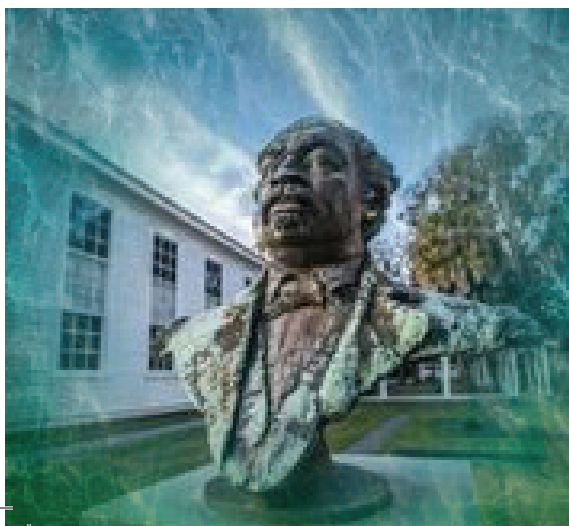




ANNUAL REPORT 2017



BEAUFORT, SC
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



THE ROLE OF THE **BEAUFORT REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

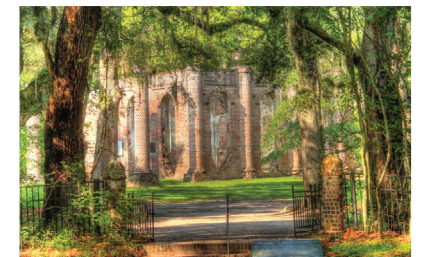
The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce stands as the unified voice of the business community. Every day since 1892, we have been promoting, protecting and improving business.

Our mission is to manage and build capacity for continual community growth by advocating for a pro-business environment and building a quality workforce in order to enrich the region's quality of life.

In support of our mission, we will continue our focus on tourism, military enhancement, business advocacy and economic development, as well as education, workforce development and leadership development.

THE BEAUFORT REGIONAL CHAMBER **OF COMMERCE** **VISION**

“TO BE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATION IN THE REGION
CREATING THE PREFERRED COMMUNITY
TO INVEST, PROSPER AND ENJOY.”






At the outset of this year's annual report and presentation of Chamber business priorities, we want to thank you for your commitment to our organization and for the difference you are making with the successful operation of your organization. 2016-2017 was an incredible year for the Beaufort region, and our joint efforts all contributed to the success of its economy and its overall prosperity.

Our shared opportunity in the upcoming year is to continue to contribute to the sustainability and prosperity of our region. Leveraging the assets and resources needed for our region's continued progress means that we need to work as one for economic development, tourism enhancement, business support and military advocacy.

The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce exists to support our local business community. Through our combined efforts, our voice is stronger and we are able to make a difference. I look forward to the opportunities ahead in 2017-2018, and I assure you we will continue working hard every day to help our members and the region prosper.

Thank you for your membership, support and high expectations. We look forward to serving you and advancing our region.

Blakely Williams,
President & CEO 
Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce

FROM LETTER THE PRESIDENT

MAIN STREET BEAUFORT, USA

Over the past six months, our staff has thoroughly researched what the best Main Street programs of work look like and has developed a new vision for Main Street Beaufort, one that has been well received by both Main Street District stakeholders and the City of Beaufort. As we move forward through City budget season, we hope to see a new and re-energized Main Street Beaufort emerge from the process.

It has been one year since the marriage between Main Street Beaufort, USA and The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce. We are happy to report that things are advancing very well. This year, we hosted the traditional slate of Taste of Beaufort, Trick or Treat Beaufort, Holiday Weekend, and one of the most successful Shrimp Festivals in the history of the organization. Every day, we are finding new and exciting ways that the additional staff and institutional resources the Chamber brings to the organization can enhance the Main Street mission.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-17:

Leigh Copeland, Chair of the Board
(Technical College of the Lowcountry)

Jim Wegmann, Past Chairman of the Board
(Weidner, Wegmann & Harper Law Firm)

Cliff Mrkvicka, Chair Elect
(Lockheed Martin)

Kevin Dukes, Director at Large
(Harvey & Battey, PA)

Edward Dukes, Tourism Advisory Chairman
(Lowcountry Real Estate)

Whitney McDaniel, Treasurer
(Wells Fargo Advisors)

Chip Dinkins (Plums, Inc.)

