

Thank you to everyone attending today. To our Elected officials, community members, friends, and of course one of our most treasured assets, our members. We appreciate you attending, showing interest in the Tri-Lakes Region and supporting us along the way.

It is an honor to be joining you again for our Annual State of the Tri-Lakes Region, from the Great Wolf Lodge and our beautiful view! We have had some great information shared already, so thank you to all the elected officials who spoke today.

Last night as I was driving from Monument down to Northgate to pick up a couple of trees we are using for decoration for our annual dinner. The snow was just starting to lightly fall, but you could still see the outlines of the mountains to the west and all the houses with all their lights on and I thought about everyone who was already home and tucked in for the night. You get that warm fuzzy feeling and it makes you absolutely love this community.

We are a Chamber of Commerce, which by nature, means we support business, both those existing and those coming to our area. A Chamber's mission is creating an environment in which businesses can prosper. It is pretty simple concept. But I want to make sure everybody knows that we as a chamber take this responsibility very seriously.

Let's talk about 2019. Here we are, same bat place, same bat channel, as last year. Then, I described 2018 as the year of growth. So now, I have to add, 2019 was ALSO the year of growth! And we all know it will continue to be, for the unforeseen future.

Last year I threw out a bunch of numbers having to do with housing starts, expected growth over the next 10 years, how new businesses come when there are more people, yada yada yada. I feel I could have almost recited the same info today as I did last year. But I don't think I have to. This is all stuff we know just by driving around, looking at social media and hearing people talk. So instead of numbers, let's talk about feelings...ok, not really feelings, but what about attitudes? That is not quite right either. Let's just call them "thoughts."

What are these thoughts? It runs the gamut.

- There are too many people moving here, stop the growth; **but I want what other communities have like Costcos and Targets.**
- There are too many tire stores; **I am so mad, I had to wait an hour to get my snow tires put on.**
- I want more mom and pop stores and restaurants; **I want more name brand, chain stores and restaurants**
- Too much traffic! **I had to wait at the stop sign for a car to go before me. Can you imagine?**

Reality? Costcos and Targets only go where there are enough people to support their stores. We are a commuter community that goes through tires faster than others. Variety is the spice of life and waiting for a car or even 3, does not count as full blown traffic.

I have been in the Chamber business for almost 9 years, but I can tell you, beforehand, I probably would have been one of those with "thoughts." The difference is the knowledge I have picked up along the way working with those in the towns, counties, builders and business owners. I do not expect everyone to know how things work, to know the laws and to know what you can and cannot do legally when it comes to business, vacant land and choice.

Most of you in this room get it. You know how growth works, both the good and the difficult aspects. I challenge each of you to have patience when faced with “thoughts.” Do not feed into it, but do not dismiss it. Educate, and let’s help gain and maintain a community filled with positive thoughts.

So, when questions arise, when voices are raised, when reality seems to have taken a vacation, use your positions as business owners, town employees, elected officials, with-it community members, to help educate and keep the positivity flowing.

Want to be educated yourself? We are a wealth of information. We are here to help you stay in business. We help create a great working environment by sharing information, making introductions, working with the towns so that your experience as a business owner is a good one. Plus, we have a zest for problem solving.

One of our goals last year was to get our old Chamber building up and running so that more groups can have an additional comfortable place to meet. We were running out of available times and days for people to use our community room where we currently are.

I am happy to announce the “Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce Community Meeting House” is complete! On the inside anyway. The outside will have to wait until spring. The person who headed up the whole remodel was board member Merrilee Ellis. She worked with Home Depot to donate the materials and some labor, and got others out there, including other board members, to donate their time and now it looks great and is a comfortable place to meet. There were so many people involved, so please

stay tuned to a future eNewsletter where I will be listing everyone and their involvement.

Looking forward to 2020, what stands out is our organization – our staff, our board and our members embracing change. We have all heard “the only thing constant in life is change.” Our membership is changing every day, and we walk a fine line between preserving some of the tried-and-true ways of doing business and introducing new ways to engage our business community that are vastly different than what we’ve done in the past. We must begin tapping into the talents of our young professionals and our next generation of leaders and decision makers.

We have business owners in the community who have been here for decades. We also have brand new business owners, with new, fresh energy that we need to tap into. One that comes to mind is a new ice cream shop that will be opening up right across the street from the Chamber office.

