

BARABOO AREA CHAMBER & TOURISM TIME TO CIRCLE THE WAGONS

By Darren Hornby, Executive Director
Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce

Our organization traditionally has played a dual role. We promote the Baraboo Area to visitors, and we support members by helping them connect with customers and other businesses.

At this time — with the coronavirus pandemic calling into question the advisability and effectiveness of any campaign encouraging people to travel — we feel our energy is best spent spurring our community to support local businesses.

The lifting of Wisconsin's Safer at Home order has allowed the economy to re-open, safely and responsibly. Kudos to the many members who have enacted safeguards to promote social distanc-

ing and ensure sanitization as they welcome back customers.

Even with the economy re-opened, some consumers are understandably skittish about travel. In a departure from its typical push to bring visitors to Wisconsin, the Department of Tourism is encouraging people to stay close to home and shop local. I agree that, for the time being, that's the most prudent course of action.

The Chamber's marketing effort will shift to a two-part push. First, we will embark on an educational campaign designed to demonstrate to community members that supporting local businesses is absolutely critical. The down side of the potentially hazardous nature of travel during the pandemic is that tourism has been brought to a near standstill. The up side is that, if people are advised to stay close to home, they're in position to help local businesses that are suffering from a dearth of visitors.

Second, as the economy continues to reopen and safety measures are perfected, we will embark upon a regional tourism campaign. We will promote the Baraboo Area to nearby communities from Richland Center to Pardeville, and from Tomah to Dodgeville. We worked to gain a foothold in several of those markets during the holiday season last winter, and will renew our push to attract consumers interested in taking a day trip to sample the Baraboo Area's diverse shopping, dining and entertainment options. I feel consumers wary of cross-country travel may look for regional options.

This is a can-do community. I'm confident residents will heed our call to circle the wagons and boost the locally owned businesses that form the community's foundation. We just might find that we enjoy playing the role of tourist in our own community!



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Jeffrey Castree: "Unfortunately, as a breakfast and lunch place we've not really set up for it." But once Castree received the business's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) government loan, he came up with an alternative plan to bring in customers. "I looked out into the parking lot," he says, "and I knew exactly what I had to do."



MAY HIGHLIGHTS



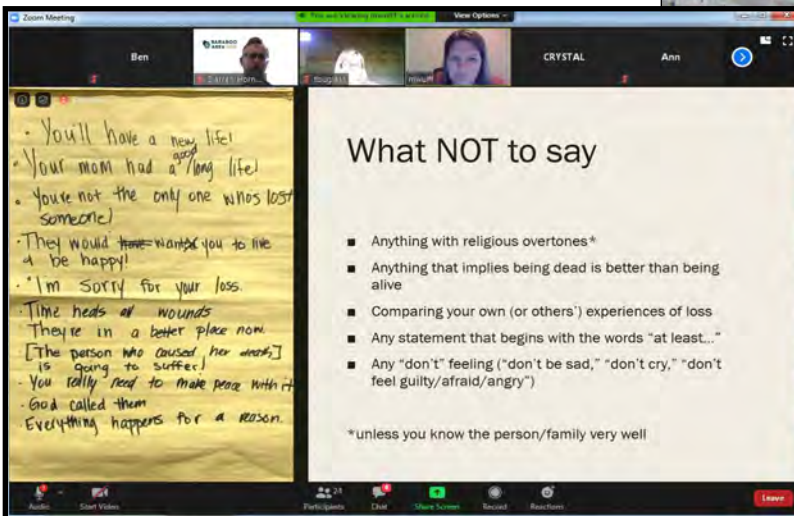
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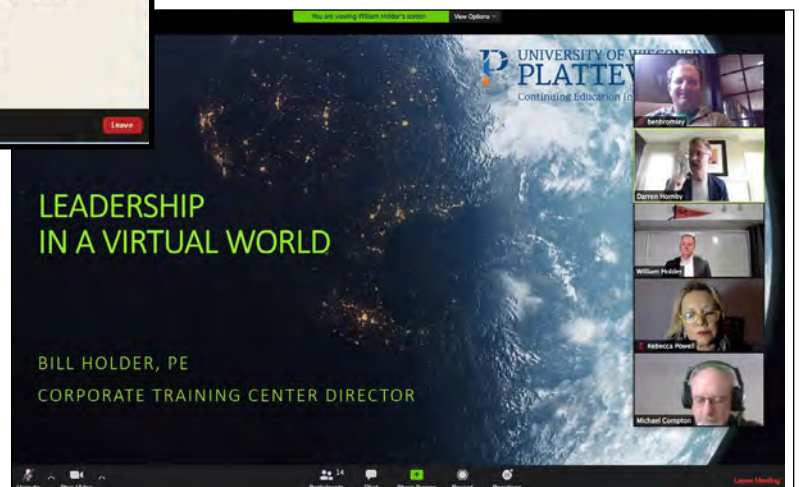
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Visitor guides available

The Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce's 2020 Discover Real Baraboo Visitor Guides are now available!

The magazine-style guide features page upon page of information about the Baraboo Area and its many attractions. Hard copies are available in the vestibule at the Visitor Center at 600

W. Chestnut St. You can also check out the visitor guide [online](http://baraboo.com) at baraboo.com.

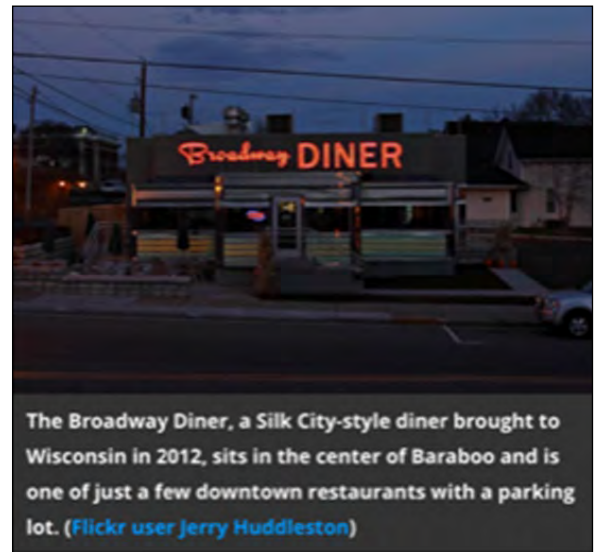
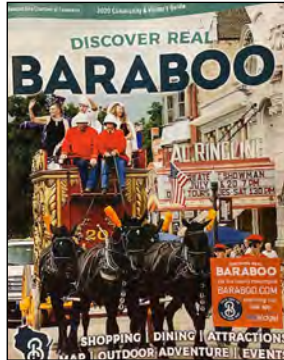
The Visitor Guide was developed by Chamber staff and designed by a Baraboo company and Chamber

member, Towns & Associates.

The Visitor Guide went to press before the corona-

virus pandemic hit. Many of the events highlighted - including the Big Top Parade, which is featured on the cover - have been postponed or canceled since its publication.

Nevertheless, it's packed with helpful information about the Baraboo Area and its attractions that will guide visitors once travel is deemed safe once again. The publication is being distributed to visitor centers across the Midwest.



The Broadway Diner, a Silk City-style diner brought to Wisconsin in 2012, sits in the center of Baraboo and is one of just a few downtown restaurants with a parking lot. (Flickr user Jerry Huddleston)

National magazine features local diner

Baraboo's own Broadway Diner was featured last week in a Smithsonian Magazine [article](#) about the return of drive-in restaurants! They are using an old tool to solve new problems created by the coronavirus pandemic.

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