

CHAMBERS OF INSPIRATION

VOLUME 3

5
INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

FEATURING
AWARD-WINNING
EVENTS AND PROGRAMS
FROM CHAMBERS
ACROSS
NORTH AMERICA



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	PAGE 02
#LeapOfKindnessDay	PAGE 03
Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce	
Shop Southern Illinois	PAGE 05
Carbondale Chamber of Commerce	
LAX Coworking	PAGE 06
LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce	
Bennington Made	PAGE 08
Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce	
Davis Regional Amazing Race	PAGE 09
Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce	
Conclusion	PAGE 11



Introduction

Big or small, Chambers of Commerce are continually challenged to reinforce their value and relevance to members. That's why every Chamber looks for creative ideas for events and programs that have a positive impact on the community while adding value to their organizations.

ChamberMaster is proud to sponsor the 3rd annual Chamber Innovation Award Competition and continue our tradition of celebrating and sharing inventive ideas from enterprising Chambers of Commerce.



This year, close to 100 entries were received from Chamber organizations across North America. The number of quality, competitive submissions was extraordinary. Congratulations to the 1st place winner, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, for their memorable program. They are featured alongside four other organizations that submitted programs or events which challenge the status quo.

Before heading back to the drawing board to develop your next event or program, review these ideas to find something that helps your Chamber make an impact.





THE WINNING IDEA!



IDEA:

"#LeapOfKindnessDay"

CHAMBER:

Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:

Saratoga Springs, NY

[Event Website »](#) [Event Video »](#)



{ TAKING THE LEAP }

In fall of 2015, the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce convened a group of community members and asked them, "If you were given one extra day, what would you do with it?"

There was a range of ideas, but **the responses all had one thing in common: something for others.** Individuals shared ideas about things they'd do for friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, and the community.

The Chamber then revealed that everyone in the community would actually receive an extra day – Leap Day. Occurring once every 4 years, 2016 was a Leap Year, and the Chamber dubbed February 29th, 2016 #LeapOfKindnessDay. They launched a plan to mobilize the community (and beyond) to do something kind for others.

"With Leap of Kindness Day, we created a new way to celebrate Leap Day every four years. In Saratoga County, this day was celebrated by dozens of organizations and hundreds of people who did something kind for someone else. It united our community in a way that made everyone feel special, shining a light on the Chamber's capacity to bring people together to do great things."

Todd L. Shimkus

President,
Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber announced the #LeapOfKindnessDay program before a crowd of 700 people at their annual dinner in January. By the time February 29th arrived, hundreds of people and dozens of organizations had committed to extend goodwill and generosity to deserving people and organizations.



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The Chamber website was loaded with ideas and suggestions for things to do to celebrate #LeapOfKindnessDay, including ways to say thank you, give a gift, make contributions, or lend a helping hand to thousands of people.

The surprising result was not that thousands of people and organizations benefitted from the program – the Chamber knew their community would make that happen – it was the fact that nearly 50 Chambers of Commerce also celebrated #LeapOfKindnessDay.

The program was hash tagged in social media posts from Chambers around the U.S. as well as India, Italy, Mexico, and Singapore.

Helping everyone from nursing home residents to school bus drivers, local police and fire fighters to veterans and nonprofit organizations, the Saratoga County Chamber took a leap and made a difference.

IDEA:

"Shop Southern Illinois"

CHAMBER:

Carbondale Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:

Carbondale, IL

[Program Website »](#) [Program Video »](#)



{ A VICTORY FOR EVERYONE }

The Carbondale Chamber of Commerce partnered with 18 other Chambers of Commerce to keep holiday shoppers local.

Shop Southern Illinois was a regional, cooperative effort designed to encourage area residents to do holiday shopping in their local communities rather than online and in nearby out-of-state metropolitan areas.

The program featured a website outlining the benefits of shopping locally. Residents were encouraged to take an online pledge to do a majority of their holiday shopping in the region. Upon taking the pledge, residents were automatically entered in weekly drawings to win prizes donated by area businesses.

A full marketing plan supported the program. Local and regional media ran promotions as public service announcements free of charge. The campaign featured the popular head basketball coach from the local university, who urged area residents: "Don't cross the river and don't go online. Do your holiday shopping right here, where we all win."

19 local Chambers worked together to promote the region as a whole – it was a win-win for everyone.

"Shop Southern Illinois is the ultimate in regional cooperation – 19 Chambers of Commerce all working together with a single goal: making area residents mindful of the importance of supporting our own communities and region."

Les O'Dell

Executive Director,
Carbondale Chamber of Commerce



THIRD PLACE

IDEA:
"LAX Coworking"

CHAMBER:
LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:
Los Angeles, CA

[Program Website »](#) [Program Video »](#)

LAX C  WORKING

{ NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S CHAMBER }

The LAX Coastal Chamber recognized that today's business community is changing. Modern professionals can work anywhere in the world with just a laptop and a cellphone, and many of them are unfamiliar with the Chamber of Commerce model.

To prove themselves as a resource for this "new" worker, the Chamber introduced LAX Coworking, a workspace with supplemental educational resources and programs for professionals on a tight budget.

