Chamber Creates Charitable Foundation

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The St. Clair Area Chamber of Commerce has established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the St. Clair Area Chamber Foundation.

The foundation will allow to partner with the city, school and other organizations for community betterment programs, said Charlene Saling, executive director of the Chamber of Commerce.

Through the foundation, the chamber will be able to provide financial support for educational and community development activities and programs; promote economic, cultural, welfare and social welfare through educational programs; offer programs to encourage the development of area small business enterprise; and enhance educational opportunities offered by school districts.

Though the decision to form the foundation has been in talks for a while, Saling said the pandemic has brought certain issues to light.

“We were pretty much down, a lot of people haven’t been able to pay membership fees, we were out on events and we were unable to raise any money, just like everyone else in the situation,” she said.

Saling checked with the state chamber director and other chambers in Missouri and found many benefits to organizing a chamber foundation as a 501(c)(3), and decided it was finally time to do so.

“Our primary goals are to be able to plug into scholarship programs, to work with the Missouri state chamber and execute our scholarship programs through them,” she said. “It just adds another dimension to the chamber.”

The chamber also will now be able to receive charitable donations and receive grants which, according to Saling, will allow it to get involved with state and national programs.

The foundation’s board will include the executive chamber board members and two members at-large, which will decide how funds are distributed.

Saling said the chamber board has already given the approval for the formation and filed the proper paperwork. The foundation’s board will hold its first meeting by the end of September.

“Down Came the Rain”

Alesia Cullen, children’s programmer at the St. Clair branch of Scenic Regional Library, performed multiple renditions of “Itsy Bitsy Spider,” during virtual story time, Thursday, Aug. 27. Missourian Photo/Sarah O’Daniel.