

# Chamber Chat

## News from Executive Director, Laura P. Doster



**May 2019:** It's hard to believe I've been at the helm as your Chamber Director three months already!

It has been an action-packed, firehose drinking, hand-shaking, event attending, designing, re-organizing, public speaking, networking, and brainstorming quarter.

Words still cannot express how engaged and committed I truly am, to being your Executive Director and working beside everyone to take us to the next level as a Chamber of Commerce.

Over the past three months, the question I've heard or received most is, "What is the Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge," "What does the Chamber do" and also – "How can I support you?" So let us start there and tackle those kinds of questions.

At a high level - Our Mission - ***To promote economic progress and quality of life in the Hickory Nut Gorge Community while helping to protect the natural integrity and unity of the communities of the Gorge. The Chamber is a catalyst for the creation of activities and opportunities for both visitors and residents and promotes an atmosphere that encourages visitation, business growth, and a strong sense of community.***

More simply stated, we are the umbrella organization that supports and represents all businesses, organizations, non-profits, residents, and visitors of the Gorge. We are your "go to" for information, events and business support. We are the only organization IN the Gorge, dedicated to promoting everything IN and ABOUT the Gorge.

At a service level for our members – our website and database serve as a direct connection to Chamber members and a wider audience. You have the ability to utilize our website and social media to promote and market your business in various degrees (and we will help you). We have the [all-inclusive online calendar of events](#) focused on the Hickory Nut Gorge and surrounding areas

Our area non-profit organizations are vitally important to us and to the Gorge as a whole. Promoting and supporting them via mass email communications, organization of their events, e-commerce set up and attending their events. Networking opportunities to help your business grow is another huge way our members are supported – re-Charges, ribbon cuttings, milestone anniversaries & other Chamber Signature Events. We also refer business inquiries to our members. These are just a few. If you want to see more: check out this detailed list of [What the Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge does for you](#).

The visitor population to the Gorge is the primary driver of our area's economy. The Chamber promotes on our website, in the media, and on our social platforms "all things about the Gorge." For example, we regularly create outbound marketing campaigns around Valentine's Day, Easter, Saint Patrick's Day, Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Fall, Christmas, and New Year's. These efforts pull in visitors from our surrounding communities, including Spartanburg, Hendersonville, Rutherfordton, Forest City, Flat Rock, Charlotte, and Asheville, as well as from surrounding states - South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, & Georgia.

And of course you know about our Signature Events – the New Year's Day Polar Plunge, Sale on the Trail, the Dirty Dancing Festival (drawing more than 3,000 attendees annually), the Chamber Christmas Gala, and our Candidate's Forums.

Additionally, co-sponsoring or participating in ALL events in the Gorge is a reflection of our commitment to being a strong community partner. We co-sponsor or participate in the Arts & Crafts Festival, Classic Boat & Auto Show, and the Power in the Flower Campaign, Raptor Run, & the Olympiad.

"What can you do for the Chamber" – we are an event-heavy organization and carrying that out on a very limited budget. This Chamber and our community depend significantly on volunteers. The Chamber is also an organization of Committees – led by volunteers - Economic Development, Marketing/PR, Events, Membership Services, & Community Development. We need volunteers to help with events, serve on one of the committees, work in our office to answer calls/greet walk-ins. Financial support is always important for continuity and growth, in order to take on more. If you are interested in being added to our volunteer database, let me know. [Email Laura P. Doster](mailto:Laura.P.Doster@hickorynutchamber.org). You have control over what you sign up for, and the contributions you give, **but we need you!**

Hopefully, this helps you now understand - your Chamber's does many things, and there are many things you can do for your Chamber, AND there is so much more. The possibilities are limitless working together, and this community does that very well! The people in the Gorge have touched me deeply with their passion, commitment, vision for our future, stewardship of its natural surroundings, athleticism, collaboration, and magnanimous spirit. There is a quote that says, "The secret to success is the willingness to serve without aspiring for rewards."

This community is a great example and it is humbling and an honor to serve as your Chamber Executive Director.

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*For more than 25 years the Chamber of Hickory Nut Gorge has served as a catalyst for the creation of activities and opportunities for both visitors and residents by promoting an atmosphere that encourages visitation, business growth, and a strong sense of community.*

Learn more at [hickorynutchamber.org](http://hickorynutchamber.org) and follow on 