

January 2021

## 2020 Visitors

Onsite Visitors	7,827
Museum Website	23,294
Explore Website	6,386
<b>Total Visitor Contacts</b>	<b>37,507</b>

## COVID-19 Impact on Tourism

The number of onsite visitors in 2020 was just 27% of the onsite visitors in 2019. We were closed five months during the year on the governor's orders. Despite the 73% decline in onsite visitors for the year, we saw a modest increase in gift shop sales. We attribute the strong sales to two factors: 1) folks that did travel wanted to spend money, and 2) folks shopped locally. There has been a genuine interest in supporting our local businesses.

## Small Business Support Grants

We are using a portion of our retail sales to award grants to small businesses in our community who have suffered due to the pandemic. This grant is open to any business licensed to operate in Calico Rock and is being supported by local dollars, not state or federal funds. This is on the heels of the \$3,000 in grants we were able to award last month. We will provide more details on the grant awards next month.

## Heritage Center Exhibit Construction

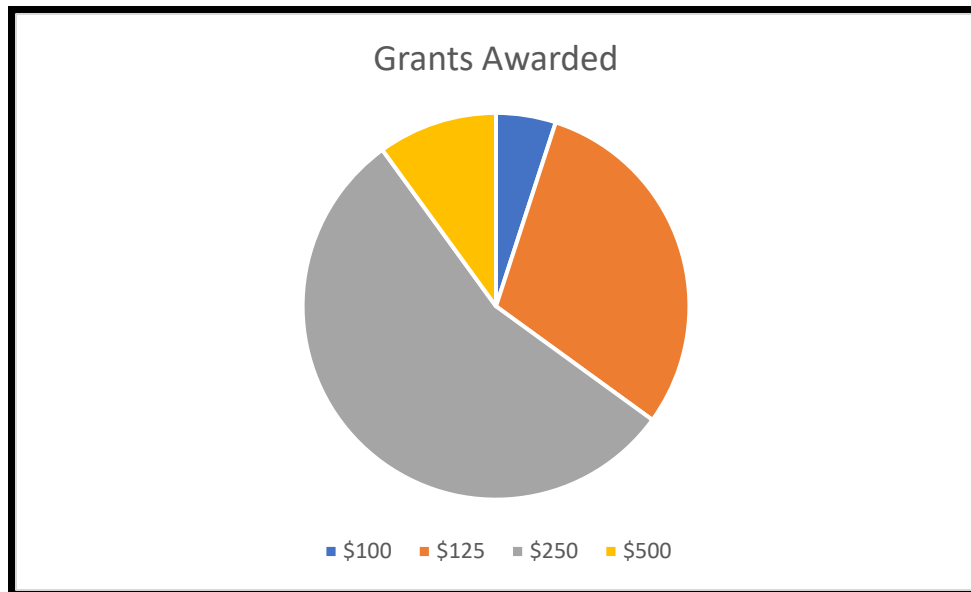
Due to the ongoing pandemic and the effects on tourism, we will be closed the month of January. This will allow us to finish up construction of our history museum exhibits and to complete some maintenance projects. We will get everything ready for our tourist season, which we are hopeful will begin returning life to normal.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you. Happy New Year!

