



Northeast Polk Chamber adapts, remains ready to serve

Olivia Feliciano | Northeast Polk Chamber of Commerce

The Northeast Polk Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit business, financed by membership dues, with the purpose of serving the Northeast Polk County region. Our purpose is to promote and support our members while serving the citizens of our local communities.

The Chamber hosts numerous monthly and annual events including: monthly business after hours, ribbon cuttings, luncheons, our annual Pig Roast & Political Rally, Wine & Cheese at the Park, an annual banquet and an annual golf tournament. We promote our members through event sponsorship opportunities, email blasts, social media posts, website features, directory listings and distribution of promotional material in our lobby.

Beyond membership, we make it our goal to support our communities by helping visitors acquire information, partnering with local donation drives and sending out information about available resources.

Our normal operations have been disrupted over the past few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we have remained committed to doing our part to continue serving our members and our communities.

Like many of our resilient members and other local businesses, we adapted our operations to continue our service mission. Although all of our events from late-March until now have had to be cancelled or postponed — and our lobby was closed for several weeks — we continued promoting our

members' information through daily emails, social media posts and website updates.

We also sent out important news about available resources and webinars through the same daily updates. Once our lobby reopened a few weeks ago, we began helping community members fill out Polk CARES 2020 applications.

During this time, our Chamber has also served as a food collection location for local food pantries.

As we all continue to navigate the changing circumstances of the pandemic, the Northeast Polk Chamber is committed to continue doing what we can to serve our members and community members. We will continue to promote our members and share their information and other news about available resources and webinars through our emails, COVID-19 Resources & Daily Updates webpage, and our social media platforms.

We partnered with the Haines City CRA, Haines City EDC, and PGTV on a weekly webinar series called “The New Norm” — which live-streamed on Fridays through June 26 — and each webinar featured speakers that discussed topics including how small businesses can adapt to new practices and guidelines, updates on the unemployment situation and other helpful discussions regarding the new normal of the pandemic.

Looking ahead, our Chamber is also very excited to begin hosting

TO PG 22 ►

BALMORAL RESORT FLORIDA



LUXURY VACATION HOMES WITH RESORT AMENITIES

RATES STARTING AT

\$120/ PER NIGHT

SPECIALS + ENTERTAINMENT

MONDAY: \$5 MARTINIS

TUESDAY: \$2 TACOS | \$3 MARGARITAS

WEDNESDAY: UNLIMITED WINGS | 4-7 PM

THURSDAY: \$2 DRAFTS | 6-9 PM

SUNDAY: KIDS EAT FREE*

Entertainment

TUESDAY Dang Yo! Trivia	5-8 PM
THURSDAY The Line-Up (Live Music)	6-9 PM
FRIDAY Live Entertainment	7-10 PM
SATURDAY Live Music	7-10 PM
SUNDAY Live Entertainment	12-4 PM

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC!



HAINES CITY • FROM PG 16

Redevelopment Agency (CRA), Haines City Economic Development Council, Inc. (EDC), and Northeast Area Chamber of Commerce have locked arms on behalf of these businesses owners to provide current and timely information.

By working together, our city has rooted itself in taking the best possible care of our business owners during this difficult time.

It is a defining moment in business. With COVID-19 triggering a national emergency in the United States, many of our small businesses are trying to find a new way to survive. Operating any business in this climate is stressful and, more than ever, looking for local resources is going to be key to navigating and gaining insight for small businesses and our citizens who took a hard hit in this pandemic.

Our organization here at the Haines City EDC has partnered

BARTOW • FROM PG 17

to their toolbox. They have worked hard to get creative. They know they can survive. They are in the process of writing their new normal.

I don't think any of us can pretend to know what that normal looks like, exactly, but I think we will all agree that the lessons learned over the last six months have made our businesses stronger.

WINTER HAVEN • FROM PG 18

Florida Chamber and the US Chamber of Commerce, we have been able to open numerous other webinars with state and federal leaders and experts to our members. Perhaps most importantly, we have had over 200 phone calls or virtual one-on-one counseling sessions with area businesses, and individual community members, looking for help to make it through this crisis.

A Chamber of Commerce is not a government entity. We are an independent non-profit that exists through the support of our mem-

POLK COUNTY TOURISM • FROM PG 18

bers and donors that believe in our mission to build strong communities. What we do would not be possible without the generous support of the over 760 businesses that are members of the Winter Haven Chamber.

Using the above information, as well as additional information gathered by our Tallahassee market research company Downs and St. Germain, PCTSM has devised a fluid marketing plan that seeks to capitalize on the shifting travel desires of the general public.

Focusing on the surrounding drive market, from the Villages to Jacksonville, St. Augustine to Miami and Georgia, we plan on highlighting what Polk County has always been known for – wide-open spaces, plenty of outdoor activities to enjoy and friendly faces.

NORTHEAST POLK • FROM PG 21

in-person events again and getting to see our chamber family members. Our next scheduled in-person event is our 38th Annual Pig Roast & Political Rally, which is scheduled for Friday, September 25, at Lake Eva Event Center in Haines City. We will begin sending out more information about this event as the date approaches, and we are looking forward to having a wonderful Political Rally this year.

Our doors are always open to our existing members, new members, community members and visitors. The Northeast Polk Chamber of Commerce is located at 35610 U.S. Highway 27 in Haines City. If you would like

with the City of Haines City CRA, Northeast Polk Chamber of Commerce and PGTV creating "The New Norm," a post-pandemic small business development and community wellness live-stream production. The show has covered a variety of topics relating to conducting business post-COVID-19 and beyond. We have received a great response from the business community finding the information helpful and relevant.

When times get tough, we look for guidance. For small business owners, that means looking to business leaders for their views on how the economic stall from the pandemic will play out, and to navigate a plan to help them succeed. Our local organizations have really come together and have come up with ways to support each other to assist our small businesses and our citizens during this time — and beyond. ♦

There is still much uncertainty ahead — will there be a resurgence? Will further shutdowns be required? No one can provide a solid answer on that, but we can find strength in knowing our communities are here to support us.

I think it is safe to say 2020 has provided a fresh start — just not the one we expected. ♦

If you are a business, I strongly encourage you to support your local Chamber of Commerce. Show me a thriving, strong community, and I will show you a strong Chamber of Commerce at the center of it. ♦

What the future holds

Pre-pandemic, tourism was the backbone of Polk County's economic engine, generating more than 21,000 jobs, \$460 million in wages and \$2.4 billion in economic impact.

Those days will return.

It is our job here at PCTSM, as the stewards of our tourism industry, to guide it from the gloom toward the light. We'll do this through innovative and responsive marketing, well-timed advertising and the return of sports and special events, guided by what we think is a steady hand on the tiller. ♦

to be in the loop of all our Chamber happenings and receive information about resources and more, visit our website at www.northeastpolkchamber.com. You can also receive our weekly e-newsletters and regular email blasts by requesting to be opted-in to our emails. Contact the Chamber at (863) 422-3751 or info@northeastpolkchamber.com. Plus, don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram (@northeastpolkchamber) and Twitter (@NEPChamber).

Our Chamber has great things in store, and we would love for you to be a part of our chamber family! ♦