ROARING—into the—

2020s

ARE YOU ‘YETI’ FOR ANOTHER DECADE OF RECORD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT?

‘Last Call’ for the Great Northern Brewery
Roaring 20s Awards Gala
Jan. 30 at the O’Shaughnessy

Chamber Board Sets Goals & Objectives for 2020
GONE FISHIN’
Thursday, February 20th  ♥  5–7PM

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www.whitefishcrossing.com
The Whitefish rumor mill has been buzzing for weeks about the worst kept “secret” in town, but now it’s official … the Great Northern Brewing Company – an iconic landmark in downtown Whitefish for the last 25 years – will be closing its doors for the last time on Feb. 9.

While it’s fitting that the popular downtown business will go “out with a bang” on Winter Carnival weekend, it’ll be a sad day for Whitefish. Granted, I’ve only been in town for the last 10 years, but in that time I can honestly say that there have been few local businesses who’ve done more for our community than the Great Northern Brewing Company.

In addition to providing stable, year-round jobs for dozens of full and part-time workers, the brewery is one of the few true manufacturers we have in Whitefish; a company that’s producing a top-quality product that’s in demand throughout the Pacific Northwest. GNBC beers are currently distributed in nine western states and Canada … or should I say they were. According to longtime brewery manager Katie Williams, the last loads of Good Medicine, Wheatfish, Wild Huckleberry Lager and Going to the Sun IPA were shipped out last month, and the skeleton staff is currently kegging the last shipment going out to the MacKenzie River Pizza chain.

The free publicity that our little mountain town has reaped from the brewery’s emergence as a major regional microbrewer is impossible to measure, as is the good they’ve done for scores of local non-profit organizations through their “Pints with a Purpose” campaign … and then are the donations of time, product and cash made to dozens of events and “causes” over the years. Including the Whitefish Chamber.

The events that the Brewery has produced (or been a part of) have also served to promote Whitefish to the “outside world.” From the Music Festival in Depot Park in 2012 to the “Canine Keg Pull” at the Christmas Stroll, to the annual Oktoberfest and ever-popular Winter Carnival Beer Barter, the Brewery, its management and staff have contributed much to the social scene here in Whitefish.

What’s next for the Brewery building – which was sold to a California investor late last year – is still unclear. But what’s clear is that Whitefish will miss the Great Northern Brewing Company.

Unfortunately, that will become crystal clear on Feb. 10.
Montana Legislature has ruled that fundraising license plates must sell at least 400 every year to continue to exist. Choosing to save the Whitefish license plate directly contributes to the Stumptown Historical Society’s mission to preserve the history of Whitefish.

Past and current projects have included:
- Whitefish Depot Preservation
- Free Year-round Museum
- Historical Books
- Whitefish Walking Tour Plaques
- Centennial Statue “Whitefish Rising”
- Ski Heritage Museum
- School History Trips
- 4th of July Fireworks
- “Hear the Whistle Blow” Fine Art Exhibition

When you renew your license plate, ask for the Stumptown Historical Society Whitefish Plate!

Did you know you can have fun and personalize it, too?

For more information contact: Jill Evans  406-250-3148  whitefishhistory@gmail.com
Annual Awards Gala set for Jan. 30

Make your plans now to go “Roaring into 2020” at the Whitefish Chamber’s annual Community Awards Gala, set for the evening of Thursday, Jan. 30 at the O’Shaughnessy Center … or should that be the O’Shaughnessey Speakeasy?? “Roaring into 2020” will be the theme for the evening’s happy hour festivities from 6-7 p.m., so don your best flapper or gambler outfit and get “in the mood” for some great food, drink and ’20s-style fun!

The Main Event, of course, will be the presentation of the Chamber’s annual Community Awards, which are given each year to a handful of outstanding businesses and individuals who have “gone the extra mile” on behalf of the Whitefish community. Among the awards to be presented: the prestigious Great Whitefish Award, Citizen of the Year honors, awards for both the Business of the Year and Tourism Business of the Year, and recognition of the Chamber’s Ambassador and Volunteer of the Year.

The “Chamber Speakeasy” will open for business at 6 p.m. with a no-host bar and a buffet of heavy hors d’oeuvres inspired by the Prohibition Era of the 1920s … along with a contest for the “best dressed” flapper and gambler, a “Roaring 20’s” Selfie Station and more fun n’ games. The 2020 Awards Ceremony begins at 7 p.m. sharp in the main theater.

