learn more about the different services provided by the businesses exhibiting.

### **We Support Entrepreneurism**

The Chamber has a seat on the DDA's Business Development Committee, and on the subcommittee for the SPARK Manistee event, which is a shark tank competition to encourage entrepreneurship and growth in the downtown. The Chamber is one of the sponsors of the event and is excited to have a board member as one of the judges for the competition.

### **We Market the Community**

The Manistee County Relocation Guide was developed and is in distribution along with an electronic version coming soon. This was a need for our employers to recruit talent, and other agencies and businesses to have a resource to provide newcomers to our area. It's a quick reference for business information, early childhood, education, healthcare, housing for those who are new to Manistee County.

### **We Initiate Conversations**

The Chamber organized and hosted an HR Roundtable with our top employers in the area to get connected and acquainted with one another. The creation of this network allows these department heads and the Chamber to connect, share best practices and develop ways to collectively work together on employee retention, recruitment and workforce challenges and opportunities. These meeting will continue quarterly.

### **We Acknowledge & Celebrate Our History**

The Manistee National Forest Festival kicked off on June 29 and extended to the Fourth of July and it was a hot one! This festival celebrated it's 82nd year and showcased our community well, celebrating its rich history by bringing back some of the logging events from the past. We are excited to report that there were over 40 events that took place over the six day festival, and want to acknowledge and thank our dedicated volunteers and staff for the countless hours to make this festival a success. Festivals are one of the top drivers of local tourism. Did you know that \$142,100,000 is spent annually by visitors in Manistee County? We are happy to work in partnership with the Manistee County Visitors Bureau.

### **We Give Back**

It's extremely important for the Chamber to give back to local organizations and charities. The Chamber has donated over \$13,800 to different organizations since the beginning of the year. We continue to work with local nonprofits to raise funds to assist with sustaining their missions and the value they bring to the community.

### **We Offer Tangible & Intangible Benefits**

As a member of the Chamber, please get involved and take advantage of the following member benefits. We offer member insurance discounts on commercial and personal property, provide accident fund group program, business referrals, grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremonies, and milestone anniversaries to promote your business. We offer many networking, sponsorship and volunteer opportunities. We are active on social media promoting your business, the

community, different events, programs and services for our area. We also have a job board on our website, so if you have opening please send them our way.

We thank you for letting us share some highlights and what's been happening so far this year with YOUR Chamber of Commerce.

For more information on the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce, please visit [manisteechamber.com](http://manisteechamber.com) or contact us at 723-2575.