

SLIDELL BUSINESS News and Notes

St. Tammany Chamber arrives in Slidell

Olde Towne office open as businesses get support again

By KEVIN CHIRI
Slidell news bureau

SLIDELL—The new St. Tammany Chamber is ready to get back to business—particularly on the eastern side of the parish in Slidell.

It was a year ago that the former East St. Tammany Chamber and the St. Tammany West were in the midst of major changes.

For the Slidell Chamber in early 2019 it proved to be the end of the longtime organization after financial difficulties took the group down. Meanwhile, the West Chamber had been considering for several years the idea of creating a parishwide Chamber.

When the Slidell Chamber came to an end it was the perfect time to create the new St. Tammany Chamber, which officially was formed in the fall of 2019. However, just as the new parish Chamber was beginning to execute a plan to support businesses on the east side of the parish the Coronavirus took over the country and sidetracked everything.

The St. Tammany Chamber had already leased building space in Slidell's Olde Towne so they could have an equal presence on the east and west sides. They were all set to hold an official grand opening earlier this year, but that got put on hold until several weeks ago when a ribbon cutting and grand opening was held at the site, located at 2220 Carey St.

"We are now here, open for business, and prepared to support all the businesses in St. Tammany Parish," said St. Tammany Chamber CEO Lacey Osborne.

Of course, even though the Slidell Chamber office is now staffed daily, with Osborne spending two to three days a week here, the Coronavirus situation has forced them to start slow.

"We know we can't hold any actual public events for a little longer, although we have planned our first major event for Sept. 30," Osborne added. "And we are just as anxious as everyone else to get things back to normal."

The Sept. 30 event

could be a big one. It is the annual business expo named the Explore Northshore Business & Community Expo. It will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 30 from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Castine Center in Mandeville. As is already planned for all other major events each year for the parish group, the Expo will be held in Slidell next year, with the event alternating year-to-year.

Slidell will get to host its first St. Tammany Chamber event with the return of the Fan Upl luncheon at the Harbor Center, which will be held on Wednesday, Aug. 19 from 11:30 to 1 p.m. with radio commentator Mike Dettillier returning as the guest speaker for what still appears to be the Saints football season.

Then Slidell will host the Chamber "Swinging for Scholarships Golf Tournament on Thursday, Oct. 15 at Oak Harbor Golf Club.

"Our purpose is to create an atmosphere for commerce. We want programming to help businesses in St. Tammany, and we are very



The new St. Tammany Chamber has established an east side presence now with the opening of their Slidell office at 2220 Carey Street in Olde Towne. This grand opening held several weeks ago was still following the masking guidelines.

intent on creating one St. Tammany Parish Chamber," she added.

During the forced closure the past three months, Osborne said they have been holding online webinars, and holding business focus groups to ensure the programming and services are best geared to support business in St. Tammany.

"We want to make things happen for business, especially coming out of this COVID situation," she said. "The focus groups have been very helpful, and we are still holding ZOOM committee meetings, so we are ready to provide a lot more as quickly as we are allowed."

She said the staffing is now there each day, but they are hopeful for a complete opening of the doors by July 1.

Otherwise, the Chamber has been offering a host of informational, online services for businesses. They have posted numerous updates to the business relief package offered from Congress, including regular updates on



Slidell Mayor Greg Cromer (right) and Parish President Mike Cooper took part in the St. Tammany Chamber grand opening several weeks ago and welcomed the group to their Slidell location.

requirements for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) that many businesses received. They are releasing detailed information to ensure businesses are able to have the loans forgiven, as has been promoted since the money became available.

Among many services currently available through the Chamber website are:

- Back to Business Posters.
- Leadercast seminar

at the Movie Tavern in Covington on Wednesday, July 22 can be attended or seen online.

—Business webinars.

—Updates from the Louisiana Legislature.

—Links to up-to-date Coronavirus information.

—Information for business re-opening guidelines.

For more information on the St. Tammany Chamber, call the Slidell office at 935-273-3007.

Their website is: Sttammanychamber.org