



MEMORANDUM – Gering Visitors Bureau

Karla Niedan-Streeks, Executive Director - 308.436.6886 – karla@visitgering.com

TO: Gering Visitors Bureau Members and Tourism Partners
FROM: Karla
DATE: March 19, 2020
SUBJECT: Bureau Update on Our Tourism Industry Amidst Covid-19

First and foremost; your Gering Visitors Bureau thanks you, your staffs and everyone on the front lines of our tourism industry and business community for your resilience during these difficult times; and for doing all we can do to keep everyone healthy and safe while doing our best to maintain a level of optimism for the future. Hang in there everyone!

Some general information I want to share with our Members and Partners:

- The Gering Visitors Bureau offices and the Gering Civic Center are open; I and Civic Center management staffs are working and keeping usual business hours; complying with all cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing practices. Additionally, our health safety measures and efforts include:
 - Locking of the front doors with signs posted; entrance to the Gering Visitors Bureau Offices-Visitors Information Center and Gering Civic Center are by calling ahead-by appointment to comply with the 10 or less guideline and to limit person to person contact to only immediate necessary business transactions.
- First part of this week; booked business for conferences, meetings, fundraising events and social functions-weddings for the next few months were calling to post-pone and reschedule their events to later in the summer and beyond. **I'm happy to say that 90% of those calls postponed and did not cancel their functions-events.**
- Our Bureau was working with the Nebraska Tourism Commission and Scotts Bluff County Tourism to co-host (32) group tour operators from the Select Traveler organization on a FAM trip to Western Nebraska March 19-22. The FAM trip was cancelled; but our Bureau is finalizing a direct mail campaign with a new virtual tour video that we'll be sending to those operators to "show them Gering-area" despite the cancellation of the FAM. These operators develop and book group tours 1-3 years ahead; they too are staying in their offices planning for the future and we're going to make sure our destination products and services are in the forefront of planning for their companies.
- We'll be using our new "virtual tour video" in the coming weeks-months to keep our destination and tourism amenities in the forefront of the minds of other ABA tour operators we're in a business relationship, meeting planners and sport-tourism recreation planners. These markets are long-term planning markets; we'll encourage them visually with positive images and stories about our area so then can book with confidence for the future.

- We're in the process of making some adjustments to our website; www.VisitGering.com that will be both conscientious about our "sales outreach" in the current climate but still using messaging, video and good photography to encourage group business and visitors to plan ahead for visiting Gering and Western Nebraska when travel starts again. The site will also keep local tourism industries and visitor markets apprised of attractions closing and amended operations due to the crisis.
- The Bureau is in constant communications with our destination marketing organization colleagues statewide as well as the Nebraska Tourism Commission; we're talking, sharing ideas and developing collaborations that will keep our tourism products in the forefront of meeting planners, tour operators, sports and recreation markets and leisure visitors.

As we finalize and implement these revisions in our marketing strategies; I will be communicating with our members and partners on both what we're doing as your Bureau as well as sharing ideas of what other attractions and tourism services are doing statewide to keep tourism businesses afloat during this difficult time and beyond.

Most of all; I want to reiterate that we're all in this together and to encourage you to give me a call or ask me to stop by so we can share our concerns and ideas for the future. This crisis is going to end; and I'm constantly encouraged that we have a long history of working together and tourism collaboration to get the job done and succeed.

Just as a reminder; here is my contact information if you want to reach me at any time to talk tourism:

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Also, amongst the great amount of information we're all following and heeding about COVID-19; here's a link to a good video that was put together by a Lincoln, NE physician and board of education member. It speaks very specifically to why we are taking the actions we are locally, regionally and statewide.

<https://youtu.be/IUMuc-zMzS8>