Ben Duncan (Hargray)

John Dickerson (Sleep In History!)

Pamela Flasch (Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority)

Tina Gentry (United Way of the Lowcountry)

Karen Gilbert (Beaufort County School District)

Malcolm Goodridge (Investor)

Terrance Green (Coldwell Banker Realty)

Christian Kata (Ameris Bank)

Andy Klosterman (Andrews Engineering)

Frank Lesesne (Anchorage 1770 Inn)

Susan Sauer (Discover Tours)

Mark Stokes (Bay Street Jewelers)

Jay Taylor (Kingham Insurance Agency of Beaufort)

Mary Ann Thomas (Cuthbert House Inn)

Charlie Williams (Investor)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-18:

Cliff Mrkvicka, Chair of the Board
(Lockheed Martin)

Leigh Copeland, Past Chairman of the Board
(Technical College of the Lowcountry)

Kevin Dukes, Chair Elect
(Harvey & Battey, PA)

Alissa Murrie, Tourism Advisory Chairman
(Fripp Island)

Christian Kata, Treasurer
(Ameris Bank)

Russell Baxley (Beaufort Memorial Hospital)

Chip Dinkins (Plums, Inc.)

Ben Duncan (Hargray)

Pamela Flasch (Beaufort Jasper Water Sewer Authority)

Tina Gentry (United Way of the Lowcountry)

Terrance Green (Coldwell Banker Realty)

Andy Klosterman (Andrews Engineering)

Frank Lesesne (Anchorage 1770 Inn)

Whitney McDaniel (Wells Fargo Advisors)

Susan Sauer (Discover Tours)

Eric Skipper (University of South Carolina Beaufort)

Mark Stokes (Bay Street Jewelers)

Jay Taylor (Kingham Insurance Agency of Beaufort)

Jim Wegmann (Weidner, Wegmann & Harper Law Firm)

Christina Wilson (Child Abuse Prevention Association)



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This is a year for the history books! Our beautiful Beaufort has many extraordinary accomplishments to celebrate, and much of it is due to the leadership and diligence of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Beaufort. The Chamber has successfully promoted and recruited the economic development of Harris Pillow Supply, eviCore and Geismar, resulting in the creation of 494 jobs and in \$6.3 million of direct investment into Beaufort County. The Port of Port Royal sold to Van Cleve Enterprises. The sale and redevelopment of the Port of Port Royal remains a top Chamber priority this year, and we are

delighted that we are one step closer to seeing this happen. And, Southern Living named Beaufort, SC “the Best Small Town in the South,” an accolade which brings us all great pride.

It has truly been my honor to serve as your Board Chair. Special thanks to my fellow board members for their continued guidance, volunteerism and advocacy. In addition, I'd like to recognize the Chamber leadership and staff for going above and beyond every single day in service to the membership and the entire community. We have all benefited from this hard work and dedication.

What's stood out to me most this year is how fortunate I am to call Beaufort “home.” And please know that each of you plays a part. For home is more than just a place, it's a combination of people and businesses like you. Maybe you've been in business here for 50 years. Maybe you just held your grand opening. Regardless, it's this unique balance of preservation and innovation, of old and new, that makes Beaufort so special.

Membership is the heart of this organization. Whether it's through our efforts in tourism, business advocacy, military enhancement, or education and workforce, serving our members is our number one priority. After all, you are the ones who help Beaufort become home to all, whether they're here for a day, week or lifetime.

Please join me in celebrating Beaufort – its people, places and businesses – our home sweet home.

