

Annual Report

January 1-December 31, 2020



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dr. Martin Luther King said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in the moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” In reflecting on 2020, a year defined by adversity, it’s with relative ease that we can prove his words correct simply by looking at our neighbors, in our community, and within ourselves. I am overwhelmed with pride at the resiliency, courage, and unity demonstrated by our small business community in responding to some of the darkest days in recent history.

Leading as Chamber President in 2020, I had the privilege of being part of countless amazing and inspiring moments. I officiated ribbon cuttings for businesses who refused to let COVID-19 destroy their dream and instead doubled down with hard work to get their doors open for business. In Zoom networking meetings, I was moved equally by members who so truthfully expressed their anxiety and desperation as I was by the eternal optimists who lifted our spirits with hope. Most of all, I am proud of the Chamber and our members for not taking the easy way out by cancelling events, programs and services. With creative ideas from our members and careful planning by our staff, we pressed on with versions of the Taste of Maplewood, Annual Dinner Auction, Golf Tournament, Concert Series, Christmas Tree Walk and many of our networking events.

Thank you for entrusting me to lead the Mid County Chamber of Commerce for the last two years. Cheers to better days ahead for our community and with gratitude for the year that brought out the best in us.

Sincerely,

T. Christopher Peoples
President of the Board



The Chamber welcomed over 80 businesses to town throughout Maplewood and Richmond Heights in 2020.

Chamber Board of Directors

Valerie Boring
St. Louis Lighting Group

John Edwards
EZ Web Marketing

Mike Klaus
Forward Fitness

Dio Maranan
CNB Bank

Vivian McBride
Clarity Street Realty

Dana Merritt
Stl Buy & Sell REALTORS

Halley Moore
Calliope Massage Studio/Calliope Insights

T. Christopher Peoples
Frontenac Engineering Group

Kristy Ponticello
Mystic Valley

Chris Rayburn
The Blue Duck

Jennifer Ridgeway
Edward Jones

Ex Officio Members

Anthony Traxler
City of Maplewood

Amy Hamilton
City of Richmond Heights

Roxanna Mechem
Maplewood Richmond Heights School District

CHAMBER INITIATIVES RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Recognizing that our small businesses needed our support more than ever, the Mid County Chamber of Commerce remained open throughout the pandemic with staff in the office to ensure they were easily accessible to members. Some of the ways the Chamber supported businesses during the initial stay at home orders include:

- Creation of an online directory to promote businesses offering carryout, curbside pick-up, online ordering, and other virtual services. Other initiatives included a “What’s For Lunch/Dinner?” social media campaign specifically designed to promote restaurants who were required to close and a Mother’s Day Gift Buying Guide.
- The Chamber reached out to 147 + businesses either with an in-person visit or via telephone to check in and see what kind of support they needed.
- In partnership with the cities of Maplewood and Richmond Heights, the Chamber held industry-specific Zoom calls to address questions about stay at home orders and to facilitate business-to-business support for handling and interpreting changing guidelines.



Light Pole Decorating Contest

New Initiative to encourage foot traffic in Downtown Maplewood

MEMBER SUPPORT & NETWORKING

Creating opportunities for business owners to stay in touch with each other has always been a top priority for the Mid County Chamber of Commerce– it’s what we’re known for! Using Zoom and taking advantage of nice weather to hold events, our monthly networking opportunities while fewer, never ceased. Our events by the number include:

Ribbon Cuttings	Monthly Lunches	Educational Training	Virtual Networking	Chamber Coffee & After Hours
12	7	5	5	8

PROMOTION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps nothing demonstrated the Chamber’s resolve better than our decision to move forward with, not cancel, our annual community events including the Taste of Maplewood, Concert Series, and Christmas Tree Walk. With approval from St. Louis County Health Department, we planned safe ways to attract visitors, virtually and in-person, to shop and dine with our locally owned businesses. We also worked to provide our members with the beloved events they look forward to each year. Some of our efforts included:

- \$15,000+ increased revenue to local businesses through our shop local punch card programs initiated as part of Taste of Maplewood and the Shop Small for the Holidays punch cards.
- Encouraged foot traffic in and out of local businesses through the Taste of Maplewood and Christmas Tree Walk. Additionally, we launched a Light Pole Decorating Contest which directed pedestrians to visit downtown Maplewood and vote for their favorite decorated light pole.
- Provided (1) free outdoor concert event for the community during the small window of time that we were able to. Guests were encouraged to pick up dinner before or after from a local restaurant.
- Awarded a scholarship to a local MRH Student.
- Recognized the contributions and efforts of community leaders: Citizen of the Year-*Richard Vilcek* | Educator of the Year– *Dr. Karen Hall* | Business Person of the Year– *Neil Suthar* | Business of the Year– *Side Project Cellar*



2020 Taste of Maplewood