

Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce



2004-2005 ANNUAL REPORT

The Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce has been an important community asset and has been for over 61 years. The Chamber's mission of "meeting the needs of its membership and the community by fostering economic opportunity" is accomplished by working collaboratively in three major areas:

- Assisting businesses through referrals, workshops, demographic details, networking and legislative activities which help businesses prosper;
- Providing excellent customer service to our visitors to promote year-round visitor stays with emphasis on enhancing visitor traffic in our primary seasons of fall, winter and spring, through our website, Visitor Center and phone;
- Promoting tourism and the local economic climate through our programs, events, publicity and partnerships.

The Chamber's positioning statement for marketing purposes is, "Twentynine Palms is a hospitable and alluring desert city with a world class culture of artists, musicians and dark night skies. The City is host to the headquarters to the Joshua Tree National Park and the world's largest Marine Corps base. It provides a base for a variety of recreational activities and is an indisputable relaxation destination."

This past year, the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors recognized that the Chamber's direction needed to evolve. While the Chamber relishes its past growth and success, we also recognize that only through continual self-evaluation can we ensure that our policies and programs continue to meet the changing needs of our diverse membership and community. With this goal in mind, the Board of Directors authorized a Membership Survey that was sent out in May of this year, thus allowing our membership and workplace partners to identify our strengths and weaknesses. The Board will carefully analyze this survey and will use it to structure its Strategic Plan for the future of the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce.

MARKETING SYNERGY

Discovery Guide: Still our most popular response piece for visitor inquiries as people seek safe, culturally diverse and interesting destinations to vacation, whether alone, with friends or family. Since last October, over 50,000 guides were placed or distributed aboard the Marine Corps base, City Hall, local lodging facilities, local restaurants, airport lounge, mailed in visitor/relocation packets, travel and trade shows, handed out during community events and to those who stopped by the Visitor Center.

Wildflower Updates: Both as a map and via the CVB web-site, the updates were a popular response piece for visitor inquiries. We printed over 3,000 guides as visitors sought the spectacular carpets of wildflowers found throughout the Morongo Basin this past spring. This brochure was produced by Chamber staff in conjunction with Joshua Tree National Park. This brochure educated visitors and residents alike as to where, when and what flowers were springing up on hillsides, washes, in Joshua Tree National Park, and along roadsides. Chamber staff collected beautiful photographs that were displayed on both the CVB and Chamber websites. Chamber staff requested wildflower photographs from visitors on their journeys throughout our immediate area.

Sky and Telescope Updates: These were emailed to lodging facilities as well as given out to visitors to view our beautiful dark night sky. This pamphlet led visitors to a better understanding of star constellations and planetary paths while observing our night sky.

Newsletter: The Chamber produces a monthly newsletter with pertinent articles about what is happening in Twentynine Palms. Topics vary broadly, as do the interests, and issues that are important for our members and community. It includes Chamber, Member and Area events, calendar of classes from JTNP and Small Business Administration as well as updates about labor law.

Working Hours: To meet increasing demand and to better accommodate our visitor and residents alike, we hope to expand Chamber and Visitor Center hours during the fall, winter and spring 2005 to include Saturday mornings.

Web-based Marketing: Chamber Staff sent out information regarding free web-based marketing opportunities by CalTia for our merchants' that includes, Offer Wizards "What's new in California," "Shop California," and "Culture California." Offer Wizard is an interactive, itinerary-based planning tool that highlights special travel values. Additionally, merchants can promote any changes and upgrades to their facilities.

Visit29.org website, "get lost in the california outback," was completed and has met with great success. With the goal of total integration in marketing efforts, the site reflects our community events, recreational activities, lodging and dining, and features quick links to Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, Death Valley National Park, Cleghorn Lakes, Sheephole Valley, and the Kelso Depot.

Chamber's website www.29chamber.com, was redesigned to provide easy access to local merchant information as well as expanded visitor information. Marketing efforts on the site reflect our membership, merchants, Visitor Guide, community events, current survey links, newsletters, e-news links and a virtual Chamber store of gifts and collectables. It also includes an Employment Page with links to MCCS, S.O.S., Cal Jobs, Copper Mountain College, The Desert Trail, The Hi-Desert Star and Virtual 29. On Virtual29 and CalJobs links, employers, as well as job seekers, can post position qualifications. A link to "Startupkits.com," an interactive tool to complete forms needed to start a new business, was added.

