

Hello Everyone,

The Grand Bend and Area Chamber of Commerce want thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to come and get involved.

We have had a busy year with various projects involving community players and municipal collaborations. I am going to summarize each, and point out our partner in each event. You will see why as we go through the list.

Our spring mixer at Oakwood, with over sixty attendees and a celebration of Bluewater Inn's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our fall mixer at Gators featured lots of good food, a great view, and lots of politicians trying to get our attention.

Arts, Eats and Beats beginning of May featured many wonderful artists collaborating with musicians and great food and accommodation providers. It has become so popular that people inquire ahead and where all these fabulous artists are displaying their artwork. Glen Baillie spearheads this amazing event. Have you dealt with many artists and their individualism?

Buskerfest was held again, returning musicians found a warmer reception on the main street, and the municipality has relaxed the regulations on street entertainers once the Chamber has registered them. Who knew you could change a bylaw?

The new and amazing event Sunset Summer Series Concerts at the beach on Sundays was an incredible endeavour seeing businesses pull together and Glen Baillie heading it tirelessly so that we could enjoy awesome talent and show case where music started in Grand Bend at the beach. Stay tuned here as the Rotary Club lead the charge to get a permanent stage erected on the beach. See Jim Southcott for more details, or Glen Baillie regarding your desire to donate money to the construction.

Aqua Fest helped to create a great awareness of our largest resource Water. Paddle board competition, photography, clam chowder contest and collaboration with the Pinery Provincial Park and many others. This festival was featured in videos at the conference I just attended and I understand no one is there to head it up, perhaps another example of the danger of counting on volunteer events to drive event based programming.

The Annual Golf tournament spear headed by Mark, Sheila, and Nancy Starek had the highest turn out ever at the Bayview Golf Course. Everyone remembers of the great weather for all. All the great sponsors. no one won the car, wine had by all, which Mark and Sheila had to search and follow up on. Lots of leg work involved. Amazing games, food and good times had by all. The funds raised here allow us to keep the visitor center open an extra 80 days.

We had the Christmas Comes Early which Mike Burgess worked tirelessly on his own and taking time out of his business. He successfully also got Bayfield right to Forest involved. This was the first year for this collaboration which we want to continue. Amazing shopping the whole coast and right into heritage Forest with their many quaint and amazing shops. He and Ian put up the signage to let folks know what was happening. No small feat that got --- merchants involved.

This tied in with the New Grand Bend Light's Up grass roots group which was an amazing partnership between the small and mighty West Coast Lions, Legion, Partners In Learning, community folks,

businesses, and the municipality and councillors. This particular group had its first meeting September 26 and met every Monday evening and decorations were up in 4 weeks with many amazing events: We had the official Light up Grand Bend with Santa, singing choirs Grand Bend United Church Singers and some of the Seaforth Harmony Kings. West coast Lions had hot chocolate supplied by Tim Hortons and hot cider and cookies supplied by Soebys. Don't forget the Humes horse and carriage sponsored by the Grand Bend Legion. Sandra Cox and the Celebration tree over a \$1000.00 was raised for Blessings in Zurich. Nancy Winters led the Partner's In Learning Group with the Best Light Up Displays which was celebrated at the Pine Dale Motor Inn and the beautiful awards created with Shannon from Garden Gate and Nancy picked up the cute Christmas house decorations at Bronners while bringing her Dad back here and her car broke down by Frankenmuth. Tina from Midoris did the shoe box for kids which was helping kids to have a better christmas. If I missed something or someone I apologise.

Thanksgiving Market was on a glorious weather weekend. Many folks were hustling and bustling enjoying the autumn bounties and crafts. It is now opened to include a broader spectrum. Someone needs to head this up to become bigger and better celebration.

We had the Mayor's Breakfast at the Colonial which was very successful with information and fabulous breakfast, Winter Carnival which needs to be celebrated all the players were running their fun events making their contribution to this area so our citizens and visitors could have fun. Mother Nature certainly put her cold shoulder to our celebrations but didn't freeze all the warm hearts.

So what have all these events have in common? Susan we want to thank you on behalf of the board and your tireless work for putting this and more all together. It comes out to our memberships and visitors. This doesn't include minutes, giving the board reminders of meetings, applications, grant writing, communication with municipality, accountant, doing the layout for the visitor guide and so much more ! She is here for us so that we can have a viable and economical business. A great big thank you.

