

# BARABOO AREA CHAMBER & TOURISM

## READY TO RESTART AND REBUILD!

By Darren Hornby, Executive Director  
Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce

This month Wisconsin's economy is set to reopen, and the Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce is honored to be leading the recovery effort alongside its members. We're planning several initiatives designed to get things humming again.

The Safer at Home order, while necessary to safeguard public health, stalled the economy. Stores, offices and nonprofits like the Chamber closed their doors. But that doesn't mean our staff has been inactive. We've spent the pandemic quarantine getting information out to members about state and federal aid programs designed to help them ride out this difficult period. We shared your new hours, services and specials at [baraboo.com](http://baraboo.com) and on our social media feeds. We recruited members to deliver educational webinars as part of our "Restart, Rebuild" series. And we worked with Sauk County and neighboring Chambers to establish a Small Business Relief Fund that, thanks to our municipal partners and private donors, has put grants totaling tens of thousands of dollars into the hands of struggling merchants.

All the while, we've been setting strategies for a recovery effort to be launched as soon as the Safer at Home order is lifted. We feel travelers will be itching to get out and about as soon as it's safe, and that lingering concerns about international travel and even domestic air travel could make a regional destination like the Baraboo Area a real hot spot. Families that canceled spring break flights will be looking for "road trip" destinations within a day's drive where they can spend a week this summer or fall. We plan to invite them to Discover Real Baraboo.

The Chamber already had an aggressive marketing plan in place for mid-summer. We were preparing to apply for a Joint Effort Marketing grant from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism before COVID-19 hit, and before the state retooled the grant program to address communities' needs in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Our marketing plan will remain in place, and we're still going after the grant, because now more than ever we need to make a push to bring visitors to the Baraboo Area in the second half of the year.

We plan to advertise in publications catering to travelers from major cities in neighboring states.



We're developing a video series that, through the Chamber's YouTube channel and social media platforms, will entice prospective visitors to

sample this community's many charms. We will be rolling out a revamped, visitor-friendly website equipped with a virtual tour guide.

These efforts originally were aimed at boosting tourism during the "shoulder season" that follows a bustling summer. This year, with the Baraboo Area's tourism season getting off to a delayed start, our plan will kick in at just the right time. We'll be promoting the community to visitors looking to travel in late summer, fall and during the holiday season. We're confident our marketing push will help all of you enjoy a strong finish to a challenging year.

I thank all of you who have supported the Chamber and your fellow members during this pandemic, and I credit you for keeping your chin up and pushing through the quarantine.

The worst is nearly over. Now it's time for the Baraboo Area to set its sights on rebuilding and restarting its robust, diversified economy.





The Businesses of Baraboo United group held an online concert April 26 that featured local musicians and raised \$1,250 in individual donations to the Small Business Relief Fund. Plus, the Cocoa Crawl committee pledged \$2,500 in proceeds from that event. Five local favorites performed during a five-hour concert, which was broadcast live online. It was sponsored by WOLX, MAX FM, NextLevel Creative and Maxwell Media.



## Chambers collaborate on relief fund

It is difficult in these sad, strange and often scary times to make sense of anything. There are so many questions for which no one really has answers, but a common theme has emerged, and that seems to be that we are all in this together.

The four Sauk County Chambers of Commerce have come together to make difference if we can, but we need help. All of our communities look very different than they did just a few weeks ago, and none of us ever thought that we would see our businesses, churches and schools closed, our doors locked to the public and our streets nearly empty. These were all necessary steps, but like you, we all are anxious for the day when the recovery begins, and we know that it is going to take a long time, and it is going to be difficult for many.

As an answer to some of the need that we know exists, our four Chambers in partnership with the Sauk County Economic Development Committee have established a Small Business Relief Fund. The purpose of the fund is to provide grants that range from \$500 - \$1,000 to small business owners with less than five-employees, and who have experienced losses due to COVID-19. Distribution of the funds began mid-April and will continue until all funds are expended. Our hope is that this may help some businesses get through this difficult

time and retain their employees. We want and need our diverse business communities to not just survive, but to thrive when this is over.