Visitor Center Kiosk: The visitor computer kiosk has provided a much appreciated resource for our visitors. It has proved to be very helpful with weather-related traveling, road conditions and other situations that arise traveling from one area to another. Visitors, especially our European tourists, are pleased that they can connect with family, friends or conduct business back home while traveling on their adventure.

Chamber staff was instrumental in bringing the two-day desert training session of the “Watchable Wild Life Program” to Twentynine Palms. This program has traditionally been held in the lower desert. We also hosted Pacific Media Arts, Inc., “The Nocturnes Night Photography Workshop, UC Santa Cruz “Nocturnes Workshop,” Alpha Omega Seminars and Sunshine Special. The Chamber conference room is used for the weekly “Back to Basics,” and several attorneys used the conference room for depositions.

This past fiscal year, Twentynine Palms was featured in a wide array of local, regional and national publications. Some of the press received for our local area was from Westways (AAA), L.A. Times, The Press Enterprise, New York Times, Boston Globe, Sacramento Bee, Travel Host Magazine, Parade Magazine, The Desert Trail, The Sun Runner, Southwest Blend, R.V. Journal, National Parks, Fine Living, Desert U.S.A., AOPA Pilot, Observation Post, Daily News, Move America Forward, Pacific Citizen, Tribune-Review, Life Style and Vitals Magazine.

The Inland Empire Tourist and Travel Bureau requested Chamber staff to arrange an itinerary of “The Great Mojave Outback Adventure” for world-renowned travel writer Mr. Peter Guttman and his family. Mr. Guttman’s books and magazine articles have explored and portrayed countless dramatic and romantic lodgings throughout the world.

California State Library: Items of historical interest such as videos, postcards, chamber buttons, event posters, Visitor Guide, event pictures, public information regarding the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center and area brochures were sent to the California State Library for archiving purposes.

Blue Star Memorial Marker: The Chamber purchased two (2) Blue Star Memorial Markers for the West and East entrances to the City of Twentynine Palms on Highway 62. Funds for the project are being raised by generous donations, and the sale of wildflower buttons. Currently, we have received one of the plaques, the second plaque is on order and locations are in the application process with Caltrans. The Chamber will have a dedication ceremony before actual placement, the date and time of dedication will be announced upon Caltrans’ final approval of locations.

Scenic Byways Designation: The Desert Management Group is assessing the feasibility and scope of establishing national scenic byways on selected routes in the California desert. The Chamber request’s for Highway 62 designation was favorably received by the group. National Park Service, State Parks and Department of the Interior discussions are still in progress.

Chamber Guest Book: This has been an astounding and marvelous gift to our community! Our visitors have expressed their pleasure of our community with diverse comments that reflect on the friendliness of our city and our beautiful desert surroundings.

Chamber Clocks: The Chamber now presents a small clock featuring the Chamber logo as gifts at Chamber functions and other occasions.

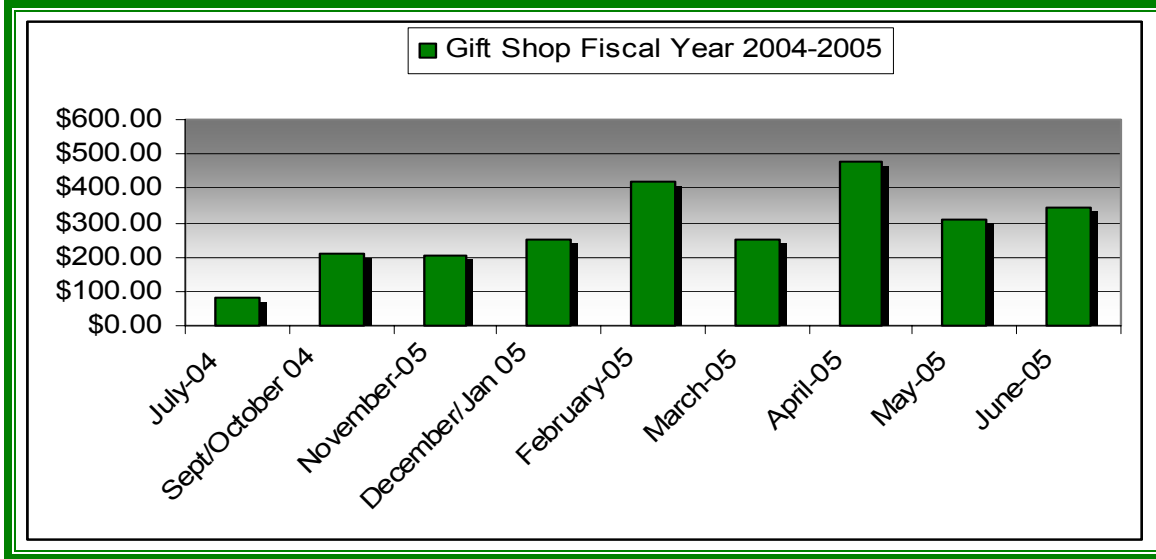
Wildflower Buttons: Chamber staff designed three (3) special wildflower buttons to celebrate the extraordinary season that the winter rains brought to our desert. Proceeds from the sales are earmarked for the Blue Star Memorial Highway Plaques and installation.

