



# 2020-21 | Annual Report



*Powered by business.*

**ABILENE INDUSTRIAL  
FOUNDATION**  
AN AFFILIATE OF THE ABILENE CHAMBER

**ABILENE**  
Convention and Visitors Bureau

**ABILENE**  
Abilene Cultural Affairs Council



# Perseverance From Our Partners

As I reflect back on everything the business community has been through over the past year, the words “challenge” “gratitude” and “perseverance” come to mind.

The challenges that COVID and SNOVID brought our community can at times overshadow the year, but if you look around, Abilene is thriving, and progress is everywhere.

Take a look at the development that continues in both North and South downtown, to the newly developed Allen Ridge, to thriving new small businesses spread out all across town. “Perseverance” from partners just like you is everywhere.

Take a look at what was accomplished at your Chamber by our numerous volunteers.

From our Leadership Abilene Alumni jumping in and helping our Healthcare Heroes in their moment of need, from the business community’s largest and arguably most successful Small Business Week, to the execution of the largest Young Professional Leadership Summit in West Texas, and the storied Children’s Art and Literacy Festival returning.



Over the last year, your Chamber Board of Directors implemented five organizational goals focused on delivering value to our partners and continuing to create a business-friendly environment for all. They are:

1. Deliver relevant and high-quality member services, information, programs and events.
2. Develop an inclusive business environment for all.
3. Accelerate Abilene’s Business Friendliness
4. Grow, recruit, retain and nurture talent and workforce needed for the future.
5. Continue to operate the Chamber with excellence.


As you take a look at this year’s annual report, I think you’ll be pleased on how our volunteers have helped Chamber staff make progress towards these goals. Your tenacity has driven the success of the Chamber during this difficult year, and I hope you find that through this year’s report.

Each of you played a role in our organization over the last year, and I hope you continue to help us become masters of the basics.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marshall Morris', written in a cursive style.

Marshall Morris  
2020-2021 Chamber Chair  
First Financial Bank



A large crowd of people is gathered in a modern, brightly lit interior space, likely a lobby or atrium. The space features large glass windows and doors on the left side. People are dressed in a variety of attire, including business casual and semi-formal wear. Some individuals are standing in small groups, while others are seated at long tables covered with black cloths. The tables are set with food and drinks. The overall atmosphere appears to be a formal or semi-formal social event, such as a networking gathering or a community meeting. The lighting is warm and the space is open and airy.

**Chamber leadership  
involves aggressively  
pursuing the hundreds  
of incremental moves  
needed to achieve  
greater prosperity of our  
communities.**

**- Dave Adkisson, CCE**



# GOAL: Deliver relevant and high quality member programs, events, services and information.



*"Service to your business is why your Chamber exists. Whether it's one of our five monthly networking events, programs to help you manage disaster, or training seminars to ensure your staff is equipped with the knowledge needed for success, I think you'll find your Chamber volunteers have accomplished significant work for the business community over the last year." - Laura Moore, Chair-Elect, The Grace Museum*



Jessi Bailey, Vice President of Human Resources for West Texas Rehab Center

"The Abilene Chamber provided West Texas Rehab Center (WTRC) 240 COVID tests and 12 boxes of N95 masks. With the number of tests that were provided WTRC **saved over \$4,800** in testing supplies! Our nurses are also required to wear N95 masks, not the less expensive KN95 masks. When visiting a COVID positive patient, which unfortunately we have seen a lot of over the last year. The N95 masks **saved us another \$600!**

By utilizing the supplies given to us by the Chamber, it allowed us to provide testing on site, thus saving time in sending employees to other testing centers in town. Being a nonprofit, financially planning for something like COVID wasn't exactly on anyone's radar prior to a year ago. The cost of keeping our patients and employees safe is exorbitant, but with the help of our community partners like the **Abilene Chamber of Commerce providing over \$5,400** free of charge in testing supplies, we can and will continue onward."

