

## **Marketing Department Annual Report 2020-2021**

### **Overview:**

Tourism numbers were inconsistent during the year, affected by both COVID-19 and Hurricane Sally. As vaccinations became readily available, visitor numbers picked up in late spring and during the summer.

Although there were fewer visitors who came into the Welcome Center early in the year, packets with visitor information were available outside the door for contact-free pickup. Depot visitor numbers were up for the year. Visits to the model train exhibit were down because it was open on Saturdays only from October through May, as fewer volunteers were available because of COVID. The exhibit reopened on their normal schedule in June.

The Holmes Hospital Museum was damaged heavily in Hurricane Sally and reopened for visitors on July 15, 2021. The museum reopened with improved exhibits thanks to Bill Swanson and his team. The museum presents a better visitor experience with new story boards throughout that help tell the story of the first physicians and the medical care that was available in the area from 1936 – 1958.

The Charlie Ebert II Park Train had a wonderful year in spite of COVID. Because it is outdoors, volunteers kept the train running on schedule throughout the year.

### **Welcome Center and Museum Counts – report attached**

- At the Welcome Center, there were a total of 2,870 visits, down 12 percent for the year from the 3,286 visits during the same period during 2020. The year started very slowly because of the threat of COVID-19 kept many visitors away
- At the Railroad Museum, there were 16,250 visitors, up 14 percent from the 14,238 visitors during the same period in 2020.
- The Model Train Exhibit was only open on Saturdays from October through May. The venue reopened for the normal schedule of three days a week in June. During June and July they saw over 2,500 visitors a month. For the year, there were a total of 11,058 visitors, down only 6 percent from the 11,733 visitors in 2020 because of strong numbers during summer months.
- The Event Train runs on Saturdays only during September through May. In June, July and August it runs three days a week. During 2021, the train had 10,408 riders.
- The Holmes Medical Museum, heavily damaged in Hurricane Sally, did not reopen until July 15 of 2021. They had very strong numbers when they reopened, with 1,093 visitors in August alone. Amazingly, after being open only three months in 2021, they greeted 2,240 guests during 2021, down 66 percent from the 6,582 visitors in 2020.

### **Online Presence**

Website users for VisitFoley.com totaled 46,340 for the year. Website users for CityofFoley.org totaled 110,096. Visit Foley Facebook Activity totaled 76,500 for the year, while Facebook activity for City of Foley totaled 145,076.

## Mayors Newsletter

The newsletter was produced and mailed quarterly. A total of 18,000 newsletters are printed, and the majority are mailed. A newsletter is sent to each box holder with a Foley address. Copies are also distributed at city hall, the library and the welcome center.

## Events

- Hometown Halloween was reimagined because of COVID-19. A drive-in movie was shown at the Foley Sportsplex on Hwy. 98. Reservations were on track for a big success until Hurricane Zeta caused the date for the event to be changed to early November. The folks who attended reported having a great time.
- Christmas in the Park was also changed due to COVID-19. The scaled-down event consisted of a welcome by Council President Wayne Trawick prior to the lighting of Foley's large Christmas tree, and an opportunity for guests to walk through the small village where "snow" was softly falling. Guests also enjoyed Christmas Tree Lane that consisted of 15 trees decorated by businesses and organizations from across the community.
- The Foley Christmas Parade and the Let it Snow event were cancelled because of COVID-19.
- 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.
- 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. 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.
- Foley participated in the statewide Walking Tours in 2021. Unfortunately, two of the four Saturday walks were cancelled due to rain. On April 3, Darrelyn Dunmore led the tour, and on April 10, Zana Price was the leader. A total of 27 people participated over the two days.
- A total of five Heritage Park Marketplace and Music and a Move events were held on Fridays May 14 through June 11, 2021. The Marketplace had an average of 23 vendors each week, and averaged 241 shoppers each week. Five different bands played from 6 until 8 each week, with an average attendance of 253. Five movies were scheduled. One was cancelled due to high winds in the park because an inflatable screen is used. An average of 223 attended each movie.