Arts of the West Calendar: This unique gift was once again given out to members/non-members and tourists. European visitors especially, have shown a great affinity for this calendar.

Gift Certificates: The Chamber sold \$3,955.00 in gift certificates in fiscal year 2004/2005. Gift certificates are redeemable at participating merchant members. By purchasing Chamber gift certificates we keep our dollars in our community.

Gift Shop:

Our membership has been generous in stocking our gift shop with souvenir items; t-shirts, specialty shirts, cups, post cards, ball caps, and other merchandise that represents our local community. However, City maps are the number one seller.

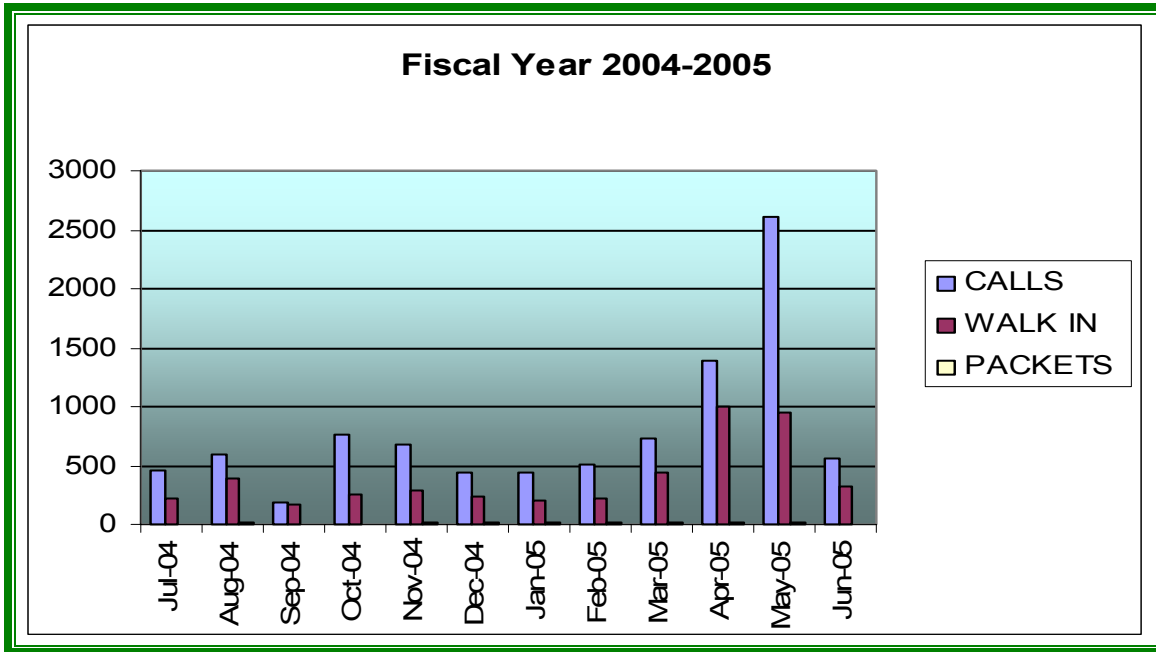


VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor services are highly labor intensive due to the immediate needs of the traveling visitor. This past winter and spring more visitors used our resources than any other recorded year. For the fiscal year 2004-2005:

MONTH	CALLS	WALK IN	PACKETS	WEB
Jul-04	455	219	5	
Aug-04	600	396	10	
Sep-04	184	167	6	
Oct-04	755	258	5	
Nov-04	677	282	16	
Dec-04	448	244	13	2153
Jan-05	449	204	9	1893
Feb-05	511	219	12	1932
Mar-05	728	442	17	2110
Apr-05	1,397	1,006	15	3229
May-05	2,613	949	10	1772
Jun-05	558	321	5	913
Fiscal Jun-05	9,375	4,707	123	14,002
Fiscal Jun-04	6,061	2,871	155	0
PERCENTAGE	31% INCREASE	35% INCREASE	24% DECREASE	0% DIFFERENCE**

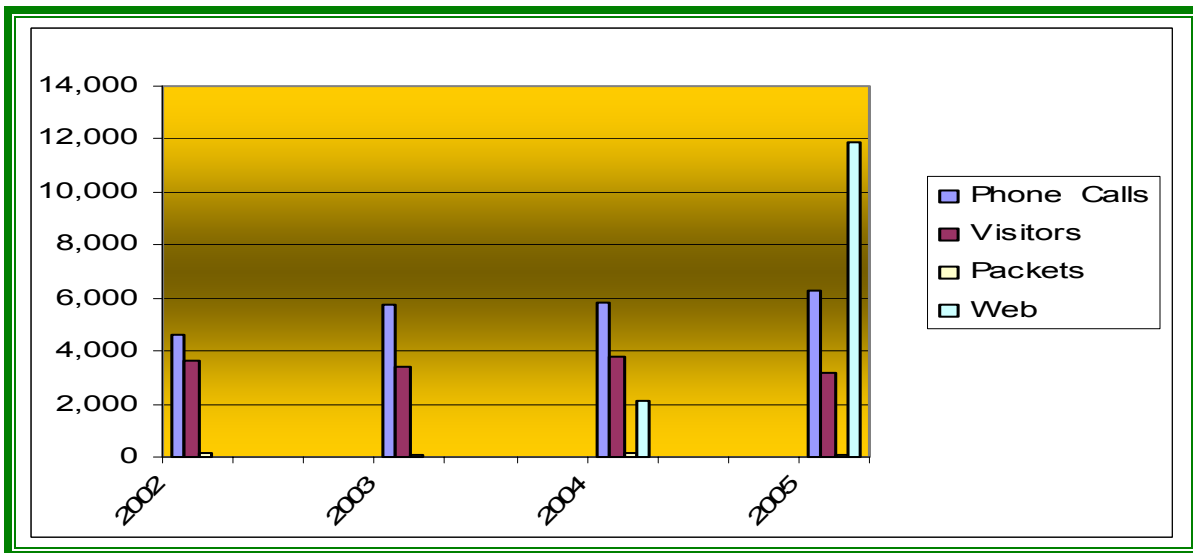
Contact Statistics 2004-2005



*The substantial drop in mailing of relocation and/or visitor packets is attributable to the expansion of information on the Chamber Website.