They are in the middle of rehabbing a home built in the late 1800’s. As they are going through their process, they are sharing on social media the ups the downs and the funnies. They showed names carved in the wood as they stripped the walls back to the studs, wondering about the history.

They showed a picture of a creepy, dingy cellar covered by plywood that they declared they will NOT be going into. And sprinkled through, are posts of delicious ice cream. They started posting only a month ago and already have almost 700 followers. They have more than a well-known establishment that has been open over 10 years!

Of course, ice cream is a popular commodity, but I doubt they would get that kind of following if they had only posted pictures of ice cream. People want to eat ice cream, not look at it all day. It is their humor, their vulnerability, their creativeness that is leading them to success even before they open. People are endearing themselves to Lolley's Ice Cream. We as a Chamber are tapping into these new fresh entities to see how we can help others have the same success.

Part of being able to help people is making sure we have sufficient funding. The better funded we are, the more assistance we can provide, and we are raring to go to make this happen. We had a wonderful Board retreat last week.

We added three new board members this year and they all have hit the ground running and have some great ideas! I love when new blood comes into an organization. It jazzes the rest of us up.

We made a few changes to how we do business, like adding a Corporate membership level, for those businesses and organizations who want to support our efforts above just membership dues. Because we are worth it!

We also streamlined the sponsorships for our annual events and added more opportunities for sponsoring, like our website banners and educational events.

All of this information can be found in our guide that each of you have at your seats.

In addition, at the end of the guide, we tacked on our Annual Report. Usually it is a stand-alone piece but with all of our changes this year, we wanted everyone to have everything.

This year you will see more surveys, more communication, more phone calls and more visits. From staff, from ambassadors and even from our board members.

Speaking of ambassadors, if you are one of our ambassadors, and I think we have a few in the room, would you please stand up? Let's give them a round of applause because they donate a lot of their time to meet with our businesses.

We want 2020 it to be the year of listening. In the words of Frasier, "how can I help?" We know Chambers cannot operate the same each year. Communities, businesses and people are not the same, why should we be? But our crystal ball is broken right now so one of the best ways for us to know how to morph to be the most help, is to ask you.

And please don't be shy! I would love nothing more than to get back to my desk this afternoon and find emails from some of you, telling me how we can help. That is Terri@TriLakesChamber.com.

We are a little challenged in how to communicate what we do behind the scenes. But we are trying to do better so our members know all about how we are serving them. One area we will be getting more involved in is legislation. Each year we select a couple of important issues we feel members should know about and how they affect their business. But we could be doing so much more.

Most of our members are super busy and do not have time to pay attention to legislation that can have a big effect on them, both positive and negative. So we have developed a new legislative committee and we would welcome anyone who has an interest in legislation, to please join our group.

We will also be taking more action, when appropriate. We might reach out to you and ask you to share your thoughts on how a certain bill could affect your business. We might ask you to testify at the Capitol, if appropriate. We work closely with our elected officials and will be here to assist them as they fight the fight on behalf of business.

We get invited to the table for most topics that come up for discussion locally and regionally. When it makes sense, we consider it our job to educate decision makers, in a manner that helps our businesses. Our community role is growing every year and I know we have a positive and influential impact on those around us.

Whether you are an emerging small business, experiencing growing pains, or are a larger organization, we want you to think of us as your proactive business partner.

You can look to the Chamber to provide business development opportunities, solid business strategies and effective advocacy, all geared towards your success. Engaging with us, dramatically expands your connections.

2020 is going to be the year of listening and the year of funding. Therefore...we will be reaching out to our members and others around us, to talk about future relationship building. So, when I or a member of our membership team ask to meet, please hear us out. I promise it won't be painful!

Speaking of investors, here is a quick list:

- Town of Monument
- Monument Occupational Medicine
- Mountain View Electric Association

- Black Hills Energy
- BBSI, HR Consulting
- Jackson Creek Senior Living
- Les Schwab Tires
- Bethesda Senior Living
- Force Broadband
- Colorado Springs Airport

Media Investors:

- The Tri-Lakes Tribune
- Snippetz
- KOAA News Channel 5

Let's give them a round of applause for stepping up to support the chamber.

Wouldn't you like your name added to this very prominent list? Wink, wink, we will talk.

I, along with our great staff, want to do nothing but support. Support our members, support the towns and county we represent, support the community and help keep it the best darn place to live and work.

Thank you for being a part of our Chamber & EDC family. We look forward to providing an even better partnership in 2021.