

Marketing Department Quarterly Report

January, February and March 2021

Visitor Stats:

Overall, visitor numbers were down significantly for this quarter. Although pandemic numbers peaked in January of 2021 and began falling in February, the welcome center, depot museum and model train exhibits remained open. The Holmes Hospital Museum remained closed for repairs from damage caused by Hurricane Sally in September of 2020.

The Welcome Center continued to greet visitors during those months. For the quarter, we greeted 901 guests, which was down 51% from the 1,854 that came in during the same period in 2020. The Welcome Center remained open Monday – Friday, from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Most guests chose to wear masks, but not all. Staff always wore masks. Sneeze screens, frequent hand washing and social distancing were used for safety.

The Railroad Museum also remained open during regular hours, Monday – Saturday, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., during the darkest days of the pandemic. Attendance there was also down significantly. We greeted 2,363 guests during the quarter, compared to 4,564 during the same timeframe in 2020, for a decline of 48%.

The Model Train volunteers are all in a high risk group. Some of these volunteers followed CDC guidelines and stayed home during this time. There were also regular volunteers who live in northern states who did not travel to our area this year. This resulted in a shortage of volunteers. The exhibit was open on Saturdays only during the quarter. For safety, large sneeze screens were installed, volunteers wore masks at all times, the number of guests allowed in at any one time were restricted and the flow of the exhibit was modified. The number of guests who visited the museum was 1,441 for the quarter, versus 6,069 for the same period in 2020, resulting in a decline of 76%.

Event Train – For the past year, this has been the hottest free ticket in town. Each Saturday the train has seen heavy traffic as it was one of few activities open for children. It definitely pulled guests into Foley's downtown area. We recently began recording the number of riders. During the quarter, 1,355 rides were given.

Online Stats for January, February and March 2021

City of Foley Municipal Government Facebook Activity 12,841, up 294% from 4,365 in 2020

This page jumped significantly during Hurricane Sally as this was one of the prime tools used to push information out to residents. It is almost daily to provide city information.

Visit Foley Facebook page Activity: 10,009, down 7% from 10,756 in 2020

Fewer out of town guests were looking for information on things to do, but numbers stayed strong because we have a good local following.

Visit Foley website: 10,989 visitors, down 16% from 13,161 in 2020

City of Foley website: 24,895 visitors, down 15% from 29,435 in 2020

Activities and Events:

January 2021

Foley coupon sheets arrived in early January. This very successful partnership between Foley Sports Tourism, Recreation and the Marketing Department produces an impressive sheet with 80 coupons for Foley businesses that is distributed to area visitors. Guests love to receive it and have been known to come back to get another one. It is a benefit to area businesses as it encourages people to keep their dollars in Foley.

The 10th Annual Snowbird Coffee was reinvented to follow recommended COVID-19 restrictions. It was held as a drive-through event at the Foley Senior Center, with a total of 432 attending. Through the windows of their car, each guest received a reusable bag filled with area coupons and information, plus goodies. This was our first opportunity to distribute the 2020 Foley coupon sheets. Guests also received cups of hot chocolate. Our winter guests appreciated that the city continued the tradition of welcoming them with an early January event.

A second part of the welcome was the traditional scavenger hunt within downtown businesses, with 117 participants this year. Prizes included \$1,000 total in gift certificates to local restaurants, benefiting both guests and the restaurants. This was new event coordinator Sara Harkin's first event. Thank you to the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, Foley Main Street, the Senior Center, the Maintenance Department and both the Fire and the Police Departments for assisting with this project.

February 2021

Eighteen thousand copies of the Mayor's newsletter were printed, with 17,814 delivered to mailboxes and the balance distributed at city hall, the library, the welcome center and other city offices.

March 2021

An experimental new event called Midweek Melodies was hosted in Heritage Park in March. Musicians were hired to play from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. on three consecutive Wednesdays beginning March 17. Guests were invited to bring their lunch and a chair to enjoy the music and the spring weather in the park. A food truck was located in the park for convenience. The crowds were small, at approximately 60 for each date, but the events were definitely enjoyed by those who attended. By the last week, guests were asking who would be playing the next week. There is definitely interest in holding this event again.