



2020 SUCCESS SCORECARD A Year in Review

a message from Stephanie Klett:

We Carried On When Carrying On Seemed Impossible!



The COVID pandemic hit the world hard, in ways physical, financial and emotional.

Just keeping doors open and people employed seems nearly impossible. Yet, the businesses in the Lake Geneva region have done so much more than simply carry on. Together, we worked harder than we ever have in our professional lives, living up to a commitment to serve neighbors and friends and welcome visitors from far and wide. That makes the achievements of 2020 even more remarkable.

While we are all justifiably eager to bid adieu to 2020, let us do so only after we recognize victories large and small, for each victory brings optimism for the coming year.

Stephanie Klett President & CEO of VISIT Lake Geneva



A crisis can bring out the best in people, and so it did in the Lake Geneva region. Rather than waiting, we took a rapid-response approach, setting expectations for safety with empathy and kindness that will help continue to guide us through the coming months.

- We provided partner updates, consistent in message and sent regular updates from the National Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Wisconsin Manufactures and Commerce and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.
- We launched a digital promotion to support local restaurants called Take Out and Eat Well. This featured curbside pickup, take-out and delivery. Other social and website promotions included National Travel and Tourism Week and a We're Open campaign.
- We worked hard to generate awareness of shop local opportunities, bringing visitors and locals to downtown Lake Geneva.
- With Covid, we shifted our emphasis to spotlight our area's pristine natural resources and outdoor recreation options, promoting a message of natural social distancing. Web content was created as were blogs and articles on Golf, Farmer's Markets, Fireworks, Beaches, Biking and Fall Drives/Color.
- The Visitor Information Center was retrofitted for safe interaction with the public, including safety shields, informational signage and proper sanitation measures.
- In an exclusive partnership with Chicago Magazine, we provided 20,000 subscribers with a copy of the 2020 Lake Geneva Regional Visitors Guide in a mailing with the December Chicago Magazine issue.
- VISIT Lake Geneva, like most businesses, cut operational expenditures while carefully ensuring our marketing dollars and messaging remained strong.



Publicity Tally of \$4 Million

This year, the number of news stories that VISIT Lake Geneva worked with reporters and media on garnered an unprecedented \$4 million of positive earned media for the region. We did not stop working with reporters, we just did it with great intention and sensitivity. We reminded travelers from Chicago, and from Wisconsin too, what an easy drive-to destination Lake Geneva is. It's been a good reminder of how important our home state can and should be to our tourism economy, a message we'll take into 2021.

And now for the headlines:

- Nation's Top Snow Sculptors Compete, AAA Living Magazine
- Best Boutique Hotels in America, Reader's Digest
- 25th Anniversary of the U.S, National Snow Sculpting Championship, CBS This Morning with Jane Pauley
- Top 15 Romantic Getaways in Wisconsin, U.S. News and World Report
- Luxury Hotels Offering Rare Classic Cars, Forbes
- Wisconsin Winter Bucket List, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- Ice Castles to Pop Up in Lake Geneva, CBS2 TV Chicago
- 20 Midwest Destinations to Visit with Your Family, Chicago Parent Magazine
- Snowmobile Racing in Wisconsin, Chicago Tribune
- Top 10 Resort Hotels in the Midwest, Travel + Leisure Magazine

- New Coffee Shop Inspires Customers, TMJ4 TV Milwaukee
- Best Public Golf Courses in Chicago and Wisconsin, Better Magazine
- Perfect Road Trips for When You Need to Escape Chicago, Thrillist.com
- Hotels Are Offering Schoolcation Packages, New York Post
- Fall Colors Shine Bright Along Shore Path, Spectrum 1 TV News
- Charming Lake Geneva, Bleu Magazine

Radio Waves: With travelers in the Midwest spending more time at home, we tapped into radio to reach potential and loyal visitors. Milwaukee stations WTMJ and WISN stepped up in a big way with numerous interviews, as did local station WLKG. WIBA in Madison and WCLO In Janesville helped our cause too. And Wisconsin Public Radio offered a platform for telling our story.



Record-Breaking Winterfest

This year marked the 25th year of Lake Geneva hosting the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Championship, and what an anniversary celebration it was. Spectator numbers broke all records, with some 65,000 visitors converging along the lakeshore, throughout the downtown district, and across the region over the course of the five-day event. New elements added to the frosty fun, including s'mores on the beach, fire dancers and ice sculptures throughout the downtown. In addition to the snow sculpting teams, we had several other VIP guests, including U.S. Congressman Bryan Steil and Miss Wisconsin Alyssa Bohm. The event was made possible by grants awarded to VISIT Lake Geneva from the City of Lake Geneva Tourism Commission and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. While we had the attention of media, we took the opportunity to cross-promote Ice Castles, an attraction that we're happy to report will return to Lake Geneva in 2021. Along with just about every major news outlet in Milwaukee and Chicago covering Winterfest, the Department of Tourism sent a video crew to create a special feature that will be used to promote the 2021 event on their website. The TODAY Show, showed up too!