Respectfully submitted,

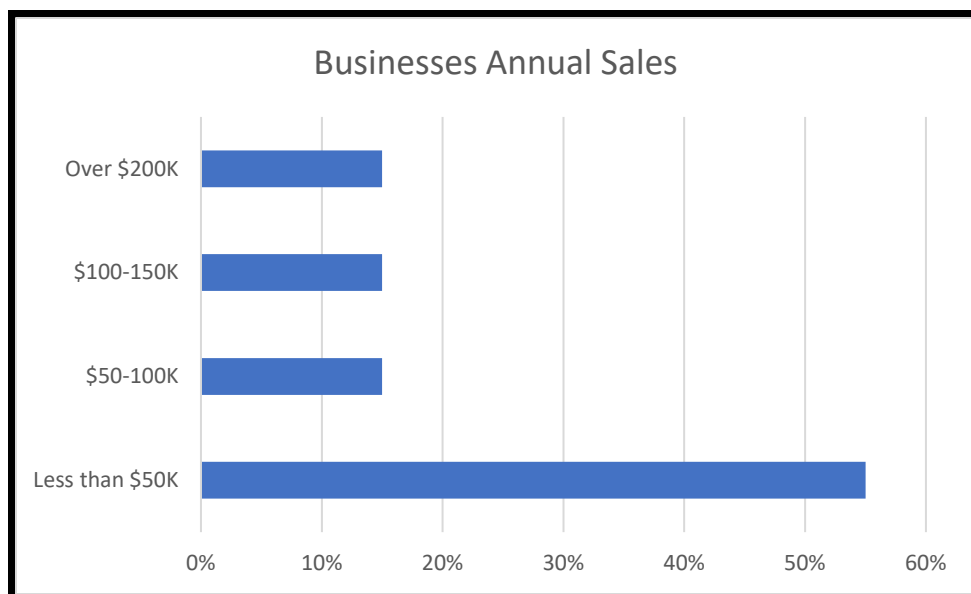


# CALICO ROCK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AWARDS \$5,000 IN LOCAL BUSINESS GRANTS



Given to 20 Local Businesses  
Who Employ 108 People  
Supporting 108 Local Families

Average Lost Sales in Past Year: 35%



### **Promise Kept: Investment in Local Business**

In the past three months, the Calico Rock Community Foundation have awarded \$8,000 in grants to our local small businesses. Last month, we awarded \$5,000 of these grants with no assistance from state or federal money. These grants were given from the proceeds at The Marketplace and Artisan Gift Shop. Every qualified business received a grant of at least \$125, with the average grant being \$250. In total, 20 local businesses received the money. These 20 businesses employ, based on their applications, 108 people in our community. The data we gleaned from the applications confirms the information we provided to you in our application for the AIJ grant last Fall.

### **Promise Kept: Investment in Our Community**

Over the winter, we have completed construction projects that will ultimately benefit the entire community. One of our biggest projects is work behind our new facility in Peppersauce Alley. We are building a two-story deck with a stylish and functional spiral staircase that will create two levels for entertainment, events, and outdoor education. The lower deck will serve as our primary outdoor classroom. We intend to use this space and the nearby Calico Creek in partnership with the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission for nature programs, but this space can be used for events, street dances, festivals.

### **Promise Kept: Promoting Local Business**

While printing a magazine during the pandemic has not been feasible, we have turned to Facebook and other social media platforms to promote our local businesses. Our Shop Local campaign last fall generated sales in our local businesses which generated local tax dollars. We are in negotiations with our printer to resume printing the magazine and are hopeful this useful tool can resume and thrive later this year.

### **Staying True**

Our primary focus remains preserving our history, art, and culture at the Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center. Our construction on the heritage exhibits is now complete and we are waiting on painters to finish a few key exhibit areas that need a professional touch. By the time you read this report, we hope to be well on our way to installing the artifacts into the exhibits. Our goal is to open these areas on April 1.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



## February Visitors

On-Site Visitors	423
Museum Website	1,551
Explore Website	451

## Sanders Nominated as AMA President

Gloria Sanders, our executive director, has been nominated for a two-year term as president of the Arkansas Museums Association. Sanders currently serves as vice president of the organization and has served on the board of directors for the past five years. If elected later this month, she will succeed Heather-Marie Wells of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Sanders has represented Arkansas at the national Museum Advocacy Day in Washington, D.C., is a graduate of the Jekyll Island Museum Management Institute, and previously planned and hosted the annual AMA conference held in Calico Rock. Her election is a great honor for our museum, our community, and the county.

## History Exhibit Installation Proceeding on Schedule

Installation of our new history museum exhibits is proceeding on schedule. Here is a look at some of the unique exhibit spaces we have built and are finishing out:



*The train depot (left) is painted in the original depot colors from 1903 when the first depot opened. The depot was rebuilt in the 1940's using siding and repainted in white and burnt orange trim. Our caboose (right) pays tribute to the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railway and will contain our exhibit on train travel and the history of the railroad in Calico Rock.*

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



April 2021

## March Visitors

On-Site Visitors	1,007
Museum Website	2,135
Explore Website	1,023

## Targeted Facebook Advertising

Just before Spring Break, we conducted our first targeted Facebook advertising campaign. The ad was targeted at three zip codes in Conway, Little Rock, and West Little Rock. The ad ran for five days at a total budget of \$200.

The campaign was seen by 8,483 Facebook users and 876 people engaged with the post by clicking on the link that redirected them to our [www.explorecalico.com](http://www.explorecalico.com) website. Data indicates they spent an average of 7 minutes on the website looking at multiple pages of information. You will recall that this website has a directory of every business licensed by the city of Calico Rock and promotes tourism in our community.

The Explore Calico website saw a 228% increase in visitors after the campaign began. The museum website saw a 128% increase in web traffic. We believe targeted advertising, like this one, can be very effective at promoting tourism in our community and region moving forward.