Tickets for the 2020 Chamber Awards Gala are just $30 per person, but advance reservations by Friday, Jan. 24 are a must! For reservations and more information, call the Whitefish Chamber at (406) 862-3501, email events@whitefishchamber.org, or register via the Chamber’s online calendar at www.whitefishchamber.org/events. For more information, call the Whitefish Chamber at 862-3501 or visit whitefishchamber.org.
And the answer to that question, apparently, is: "Nowhere but up!"

Optimism for the New Year – and the new decade – is evident throughout the Whitefish business community, and the rapid growth which our area has experienced over the last 10 years shows no signs of stopping.

Residential development is, indeed, "roaring" into the 2020s, with the local housing market as busy as it ever has been. Permits for single family homes were up by an astounding 50 percent in 2019, with 95 permits approved compared with the 64 permits OK’d in 2018. Permits for duplexes and townhomes nearly doubled – from 40 in 2018 to 77 last year – and permits for apartments and other multi-family residential developments were up by 125 percent.

You can expect that trend to continue in 2020, with development ramping-up at a number of large residential projects, including the 58-home Trailview subdivision off Monegan Road, the 137-unit Alta Views townhome development on J.P. Road, and The Quarry, a 66-unit condominium project on Wisconsin Avenue.

Likewise, commercial development is approaching levels only seen in the pre-recession “boom” days. Things are particularly hot on Central Avenue and in the downtown core, but things are also heating up on 93 South and north of the viaduct, and both of those areas are poised for more of the same in coming years.

‘More, better, faster …’

“The 2010s were a whirl,” says local Realtor and Chamber Board member Jeff Raper, “and the 2020s are gonna be more better faster … more growth, more development, more people.

“I’m sure we’ll see the market drop and rise again, because these things run on a 10-12 year cycle,” he added. “So by mid-decade I expect we’ll see a bit of a dip, but nothing like what we saw in 2007-08. This area is growing, and we won’t go backwards.”

That’s a sentiment shared by ski area CEO Dan Graves at Whitefish Mountain Resort, which has enjoyed exponential growth – and set record-after-record – over the course of the last decade.

“People have discovered us,” Graves said, “so I expect to see continued growth. In the last 10 years we’ve gone from hoping to hit 300,000 skiers a year to expecting to hit 400,000 … that’s a pretty dramatic difference.” With the ski
area earning i’s best-ever finish (#3) in this year Ski Magazine resort rankings, expect more folks to “discover” Whitefish Mountain Resort in coming years. And that’s both a good thing.

“We need that growth,” Graves said, “in order to keep making the improvements we’ve made to the resort and enhancing the skier experience … adding and upgrading lifts, and renovating our restaurants and base facilities.”

**With growth comes challenges**

The challenge of rapid, sustained growth is dealing with the byproducts … from increased traffic congestion and parking woes to the cost of hiring – and housing – the service industry workforce.

“Wages will have to come up, just to keep up with the Joneses,” Graves said, “and we’re really concerned about housing for our staff. A lot is being built, but we’re hoping for something that’ll allow folks to live comfortably with one or two roommates, rather than needing 4-5 guys to make it work.”

Mayor John Muhlfeld – and the City of Whitefish – have a ton of growth-related issues on their plates, but he agrees that developing housing that is affordable to the Whitefish workforce is a top priority. With the City’s Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district now in its last year, the TIF fund has about $750,000 in funds that haven’t yet been earmarked. Muhlfeld favors spending a good chunk of that money on workforce housing.

But the biggest issue looming on the horizon, in Muhlfeld’s opinion, involves finding a balance between the Chamber’s two primary objectives … improving the economy and protecting our quality of life.

“More and more people are feeling like we’ve reaching a tipping point,” Muhlfeld said, “between the rapid growth and popularity of the area and our ability to retain the small town character … the reason that we all moved here in the first place. It’s the density, the traffic, parking, the ability to move around town … it never used to be like that.”

Trying to find that “balance” won’t be easy, but Muhlfeld, Raper and Graves all feel confident that Whitefish, its residents and business owners are up to the task. And why wouldn’t they … they’ve got 20-20 vision!
Staffing, housing, transit top Chamber’s 2020 priorities

It’s been said that in the real estate business, it’s all about three things … location, location and location.

Well in the Whitefish Chamber’s 2020 Program of Work (POW), it’s all about three things … workforce, workforce and workforce!

The ability to attract – and retain – qualified workers has become the #1 issue facing employers in Whitefish today, and the Chamber’s Board of Directors in November reaffirmed its commitment to leading efforts to address the ongoing worker shortage.