Leigh Copeland

BUSINESS ADVOCACY, LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ADVOCACY/LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

In 2016-2017, the Chamber:

- Produced the annual Legislative Luncheon in January, highlighting its 2017 Legislative Agenda and featuring S.C. Senators Chip Campsen and Tom Davis as well as Representatives Bill Bowers, Jeff Bradley, Shannon Erickson and Michael Rivers.
- Hosted the 2017 State of the Bases breakfast where attendees were able to hear updates from Beaufort's three military installations.
- Organized Candidate Forums for the S.C. House Seats 124 & 121, Beaufort County Council District 3, City of Beaufort City Council, and Town of Port Royal special election. The forums created an opportunity for our membership to engage with each candidate.
- Recognized by the Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (CACCE) as a 2016 recipient of the CACCE Outstanding Communications Award.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Congratulations are in order to Blakely Williams, who has received state certification in economic development as a graduate of the 2017 class of "The Institute," which is conducted each year by the South Carolina Economic Development Association in conjunction with the South Carolina Department of Commerce. For the fourth consecutive year, Economic Development and Job Creation scored highest in priority to our membership out of all issues currently facing our region. The expertise that comes with completion of this certification will aid the Chamber greatly as we continue to serve in the necessary and critical role of Beaufort County's Economic Development office, a job we've proudly held since September 2015.

Since accepting that mantle, the work the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce has conducted as

Beaufort County's Economic Development office has netted the retention of 376 primary jobs that were in danger of being lost. Working with Harris Pillow Supply and eviCore, we listened to their issues and helped put the resources together for those companies to expand, creating an additional 57 jobs. In 2017, we also proudly announced the arrival of "Project Eagle." – now known as the successful recruitment of Geismar's North American headquarters, which will bring 61 international manufacturing jobs producing custom service vehicles and tools for the rail industry in the United States for the first time in Beaufort County.

The Chamber's successful completion of these economic-development projects and the 494 jobs associated with them represent an average wage of over \$53,000. The direct investment into Beaufort County from these projects totals over \$6.3 million and a total combined annual payroll of over \$26.4 million. These are dollars being spent that would not otherwise be in Beaufort County – dollars spent on mortgages and insurance, with our professionals, at restaurants, and with our small-business owners.

Additionally in 2016-2017, the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce was the first in the state to earn a Palmetto Site Designation for the Beaufort Commerce Park (in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Commerce and the City of Beaufort). We hope the achievement of this designation will greatly improve the marketability of Beaufort County to the global marketplace in the coming years. Needless to say, it has been a VERY BIG YEAR and a GREAT DEAL has been accomplished by our staff in a SHORT TIME!

As a county, we have well-developed tourism and military economic pillars. For our long-term economic health, we must balance our overdependence on these with recruitment of traditional technical and light manufacturing jobs to the area. Our hope in the coming year is to continue the work we have started in Economic Development and foster productive, cooperative relationships between the county, municipalities and the South Carolina Department of Commerce, all of whom are working toward the common end of making Beaufort County the best place to live and work.



MEC MEMBERS:

Chair: Jim Wegmann
Vice Chair: Frankie Denmark
Treasurer: Jimmy Boozer
Warren Parker
Ed Saxon
Merritt Patterson
Teri Maude

MEC / MILITARY

The Military Enhancement Committee works closely with local, state and federal leaders to enhance the quality and value of the three military installations of Beaufort County and to lay the framework to defend them with regard to any threats, including base realignments and closures. It also establishes procedures and contingency plans in the event one or more of the Beaufort County military installations is closed or realigned. The MEC works to support military families and improve their quality of life as well as retain jobs associated with our military bases. These bases and the Marines, Sailors, and civilian personnel who inhabit them are and have been a part of the fabric of our community for over 100 years.

