

Sponsor a Membership (from Q2 Newsletter)

The word “Membership” has a long history. Its first usage was in 1614. But what does this word mean today? Does it mean being included? Being a part of something awesome? To belong? Does it mean commitment or community?

The BVICCHA is a non-profit organization (NPO) funded by memberships and event fundraisers. In fact, 55% of our income depends on memberships each year. The remaining 45% relies on fundraising efforts. Like other registered NPOs, the Chamber was hit square in the jaw by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. BVICCHA started this year with a bang! We saw a huge increase in membership in the months before the country closed down.

Our first fundraising event would have been the BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival. As a 50% owner and event organizer of the Regatta, the BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Festival would have been the first large injection into funding our operating costs. This event has been postponed until 23-25 October 2020 (so excited!).

While the next event isn’t exactly a fundraiser for the operational budget, the next fundraising effort would have been used to send the BVI National Culinary Team off to Miami to compete in the CHTA’s Taste of Caribbean competition where we currently hold the Silver Medal overall. This event has been cancelled for 2020. We may *(continued from page 1)*

see it again in 2021. It just depends on how things look next year, right? Let’s pray this happens in 2021 so that our BVI National Culinary Team can get the exposure and recognition from this event they deserve (although some local exposure and recognition is also being explored).

And then there was the BUY BVI Business Expo (the rebranded Trade Expo). This was set to take place in June. We are hoping to still have the Expo this year and are depending on the creative ideas that the planning committee comes up with. And of course, the Annual Business Recognition Awards and Gala, where we would have held a grand gala in celebration of 50 years of advocacy, network, and support for local businesses, hopefully, will happen. Both of these events are still in the discussion phases and will shift to their respective planning committees for further planning.

We relaunched our magazine *Visit BVI* in November 2019. Royalties from the ads placed by businesses help keep the doors open. Normally this magazine launches in November for the next calendar year, but this year we are hoping to see it in your hands in January for the 2021 year. The royalties should be realized, but we know that the advertising budget is sometimes the first to go. We will continue to advocate for businesses so that they can recover and promote themselves

So what does this mean? Well, for all of 2020, maintaining our NPOs operating costs have been solely dependent upon membership dues. While the Chamber works closely with the policymakers to ensure protocols and programmes are in place to safeguard locals and visitors alike when the borders reopen, all local businesses were closed down over two months and far too many have been affected for over four months. Many of these businesses do not have the extra money



to pay for their Chamber membership for this year. This is something the Chamber completely understands and encourages any business to pay bills that cover their individual operating costs to keep their doors open and business running. We, however, do not want to lose our members. Without them, there cannot be a BVI Chamber of Commerce and Hotel Association.

We have offered 3-6 month deferments to those businesses that are struggling, but there is a way you can help. Make a difference in our business community: adopt a business and pay their Chamber membership dues (or a part of them) this year. We have almost 250 members currently registered with us. Nearly 50 of them have signed up this year. This is a strong indication that our businesses are proud to be a part of something good, they value the benefits that Chamber membership offers, and they desire to be a part of a group that works together and supports each other. These members want to remain with the Chamber and I am sure they would appreciate the help. Plus, this will help the Chamber continue fighting your causes and empowering, educating, and equipping you with everything you need to be successful and to grow.

Can you help out? Besides shopping locally (#BUYBVI), supporting a community business with a membership donation is another positive way to assist our businesses' recovery efforts. If you are willing to adopt a business for BVICCHA membership, please contact me at (284) 345-3513, or send an email to info@bviccha.org. Membership in the BVICCHA allows you and others to continue to be a part of something great.

Come and join us!