

**MAY 2020**

**JCTDA BANNER WELCOME AT CASHIERS CROSSROADS:**



**STAFFING ANNOUNCEMENT:** Effective 5/11/20, Thomas Taulbee has joined the Chamber staff and will be managing visitor center operations. Eli Ramirez is leaving the workforce to focus on her growing family. Thomas was previously with the Highlands Cashiers Board of Realtors, has been a full-time resident of Cashiers for six years and visitor for many more, and is a graduate Leadership Cashiers 2019. His professional background includes ten years with Chamber South and as a yoga instructor and practice owner. He is an avid fly-fisherman, hiker and community volunteer.

**WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT DILEMMA:** Restaurants are reporting challenges in rehiring seasonal staff given the federal and state supplemental unemployment insurance. The enhanced payments represent more than an employee can make by returning to work. Requirements to return to work have many COVID-19-related exceptions.

### **FEATURED NEWS**

**ALL IN JACKSON FUND:** Working with Jackson County Economic Development Department and other chamber, tourism, business center and agency stakeholders on the new low interest loan program launched on May 8th to provide \$2,500 to \$10K in relief loans for severely-impacted small businesses. Mountain BizWorks is the financial processing partner.

**RESTAURANT SANITIZER STATIONS (*Embargoed information until public release TBD*):** The Cashiers Area Chamber received a \$50,000 grant from the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation to fund a partnership among four Jackson and Macon Counties chambers of commerce for a COVID-19 recovery effort.

The organizations will distribute commercial-grade hand sanitization stations to every independent restaurant in the two-county region as a consistent, high-profile visual cue of the establishments' commitment to patron safety. Consumer confidence is critical for economic recovery of the hospitality industry. The free-standing foot-operated dispensers are 50" tall, include WHO/FDA-approved 80% alcohol-based sanitizer and retail for \$416, plus one gallon gel, shipping and handling.



KleenStation Multi



Sample Signage

## COVID19-RELATED ACTIVITIES:

- Preparing to reopen Cashiers Area visitor center walk-in operations according to best social distancing and hygiene practices. During office closure redirected all calls, emails, US mail and deliveries for seamless and prompt responses. Maintained outdoor signage changes, package deliveries, administrative duties and more
- Providing timely and numerous database, business and operational updates to JCTDA for posting on LoveJacksonNC.com
- Ongoing communications with JCTDA staff and leadership re: industry impact and opportunities
- Working closely with Western NC Chamber Executives on best practices and collaborative opportunities to support tourism industry, membership and local community
- Providing complimentary high-speed internet access via the visitor center's network and promoting other public network access for visitors and students
- Participating in numerous industry-related webinars, weekly calls and other exchanges re: contingencies, projections, marketing and other related issues
- Maintaining frequent contact with local media and stakeholders to promote consistent, relevant and timely information to the community, businesses and visitors
- Launched \$small Business \$upport Campaign – Chamber's focused member and public relations efforts to assist small business members with transitional emergency financial aid and ensure successful economic recovery in the future
- Launched Support ♥ Small Business Campaign – Chamber's consumer-oriented messaging to promote revenue generating member support (i.e. online sales, virtual classes, curbside/delivery, product and service availability, etc.)

- Working with Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation, a partner of Dogwood Health Trust, to deploy immediate supplemental funds and to develop a long-term economic support program for businesses and workers
- Reformatted Cashiers411.com to provide high-profile placement of business-oriented activities on the comprehensive community calendar
- Custom banner display of public health information and resources, Small Business Support, Cashiers411.com and more
- Working with county officials and agencies on local response activities in response to the virus outbreak
- Participating in weekly Cashiers Readiness Committee (now Cashiers Community Together) teleconference for updates on healthcare facility preparedness, various efforts to ensure food security, internet access, educational programming, effective communications to stakeholders and more
- Contacted US Senators representing NC urging legislative action to grant eligibility for federal and state emergency aid to 501(c)6 and (c)7 social and recreational clubs and chambers of commerce (subsequently approved).

**2020 CASHIERS AREA VISITOR GUIDE:** The annual visitor guide published by the Chamber is in production with an estimated delivery date of June 1. 20,000 copies will be available for distribution via the visitor center, on demand calls/emails/letters, seven all-weather kiosks across south Jackson County and via digital format and links with chamber partners.

**CASHIERS AREA SHOPPING & DINING GUIDE:** Delayed production pending alignment with destination marketing timelines and possible JCTDA budget reconsideration. Plan to reduce 20,000 annual print volume (amount tbd).

**HISPANIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The Chamber adopted a 2020 strategic initiative to focus on Hispanic-owned and operated business support and development. Special efforts have been made to provide Spanish translation of communications, particularly those issued during the ensuing health crisis.

**LEADERSHIP CASHIERS/VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING:** Working with program director, task force and alumni network to revise 2020 programming to ensure a complete and enriching experience for current class. LC was recognized by the national Association of Leadership Programs for being among, if not the first program to promptly pivot to a virtual format when Stay in Place mandates were being considered. Recently featured was Dr. Matthew Sowcik, of University of Florida's leadership development studies, who lectured on how to effectively "Lead Remotely."

**TOUR DE CASHIERS 2020:** Given the public event uncertainty as a result of COVID-19 and the lead time to organize the annual mountain cycling and 5K run experience, it is likely the September events will be cancelled this year. We continue to explore alternative formats to encourage cycling recreation across Jackson County and welcome any ideas for virtual opportunities.

**CLEANING UP THE MOUNTAINS –** The Chamber funded \$1,500 in partnership with the Highland Chamber of Commerce to pay for private "deep clean" pickup of roadway shoulders US 60/NC 107 intersection to Jackson County line. More than 125 NCDOT trash bags were collected.

**OTHER –** Administrative reporting and processing and other activities as required.