Parris Island, MCAS Beaufort and the Naval Hospital contribute \$2.2 billion of economic impact to the Lowcountry on an annual basis. Advocating to maintain, grow and protect our military installations is not only important to our local economy, but is more importantly vital to our overall national defense. In support of those efforts, the MEC has:

- Hosted the State of the Bases, featuring the Parris Island Band, and provided our members and the community with important updates from leaders of our local military installations and from the South Carolina Military Base Task Force.
- The Military Affairs Committee honored military families with the Military Family of the Quarter Award during the State of the Bases and Military Quarterly Briefings.
- MEC members will attend the upcoming Association of Defense Communities Summit in Washington, D.C., in June of 2017.
- Hosted Military Appreciation Day Celebration in Laurel Bay for military families in the Tri-Command.
- Continued to advocated for military-friendly legislation.
- Continued to advocate for Military Retirement Income Tax Exemption.
- Visited various members of congressional delegations from SC, NC and Georgia in Washington, D.C., to advocate for our installations and specific projects to enhance and grow our installations.
- Attended South Carolina Military Base Task Force meetings
- Formulated and advocated for partnerships between local corporations and educational facilities for apprentice-type programs and training to grow the civilian job opportunities that support our local military bases.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN ELECT

As the 2017-2018 Board Chair, I feel extraordinarily privileged to work with this great organization called the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce. We have such talented people on this team. Our Board and our staff do outstanding work every single day -- sometimes under enormous pressure -- while dealing with a number of complex business and regulatory issues. The way our Chamber is able to address each opportunity while continuing to grow our visitor base, increase business membership and support our business owners fills me with pride. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Board members and

staff both present and past. You are the unsung heroes who dedicate time and effort to ensuring we all have a community to be proud of. Thank you!

Of course, there is still more work to do, but we have always been attracted to the toughest challenges, because they create the biggest opportunities. The Beaufort Regional Chamber exists to manage and build capacity for continual community growth by advocating for a pro-business environment and building quality workforce development in order to enrich the region's quality of life. This year's board is ready to continue this mission. We have, on this board, brilliant minds and open hearts that are eager to serve our community. I invite you all to join us in making Beaufort County a vibrant community that supports our military and tourism, and is poised for economic development and growth. You can help us with these opportunities through your membership. Your voice will help shape the future of the Lowcountry.

To all of our current members, I wish to extend my thanks for your continued support of the Chamber and the myriad of programs that fall within it. Your membership is the cornerstone of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce. Without you, there would be no Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber will continue to be your advocate. We want you to know that we appreciate your feedback. We will continue to work diligently for you.

Lastly, I am honored and privileged to serve as your Chamber Chair.

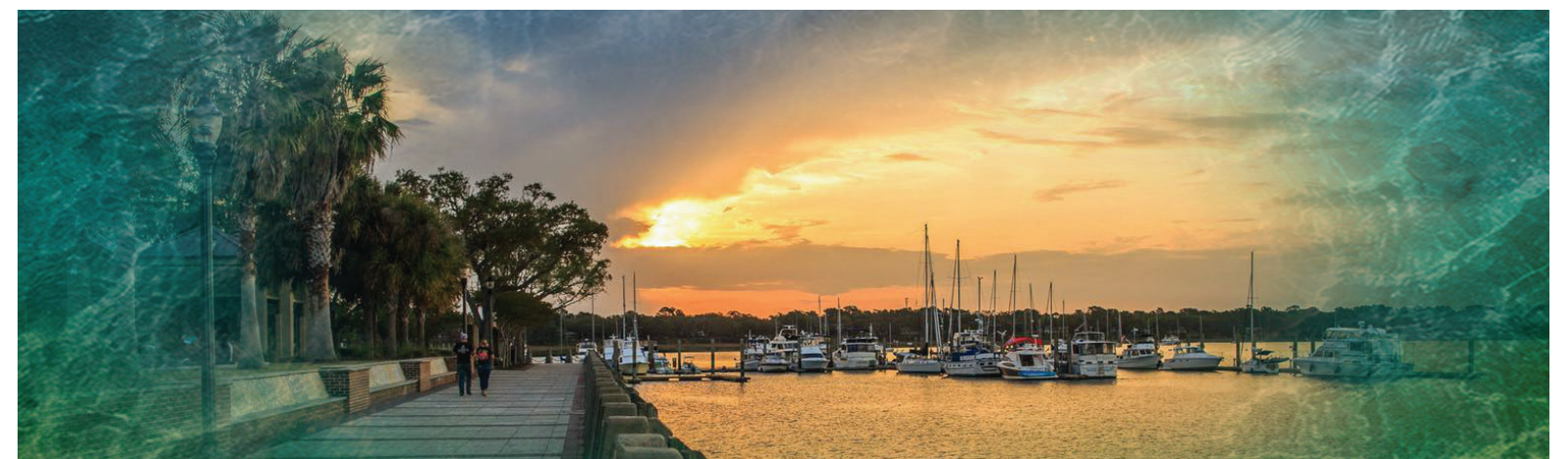
I look forward to a fruitful year in the Lowcountry, and I am hopeful we can share some time together in and around the county.

