

Newcastle Chamber finds a way to keep community together during pandemic

By Jayson Knight

Gayla Riddle with the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce reported Wednesday that the pandemic actually allowed the chamber to get more done.

"I was able to work more within the Community for the Community and our Chamber Members together," said Riddle, who is the Director for the organization. "I was also able to go out and meet one-on-one with many of our Chamber Members and highlight them via social media. Through the Chamber we purchased gift cards from our local businesses and held virtual giveaways on social media. This was to stress supporting local and supporting small businesses now more than ever."

Besides supporting businesses, the chamber found other ways to

support its community with events targeted at togetherness, despite the social distance.

"We offered Virtual Chamber Coffees and even a Virtual Easter Egg Hunt," Riddl said. "We organized a monthly Crusin' Main for our Tri-City Cruisers and anyone else that wanted to join with our Sonic on Main as the final destination of the Cruise."

Riddle organized the Newcastle Farmers Market, increasing the number of vendors from 2-3 in the past couple of years, to over 66 Vendors.

"Our Farmer's Market was every Saturday from April-October and was a huge success," Riddle said. "We offered everything from Fruits and Veggies, Local Honey, Jams & Jellies, Baked Bread and Goods, Coffee, Fresh Flower Cart, Hand-Made Cards, Jewelry, Holiday Decor, Crafts and much more."



"In the Fall when things were opening back up we hosted a Haunt the Park for our Newcastle families and we held a Veterans Recognition Luncheon for the Veterans in the Tri-City areas."

Riddl discuss what the Newcastle Chamber would be up to in the coming calendar year, which will include innovative ways to maintain some of the stronger features from traditional events.

"We are currently hosting Virtual Luncheons with Speakers and Brown Bag Drive Through Lunch Pick Up before the Zoom takes place," Riddle said. "For the February Luncheon, the Luncheon Sponsor will actually will be delivering the lunches to those

that sign up. We are using Chamber Members to provide the Brown Sack Lunches. We have several Free Virtual Family Events in the works but I don't have the final info on it all.

Our Networking Committee is also in the process of planning Virtual Networking Events for our Chamber Members.

"This Summer we will be hosting a Free Meet Your Community Event for all businesses in the Community to set up an informational booth for the community to come by and visit and learn about their businesses. Our Annual Golf Tournament is scheduled for September 13th and our Annual Chamber Banquet is scheduled for November 16th."



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