

# Annual Report

# 2008

522 West Rainey Avenue  
PO Box 857  
Weatherford, OK 73096  
580/772-7744 – 580/772-7751-fax

[www.weatherfordchamber.com](http://www.weatherfordchamber.com)

**We Mean  
Business!**  
Since 1900



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## Executive Summary

The 2008 year has been one of transformation for the Weatherford Area Chamber of Commerce! The transformation has taken place in all areas for your Chamber and will continue to take place in the coming year. Every action of your Chamber is done to provide value to its members and to make Weatherford a better place for business and residents to live. On the following pages you'll read about the many accomplishments of your Chamber. All of this was made possible because of the support of Weatherford businesses and individuals who by financially supporting the chamber said, "Yes I want to support the Chamber's efforts in community and economic development. "

Highlights for the year include

- 1. Over \$95,000 was raised by Chamber committees and put to work in our city to improve Weatherford's economic viability and make Weatherford a great place to live and do business.**
- 2. \$29,000 was contributed by Weatherford area businesses and individuals to support youth involved in agriculture activities;**
- 3. Conducted eight (8) ribbon cuttings for new businesses or existing businesses which increased their investment in Weatherford;**
- 4. Wellness Expo attracted consumers from 22 different communities and two (2) states;**
- 5. Heartland Cruise and Car Show drew over 70 entries from 27 communities and 3 states. Supporting the event were 112 Weatherford area businesses;**
- 6. Developing an informed leadership pool, ready to play a role in keeping Weatherford competitive is the goal of Leadership Weatherford.**
- 7. During 2008 thirty-three (33) new members were gained;**
- 8. 64 businesses supporting the "Home for the Holiday" promotion - 43 businesses participating, the promotion gave away \$12,000 in Chamber bucks;**
- 9. Advertising in "Oklahoma Today", the Oklahoma State Travel Guide, the Oklahoma Events Guide, the Great Plains Country Guide, and the Route 66 Guide;**
- 10. Development and airing of a TV commercial in the Oklahoma City metro area;**
- 11. OTRD's Fulfillment Program, Weatherford's travel brochure has been sent nationwide. Over 1,500 brochures have been mailed through this program;**
- 12. Hosted 144 tours representing 5,760 travelers.**
- 13. To date ten (10) businesses have participated in the Façade Grant Program;**
- 14. Chamber will have handled over 1,260 requests referring our members;**
- 15. Web statistics include 7,387 hits and 1,903 referrals since July 23, 2008.**

### Agri-Business

**Tim Lowry, Andy McPherson, and Radonna Sawatzky**

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in the economic well being of Weatherford and Custer County. To support this important economic engine and to encourage and develop future agriculture leaders, the Chamber conducts the Weatherford Livestock Show and the Weatherford Horse Show. In 2008 approximately **\$29,000 was contributed by Weatherford area businesses** to provide prizes for these two shows and provide bonus money for Weatherford exhibitors at the Custer County Livestock show.

### Ambassadors

**Jennifer Dickey and Barbara Jones**

Serving as the official host and hostess for your Chamber, this year the Ambassadors expanded their role to include "Operation Thank You" a one day membership outreach program. The only goal of "Operation Thank You" was to say thank you to Chamber members for sticking with the Chamber and ask their continued support in 2009.

Recognizing the faith a new or existing business has in the Weatherford business community is done through a ribbon cutting or grand opening. To add extra excitement to ribbon cuttings, a 3 foot pair of scissors, sponsored by BancFirst, was purchased. During the year the Ambassadors **conducted eight (8) ribbon cuttings** and delivered membership packets to Chamber members.



Monthly Community Coffees continued to play an important role in networking with business and community leaders. The Community Coffees also serves as an excellent opportunity to receive information on current Chamber and community activities.

### Banquet

Celebrating the past year's successes and looking to the future is always the objective of the Chamber's Annual Banquet. With a record attendance of over 300 people and tables decorated by Chamber members the 2008 Chamber banquet started the new year off in the right direction. Richard McPhetridge and Jim Lovell were recognized as "Hall of Fame" recipients while John Gerber was named "Roots and Wings" recipient. Bruce Lewis was named the recipient of the "Outstanding Service Award."

### Education

**Bruce Belanger**



The education community plays a vital role not only in Weatherford's economic fabric but also in its future vitality. To that end your Chamber continued to support the local education community through the "Welcome Reception" presented by First National Bank and Trust.

The Chamber also formed an alliance with other Oklahoma communities with regional universities to work together to support these important educational entities.

The University Picnic provided an opportunity to raise funds for a Chamber intern.