How can you help? If you have the resources available to assist businesses in need, this fund may be a way for you to help. We have all seen amazing acts of kindness in the last few weeks, and we know that people want to help, but they don't always know how to help. We hope that by establishing this fund we are providing an opportunity for people to safely give back to their own community. You can be assured that your donated dollars will remain in your community, helping the very businesses that serve your friends, family and community at large. When you donate, you will mail your check to your local chamber of commerce. Your chamber director will ensure that all dollars collected locally will stay local. Each chamber of commerce was awarded \$20,000 in match dollars from the Sauk County's Economic Development Committee, and each chamber will be responsible for accounting for all of the dollars donated and disbursed in their community. All of us believe that additional dollars will be contributed through either public or private funds once people can contribute to a local effort.

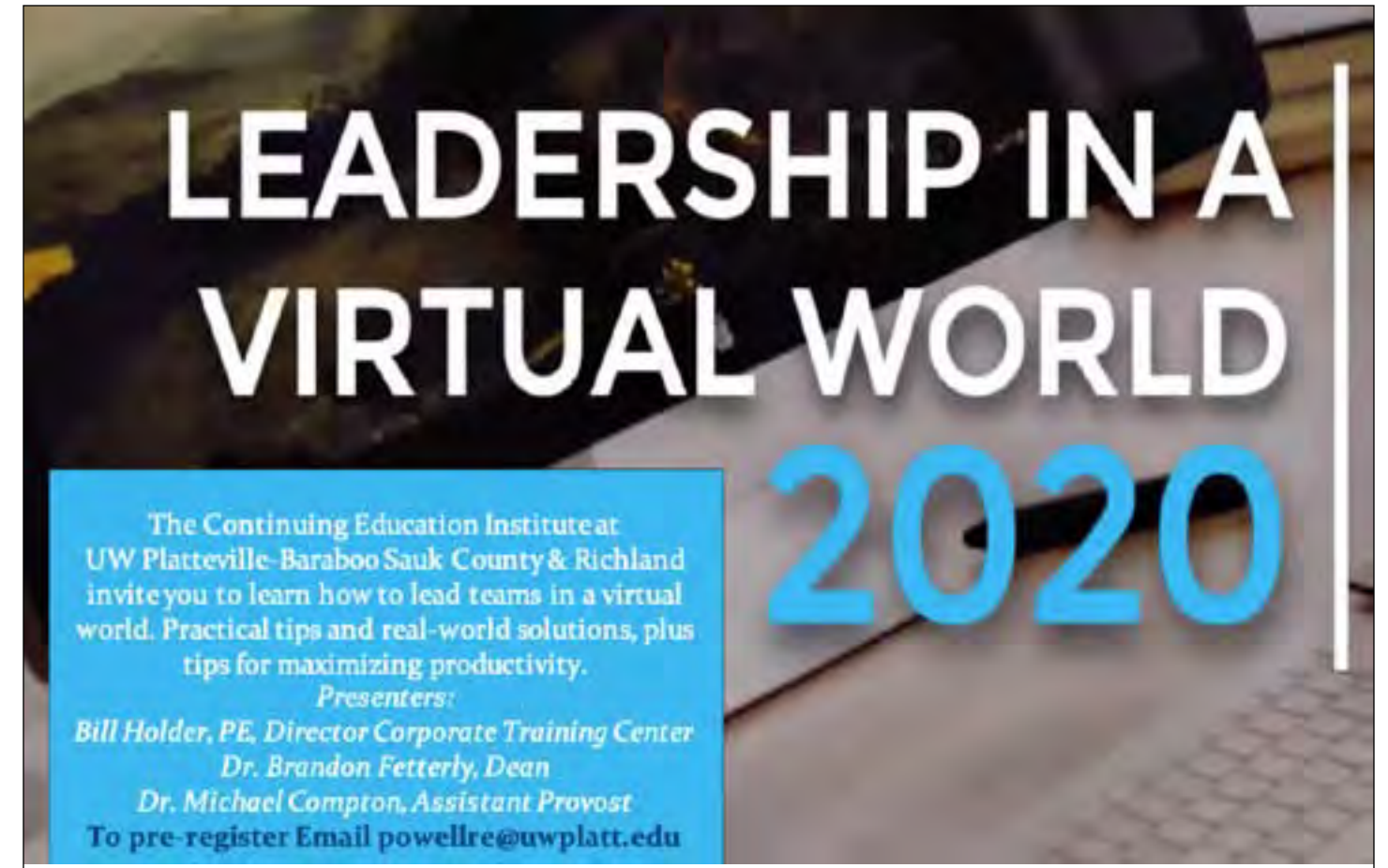
We know that there are some state and federal resources that some of our local businesses may be eligible

for, and we encourage businesses to apply for them, but we also know that some of them won't qualify. More importantly, the businesses who are struggling are often owned by the same people who give donations to Little League, community events and more. When people ask for their help, they give. They have not asked us to do this for them, but it is the right thing to do, and now it is their turn to receive. We believe in the generosity of the people in Sauk County, and we know that strong businesses make strong communities.