## BY THE NUMBERS:

- 83 test kits
- 3,320 tests
- 661 KN95 masks
- 73 businesses impacted

*\*Tests were provided through an initiative of Governor Abbott's and the State of Texas. Hendrick Health provided additional tests for the business community.*



Lindsay Flores, General Manager for Lytle Land and Cattle

In November of 2020, Chairman Marshall Morris challenged the Chamber Board to come up with a way to help keep our dollars local during the second wave of COVID during what would have been businesses' busiest season. Keep It Local, powered by First Financial Bank, gives consumers an option to buy one e-gift card that is redeemable at over 60 participating merchants. Since the program's inception, over **\$5,000 worth of e-gift cards** have been purchased and disseminated to Abilene businesses.

"Because of this tool in our toolbox, **over \$800** has been spent at Lyle Land & Cattle. Keep it Local has been a great reminder of the Chamber's support through one of our hardest times in business. I encourage any Chamber member to take advantage of this free resource so we can all work together at keeping our dollars local."



Scan the QR code to purchase an e-gift card or to sign your business up to be a merchant free of charge!





## IMPACT NUMBERS:



600

Young Professional  
Committee Members

300

Military Affairs  
Committee Members

55

Chamber Members celebrated  
milestone anniversaries  
ranging from  
five to 130 years



50k

sessions on  
abilenechamber.com

7,291

followers

6,029

likes

4,000 +

engaged in signature events, programs,  
networking events despite COVID-19  
challenges



Presented the Abilene  
Trophy virtually for the first  
time in program history.

360

Airmen welcomed through  
the Chamber's Downtown  
tour during Right Start.



1.9 million

Secured Federal dollars using the Defense  
Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) for  
Dyess elementary's STEM addition through work  
of the Chamber's Military Affairs Committee.



CALF

Children's Art & Literacy Festival  
by the numbers: 4,642 registrants,  
500 volunteers, 156 Texas cities, 26  
states, 17 downtown venues



#relocatetoABI

1460

Relocation  
packets  
distributed

3.8 M

Leveraged State Defense Economic  
Adjustment Assistance Grant Dollars  
(DEAAG), Development Corporation of  
Abilene dollars, and Air Force dollars  
for a Dyess Flight line Security upgrade  
through the work of the Chamber's  
Military Affairs Committee.



# GOAL: Develop an inclusive business environment for all.



*"Our volunteer leadership cast a vision and focus for staff to ensure that we're working to be as inclusive of an organization as possible. From our Children's Business Fair, to our inaugural Entrepreneurship Bootcamp, to our continued efforts to better align with partners such as the Small Business Development Center and Procurement Technical Assistance Center, our organization is better aligned for the future today than ever before. And, we're not done yet."* - Doug Peters, Chamber President & CEO



**50 businesses**

Young entrepreneurs tried their hand running a business at the Chamber's two Children's Business Fairs hosted in the spring and fall.



**40 attendees**

Mayor Williams issued a challenge and we delivered. Our inaugural Entrepreneurship Bootcamp kicked off during Small Business Week.



**171 attendees**

Despite COVID challenges the Chamber's Hispanic Business Council continued their ever popular luncheons this year with added precautions when needed.



**\$87,250**

The Cultural Affairs Council HeArts for the ARTS Grant program of privately funded grants distributed \$87,250 to 17 non-profits.



**\$66,150**

given to 13 non-profits for the community and visitors development grant program funded by the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT).



*The mission of the Center for Contemporary Arts is to encourage, empower, and inspire artists, children, and the community through the arts. With a growing artist membership of over 87 local and regional fine artists, 10 resident studio artists, and annual visitorship of over 26,000, the Center plays a key role in the arts in our community. The Abilene Cultural Affairs Council (ACAC), through their two grant programs, supports each aspect of our mission. Funding through the Hearts for the Arts grant program provides support for all of the Center's ArtReach programs - which encompasses art instruction for youth in afterschool programs and therapeutic art experiences for people who have experienced trauma, incarcerated youth, and veterans experiencing PTSD. The Community and Visitor Development Grant program not only provides the Center with operational support, but also underwrites a significant portion of the monthly Artwalk. Because the Center is dedicated to supporting local artists, all instructors are selected from our Artist Membership. The ACAC grant program not only supports each aspect of our mission, but ensures local artists have support in the most direct way possible.*

- Rebecca Bridges, Executive Director for the Center for Contemporary Arts



“

The Cultural Affairs  
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supports each aspect of  
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have support in the  
most direct way  
possible. - Rebecca  
Bridges, Center for  
Contemporary Arts





## Travel industry Abilene MSA

\$416.3 million spent by visitors

\$40 million in tax revenue

\$13.2 million in local tax revenue

3,600 employed by travel industry

## Downtown Work

Worked with the City of Abilene and the Abilene Improvement Corporation to vision cast new opportunities for the former Civic Plaza site and the former Abilene Reporter-News building.