### Health Education

**Lucas Grounds and Dawn Hollander**

Informed citizens make better decisions about health care issues and to that end the Wellness Expo was conducted. With a record number 44 booths and information and services available on a wide variety of health issues, this year's

expo met and exceeded expectations. The Wellness Expo **attracted consumers from 22 different communities and two (2) states.**

#### **Heartland Cruise and Car Show**

**Joanne Chain**

Classic cars of all types and eras cruised downtown Route 66 Friday night to the delight of hundreds of Weatherford area citizens. The next day the action moved to Rader Park for the burn out contest, poker walk, and more. The **event drew over 70 entries from 27 communities and 3 states. Supporting the event were 112 Weatherford area businesses.**



#### **Leadership Weatherford**

**Linda Hays**



**Developing an informed leadership pool, ready to play a role in keeping Weatherford competitive is the goal.** The 2007-08 year saw the graduation of the 10<sup>th</sup> class since the resurrection of the program. Southwestern Oklahoma State University serves as a partner in this program. The program also received a Midwestern Oklahoma Development Authority (MODA) grant to help underwrite the program.

This was also the year when names of past graduates were gathered and retained in a permanent manner.

#### **Membership**

**Harold Wright**

Membership is the life blood of your Chamber. During 2008 **thirty-three (33) new members** were gained. Record numbers of Chamber members served on committees; "Operation Thank You" was conducted and a Membership Survey was conducted. 312 Chamber members were given the opportunity to respond to the survey and 102 members responded. An outstanding return! The survey showed our membership wanted the Chamber involved in economic and community development and tourism.

Your Chamber Board of Directors also met with representatives from SWOSU, City of Weatherford, Weatherford Economic Development Foundation, Weatherford Industrial Foundation, Weatherford Public Schools and Western Technology Center in a one day planning conference to discuss the Chamber's and Weatherford's future. Included in the discussion were the results of the membership survey.

#### **Public Affairs**

**Jeff Berrong**

Making it easier to **stay informed on legislative issues is the focus of the "Prosperity Project"** sponsored by your Chamber and The State Chamber. Through the "Prosperity Project" Chamber members were able to learn about candidates for office, legislative issues, review sample ballots, conduct voter registration campaigns, and more.



With the legislative session over, the **"Eggs and Issues Breakfast"** provided the perfect forum for Chamber members to hear from elected state officials on the issues they faced during the legislative year.

The race to fill the District 57 House of Representative seats was the main attraction at the **"Candidates Forum"**. Also featured during the forum were the Custer County Sheriff candidates. Seventy-six (76) concerned voters heard from the candidates and met with representatives from 10 other local or state races. The forum was co-sponsored with the American Association of University Women.

Your Chamber also met with **U. S. Senator Jim Inhofe** and **U. S. Representative Frank Lucas** to discuss legislative issues.

### Retail Trades

**Linda Bartel and Colleen Schmitz**



“Home for the Holidays with Family and Friends” was designed to create an excitement about shopping Weatherford during the holiday season. With **64 businesses supporting** the promotion and **43 businesses participating**, the promotion gave away **\$12,000 in Chamber bucks** to 12 Weatherford shoppers.

### Tourism

**Jim Lovell**

Your Chamber’s tourism promotion plans received a vote of confidence when the Hotel/Motel Advisory Committee voted to fund the Chamber’s tourism promotion effort to the amount of \$53,000. The goal of the Tourism Committee is to increase awareness of not only where Weatherford is located but also of what it offers in the way of tourism and travel opportunities.

Working with Oklahoma Today’s creative folks a Weatherford tourism ad was created. This ad is adapted to meet different needs as the tourism season changes. Funds have or will be used to purchase **advertising in Oklahoma Today, the Oklahoma State Travel Guide, the Oklahoma Events Guide, the Great Plains Country Guide, and the Route 66 Travel Guide.** Information about Weatherford’s travel and tourism opportunities and calendar of events were also provided to these publications.



Increasing awareness was also achieved through the **development and airing of TV commercial.** To maximize dollars and create a unified look, the Chamber and Weatherford Economic Development Foundation worked with the same video producer to develop a 30-second commercial. To get the best “bang for the buck” your Chamber works with the Oklahoma Department of Recreation and Travel to identify Weatherford’s target market. The services of a media buyer are being used to purchase commercial time on **Oklahoma City’s Cox Media cable service.** The media buyer not only is able to get a better price for the advertising time but is also able to target the channels and shows which Weatherford’s target market enjoys.

Relationships with Oklahoma’s travel professionals are an important component in a successful tourism effort. To that end **“Weatherford Day at the Erick Travel Center”** was conducted. The event not only introduced the travel



professionals to Weatherford’s tourism and travel opportunities but also provided quality time with the traveling public. Relationships have also been developed with various members of the **Oklahoma Travel and Recreation Department (OTRD) and Great Plains Country.** These relationships allow Weatherford to become better known in the tourism industry while keeping Weatherford informed of what goods and services are available.

