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TRIBUTE TO RONNIE KOLE
SURVIVOR STORIES
COMMUNITY LEADER - KATIE CROSBY

LACEY OSBORNE

President and CEO,
St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce



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Reading Lacey Osborne’s resume, there’s little wonder that she holds the title of President and CEO of the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce. Making her the perfect person for the role, her CV lists a lengthy background in leadership training: graduation from Nicholl’s State University, the U.S. Chamber’s Institute for Organization Management (IOM), Leadership Louisiana, and NORLI in addition to cco-founding Leadership West in Iberville and West Baton Rouge parishes. With 31 years of experience in the chamber profession—21 of which have been with St. Tammany parish—she has a vast knowledge of the workings of business throughout the parish, region, and state, all of which have been invaluable in keeping the community strong. In such times as we are facing with the threat of COVID-19, solid leadership and a clear vision for the future is something that we all need; and Osborne embodies that.

“Since entering this profession, I have felt as though I’m answering my calling,” says Osborne, the proud mother of two and grandmother of four. “It’s rewarding to work with business and elected leaders toward making our parish and cities better places to live and work. Successful, supported businesses help a community thrive.”



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Active with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a member of their Committee of 100 and the Accreditation Board in addition to being an active member of the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), Osborne dedicates herself to being the best possible leader for her members and facilitating relationships. “I am a connector of people: small business owners, service organizations, healthcare, elected officials, government support staff at all levels, bankers, developers, and many more.”

Naturally, her work brings her into contact with a great deal of people—and COVID-19 has changed that dramatically. The virtual world has become her new means of conducting business, from meetings to seminars and even ribbon cuttings. Even with such creative workarounds, however, there’s still no denying the fact that there is no substitute for face-to-face interaction. “A lot of us miss that human contact,” Osborne notes.

Unsurprisingly, the lack of contact and the health restrictions regarding social gatherings has brought events and fundraisers to a halt—both of which severely impacted the chamber’s budget. Still, Osborne and her team at the chamber have managed to keep the needs of their members at the top of their priority list. “Our partnerships with other organizations as well as government staff and elected officials have strengthened over the past months during this crisis. In partnership with the North Shore Community Foundation and St. Tammany Corporation, we offered a series of convening meetings entitled ‘Corona Conversations,’” Osborne says. “Six topics were presented in 90 minute sessions on our YouTube channel in an effort to have factual conversations including some of the immediate and long term economic realities of the pandemic.”

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The realities of the pandemic have been numerous, and Osborne recognizes the need to reassure citizens that we will come through this to the other side. “There has been a tremendous impact on everything, and social responsibility must continue in order for us to gain control and keep it,” she says. “Our best hope is for long term behavioral shifts. We have seen hotel occupancy rates severely impacted, unemployment, retail and office space vacancies, and the inability for both large and small businesses to pay their rent. Some of the good news, however, is that sales taxes did not decline as much as had been anticipated. Unfortunately, we continue to hear of the cancellation of community events. This is an adjustment for our residents who so enjoy that

While we may be in the midst of what has been termed “COVID fatigue,” Osborne urges the public to remain vigilant by wearing masks, washing hands, and maintaining safe social distancing. “I am a realist, but I also see a silver lining from what we all learn and have come to a better understanding of during this pandemic,” says Osborne, who, as a breast cancer survivor, knows the importance of finding “silver linings.” “I’ve come to realize how fragile normalcy is and that maybe normalcy is just an organized form of chaos. Given the shifts and changes we have all experienced in 2020, I am grateful for patience. The future comes only one day at a time.”