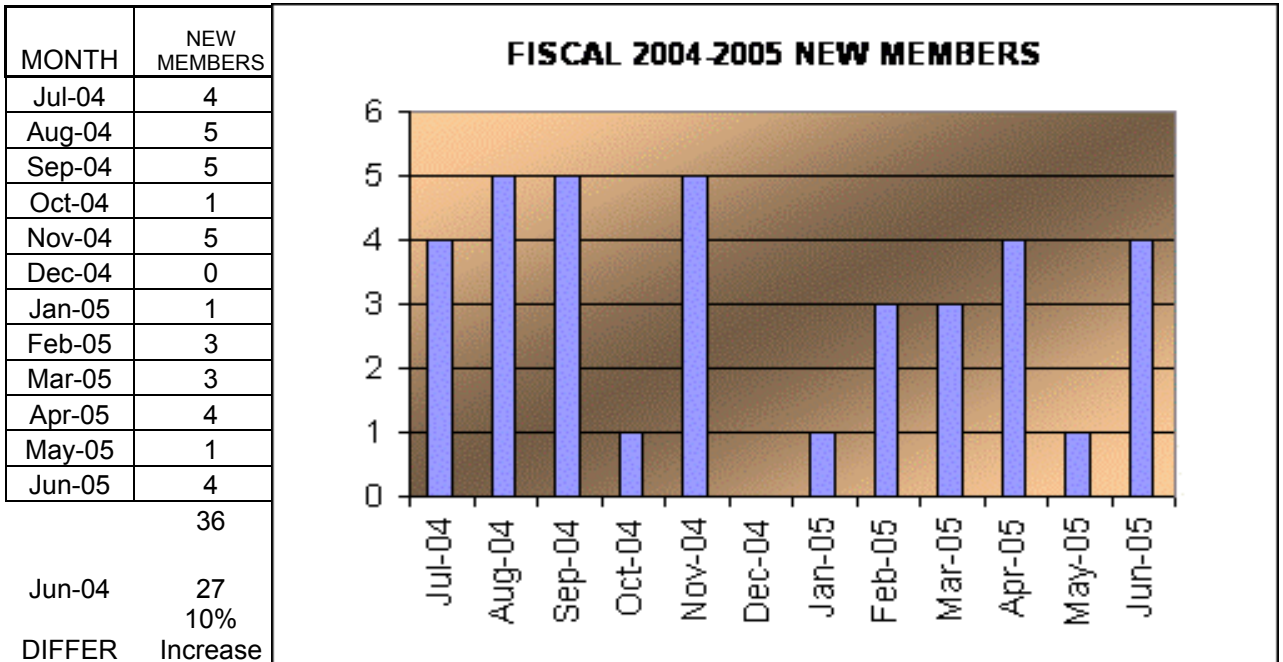
**Website visits had not been previously recorded.

Chart below is indicative of Calendar Years



MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Our member services have helped the Chamber to increase its retention revenue by more than 98% and meet its budgeted forecast. Non-renewals were due to closed storefront, moved to home based operations or other comparable circumstances. New members totaled 36, an increase of 10% over last year. The Chamber completed the year with 253 members.



Business & Public Educational Services

Each year the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce strives to provide quality information regarding issues that concern our membership and community. This past year saw major changes in the California Workers' Compensation system, the infamous "Sue Your Boss" legislation, and a November election. The Chamber's Business and Economic Development committee hosted educational meetings, roundtables, forums workshops and seminars, including:

- Workers' Compensation Reform-Practical Applications Workshop;
- Education regarding Measure I for the November ballot;
- Reciprocity Ring Workshop presented by BNI;
- Candidates Forum for Twentynine Palms City Council;
- Supervisor Bill Postmus' State of the County Address;
- Assemblyman Russ Bogh, Town Hall Meeting;
- "Workers Compensation Issues," by Mr. David Torres;
- The Chamber presentation of "*Why We Succeed Without Disneyland, Sea World, or the Monterey Bay Aquarium;*"
- Sky's the Limit, "*Observatory Status;*"
- OneLegacy, "*Organ Donation the Donation of Life*"

In addition the Chamber addressed extensive labor law issues throughout the year that include:

Prevailing Wage Requirements, AB269o
New USERRA requirements
Sue Your Boss Legislation, SB 1809;
Injury & Illness Prevention, SB899;
Child Labor Regulations Revision;
Employer Reimbursements;
Paycheck Cards Legislation, AB822;
CalOsha Log 300 & 300A Revisions
Sarbanes-Oxley Act, Whistleblower Retaliation;

NLRB-Weingarten Rule
Meal Breaks Legislation;
Sexual Harassment, AB 1825
Payroll Data, SB1618;
Identity Theft, AB 839;
California Paid Family Leave
Government-run Health Care, SB2
New Labor Law Poster

BUSINESS RESOURCES

The Chamber's Business Resource Center contains U.S. Small Business Administration Management Training Calendar (which is also published in the Chamber's monthly newsletter), California Employer's Guide, Small Business Resource Magazine, information regarding Inland Empire Small Business Development Center, Disaster Preparedness for Small Businesses, Sudden and Severe Economic Dislocation Loan Program, The Small Business Financial Resource Guide and information on starting a business with "startupkits.com." The Chamber created the Membership Virtual Plaque that could be attached to members websites.