## Construction Wrapping Up

We are wrapping up all of the construction projects at the new museum complex. We are 2/3 finished with the history exhibit installation. We are wrapping up the final projects to beautify the back of the building in Peppersauce Alley, including our outdoor classroom and parking lot for our staff members. Our plan is to have a Grand Opening Weekend this summer.

## Retail Sales Picking Up

We've seen an increase in visitors and retail sales this past month. Visitors were about half pre-pandemic levels, which is actually double what we were seeing last fall. Retail sales are running about 75-80% of pre-pandemic levels. They were running about half previous levels. This gradual growth is definitely helping the small businesses in our community and increasing sales tax support for the city and county. We are hopeful for a strong summer of tourism.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



## April Visitors

On-Site Visitors	1,330
Museum Website	2,455
Explore Website	579

## Retail Sales Growth

Our retail sales at the Artisan Gift Shop in April were double what they were in 2019. While the number of visitors remains about half what they were in 2019, we are encouraged by the retail sales growth. News outlets are reporting that Americans are looking for small towns with rentals (like cabins) for vacations this year so they can get out, get away, and still remain safe. We are hopeful that Calico Rock will be on their list of destinations.

## *Southern Living* Magazine's "Historic Downtowns We Love"

Downtown Calico Rock has been listed in the May edition of *Southern Living* magazine on their list of "Historic Downtowns We Love." The list features 2-3 places in all of the southern states. For Arkansas, Dickson Street in Fayetteville, Downtown Eureka Springs, and Downtown Calico Rock were listed. This is the second time this year that we have been featured in *SL*.

## Economic Development Activities

We've been working with a number of businesses owners in the area as they develop plans for expansion or opening a business. We continue to stay involved in property owners who are interested in selling or renting their space. This is an important part of the work we do to make sure our part of Izard County continues to grow and develop.

## Independence Day Activities

We are planning family activities for the afternoon of Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup> ahead of the annual Lion's Club Fireworks at dark. The activities will take place in King City Park.

## Target Opening

We have set a target date of June 26 as the opening of the entire Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center. This date will be dependent on progress in installing the last section of our history exhibits and preparing our science center. We will confirm the dates with you in early June.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



## May Visitors

On-Site Visitors	2,164
Museum Website	1,930
Explore Website	535
Facebook Ad Reach**	10,156

## R.U.S.H. Bikers

In June, we hosted the R.U.S.H. Bikers, a group of Harley Davidson motorcycle enthusiasts who choose different locations along undiscovered highways to travel. They pay a fee for the rides, part of which is paid within a local community for lunch. We were the lunchtime location and three of our local restaurants chose to participate—Riverside Pizza, Our House Café, and Between the Buns. This added \$1,350 to our local economy for this one day event, just for their lunch tickets. They also spent money in gift shops on Main Street, toured the museum, and enjoyed many stops throughout Izard County on their scenic tour.

## The Reviews Are In

Our heritage museum exhibits have been open for about a month and the reviews have been extremely positive. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Columnist Rex Nelson called the museum “a gem in the middle of nowhere.” The Rice family from Memphis said, “the museum is so professionally developed.” Locals are visiting and raving, too. Alice Dockins said simply, “love it.” Jay and Lisa Thunberg said, “beautifully done, will be back!” And, we aren’t finished, yet. We are working this summer on installing the interactive components ahead of our dedication ceremony.

## Independence Day Activities

The July 3<sup>rd</sup> Celebration in the Park this past weekend was highly successful. We planned duck races, a dog show, pie and barbecue cook-offs, and much more. We had about 500 people in the park during the daytime activities and the Lions Club estimates about 1,000 people attended their fireworks show that evening. We advertised this event on Facebook and reached 13,156 people within a 50 mile radius of Calico Rock over one week. The budget for that advertising was just \$150.

## Mark Your Calendar for Dedication Ceremony

The Dedication Ceremony will be held on Saturday, September 11 at 10:00 a.m. We hope all of you can attend this special ceremony with a reception immediately following.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



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August 2021

## July Visitors

On-Site Visitors	2,809
Museum Website	1,816
Explore Website	433

## Despite COVID Surge Tourism Rebounds

COVID cases have surged in July throughout the county and region. Arkansas was identified as a national hotspot, with most hospitals in the state reaching capacity. We saw a decline in tourism at the beginning of July, but a rebound toward the end of the month. The number of visitors and retail sales have rivaled any prior July. We are encouraged by these developments, even as we remain concerned for so many of our friends and neighbors who are suffering the impact of COVID-19.