**Weatherford has representatives on the Great Plains Country Board of Directors and the Route 66 Association and participated in the Governor’s**

**Conference on Tourism.** This conference is the event for travel and tourism industry featuring outstanding information sessions and networking opportunities.

Through the **OTRD’s Fulfillment Program,** Weatherford’s travel brochure has been sent nationwide. **Over 1,500 brochures have been mailed through this program.** Weatherford’s brochure is also available at all eleven (11) of the

Oklahoma Travel Centers. Below is an example of the Weatherford's online presence through the OTRD's Fulfillment Program



### **Weatherford - Weatherford**

Discover the amazing attractions in Weatherford and make your day! The Stafford Air & Space Museum, the Heartland of America Museum and the P- Bar Farm offer a wide-variety of things to see and do. Visit the shopper's paradise in Weatherford's Historic Rt. 66 downtown. Find great dining and great places to spend the night all over Weatherford!

Web sites continue to play an important role in tourism development and the Chamber's continues to be improved to support Weatherford's efforts.

Motorcoach tours continue to visit Weatherford on a regular basis. During 2008, Weatherford's museums hosted **144 tours representing 5,760 travelers**. Efforts continue to turn these day trips into overnight trips. Itineraries for motorcoach/group tours have been developed and provided to OTRD's Group Tour Department to use in their marketing efforts.

"Chick Trips" were the focus of the "Dallas Women's Travel Expo" held in August. Your Chamber participated by developing **twelve (12) different itineraries** aimed at the female traveler. This information was distributed during the show and will soon appear on the [www.travelok.com](http://www.travelok.com), the state's travel website. The Chamber is also responsible for maintaining Weatherford's travel information on the state's travel website.

How to fund tourism and other community projects was the purpose of the OTRD's Grant Writing Work Shop. In addition to excellent information on how to evaluate a project and write a grant, the workshop provided a list of over 100 sources of funding.



### **Weatherford Design Alliance Rick Dahlgren and Mark Yearwood**

A good first impression is vital in the business community and to help Weatherford businesses put their best foot forward, the Chamber partnered with the City of Weatherford to offer grants in the amount of \$1,000. Titled the "Façade Grant Program", businesses receive funds to use in such areas as painting store fronts, improving lighting, better signs, etc. **To date ten (10) businesses** have received or soon will receive funding.

Maintaining green in a sea of concrete is not easy but **working with the City of Weatherford the planters have provided touches of color**.

**Working with the City of Weatherford signs along Route 66 were increased** to provide a clear route for the many travelers who cruise the Mother Road. These travelers are both domestic and international and they travel by foot, car, bicycle, motorcoach, or antique or classic car.

The Committee also submitted an application to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce "DesignWorks" program for assistance in developing a revitalization plan for Weatherford's retail districts.

## Chamber

A successful Chamber is one where the inner workings are well maintained and information is easy to access, understand, and share.

Maintaining current, accurate information on Chamber members is a must. The record keeping system should also provide Chamber members with networking and advertising opportunities. To meet that need your Chamber purchased "CCASSIST" a membership data program. The program provides a means to maintain accurate records on Chamber members and their representatives. In addition the program provides a means to upload the Chamber's membership directory to the Chamber's website. The upload is so effortless; the online directory can be updated hourly if needed. Chamber members have the opportunity to be listed in five different business categories.

Financial integrity is a must. Members must be confident their investments and sponsorships are being handled in a professional manner. With this as the goal your Chamber set about using QuickBooks to meet this goal. Financial records are now structured where each committee has a detailed profit and loss statement. The statements show how the income was received and how the funds were expended.

To keep the membership informed your Chamber employs several methods. "Constant Contact" a web based email program was purchased. This program is used weekly to send the "Weekly Agenda" to Chamber members. "Weekly Agenda" was expanded to provide information about upcoming Chamber events and activities. The Chamber is a regular on "Conversation Corner" and distributes a monthly newsletter to the membership. The result is better informed and involved Chamber membership.

Everyday your Chamber answers questions about where to do business in Weatherford. In response to these requests, we only refer Chamber members. With the addition of CCASSIST your Chamber is now able to track these requests. **Averaging 5 per day**, by year's end your **Chamber will have handled over 1,260 requests** referring our members.



To meet the growing demands of consumers and the Chamber membership, your Chamber's web site received a makeover. The makeover provided the Chamber office with the means to update the web site information at a moment's notice. Information on member referrals is also able to be tracked. Web statistics include **7,387 hits and 1,903 referrals**.

Your Chamber also took an active role in the Weatherford Economic Development Foundation as both organizations worked together to improve Weatherford's economic base.