On This Day in History: The TODAY Show Came to Town!

Feb. 24, 2020.

That's the day The TODAY Show shared the story of the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Championship with the country. Alex Ficquette was the reporter and his love of Lake Geneva and the competition was contagious. Alex interviewed the event organizers, snow sculptors, and VISIT Lake Geneva's Stephanie Klett. He even tried his hand at a little snow sculpting. The story concluded with a nice nod to the 2021 competition. Alex, you're welcome back anytime!

Doing Good

The people of Lake Geneva are known for doing good things, and we love to be part of that too. This year we were pleased to help Inspired Coffee with their public relations launch bringing in major media outlets from Chicago to Milwaukee.

We also brought back The Big Bundle Up, a program that collects warm winter items. This year's recipient was again the Walworth County Food & Diaper Bank. They are deeply appreciative of the winter coats, scarves, gloves, mittens, snow pants, sweaters and hats.



Bike Trail

Recognizing the importance of bike trails to visitors and residents, VISIT Lake Geneva worked with State Senator Steve Nass, Representative Tyler August, Wisconsin Department of Transportation Secretary-designee Craig Thompson and Avant Cycle to extend a bike lane along the shoulder of Route 120 from the northern border of Lake Geneva to Route 36, the southern border of Springfield. This three mile-stretch has a wider shoulder with rumble alerts to provide safer bike travel.



Discover Wisconsin Digital Short

VISIT Lake Geneva expanded marketing efforts through a partnership with Discover Wisconsin, creating a digital short video highlighting Fall in Lake Geneva. The video spotlights Autumn activities in a unique way using drone and go-pro footage, and will be broadcast on Apple TV, Chromecast, Amazon Fire and Roku channels. The video will also be available at www.visitlakegeneva.com.

Highlights include Pearce's Farm Stand and Corn Maze, Fall-color drives including Snake Road—a designated Wisconsin Rustic Road, the lake shore path, golf, ziplining, high-ropes courses and mountain biking. Downtown restaurants and retail shops are integrated throughout the video.

The Lake Geneva Fall digital short was hosted by longtime Discover Wisconsin personality and VISIT Lake Geneva CEO Stephanie Klett.



Staying with the topic of visual storytelling, the VISIT Lake Geneva photo library continues to get bigger and better with each passing season. Photo assignments in 2020 emphasized outdoor recreation and local shopping and dining. Images from the 2020 Winterfest will provide a visual pop in our 2021 publicity efforts. We were also resolute in gathering images of employees and visitors following safety guidelines of mask-wearing and social distancing. The style of our photography is candid, in-the-moment, believable and brand-supportive. It also provides the perfect complement to the editorial features in the revamped 2021 Visitors Guide.

2020 Impact Award Winners

Each year VISIT Lake Geneva presents its Impact Awards to deserving individuals and businesses in the community, a tradition that dates back to 1974. The awards honor those who have made positive and significant impacts on the quality of life in the area as nominated by their peers and voted on by the board of directors of VISIT Lake Geneva. Award Winners are:

Stu Herzog Outstanding Citizen Award, Michael Ploch

Rising Star Award, The Candle Mercantile

Hospitality Award, The Bottle Shop

Community Betterment (Tie), Inspired Coffee and Stephanie Klett

Grants Awarded

A big piece of the work we do at VISIT Lake Geneva is looking for grant opportunities that further our mission. We are pleased that in 2020, we were awarded \$393,012. Grants awarded include Meetings Means Business, Joint Effort Marketing, City of Lake Geneva Tourism Commission and the Federal CARES Act.



Bring on 2021

During 2020, at VISIT Lake Geneva, we hung our hat on a message of optimism. And we'll conclude the year in the same way as we look ahead to 2021.

A high priority is advanced customer service training of our exceptional visitor center team. The goal? To ensure that anyone answering a phone, handing out a brochure or pointing people in the right direction knows the people, places and experiences that make Lake Geneva one of a kind. Integrated with exceptional marketing and a loud and clear invitation to visit, we look forward to working for you and with you.

VISIT Lake Geneva Metrics

- Visitlakegeneva.com Pageviews: 2,041,958
- Social Media Followers: Facebook: 50,341 We broke the 50K mark for first time Instagram: 6,264 Twitter: 3,376
- Email Subscribers: 50,122 opt-in subscribers
- Visitor Center walk-ins: 7,000



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