In addition to the above, Chamber provides informational brochures regarding employee benefits, State Disability, Workers' Compensation, Paid Family Leave Program, Unemployment Insurance, CalJobs, and Sexual Harassment.

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Chamber is a resource center that provides members and non members with up-to-date information and access to business and community information and statistics. The Chamber distributes regional information, real estate information, demographics, community profiles, labor information, club/organizations lists, motel/hotel lists, a restaurant list, menus and phone books. The Chamber continuously assists members and non-member businesses with requests in such areas as business locations, training assistance, development and free job posting site on the Chamber's website.

The Chamber along with City Manager and private pilot representatives met with Mr. Tom Ingram of San Bernardino County Airports; regarding current/future plans and goals of the Twentynine Palms Airport. Chamber staff has been diligently looking for avenues to promote this valuable resource within the community with lodging, car rental and City links. Member brochures, Visitor Guides, JTNP Guides, The Sun Runner Magazine and a listing of useful phone numbers are now located in the pilot lounge.

The Chamber supported the Morongo Basin Economic Partnership by becoming a member this year. The partnership includes public agencies, businesses and organizations that will allow for exploration of retail opportunities for our communities based upon the Buxton Community ID Program. To date, analysis of the potential retail center(s) within our region has been concluded. The analysis includes a Drive-by Trade area, Demographic and Psychographic profiles of households, dominant segment households, and the population density for these segments. The final phase, which identifies retailers and the density of the retailers, has produced 20 retailer marketing packages.

Other Chamber Memberships include the California Chamber of Commerce, W.A.C.E., CalTia, Morongo Basin Economic Consortium, 29 Palms Historical Society and Joshua Tree National Park Association.

MEMBER AND COMMUNITY ISSUES

The Twentynine Palms Chamber gets involved when areas of concern present themselves that have long term impact on our economy and require broad based participation and involvement. Most of these issues are vital and complexity. We conduct research on issues, coordinate forums and advocate legislatively where and when necessary. The Twentynine Palms Chamber addressed and or endorsed the following issues:

Endorsements of:

Californians Against Government Run Healthcare;
Renewal of Measure I;
Yes on 1A;
Measure C- Copper Mount College Bond Measure;
Measure J;
Resolution in Support of Americans for National Parks;
OneLegacy, Donate Life Workplace Partnership;
Californians to Stop Higher Taxes;
California Chamber's Anti-Small Business Tax Increase Initiatives.

Funding of Grant Applications:

Morongo Basin Cultural Arts Council, \$2,000.00;
Joshua Tree National Park Association, \$850.00;
Action Council for 29 Palms, Inc., \$3,000.00.

Conferences

CalTia's 2004 Rural Tourism Conference
W.A.C.E. Conference
Lewis Center in Apple Valley with Sky's the Limit committee
"Morongo Basin Issues" discussed with D'Ann Lanning, Senator Dianne Feinstein's
Field Representative along with Joshua Tree and Yucca Valley Chambers
Tours of local lodging facilities

MILITARY AFFAIRS

The M.A.C. Assistance Fund is maintained from donated monies which have been set aside to assist military personnel and their families with urgent needs.

Chamber staff participated in "Welcome Aboard" for new officer spouses, MCCS "Quality of Life Expo," Toys for Tots Poker Run, Marine Corps Motivational Mail System, and MCAGCC survey "How the Community Perceives the Base."

Chamber staff thoroughly researched the Internet for Marine/Sailor Family sites. As sites were found, Chamber staff updated and linked information needed for travel and/or stay in Twentynine Palms, including restaurants, local attractions, events and directions.

SPECIAL EVENTS/NETWORKING

Providing members and the business community at large with opportunities to network and develop their business is a priority for the Chamber. For 2004-2005 Fiscal year there were 3 Open Houses, 12 Mixers, 2 Basin Wide Mixers, 11 luncheon programs, Pioneer Days, Winter Light Parade, Street Fair and Car Show, Annual Awards and Installation Dinner. The Chamber volunteered time and support services

for the Joshua Tree National Park 10th Anniversary, Toys for Tots 1st Annual Poker Run, 1st Annual Cactus Flower Festival, Cemetery's 70th Anniversary, and The Sun Runner 10th Anniversary Celebration.

2004-2005 FINANCIALS