Details about how to give to your local Chamber can be found here. From all of us at the Sauk County Chambers of Commerce as well as the Sauk County Economic Development Committee, we encourage you to continue to follow all of the current protections and protocols. It is making a difference! Above all, we wish you and your family continued good health throughout the difficult time. Please know that we all care about Sauk County, and we are working together in service to our businesses and communities. We hope you will join us.

Please donate online to add to the fund!

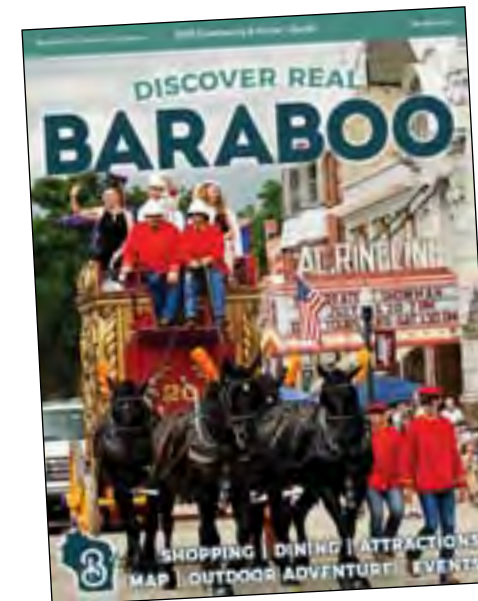
- The Executive Directors of the Baraboo, Reedsburg, Sauk Prairie and Spring Green Area Chambers of Commerce



## ‘Restart, Rebuild’ webinar series resumes Wednesday

The Chamber plans to offer informational webinars each Wednesday afternoon on topics related to the pandemic and quarantine. This coming Wednesday at 3 p.m., three presenters from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Baraboo/Sauk County will discuss “Leadership in a Virtual World” via a Zoom meeting. To pre-register, send an email message to [powellre@uwplatt.edu](mailto:powellre@uwplatt.edu). To attend the call, visit <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82576076775>.

## Discover Real Baraboo visitor guides now 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 at [baraboo.com](http://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 coronavirus 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.



# Put your freshest face forward online!



As we revamp our website and equip it with a mobile tour guide, please help us help you look your best!

Visit Widget is an app that will be added to baraboo.com, guiding visitors where they can eat, shop and play. It features each member's logo or - even better - photos as they appear in ChamberMaster. To make sure your visuals are attractive, please be sure to upload high-resolution renderings of your current logo to your ChamberMaster account, and add current photos.

To do so, log in to [ChamberMaster](#), find your business and click on the Web tab. You can upload images near the bottom of the page. For help logging in, call Sandy at 356-8333.



## 2020 Big Top Parade canceled over COVID-19

Looking to safeguard the health of participants and spectators, organizers of the Big Top Parade and Circus Celebration have decided to cancel this year's event. With the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating social distancing, parade organizers agreed it wouldn't be wise to encourage a large gathering July 18 in downtown Baraboo.

"We truly didn't want to cancel this spectacular event," said Nanci Cafilisch, who leads the organizing committee. "But safety must come first."

Each summer, the streets of historic downtown Baraboo become the stage for an old-fashioned circus parade featuring exotic animals, marching bands and clowns. The Ringling brothers' hometown has built a circus-themed festival around the parade, drawing upwards of 30,000 people to enjoy live music, great food and - of course - performances under Circus World's big top.

"We know that the parade weekend is a favorite among circus fans and a dynamic way for our community to celebrate its vibrant circus heritage. Wide-eyed children of all ages will have to wait until July 17, 2021," said Scott O'Donnell, Executive Director of Circus World. "The show must go on, but only once it's safe."

Finding a silver lining, Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Darren Hornby said organizers now have 15 months to plan the 2021 parade and festival. The Chamber of Commerce and Circus World jointly support the committee in presenting the event. "You can count on the next Big Top Parade and Circus Celebration being the best yet!" Hornby said.