Sincerely,
Cliff Mrkvicka

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

Recent awards and accolades received by Beaufort include:

- Named "The South's Best Small Town" by Southern Living (2017)
- TripAdvisor's Traveler's Choice Awards featured Anchorage 1770 as #13 on the "Top 25 B&Bs and Inns – United States" and The City Loft as #23 on the "Top 25 Small Hotels – United States" (2017)
- Cuthbert House Inn ranked #10 on trivago Awards 2017 list of award-winning hotels for the category of "Alternative Accommodations" (2016)
- Named to the New York Times' "52 Places to Go in 2016" list (2016)
- Fripp Island named "Best Beach Community of the Year" by Real Estate Scorecard (2016)
- Beaufort's annual Water Festival named a "Top 20 Event/Festival of the Year" by the Southeast Tourism Society (2015)
- Named to Good Housekeeping's list of "The 50 Most Beautiful Small Towns in America" (2015)
- Topped Southeastern Traveler's list of the "Top 5 Beaches in South Carolina" (2015)
- Topped Travel Channel's list of "Best Retirement Getaways" (2015)
- Hunting Island ranked #12 on TripAdvisor's list of "Top 25 U.S. Beaches" (2015)
- Named to Southern Living's list of "Small Towns We Love" – Beaufort was one of five small towns featured and was the lead in the feature story (2014)
- Named "America's Happiest Seaside Town" by Coastal Living's readers (2013)
- Smithsonian Magazine named Beaufort to its "Best Small Towns in the U.S." list (2014)
- Beaufort ranked #1 for healthiest county in South Carolina by the 2014 County Health Rankings.
- Hunting Island ranked #7 on TripAdvisor's list of "Top 25 U.S. Beaches" (2014)
- TripAdvisor's Traveler's Choice Awards featured The Beaufort Inn on its "Top 25 Hotels in the U.S." list and City Loft Hotel on its "Top 25 Small Hotels in the U.S." list (2014)
- USA Today featured Beaufort on its "30 Great Places for Business Travelers" list (2014)
- The AAA Carolinas recognized The Cuthbert House Inn and The Rhett House Inn with its prestigious AAA Four Diamond Award designation.
- Ranked #3 on Carolina Living's list of "Top 20 Most Preferred S.C. Destination Towns" (2013)
- TripAdvisor chose nearby Hunting Beach as one of the "Top 25 Beaches in the U.S." (2013)
- CNN Money highlighted the town as one of the "25 Best Places to Retire" (2010)
- Southern Living's 13th Annual Readers' Choice Awards rated Beaufort as the "#1 Best Small Town" (2009)
- Port Royal was named one of "America's Coolest Small Towns" by Budget Travel Magazine readers (2009)
- The city was also ranked on the "Top 25 Small City Arts Destination" list by American Style Magazine (2008)
- Field & Stream named it one of its "Top 20 Fishing Towns in the U.S." (2008)
- And National Geographic Adventure listed it as a "Top 50 Adventure Town" and "#7 Waterfront Adventure Town" (2007)