I have just returned from a major tourism conference sponsored by RTO#1 Ontario's Southwest. The theme was building momentum. Attendees of interest were Natalie Core, Brad Oke, and from the municipality, Shannon and Ashley. The event had many notable presenters, a summary of which is :overall tourism spend in this region has surpassed \$1.7 billion

-we get over 17.8 million visitors, including 3 million from the U.S. (goal isto tap into this market)

-14.6 million of those visitors are day-trippers who don't spend as much as overnights (need to convert )

-cycling is increasing fast

-everybody is a foodie

-currency Us to Can.

-#of US passport holders A-changing 40 million- now 120 million

-mkt campaigns from Ontario's Southwest -loud and clear, -build a better beach eg. Blue Flag, back road trips

-Hotel-Pelee Island and Windsor Rev Par 17% vs Canada 6% ave is 9.3% for RT0 1

they are planning to increase this by launch new programs

by bloggers, videos , significant events check out Pelee.org-Canada's Best Kept Secret!

So the great news is they are expanding the waterfront trail that is Ontario By Bike.ca from Pelee Island to Grand Bend.

RTO1 and RTO 4 have made a fantastic announcement that they are going to collaborate together to include Grand Bend yeah! With matching funds more details to follow.

Blue Flag Beach- Canatara Park just received this designation- which is wonderful if the whole coast is people are looking for this and that what is attracting them -it shows these places get more tourist \$

Culinary Enhancements projects

Significant Events- adding 3<sup>rd</sup> strategic priority

Why-growth potential

When-starts April 1<sup>st</sup>

commitment :up to \$150 000 in matching funds total -2 tiers Details: Joan Walnick

this Rto1 has won the most economic development awards which comes from product development - partnerships matching funds!

Morah Fenning ass't deputy minister Tourism Planning and Operation Division Ministry of Tourism, culture and Sports told us \$28 Billion revenue in Ontario 347 000 jobs in Ontario  
RTO 1 \$1.9 Billion in receipts in this area and 83 000 jobs

concentrating on -touring, cycling, wine country and Events!

Celebrate Ontario grant application for grant but this is past due!

Rob Taylor Tourism Industry Assc of Canada TIAC – Tourism Industry Association of Canada - president & CEO -there needs to be leadership to move forward including a levels of government. People want local experiences, local fare and to be included as a local. Market like 2019 not 1999. Tourism is the world's 4 th fastest growing industry. Times a Changing!

All these tourism industry leaders : -lower loonie -with exchange rates more US visitors expected to come back & fewer Canadians heading out and cross boarder shop.

-gas prices=Southwestern Ontario is what the industry calls “rubber tire” market which means Us folks are more likely to drive here than using other modes of transportation. So last year gas prices were high and suddenly driving vacations from the US to Canada dropped 1.7% The US market is slowly recovering therefore a little more spending money for short getaway. This is where this area excels.

-passports-the tourism took a big hit when passports requirements were issued, security at the borders increased basically scaring the US visitor -even for the last minute lets go for a visit group. Good news there are 120 million US tourists with passports which has more than doubled

-I don't know if anyone seen the Rick Mercer rant a couple of weeks ago that just about says it all in regards to the Federal -Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) spends \$0 into the US market even though 70% of all international visitors are the US market. The CTC spends some money to the Chinese and Russian markets on hopes to attract them to Canada. So as Jim Hudson from Ontario's Southwest mentioned even a 50% increase in Chinese tourists would not equal the impact of a 1%

increase in US tourists". Ottawa has been asked for \$35 million dollars a year for 3 years, matched by the industry to fund new targeted campaigns to the US- CTC haven't commented. The tourism industry leaders are encouraging us to call your local mp to grow the US market! Tell them # of employees, year in business .

So as the various industry leaders said we need to take especially Greg Klassen (formerly with Canadian Tourism )

change=opportunity

-dynamic and creative =not always the safe and boring in the following

-collaboration and partnerships

-you just can't be better -you need to be different

-all level of governments need to be involved

-tell our story -can't assume people will know if, we don't- someone else will

-people want experiences of the local fare therefore we need to embrace

-events, events, events -need to create excitement -the surrounding areas are creating amazing events and attracting visitors and locals and being very successful.

-social media-instagram is out pacing fb and twitter according to the various Digital Media folks from Fanshawe College but all are important

In closing we have to take pride, we have an amazing area, with culture, shopping, culinary.

We have the Boulder (the area). By positioning our destination, the rocks -they are complimentary to the boulders, the pebbles which are great experiences and things to do. We can accomplish great things here, we need to collaborate, and constantly strive to improve.

So let's tell our story!