



# Fall Back, Moving Forward

Written by Mike Hammond

Fall/Winter 2021 Boost Lead Connect

*A publication of the Boone County Chamber*

A little more than a year ago, in December of 2020, the Chamber finalized its new strategic plan and outlined the organization's goals for the next 18 months. These goals were listed in the most recent issue of this magazine: 1) to increase members' understanding of our programming, activities, and contributions in the county and their impacts; 2) to engage current and prospective board members as active brand ambassadors for the organization; and 3) to assist small businesses in accessing business and technical assistance, and networking with peers. With an entirely new staff team as of August, our central endeavor has been to work toward advancing these strategic goals each day while focusing on what provides the most value to our members and the communities we serve. So naturally we asked ourselves, "Where do we begin?" The answer became clear right away. Our first task was to put on the type of top-notch events that will propel our business community forward. Since then, we've seen a lot of great results, but we're only getting started.

The blur of a busy summer was punctuated by a series of successful community and business to business events, some classics and some new to the Chamber calendar. Our annual Golf Classic drew fantastic participation. We hosted a record number of golfers and raised thousands of dollars to support Chamber programs and events throughout the year. That evening, participants were invited to attend such an event, and one that became a highlight of the summer - First Thursday's! A concert series aimed at drawing foot traffic to Boone's downtown district and developed in collaboration with the Boone Arts Commission, the Boone County Farmers' Market, and the City of Boone, the events were an overwhelming success. So much so, in fact, what started as a three-part series was extended an additional two months into September and October. Live music, local craft vendors, food trucks, a little ice cream, and some local craft beer attracted hundreds down to the 8th and Story Greenspace each month and raised thousands of dollars to support community organizations including Rotary and Boone Community Theatre. In August, the team put on its first Pufferbilly Days™. With the help of an incredible group of dedicated volunteers, this year's festival lived up to its theme of "Back on Track!" The weekend featured all the festival favorites including a parade, bingo, a spelling bee, spike driving contest, pet show, 5K fun run, mud volleyball tournament, 3-on-3 youth basketball tournament, classic car show, bags tournament, nightly entertainment, carnival, and a craft and vendor fair. All of this could not have happened without generous sponsorship from our member businesses and commitments, both financial and in-kind, and from community members like you. Later that month we continued to host our fall schedule of events, next up being the New Teacher Breakfast. Nearly forty new educators from districts across the county joined us for breakfast and remarks from area educational leaders. The message? Don't just teach here. Move here.

Invest here. Contribute here. Now, as you are reading this, we are rounding out autumn and the holiday season with more festivities aimed at promoting business and celebrating how great living and working in Boone County really is.

In October, Fareway hosted the first Business After Hours since the pandemic began and offered member business leaders an opportunity to reconnect in a casual setting. The annual Trunk or Treat Halloween event was very successful as well, drawing hundreds of families out despite the rainfall. And coming up, the Holiday Open House, Fall Breakfast Fundraiser, and Christmas on Story Street featuring the traditional holiday lighted parade, will surely will not disappoint. A huge shout out to all those who volunteer their time to make these events happen, and a warm thank you to all our member businesses for sponsoring and supporting these programs. As we gear up for 2022, expect more top-notch events and more good news about the great things happening in Boone County. From the new Chamber team, we wish you all the happiest of holidays!