Every fall our Board of Directors comes together for a full day of meetings and discussions, and emerges with a “Program of Work” for the coming year … sort of like the business plan that you have for your business, with a little bit broader focus. Here’s what they came up with:

Workforce issues rise to the top

To no one’s surprise, staffing is the top issue that faces Whitefish business owners today. Five years ago the Chamber identified the cost of housing as the #1 reason for the shortage of rank-and-file workers in Whitefish, and the story is no different in 2020. Our Board believes that need to continue working on ways to increase our stock of affordable workforce housing, while also improving public transportation and exploring opportunities to drive down the cost of childcare for working parents.

Specific Economic Development initiatives embraced in the Chamber’s 2020 Program of Work include:

• Leading efforts to implement the Whitefish Strategic Housing Plan;
• Supporting Glacier AERO’s efforts to expand direct air service to Glacier Park International Airport;
• Investigate the potential for public transportation to reduce peak season traffic and parking issues;
• Coordinate operation of West Glacier Visitor Info Center, so encourage Park visitors to explore Whitefish and the surrounding area;
• Continuing our focus on growing winter and shoulder tourism.

Working closely with the City

Key to the objectives of the Chamber – and its members – is maintaining a close working relationship with the City of Whitefish and other governmental entities that affect our members’ ability to do business.

See POW, Page 9
To that end, the Chamber will:
• Monitor local government; and advocate for pro-business programs, policies and decisions;
• Assure that Workforce Housing programs include incentives for local developers;
• Host Neighborhood Business meetings semi-annually to hear the concerns of local business owners;
• Encourage fiscal restraint and common sense in spending taxpayer dollars; and
• Ensure business community representation on appropriate City, County & State committees

Member Service ... the bottom line
At its annual Retreat the Board also re-committed its goal to provide unsurpassed member service to the businesses who make up our membership, and to continue looking for ways to better serve our members. In 2020, look for the Chamber to:
• Host monthly Gone Fishin’ networking events;
• Sponsor seminars on topics of importance and interest to members;
• Sponsor/organize Small Business Saturday activities each fall;
• Operate the city’s official Visitor Info Center 40 hours/week (50/week in summer);
• Maintain and update the Chamber website and online Special Events/Community Calendar;
• Publish the FishBIZ news magazine quarterly; and distribute Chamber Chat eNewsletter weekly;
• Publish and distribute the Whitefish Community Guide each year to 7,500+ readers; and
• Explore opportunities to ally with other local Chambers and business organizations.

Events round-out the POW
In addition, the Chamber will continue to plan, promote and produce the following annual events in 2020:
• Community Awards Gala (January)
• Feast Whitefish (May/June)
• July 4th Fireworks
• Huckleberry Days Arts Festival (August)
• Great Northwest Oktoberfest (September/October)
• Ladies Night Out (November)
• Small Business Saturday (November)
• Christmas Stroll (December)
WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Please join our Board and staff in welcoming the many new businesses and organizations that joined the Whitefish Chamber this fall. For membership information, contact Membership Director Melissa Ellis at 862-3501.

SaltBox Dry Salt Therapy
19 Baker Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 792-6131
www.saltboxwf.com

Whitefish Songwriter Festival
Whitefish, MT 59937
www.whitefishsongwriterfestival.org

Glacier Institute
320 Nucleus Ave.
Columbia Falls, MT 59912
(406) 755-1211
www.glacierinstitute.org

Good Medicine Lodge
537 Wisconsin Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 862-5488
www.goodmedicinelodge.com

Whitefish Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine
110 2nd Street
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 863-6001
www.whitefishaim.com

The Farmhouse Inn & Kitchen
28 Lupfer Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 862-4211
www.thefarmhouseinnandkitchen.com

The Mountain Guides Montana
Whitefish, MT 59901
(307) 250-0763
www.themountainguides.com

Law Office of Clifton W. Hayden
913 Wisconsin Ave., Ste 101
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 730-6100
www.whitefihlaw.lawyer

Marcus Duffey/Glacier Sotheby’s Realty
204 Central Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 871-5141
www.glaciersir.com

Tailwaggers Whitefish
419 E. 3rd Street
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 862-8988
www.tailwaggerspet.com

Two Sparrows Family Chiropractic & Wellness
559 Edgewood Place
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 750-8569
www.twosparrrowsfcw.com

Glacier Home Services
199 Stageline Dr.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 250-8357
www.glacierhomeservices.com

Out West Trading Co.
224 Central Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 730-8678
www.outwesttradingco.com

Natural Elements Massage and Spa
6475 Highway 93 S., Suite 22
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 270-4223
www.naturalelementsmassage.net