Look for updates at [www.bigtopparade.com](http://www.bigtopparade.com)

## No live performances at Circus World

During these unprecedented times and for the safety of guests and staff, Circus World Museum leaders have decided to suspend live programming for the 2020 season. They will also hold off opening the museum until at least July 1, at which time they will follow capacity guidelines and enhanced cleaning procedures.

The Feld building has exciting and colorful new exhibits for guests to discover this year including, The Big Apple Circus Wardrobe exhibit, the Presidents and the Circus exhibit featuring our nation's leaders at the circus, and a new tribute to Circus World - 60 years of fun!

Circus World is committed to providing a clean and safe environment for you and your family to visit and will honor 2020 season passes both this year and next year during the 2021 season, when it plans to present "Go West - Under the Big Top."

Follow Circus World on [Facebook](#) for fun, behind the scenes videos, the latest updates and so much more.

## APRIL HIGHLIGHTS

The need for social distancing prevented us from holding some of our favorite events in April, from Business After 5 gatherings to New Member Orientation sessions. Fortunately, modern technology allowed us to transform our "Lunch & Learn" seminars into a "Restart, Rebuild" series of webinars. Staff meetings, Ambassadors Club gatherings and board meetings are being held online, as well, as was our relaunched Wake Up Baraboo event!



ASPECT MULTIMEDIA WEBINAR • MAY 1



BOARD MEETING • APRIL 20



WORKPLACE ELEVATION WEBINAR • APRIL 29



WAKE UP BARABOO • APRIL 17



STAFF MEETING • APRIL 21



# City offering loans to small businesses

The City of Baraboo understands the dilemma local businesses are facing. Many have been forced to reduce or even suspend their operations due to COVID-19.

The City would like to help our businesses survive and look toward recovering to be stronger than before. To help, the City has created the Emergency Assistance Fund - Small Business Loan Program. It will help any small for-profit business with fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees. Even businesses with many part-time employees can still qualify.

The program was established to loan local small businesses up to \$5,000 to help them now. The loans will be interest-free until Jan. 1, 2021. After that they will incur an interest rate of 2% per year until

July 15, 2021. Loans will not require any monthly payments, but must be repaid by July 15, 2021.

The program is designed to make the application process as easy as possible. By visiting city website at [www.cityofbaraboo.com](http://www.cityofbaraboo.com), you can see the [details of the program](#) and complete the application online. The City began accepting [applications](#) Friday.

# Capital Newspapers unveils grant program

Local businesses are the heartbeat of our communities. That is why Capital Newspapers is excited to announce its Local Matching Grant Program.

This program is designed to help the local business community double the impact of its marketing through a matching grant. Applications are now being accepted for May and June.

This grant applies to the full suite of print and digital marketing products. This includes print ads, digital display ads, and agency products such as web design and social me-

dia management.

To apply, fill out the application form linked [here](#) and detail your marketing goals and challenges during this difficult time. Within 48 business hours, your application will be reviewed and an associate will contact you with next steps.

# DBI INTRODUCES VIRTUAL SHOP HOPS



Downtown Baraboo Inc. stimulated local commerce during its first Virtual Shop Hop on Wednesday evening. With many shops forced to close or offer only curbside service, DBI found a way to bring customers inside. Members appeared via Facebook Live video to promote products and services on special. The broadcasts will continue at 5 p.m. each Wednesday. Look for updates on the [event page](#) DBI has dedicated to the Virtual Shop Hops on Facebook!

Each Wednesday, DBI will invite members to participate and offer items fitting that week's theme. Be sure to watch and shop: This is a great way to support locally owned businesses while under quarantined. Local businesses in downtown Baraboo and beyond need your help!



# SUPERHEROES AT MEADOW RIDGE

National Super Hero Day was celebrated April 28, but the staff at Meadow Ridge Senior Living are superheroes every day of the year - especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are the heart and soul of the organization! For more information on limited term and regular employment or to inquire about care for a loved one, call 608-356-8770 or visit [meadowridgebaraboo.com](http://meadowridgebaraboo.com).



To watch a video dedicated to the Meadow Ridge Senior Living staff, click [here](#) or visit <https://youtu.be/KTShx-un58k>

# Enjoy Unlimited Golf All Season

- Season Passes now on sale (includes 4 FREE guest passes & up to 20% discounts on food and merchandise)
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