**62 percent**

group business rebooked that were previously cancelled during COVID-19

**\$5.3 million**

in direct spending through partnerships in booking the Taylor County Expo Center and the Dodge Jones Youth Sports Center

**241 meetings & events** generating

**\$21.8 million** into local economy.

**27 percent**

increase in digital engagement.



**ONE MILLION**

in NEW business during the last year.

*"Opening a brand new sports facility right before the pandemic was stressful to say the least. The Chamber and its affiliate, the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB), provided tremendous support and guidance not only as we weathered the storm, but by helping us continue to operate with added precautions. Over the past year, the ACVB has aided in welcoming guests to our facility and Abilene as a whole, provided volunteers for events, and promoted the Sports Center to various cities and locations. Because of their work, we're proud to boast One Million dollars in NEW business for the Abilene area. We are so thankful to have them both as a partner in this journey."*

- Brandon Osborne, Abilene Youth Sports Authority



# GOAL: Accelerate Abilene's business friendliness



*"Our goal here is simple. Together with our partners, we want to make Abilene the easiest place possible for you to conduct business. We're working to create a strong voice for the business community to lead and support inclusive policy at the local, state and federal levels. We're also working to better align ourselves with partners who are seeking the same community goals that are important to our leadership so you can have more opportunities for business." - Mike Fernandez, Secretary/Treasurer, Texas National Bank*

## 35 State Bills

Tracked during the regular session and two special sessions



## 50 Meetings

Attended in-person or virtually for city council, school board, county commissioners court and other local government meetings

## 100 Interactions

With legislators and/or their staff members



## Abilene Population 125,182

Helped coordinate efforts to get Taylor County counted during the 2020 Census



*"As Mayor, I have often said that our business friendliness defines our economy and that it should be easy to operate your enterprise here. With credit to our city manager and our partnership with the Chamber, City Council has adopted and will continue to pursue pro-business*

*- Honorable Anthony Williams, Mayor of the City of Abilene*

*policy that puts Abilene-based businesses at a distinct advantage in comparison to other Texas Communities.*

*We will continue to work as partners to ensure we find ways to say "yes," and further help to enable the start-up and expansion of businesses of all sizes right here in our great City. "*

## One New Downtown Hotel

Years in the making, Abilene City Council capped a long process in 2021 to help anchor our central business district with a convention headquarters hotel. The Chamber and its partners commend Council for their actions. The project has a direct impact of **469 in employment** and **output of \$70,000,000.**

Private funding for the new Downtown Hotel from the Chamber's Industrial Foundation and Downtown Initiative:

**\$340k**

Initiative seed capital

**\$150k**

Downtown plan

**\$75k**

Hotel Franchise Fee

**\$30k**

Vision casting and developers RFP for hotel



# GOAL: Grow, recruit, retain and nurture talent and workforce needed for the future



*"Workforce continues to be our community's number one economic development challenge. Not unique to Abilene, the pandemic has changed drastically how we as business owners attract, recruit and retain local talent. While it doesn't seem the workforce challenge is getting any easier, your Chamber remains committed to arming you with the resources needed to be productive including our young professional program. Take a look at how your volunteers over the past year have ramped up your Chamber's service in this area of staffs day-to-day operations." - Darrin Black, Immediate Past Chair, Black Plumbing*

## The power of leadership

Many conversations were had over the course of last year about our healthcare workers. When our hospital system became overwhelmed and their workforce need became significant, a group of Chamber volunteers formed a "Helping our Healthcare Heroes" taskforce. While there was little they could do in physically helping, this group of Chamber business leaders stepped in to show their support by issuing a 12 days of giving and a physically distant movie night at our local drive-in theatre.