YOUR CHAMBER'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2017

THE FOLLOWING ARE STANDING POSITIONS TAKEN THROUGH THE CHAMBER'S BUSINESS-ADVOCACY PROCESS. ALL POSITIONS HAVE BEEN ADOPTED BY THE CHAMBER'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

PORT DEVELOPMENT

Support the sale and redevelopment of the Port of Port Royal and the creation of the Jasper Ocean Terminal.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support initiatives that help the region attract quality industry and jobs and to expand existing business. The Chamber advocates for streamlining the permitting process to reduce the costs of doing business and to eliminate uncertainty that stifles business growth and development. Support utility, internet and infrastructure improvements to ensure economic development sites are prepared for new business.

MILITARY BASES SUPPORT, RETENTION & EXPANSION

Expand the Tri-Command's \$1.498 billion economic impact by lobbying to maintain and grow our military installations and protect them from encroachment. The Military Enhancement Committee works closely with local, state and federal leaders to retain jobs associated with the region's military installations, and works to support military families and improve their quality of life.

TOURISM

Advance the growth of the \$1.2 billion tourism industry. The Chamber supports dedicated funding for tourism destination marketing, as well as the Reconstruction Era Monument and heritage tourism initiatives in Beaufort County.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Support modifying the allocation formula for public education funding using criteria other than a school system's ability to raise revenue through property tax to a system where all students receive equitable funding. Increase funding for higher education and work to align vocational training between our county's public high schools and the Technical College of the Lowcountry. Support programs for transitioning military personnel to the local workforce and the expansion of public transportation in Beaufort County.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Advocate for beach renourishment and recovery from Hurricane Matthew at Hunting Island State Park.

ROADS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Advocate for state-wide comprehensive Roads and Infrastructure Reform. South Carolina's infrastructure is vital to the future of our economy and our quality of life. Modern infrastructure must be maintained for the region to compete effectively in the global marketplace.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SETTING THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

1. Maintain and grow opportunities for Beaufort County businesses.
2. Reduce the cost of doing business.
3. Manage growth and support infrastructure improvements so that the marketability of the area is not threatened.
4. Increase the qualified workforce.

TOURISM

YTD STAT REPORT

- July 1, 2015 – May 11, 2016
- PR Value: \$7,018,912.99
- Impressions: 760,993,664

TOP MEDIA OUTLETS INCLUDED:

- Southern Living
- Thrillist
- Associated Press
- The New York Times
- Wall Street Journal
- The Huffington Post

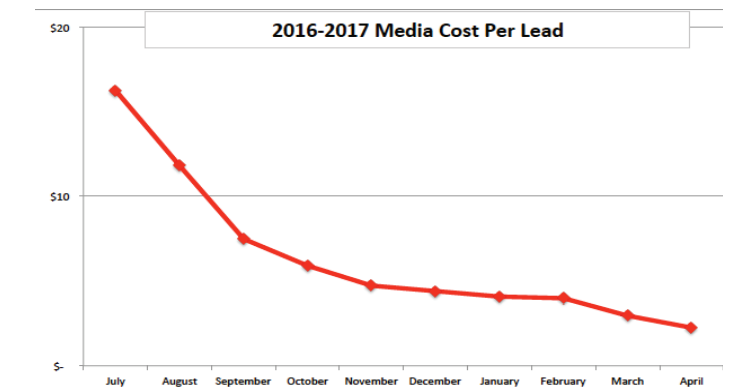
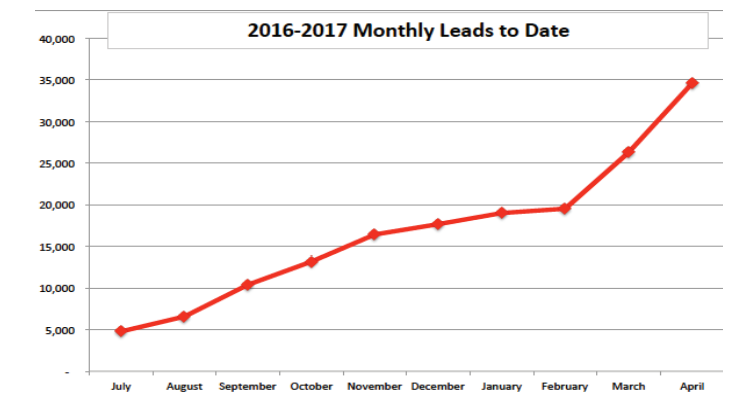
FACEBOOK: The "Visit Beaufort, SC" Facebook page grew by 20,876 fans, totaling 96,051 fans.

