

MYRTLE BEACH AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2008-2009 Annual Progress Report

The Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce is a membership organization supported by close to 2,700 businesses and nonprofit organizations.

The organizations, and the individuals representing them, join together for the purpose of promoting the civic and economic progress of our community.

The area's economic success and quality of life is directly impacted by the work the chamber performs. Because of this, the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce will have a major impact on the future of the Grand Strand.



Vision

We will be a world-class organization that thrives on continuous improvement, providing exceptional results through service, innovation, community leadership and collaboration.

Purpose

There are three primary functions performed by the chamber:

1. **Promote business:** the chamber serves as the primary destination marketing organization and promotes the tourism industry out-of-market. The chamber also provides numerous opportunities for local businesses to promote themselves to visitors, residents and other businesses.
2. **Protect business:** the chamber seeks to influence legislation and regulation by local, state and federal governments in a proactive manner, supporting legislation that benefits businesses and the communities they reside in and, where necessary, opposing legislation that unnecessarily inhibits businesses.
3. **Improve business:** the chamber offers a multitude of programs and services that assist businesses and/or individuals.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce is to provide community leadership in the promotion of economic development, including tourism. Accordingly, the chamber will effectively involve itself in the governmental and political arena and the coordinating of efforts to advance business development in order to improve the quality of life and to encourage unity in the region.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce

Provides administrative oversight of all programs and activities. The primary liaison with the Myrtle Beach area community, board of directors and elected officials.

Legislative Policy Council

The Legislative Policy Council provides direction on public and governmental relations. A key part of the chamber's mission is to protect businesses from unnecessary legislation or over regulation and to lobby for pro-business measures. We work closely with local, state and federal officials to help improve the overall state of business along the Grand Strand. The chamber employs a lobbying firm that works on issues important to our members. We meet with our elected officials with one simple goal: make our needs their priorities.

MBACC key legislative accomplishments this past year include:

- ▶ Successfully led effort to fully fund the state's destination-specific 2-for-1 matching promotion program.
- ▶ Successfully led effort to pass and implement historic legislation creating a tourism development fee, which will fund recurring tourism promotion, owner-occupied property taxes and tourism-related infrastructure.
- ▶ Hosted the 2009 Washington, D.C. Fly-In where participants traveled to Washington, D.C., to rally support for issues of vital importance to the Grand Strand.
- ▶ Made 44 trips to Columbia, S.C., and Washington, D.C., to represent the interests of Grand Strand businesses.
- ▶ Hosted the Grand Strand Legislative Reception for S.C. General Assembly members in Columbia.
- ▶ Hosted a reception for Rep. Dan Cooper, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, to thank him for his help in securing the chamber's 2008-2009 2-for-1 destination-marketing funds.
- ▶ Joined with other local chambers in hosting the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce Grand Strand Regional Grassroots Meeting. This open-forum meeting was one of the first steps in creating the 2009 Competitiveness Agenda, the S.C. Chamber's and business community's annual list of legislative priorities.
- ▶ Held the 2008 Legislative Luncheon. Members of the Horry-Georgetown Legislative Delegation participated in a Q&A moderation. The luncheon was a great opportunity for members to meet their local and state representatives and learn about the chamber's 2009 legislative agenda.
- ▶ Joined businesses and industry representatives at the annual Hospitality Day at the State House and Taste of South Carolina.

MBACC key community accomplishments this past year include:

- ▶ Assisted in collecting donations for wild fire victims and firefighters and locating long-term housing options for victims.
- ▶ Hosted a regional press conference with our local solicitor and local law enforcement personnel to combat the misleading findings within the “City Crime Rankings 2008-2009: Crime in Metropolitan America,” produced by CQ Press.
- ▶ Presented the Alternative Energy Forum which addressed the pros and cons of various forms of power generation. Congressman Gresham Barrett and Congressman Henry Brown Jr. joined leading experts to discuss nuclear, wind, solar, bioenergy and offshore drilling. The forum, open to the public, was enjoyed by more than 200 people.
- ▶ Held the President’s Gala honoring Wayne Gray as Citizen of the Year and Tom Rogers as Pioneer of the Year.
- ▶ Celebrated the fifth annual Christmas Towne, a free family event with more



than 8,000 in attendance. The outdoor festival, held at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center, featured the official tree lighting ceremony for Myrtle Beach, train rides, photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, inflatable games and other free activities.

- ▶ Celebrated the Incredible Customer Experience at the 3rd Annual Myrtle Beach Area ICE Awards. More than 980 people enjoyed the event and cheered businesses and individuals providing outstanding customer service.
- ▶ Held an information session for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to announce its research findings: Residents’ emotional connection to Myrtle Beach has a surprising relationship to economic growth.
- ▶ Hosted a luncheon meeting for S.C. Attorney General Henry McMaster to share his thoughts on crime in the area and throughout South Carolina.
- ▶ Inducted King Hagler, Catawba Indian chief, and Pat Conroy, acclaimed author, into the South Carolina Hall of Fame.
- ▶ Teamed with local radio and television stations to raise money for several worthy causes using a “Dunk a Celebrity for Charity” stunt as part of the 24th annual Surfside Beach Family Festival.
- ▶ Actively promoted community-oriented Web sites such as GrandStrandRestaurants.com; ArtsAtTheBeach.com; and GrandStrandEvents.com.