When it comes to taking care of others in their community, no one does it better than Abilenians.

Giving	Numbers
Stamina Goodie Bags	1,000
Boxes of Popcorn	331
Cookies	20 Dozen
Lage Pizzas	100
Plates of fajitas	95
Cooked Meals	75
Cases of Energy Drinks	15
Donuts	13 Dozen
Cases of Water	10
Gallons of Coffee	10
Boxes of Power Snacks	7
Bundt Cakes	2



*"I came into work one day and sat in my office brainstorming how our business was going to navigate shutting down because of lack of employees. About that time, one of the Chamber's daily memos came across my email and I saw a statement about "reaching out for*

*- Denise Coulter, Subway*

*any needs you or your business may have." I responded to the email and within 10 minutes Doug Peters was on the phone and we were brainstorming my challenges together. From there, we came up with the Hire Now Job Fair and the Chamber team delivered. While the workforce crisis still plagues us today, I know I have a partner in the Chamber team."*





Produced “A Day in the life of a Reservist” and increased the hiring rate for the 489th Reserve unit at Dyess

**\$375,000**

in Workforce grants acquired with the help of Workforce Solutions of West Texas and the Development Corporation of Abilene

**110**

Businesses participated in job fairs hosted or co-hosted by the Chamber and AIF

**8,958** views

**238** Jobs

on abilenetworks.com

**320**

Engaged in from across West Texas in the West Texas Young Professional Leadership Summit



**Summit exists to encourage young professionals as they're going about their career; how to navigate change; how to build their network and more. - Paula LeMarr, Hendrick Health**



# GOAL: Operate the Chamber with excellence



"This document celebrates the completion of the Chamber's 113th year of service to our members. Your Chamber is proud to be among the top three percent of Chambers nationwide with our accreditation status. As we move forward in our re-accreditation process, we're continuing the intensive self-assessment of our operations in nine areas of work, including governance, government affairs, and technology so we can showcase to the nation why the volunteers at the Abilene Chamber deserve five stars." - Marshall Morris, 2020-2021 Chamber Chair, First Financial Bank



**89%**

Retention rate Oct. 1, 2020 - Aug. 30, 2021

*\*The national average for membership retention as stated by the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives post COVID-19 is 68%. Before COVID-19 the average was 82%*



**135**

New Chamber members Oct. 1, 2020 - Aug. 30, 2021



## 804 Business Categories

The Chamber boasts over 804 business categories of different services members provide the Abilene area. If there's a service you need, chances are we have a partner standing by waiting to help.



## 8,324 + hours

volunteers have spent working on behalf of our organization's mission to develop and promote the economy and quality of life in Abilene over the past year through the Chamber and its affiliates.



I have been a member of the Chamber for 30 + years and believe that it is essential for every small business owner to be a member. Being involved in Chamber sponsored events and serving on committees, is the best networking and positive advertising you can do to establish and continue to grow your business. It's not about just paying your dues every year, it's about serving your community and reaping the rewards.

- Yanell Rieder,

President Casa Authentique



# Impact Investors

The Abilene Chamber thanks our Impact Investors for their continued commitment in the prosperity of Abilene. These members believe in the mission of the Abilene Chamber and invest additional dollars than their membership to ensure the Chamber meets its mission.

## Inspire Investors - \$4,501 - \$6,000

Abilene Regional Airport  
AEP Texas  
America's SBDC at Texas Tech  
Arrow Ford Mitsubishi  
Black Plumbing  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas  
The Boeing Company  
Communities of Abilene Federal Credit Union  
Condley & Company, LLP  
C Smith & Son Farm Equipment Inc  
Eide Bailly LLP  
Enprotec / Hibbs & Todd  
First Bank Texas  
First Financial Bank  
Funeral Directors Life  
Gateway Mortgage  
Happy State Bank  
Hendrick Health  
JAR Land and Investments  
KTAB-TV/KRBC-TV  
Lockheed Martin  
Northrop Grumman  
Perry Hunter Hall Insurance  
Primal Pet Group  
Star Dodge Hyundai  
Taylor Electric Cooperative, Inc.  
Taylor Telecom

