



THE ONE-OF-A-KIND **UNWIND.**



## 2019 SUCCESS SCORECARD

A Year in Review



## A Word from Your CEO

*Starting a new position is fear-inducing for a lot of people. I understand that. Yet on April 8, 2019, when I stepped into the office of VISIT Lake Geneva for the first time as the new president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and official Visitor & Convention Bureau, it was only exhilaration for me.*

*In my travels as the state's tourism secretary and before that as host of the "Discover Wisconsin" TV series, I was very familiar with the legendary places and warmhearted people of Lake Geneva. I recognized this as a moment to be seized. And so, side-by-side with staff and partners, seize we did!*

*I'd like to give you an account of what's been accomplished in 2019. Consider it the springboard to 2020, as we take our collective hopes and dreams for the Lake Geneva Region into the new decade.*

**Stephanie Klett**

**President & CEO of VISIT Lake Geneva**

Here's how we've been telling the Lake Geneva story.



**Just in: Pieces on holiday and winter travel recently ran in the Chicago Tribune & Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.**



News releases are issued with every newsworthy development. In 2019, those releases covered timely topics such as events, accomplishments, people news, and philanthropic pursuits including the recent community clothing drive known as the Big Bundle Up.

**Just in: Nearly 270 items of warm winter clothing were collected and donated to the Walworth County Food Pantry & Diaper Bank which serves hundreds of families each month.**



A year-two, \$35,300 Joint Effort Marketing Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism was secured to promote Winterfest & the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Championship in 2020, our own "Super Bowl" of events.

**Just in: The City of Lake Geneva's Tourism Commission granted \$35,000 to market the event.**

**Lake Geneva Visitor Center:**  
**Year-Round Customer Service reaching visitors in every possible way, with professionalism and care:**

- Customers Served at the Visitor Center: **17,643**
- Visitor Guides Mailed and Shipped: **15,235**
- Emails Specially Crafted and Answered: **6,747**
- Phone Conversations: **5,224**



**Purple Angel Award:**

VISIT Lake Geneva is the first Chamber in Walworth County to receive a Purple Angel Award from Walworth County's Dementia Friendly Community Initiative. This community group provides free staff training on how to recognize and serve individuals suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's.

The Best Travel Brands Know How to Tell Their Story





# Success Story

Lake Geneva will be a featured “pre or post fam tour” destination when the Society of American Travel Writers brings its annual conference to Milwaukee in October 2020. Plus, our collaborative efforts with Visit Milwaukee to host the Democratic National Convention will bring conventioners to the Lake Geneva region in July.

- A new Meetings and Conventions Planning Guide with increased page count is coming out in January 2020 and will provide all of the information planners need to seal the deal. New to the guide for 2020 - short stories that cover the “Why Lake Geneva?”
- A new integrated digital marketing strategy is underway that engages visitors via compelling content. Take the VISIT Lake Geneva Instagram page, for example. Knowing Millennials get the majority of their travel planning ideas from Instagram, we dialed in to that social platform in a bigger way. Since September, we’ve grown followers by 15%. Our top three social channels, in order, are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- We launched a revised co-op marketing program to better meet the needs of VISIT Lake Geneva and our partners.
- A partnership with the award winning WLKG 96.1 FM radio station to promote events, attractions and local businesses every week live on the air. Our partnership also includes 500 radio spots we use to tout local businesses and VISIT Lake Geneva signature events.

**Look for This in 2020: Following this year’s intense website analysis, look for a design refresh of [VisitLakeGeneva.com](https://www.visitlakegeneva.com) with relevant content and stories about our destination.**



## What Reporters, Influencers & Travelers are Saying about Lake Geneva



**Voted Best Small Town in the U.S. for Adventure**  
—*USA Today-10Best*

**101 Best Weekend Getaways in America**  
—*MSN.com*

**22 Snow-Filled Christmas Vacation Ideas**  
—*Condé Nast Traveler Magazine Online*

**10 Best Lake Towns in North America**  
—*SmarterTravel.com*

**America’s 23 Greatest Summertime Lake Towns**  
—*Thrillist.com*

**12 Small Town Getaways Your Kids Will Actually Enjoy**  
—*FamilyVacationCritic.com*

**Santa Cruises, holiday home tours and more festive events in the Midwest**  
—*Chicago Tribune*

**10 trails worth a hike before winter hits**  
—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

**6 Must-See Spots for Fall Foliage**  
—*TripAdvisor.com*

**8 Dreamy Mini Moon Destinations within 400 Miles of Milwaukee**  
—*Milwaukee Magazine*

**What’s familiar is sparkly new again in Lake Geneva**  
—*OnMilwaukee.com*

**The 18 best day trips from Chicago**  
—*Time Out Chicago*

**Close, but a world away**  
—*Chicago Sun Times*

**Road Trip: Lake Geneva**  
—*AAA Living Magazine*

**Facilities Abound in Lake Geneva**  
—*Wisconsin Meetings Magazine*

The Recipe for Successful Partnerships Is No Secret

If you want a working relationship to “work,” it means dedicating quality time, and not just once in a while but day in and day out. Here’s how we’re committing ourselves to our partner businesses, elected leaders and citizens of the community.