Leadership Grand Strand

Sponsored by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Grand Strand is a nine-month annual program aimed at fostering leadership talents of Myrtle Beach area citizens. Participants explore topics such as local history, tourism, economic development, education, public safety, politics and volunteerism.

Twenty-seven participants graduated from the program, with class members awarding the Ann DeBock Leadership



Award to Greg Everett. Class XXIX participants assisted more than 10 nonprofit organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Horry County Disabilities and Special Needs, March of Dimes, American Red Cross and MBACC's Youth Leadership Academy. The Alumni Association continued to provide networking opportunities for program graduates.

This year 25 individuals will be a part of the 30th class of Leadership Grand Strand. Each class member will spend 75 hours working with MBACC's Youth Leadership Academy, Horry County Disabilities and Special Needs and The Salvation Army. Another 25 hours will be spent doing volunteer work for community organizations selected by each member.

CONVENTION BUREAU

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce

The Convention Bureau sells the Grand Strand to the group market. When planning a meeting, sporting event, group tour or convention in the Grand Strand, the Myrtle Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau—Groups Sales stands ready to assist planners with a wide range of innovative and customized materials, information and services. Our award-winning team knows the community and hospitality industry, and helps create successful events. And these groups not only rent rooms, they dine, shop, golf and entertain themselves throughout the Grand Strand spending around \$200 each day. To show our appreciation, the bureau rolls out the red carpet by providing welcome packets, name badges and registration assistance along with other services.

Covering everything from branding and media to Web and research, the Myrtle Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau—Marketing's invaluable contributions help to bring more than 15.2 million annual visitors to our beaches each year. These travelers spend more than \$4 billion at our hotels, restaurants, theaters and other attractions throughout the Grand Strand, which benefits thousands of local businesses and helps pay for needed infrastructure.

Committees

CVB-Group Sales Committee
Advertising/Publicity Committee
Fulfillment Committee
Technology-Based Marketing Committee

Key accomplishments this past year for Convention and Visitors Bureau – Marketing include:

- ▶ Welcomed nearly 70,000 race fans at the Darlington Raceway during the Southern 500 NASCAR race.
- ▶ Published the 19th Annual Myrtle Beach Area Statistical Abstract.
- ▶ Produced more than 1 million Official Myrtle Beach Area Visitor Guides & 325,000 Official Myrtle Beach Area Vacation Guides.
- ▶ Unveiled a new Web site, a new ad campaign, and invested heavily in online advertising and television advertising to promote the destination and attract new visitors to the area.



- ▶ Hosted 36 travel writers. Produced 175 news releases. Myrtle Beach mentioned 3,371 times in print and Web stories from regional, national and international media with a total publicity value of \$19,465,553. Responded to 730 media inquiries and requests for information.
- ▶ VisitMyrtleBeach.com was featured on AOL.com home page generating more than 50,000 unique visits in 8 hours.
- ▶ Myrtle Beach destination videos were viewed 46,120 times on YouTube.com.
- ▶ Logged 3,435,168 unique visits to VisitMyrtleBeach.com.

Delivered 229,384 referrals (i.e., click-throughs) to members' Web sites through the Business Directory on MyrtleBeachAreaChamber.com and 5,161,189 referrals to advertisers' Web sites.

- ▶ Hosted the 2008 Tourism Marketing Summit with Bill Geist, ZeitGeist Consulting, giving an overview of current industry trends and providing an outlook on 2009 travel and tourism. We also held other meetings and updates providing insights and information on tourism trends and analysis.



**Key accomplishments this past year for
Convention and Visitors Bureau – Group Sales include:**

- ▶ Unveiled a first-ever comprehensive sports facilities study for our market. The study examined existing local sport facilities, the need for additional facilities and the estimated economic impact.
- ▶ Held a Sports Tourism Marketing Seminar where industry expert Don Schumacher discussed trends, issues, challenges and successes in sports marketing.
- ▶ Hosted the sixth annual Motorcoach Festival at the Alabama Theatre in conjunction with the Coastal Network Cooperative, a local collaborative effort that promotes group travel. More than 1,500 group tour travelers shared the holiday spirit and were treated to food, entertainment and gifts.
- ▶ Traveled to 30 trade shows in four different countries and 14 states. Booked 278 groups into member properties (85,303 room nights). Generated 469 group leads to member businesses. Serviced 545 groups representing 59,588 attendees with overall satisfaction of 4.88 (on a scale of 1-5).
- ▶ Received 2008 Corporate and Incentive Travel Award of Excellence, and 2008 Successful Meetings Gold Service Award.
- ▶ Inducted into the Meetings & Conventions Gold Awards Hall of Fame.



MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce

Why do businesses join the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce?

Because membership opens the door to new business development opportunities. Our purpose is to promote, protect and improve businesses along the Grand Strand from Little River south through Pawleys Island. Our membership consists of close to 2,700 businesses and nonprofit organizations.

Do you have all the business contacts you need? Not many of us can answer yes to this question so that's where the Membership Programs & Services Division steps in. This group handles benefits and services, including networking events and educational seminars, along with all aspects of membership sales and retention.

Committees

Membership Committee
North Strand Council
South Strand Council
Small Business Council
Young Professionals Council

Our key accomplishments this past year include:

▶ Awarded a Five-Star Accreditation, the highest achievement for chambers, by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

▶ Saluted National Tourism Week, May 9-17, by extending a big “Thank You for Visiting” to thousands of visitors who



chose the Grand Strand as their vacation destination.

▶ Celebrated the graduation of 27 participants of Leadership Grand Strand Class XXIX.

▶ Hosted 15 meetings of the North Strand Council and South Strand Council, keeping our members updated on chamber programs and services, and focusing on issues important to each area of our region.

▶ MBACC staff at the Myrtle Beach International Airport greeted military personnel flying home as part of Operation Welcome Home. Welcome home bags filled with discounts and goodies from local merchants were presented to the military personnel.

▶ Co-hosted the 4th Annual Hurricane Preparedness Conference & Expo with more than 350 people attending.

▶ Hosted nine Business After Hours and one Business Before Hours with more than 3,200 attendees.

▶ Welcomed 397 new members.

▶ Held 26 educational classes through the Chamber Academy with more than 550 people in attendance.

▶ Celebrated 54 ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

▶ Greeted 95,023 visitors at our three welcome centers. Answered 99,789 phone calls in our call center.

▶ Fulfilled 186,408 inquiries.

▶ Held a successful South Strand Leadership Forum (63 attendees), North Strand Leadership Forum (83 attendees) and a Myrtle Beach Leadership Forum (50 attendees). Local officials participated in a moderated Q&A forum followed by a networking reception.

▶ Held the 2nd Annual Youth Leadership Academy at Coastal Carolina University. This one-day program is designed for high school sophomores to recognize their leadership talents and apply these skills in becoming effective, ethical leaders in their homes, schools, workplaces and communities.



▶ Launched a “Shop the Grand Strand” promotional campaign, promoting local businesses and bargains.

▶ Celebrated the first anniversary of gsSCENE, MBACC’s young professionals group. During the first year, the program had a membership of 522 young professionals, hosted events that have raised more than \$3,700 for local charities, and participated in community service projects that have utilized more than 125 gsSCENE members.

▶ Celebrated the spirit of chamber volunteerism at the Chamber Volunteer Celebration. The event recognized more than 820 volunteers who donated their time to help the chamber. Special recognition went to Shannon Camp as Volunteer of the Year, HTC as the recipient of the Chairman’s Choice award, and Steve Chapman, for his excellent leadership as the 2007- 2008 board of directors chairman.

▶ Held a successful Business & Restaurant Expo with 125 members exhibiting and more than 1,100 people attending.

▶ Held the 2008 annual membership meeting featuring Frank Luntz as keynote speaker. The event included networking, four educational sessions, and the popular business and individual awards. Close to 400 people participated in the daylong event.

▶ Celebrated 70 years of success with more than 300 members joining us for an MBACC birthday bash that included lots of food, music and plenty of reminiscing.

FESTIVALS

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce

During the past 58 years, if you ever attended one of the chamber sponsored Sun Fun Festivals, then you saw first hand the work of the Festivals division. Their goal is to build festivals and special community activities that create publicity, promote commerce and attract visitors. This group plans some of the area's favorite events, including the Canadian-American Days Festival and Beach, Boogie & BBQ Festival.

Our key accomplishments this past year include:

▶ Welcomed thousands of Northern visitors at the Canadian-American Days Festival. Events, including military concerts and welcome expos, were held throughout the Grand Strand.

▶ Launched the 56th annual Grand Strand Fishing Rodeo. Held the Grand Strand Fishing Rodeo's 2008 Fall Pier King Mackerel Tournament, 2009 Spring Pier King Mackerel Tournament, and Take A Kid Fishing tournament.

▶ Held the 58th Annual Sun Fun Festival featuring an incredible concert series and various activities across the Grand Strand. Free concert by Lifehouse; free celebrity meet-and-greets; APBA Racing H2X 2009 Tour; Honeycomb Cereal Kid's Zone; H2X Racing presents jet skiing demonstrations; Sun Fun Beach Run; Miss Sun Fun and Miss Sun Fun Teen pageants; food, arts and crafts vendors; and more. The festival was enjoyed by more than 45,000 people.



▶ Celebrated the 4th annual Beach, Boogie & BBQ Festival with more than 20,000 in attendance. The festival featured family friendly entertainment and events, including live music, the official barbecue competition of South Carolina, a classic car show, and food and arts/crafts vendors.