## Innovate Investors - \$3,001 - \$4,500

Abilene Association of Realtors  
Abilene Banking Center – Coleman County State Bank  
Abilene Teacher's Federal Credit Union  
Abimar Foods, Inc.  
Action Professional Outsourcing  
Atmos Energy  
Batts Communication  
Bobcat of Abilene  
CBS Insurance  
Charles E. Rice, Attorney at Law  
Cisco College  
City of Abilene  
Coca-Cola Southwest Beverages  
Fullerton & Associates, PLLC  
Hardin Simmons University  
H.E. Butt Grocery Company  
Holland Hearing Center  
Pest Patrol  
Prosperity Bank  
Suddenlink Communications  
United Supermarkets, LLC

## Excel Investors - \$1,501 - \$3,000

Abilene Christian University  
Abilene Country Club  
Abilene Independent School District  
Abilene Industrial Foundation  
Affordacare Urgent Care  
BBVA Compass Bank  
Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate Senter, REALTORS  
Big Country Society for Human Resource Management  
Big Country Title  
Briercroft Fire & Water Restoration  
Cactus Technology Solutions  
Can-Doo Budget Rentals  
Cedar Gap Wealth Management  
Community Foundation of Abilene  
Danny's Auto Clinic/ Fort Phntom Marine  
Development Corporation of Abilene  
Gary's Floral Gallery  
Germ Killer  
Goodwill-West Texas  
Global Samaritan Resources  
Hilliard Office Solutions  
Jackson Bros. Feed & Seed  
Lone Star Dry Goods  
McMahon Surovik Suttle, P.C.  
McMurry University  
Parkhill  
Senator Dawn Buckingham  
Servicemaster by A-Town/Hi-Tech  
Sharon's Barbeque & Catering  
Sitzes Self-Storage  
TMI Texas Media Inc.  
Tolar Systems  
TSTC West Texas Abilene  
United Supermarkets, LLC  
Vexus Fiber  
Wagstaff LLP  
West Texas Rehabilitation Center  
Workforce Solutions

## Connect Investors - \$1,000 - \$1,501

Abilene Aero  
Abilene Clay Sports  
Abilene Department of Public Health  
Abilene Hope Haven, Inc.  
Abilene Reporter News  
Advanced VoIP Solutions  
Battles Home Improvement  
Benchmark Business Solutions  
Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Stovall, REALTORS  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Capital Farm Credit  
Casa Authentique  
Clavél Corporation  
C.M. Company Auctions  
Dyessmoves, LLC  
Elmwood Funeral Home and Memorial Park  
FireCycle  
First Abilene Federal Credit Union  
Garver  
Home2 Suites by Hilton  
Honda of Abilene  
IN-Focus Digital  
KTXS-CW Abilene  
Leonard Water Services  
Lonestar Truck Group  
Loudermilk Enterprises, LLC  
Mall of Abilene  
MCM Elegante Suites  
OSI Security  
Perkins Insurance Agencies, LLC  
Philpott Florist & Greenhouses  
Reed Beverages  
RE/MAX of Abilene – Margie Peck  
Rentech Boiler Systems  
SERVPRO of Abilene  
Smith Outdoor Power Equipment  
Starks Construction Co.  
Telecom Unlimited  
Texas Farm Bureau Insurance  
Texas Oncology  
Texas National Bank  
Wal-Mart  
West Central Texas Council of Governments  
Wolfe and Company, P.C.



# ABILENE CHAMBER

## 2020-2021 Executive Leadership

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### 2020-2021 Executive Committee

Chair: Marshall Morris, First Financial Bank

Chair-Elect: Laura Moore, The Grace Museum

Secretary/Treasurer: Mike Fernandez, Texas National Bank

Immediate Past Chair: Darrin Black, Black Plumbing

President: Doug Peters, Abilene Chamber of Commerce

Taylor Sturgis, Key Appraisal Group

Kelsi Mangrem, Holland Hearing Center

Shaun Martin, Atmos Energy

*For more on the Chamber's work, visit  
[abilenechamber.com](http://abilenechamber.com) or use your camera on  
your iphone to hover over the QR code.*