Kristin Zuckerman – Real Estate Broker
204 Central Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 291-0778
www.kristinzuckerman.glaciersir.com

Trail View LLC
84 Armory Road
Whitefish, MT 59937
www.trailviewhomes.com

Advanced Litho Printing LLC
1702 Rankin St.
Missoula, MT 59808
(406) 541-2576
www.advancedlithoprinting.com

Cronin Quality Coating LLC
Serving the Flathead Valley
(509) 999-8128
www.croninquailtycoating.com

The Quarry at Whitefish Montana
900 Wisconsin Ave.
Whitefish, MT 59937
www.thequarrymt.com

Dog Creek Lodge & Nordic Center
8775 Highway 93 N.
Olney, MT 59927
(406) 881-2071
www.dogcreeklodge.com

Mum’s Flowers
520 2nd St. E.
Whitefish, MT 59937
(406) 862-2757
www.mumsflowers.net

Core Care
309 Central Ave., Suite 203
Whitefish, MT 59937
(877) 717-2345
www.healthcorecare.com

Out West Trading Co.

It was all smiles for the ribbon-cutting festivities at Out West Trading Company in December, as owner Jamie Munson and her crew celebrated the grand opening of the spacious new gift shop on Central Avenue … in the old Ace Hardware building!
Mesa Moving & Storage
General manager Marie Lewis and her staff gathered with Chamber Ambassadors last month for the grand re-opening of Mesa Moving and Storage … formerly Mergenthaler Transfer and Storage. The facility is located at 5020 U.S. Highway 93, in the Happy Valley area.

Trail View Homes
A little wet weather couldn’t dampen the enthusiasm at the ribbon-cutting for the new Trail View Homes subdivision on Monegan Road this fall, where developer Jerry Dunker and his team are building 58 single family homes that are affordable to the Whitefish workforce.

Trovare
Owner Julie Hickethieher and her staff welcomed Chamber Ambassadors – and the public – to the grand opening of the new downtown shop that specializes in gourmet foods, high end cookware and infused olive oils and vinegars. Located at 317 Central Avenue.
Thank You to Our Hosts!

Compass Chiropractic
704 E. 13th Street; Suite E • Whitefish, MT
(406) 863-2658 • www.compasschirowf.com

Please join us at Compass Chiropractic on Thursday Jan. 16 to kick off the New Year with our “Roaring 20’s” Gone Fishing party!

The new year brings a fresh start, so seize opportunities and take actions that’ll bring you closer to the best version of you. At Compass Chiropractic our mission is to create a naturally healthy community in Whitefish, and we strive to deliver the highest quality of gentle, specific chiropractic care for the entire family utilizing research-based techniques and state of the art technology.

Healing is a journey and there is no better time to start than today! So let’s celebrate a fresh start, new opportunities and a year ahead filled with good health, love and adventure!

Whitefish Crossing Apartments & AYS Property Management
45 Pheasant Run • Whitefish, MT • (406) 862-5566

At Your Services Property Management Inc. (AYS) is proud to jointly sponsor this February’s Gone Fishin’ event at its premier property, the 60-unit Whitefish Crossing apartment complex. AYS has been in business for 20 years, and is committed to providing quality property management, due diligence and consulting to its clients. In addition to managing private and multi-unit properties, we offer caretaking and HOA management.

We are proud to represent the two-year-old Whitefish Crossing complex, which features 1, 2 and 3-bedroom units with available covered parking, a private dog park and a Community Center with coffee bar, business center and lounge areas.

Please join us for Gone Fishin’ on Thursday Feb. 20 from 5-7 p.m. at the Whitefish Crossing Community Center, and enjoy great food, drink, raffle prizes and networking … and pick-up a biscuit on your way to the Dog Park!

Nelson’s Ace Hardware
6490 Highway 93 South • Whitefish, MT
(406) 862-3573 • www.nelsonhardware.com

Nelson’s Ace Hardware has been a cornerstone of the Whitefish business community for 70+ years, and last March celebrated the “big move” from downtown Whitefish to our new location at 6490 Highway 93 South.

With a commitment to community, this move has allowed us to expand our products & services and meet the growing needs of Whitefish. Mariah Joos, Rick & Marilyn’s youngest daughter, will be taking over the business and is looking forward to serving this community for years to come!

Please join us on March 19th to celebrate our first year in our new location! We’ll supply the Gone Fishin’ festivities, appetizers, refreshments and give-aways … you supply the great business-to-business networking! We hope to see you here!