LAX Coworking aims to provide a positive, productive, and collaborative work environment by elevating small businesses and entrepreneurs in the area. They provide a physical space for startups at a competitive rate, which allows innovators to have the resources of an office without having to sign an expensive lease, as well as the community of a corporation while still working for themselves.

"Within today's changing business climate, the ways of the traditional brick-and-mortar business are fleeting. The new professional is mobile, often working a schedule outside of 9 to 5. As the LAX Coastal Chamber, we were excited to reinvent ourselves in order to better help this new type of worker, all while still offering the same great Chamber of Commerce service."

Christina Davis

President/CEO

LAX Coastal Chamber of Commerce

As a special perk, full-time LAX Coworkers also receive an honorary LAX Coastal Chamber membership where they benefit from more than 60 years of business experience and connect with over 500 Chamber members.



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Chamber members are also invited to use the coworking space — from hosting board meetings to using a desk for the day, any and all are invited.

The Chamber knows that when an organization focuses on its members' needs, it receives rewards tenfold. When an LAX Coworker establishes a new business through the support of their local Chamber, it builds a loyalty that will last.

As one proud LAX Coworker stated, "It's nice to know you're not alone when you're launching!"

Because of the program, the LAX Coastal Chamber is seen as a valuable resource to professionals and millennials who would not have otherwise known they existed; giving the Chamber the chance to prove that they're not "your grandfather's Chamber."



HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:
"Bennington Made"

CHAMBER:
Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:
Bennington, VT

[Program Website](#) » [Program Video](#) »



{ LIGHTS, CAMERA, BENNINGTON }

When it comes to shining a spotlight on local business, production quality is critical, and the Bennington Chamber of Commerce gets it.

"Bennington Made" is a behind-the-scenes tv series that showcases unique Bennington businesses. Similar in format to Discovery Science's "How It's Made" and ABC News' "Made in America," the production is both modern and intriguing.

With a focus on quality, craftsmanship, and locally-made products, the series puts a spotlight on the pride and celebration of products made by residents of Bennington.

"Bennington Made" brings great opportunity to member businesses – they benefit from the exposure and they also receive the professional footage for use in their own marketing efforts.

The best part? It's free! The Chamber partners with the local cable access channel to produce the show.

Additionally, the Chamber uses the program and videos to draw visitors, other businesses, and workers to the area.

"It's our belief that community-wide collaboration and the alignment of direct-value resources is the win-win scenario for Chambers in the next decade. The ability to combine community talents, resources, ideas, and strategy not only helps promote our business members and the Chamber globally, but it also helps our members understand how to compete in the world of new media; it's an extremely valuable benefit to being part of the Chamber of Commerce."

Matt Harrington

Executive Director, Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce



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HONORABLE MENTION

IDEA:
"Davis Regional Amazing Race"

CHAMBER:
Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce

LOCATION:
Statesville, NC

[Event Website »](#) [Event Video »](#)



{ A RACE WHERE EVERYONE IS A WINNER }

Based on the popular CBS show, Davis Regional Amazing Race takes teams of four throughout the service area of the Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce. The teams search for answers to clues and riddles, complete challenges, and test their knowledge of the county. Contestants must also use teamwork and communication skills to gain an edge.

Everyone starts at one location where each team analyzes clues to identify destinations across the region. Once the destinations are determined, the teams analyze the fastest route to get there, and then they head out where unknown tasks await them at each location. Past tasks have included zip lining through the Outdoor Education Center and running a NASCAR pit crew challenge at the Automotive Technology Center.

The twist: Teams have an opportunity to win an "advantage" in the race, but only if they complete and win the challenge of posting a team photo to the Chamber's Facebook page and then getting the most "likes" by the start of the race.

"One of our most important missions is to create a more youthful leadership. We have implemented many new programs but none as impactful as the Davis Regional Amazing Race. The average age of a golfer in our Chamber tournament is near 52, while the average age in DRAR is closer to 32. Plus, over 60% of the participants had not participated in a Chamber initiative before."

David Bradley

President,
Greater Statesville
Chamber of Commerce



The Chamber's Facebook page followers increased by 2,000 during and following the 2015 event!

This created a larger community for the Chamber to spread information about public policy, community outreach, and innovative programs.

The race is timed, and the first team to cross the finish line wins. There is no money involved, just trophies and bragging rights.

The Davis Regional Amazing Race has grown to become the Chamber's most anticipated event. It bridges the gap between millennials, business owners, Chamber members, and non-members. It also educates residents and businesses about the county and community and provides them the opportunity to visit and take part in activities that they would not have the chance to otherwise.

Conclusion

The 2016 Chamber Innovation Award Competition judges included Chamber pro Frank Kenny, Jason Stambaugh of LaunchGen.com, and John Cook of ChamberMaster. Once again, the selection panel brought a wealth of industry expertise to the competition.

Regardless of size or location, entries were judged on creativity, community impact, and value to the Chamber. The 2016 Chamber Innovator of the Year was awarded the \$1500 grand prize by ChamberMaster. The second place winner received \$500, and the third place winner received \$250. Additionally, two Honorable Mentions were awarded. The competition was powered by **LaunchGen.com**.

About ChamberMaster

ChamberMaster Member Management Software is powerful, easy to use, and designed to manage all the day-to-day operations of your organization. It's like gaining an extra person on staff.



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