INSTAGRAM: Visit Beaufort, SC's Instagram grew by 3,963 followers, totaling 11,200.

Print Cost Per Lead (CPL) = \$3

Online Cost Per Lead (CPL) = \$1

Total Cost Per Lead (CPL) = \$2



CHAMBER PR VALUE: \$13,298,940 by 3,963 followers, totaling 11,200.

CHAMBER ESTIMATED IMPRESSIONS: 1,437,709,594

TRAVEL PR VALUE: \$7,212,451

TRAVEL ESTIMATED IMPRESSIONS: 779,730,678

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

ELITE PARTNER



PREMIER PARTNERS



PATRON PARTNERS

CenturyLink
First Citizens Bank & Trust Co. of SC
Lockheed Martin
Marine Federal Credit Union
Palmetto State Bank
S.C. Electric & Gas/SCANA
SERVPRO of Beaufort County

MEDIA SUPPORTING PARTNER

Adams Outdoor Advertising
APEX Broadcasting
The Island News
WJCLABC
The Beaufort Gazette
The Bluffton Today/Beaufort Today
Lowcountry Weekly

TOP INVESTORS

Beaufort County
City of Beaufort
Hargray
Beaufort Memorial Hospital
Fripp Island Resort
Lowcountry Real Estate
Lockheed Martin
BJWSA
TCL
Pinckney Retreat
Santa Elena Foundation
Callawassie Island Club
Carolina Realty of the Lowcountry
SCE&G / SCANA
Coosa Point, LLC
Savannah Hilton Head Airport
CPM Federal Credit Union
Natural Retreats
Islands of Beaufort
Marine Federal Credit Union

REGIONAL LEADERS

Alpha Genesis, Inc.
Beaufort County
Beaufort Hilton Garden Inn
Bluffton Today
Branch Banking & Trust Co. of SC (BB&T)
Brunson Construction Company
CBC National Bank
Compupay Payroll
CPM Federal Credit Union
Flint Group North America
John Paul II Catholic School
Merrill Lynch Bank of America Corporation
Parker's Convenience Stores
Patterson Construction
Regions Bank
South State Bank
Technical College of the Lowcountry
University of South Carolina Beaufort

STAFF

Blakely Williams, President & CEO
Robb Wells, Vice President, Tourism
Jason Ruhf, Business Development Manager
Meg Barnes, Account Executive
Lynda Dyer, Visitor Services
LaNelle Fabian, Member Services & Special Events Manager
Josephine Long, Communications Manager
Carolyn Rennix, Member Services Coordinator
Angela Thomas-Jackson, Accounting Manager

VISITOR SERVICES

Leigh Aiken
Jannie Allen
Charles Cornett
Claudia Cornett
Anne Heyward
Mary Legree
Mary Norton
Jennifer Rhodes
Tammy Stacks
Trudy Stevens

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Lyndi Leary, and Capt. Tuck Scott, SK Signs + Designs





BEAUFORT, SC REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce
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