- We were pleased to welcome 37 new Chamber members in 2019.
- There is now weekly outreach from the CEO with stakeholders and citizens.
- The Annual Dinner and Impact Awards was given its due with an elevated prominence resulting in an attendance of 250.
- First consideration to provide services is now given to local partners before any outside vendors are contacted.
- We hosted U.S. Congressman Bryan Steil (R-Wisconsin) and U.S. Congresswoman Xochitl Small-Torres (D-New Mexico) for a community session with local business representatives and board members.
- We also hosted Wisconsin elected officials Senator Stephen Nass and Representative Tyler August to discuss plans for bike trail connectivity, with thanks to local partner Avant Cycle Cafe. The Departments of Tourism, Natural Resources and Transportation as well as the Governor’s Bike Council are also engaged in this conversation.

**Eventful Year:** One very visible part of our commitment to the Lake Geneva Tourism Commission comes in the form of events in the community. There’s the Concerts in the Park series, with VISIT Lake Geneva board members there to introduce concerts each week; Restaurant Week, with a new April date for 2020 replacing the June date (**partners, we heard you!**) as a way to shore up the less-trafficked shoulder season; the Electric Christmas Parade, with city leadership more engaged than ever before and the added nice touch of VISIT Lake Geneva’s Stu Herzog Outstanding Citizen award winners serving as parade marshals; and the larger-than-life WinterFest & U.S. National Snow Sculpting Championship bringing in snow enthusiasts from around the country.

Chamber of Commerce Reporting In

Growing the Chamber by 37 new members bringing our total to 381 is the big headline. Yet it’s the behind-the-scenes work by VISIT Lake Geneva chronicled below that deserves some space of its own.

- For every new partner, a face-to-face meeting is held to review all the benefits of membership and provide extranet training so businesses can update their custom landing page and submit specials and events on the VisitLakeGeneva.com website.
- For existing partners, a benefits check-in was undertaken. For many, it was a welcome refresher to make sure they were taking advantage of their membership investment.

**A First:** Our CEO was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce Executives, marking the first time Lake Geneva has been represented on this statewide group in the organization’s 100-year history.

- Our CEO addressed the Lake Geneva City Council, the Geneva Town Board and the Town of Lyons. She met with the City of Lake Geneva’s Historic Preservation Commission and Avian Committee with more community engagement to come in 2020. There is a fine-tuned approach underway to enhance all relationships with the Lake Geneva Business Improvement District and Tourism Commission, building on shared goals of common understanding and collaboration.
- A new outreach plan was launched, with staff members making site visits to attractions to better promote them. Staff also participate in ribbon cuttings and host partners at VISIT Lake Geneva events. You’ll recognize them by their new branded apparel.
- A new Board of Directors application form was created along with a corresponding position description.

- Each month a newsletter goes out and a partner meeting is held. That partner meeting rotates to different businesses, a nice way to acquaint members with their neighbors.
- After hearing from our community, a new membership tier for non-profit organizations was created to be both economical and inclusive.
- Rather than the past practice of mailing Chamber membership renewal stickers, they now are dropped off in person. Yet another way to remain connected with partners.



Making Sure We Deliver on What We Say We Will

We took a look inward, leaving no stone unturned in defining and sometimes redefining the roles of our staff. We are developing policy and processes to ensure operational efficiency and innovation.

- Knowing the only way employees can succeed is by setting clear goals and expectations, we wrote job descriptions when none existed and matched expectations with measurable results.
- Complementing the job descriptions are new job assessment forms used in employee evaluations. Now we are evaluating both soft skills and job-related skills.
- New hires now have the benefit of a formal orientation program. Speaking of new hires, 2019 saw four key recruitments – marketing director (with more than 200 applications for the position), partnership manager and a visitor center information specialist. A search for the social media marketing coordinator is underway now with a hire expected in early 2020.

**The Latest Must-Read:** A comprehensive employee manual covering process and policies was completed and delivered to all employees and the Board of Directors.

- We analyzed and resolved technology security vulnerabilities while also putting in place an intranet shared system giving staff easy and efficient access to documents.
- After a thorough review process and determining a need for a change, we selected a new insurance provider.
- The employee benefit package has been enhanced with long and short term disability insurance.
- Critical building needs related to electrical compliance, mold and insect remediation, and sink hole resurfacing have all been successfully addressed.
- There was leadership training for central office staff and customer service training for the visitor center staff.



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