## Development in the Tourism Corridor

Eventually, tourism will return to Calico Rock and the city has been a great partner in getting ready for that development. The City of Calico Rock has done a beautiful job of developing the parking lots around the Main Street Historic District and Peppersauce Alley. The new pergola and seating area presented by the 20/20 Group has been a welcome addition for visitors. We have applied for many grants to complete beautification projects along Main Street and through the rest of the community. We are confident all of these projects will continue to grow our tourism, which will grow our economy.

## Elected Officials Supporting Calico Rock

We enjoy the support of every elected official in Izard County and the City of Calico Rock, and your support makes a world of difference to us. Thank you for personally visiting the museum, shopping along Main Street, and continuing to support our operations. We would not be here without you!

## Science Center Slated to Open in September

We are planning to reopen our Science Center in September, coinciding with the dedication of the entire center. This will fully reopen the Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center after a nearly two-year renovation and relocation project. The science center is extremely popular, especially for school groups and families. We're excited to reopen this part of the museum very soon.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



September 2021

## August Visitors

On-Site Visitors	1,130
Museum Website	1,364
Explore Website	1,064

## Targeted Digital Advertising Round 2

In early August, we ran our second targeted digital ad. You'll remember that we ran our first digital ad on Facebook targeting folks living within 25 miles of Little Rock and reached over 13,000 individuals and had 3,500 engagements. The results from that ad included an uptick in tourism in May and June. The theme was "Escape to the Mountain" and featured a beautiful photo of the bluffs, mountains and river.

The second digital ad campaign was entitled "Making Memories" and featured a fishing photo montage. The ten-day ad campaign targeted Facebook users in Jonesboro, Little Rock, Conway and Fayetteville. It was an astounding success! **We had 66,451 impressions, 18,654 paid placements, and 692 direct contacts.** Traffic to the ExploreCalico website was 3 times higher than in the previous month. We will be closely monitoring the affects of the ad on tourism this Fall, but we are very hopeful.

These targeted digital ad campaign statistics greatly outpace far more expensive print ads or billboards. We expect great results from these modest-budget campaigns and plan to continue doing them going forward as part of our services contract with the city and county.

## Historic Downtown Welcomes Three New Businesses

Three new businesses are being added to our Downtown Historic District: Lemley's Country Store, Juniper's Back Door, and Cooper Antiques & Collectibles. We're glad to have these new businesses join our community.

## Downtown Improvement Projects

The city is continuing to improve parking for visitors in Peppersauce Alley, which will be beneficial for the Main Street Historic District, East Calico Historic District, and future development in Peppersauce Alley. The Foundation is planning changes to the Main Street mural that has fallen into disrepair, signage in the East Calico district, and development of an event center off Peppersauce Alley that continues our commitment to improving our community. We hope this work can be completed over the winter off-season.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



October 2021

## September

On-Site Visitors	1,785
Museum Website	1,610
Explore Website	1,054

## Community Improvement Projects

We have received a grant to sandblast the mural along the wall on Main Street and, depending on the condition of the wall, to paint a basecoat or preserve the wall. We have had three metal signs made to dress up the wall. The wet-weather spring behind the wall makes it impossible to maintain the mural, so we are hoping this solution makes Main Street a welcoming front door.

We also have a grant to install artistically painted rainbow trout throughout the community in a program similar to the “painted cows” sculptures that appeared in Chicago some years ago.

We are also hoping to refurbish the informational signs in East Calico this winter.

## Observations from the Museum

We wanted to share with you some observations since we opened the new Heritage Center:

One day a man came into the museum and ventured back to the huge American flag that we have hanging on our back wall. He stared at the flag for a time and then went up to each uniformed mannequin standing there. He inspected each one carefully and then turned. He approached Kedra Sugg, with tears welled up in his eyes, and told her that the medals on the uniform are to be 1/8” below the bars. He immediately said, “You all got it perfect. Nobody gets it right. Thank you for getting it right.” The 1/8” was everything to him because it meant we were telling the story perfectly.

Another day, a family of five came into the museum. They assembled by that big American flag, took up their positions neatly in a row, and raised their hands to their hearts. Then, they recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Calico Rock Museum & Visitor Center is impacting people in ways we might never have imagined and we thought it was important to let you know the difference you have made in supporting the work we do.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



## October Visitor Statistics

On-Site Visitors	2,138
Museum Website	795
Explore Website	594

## Economic Snapshot

On-site visitors to the museum were up 161% this October over last year. Within our gift shops, sales are up 166% in October over last year. We are hearing similar reports throughout town with the number of visitors slowing increasing.

While sales were definitely impacted during the pandemic, we did not see the same percentage of decline in sales that we did with visitors. In other words, while we had fewer people coming to town during the pandemic, they were spending more money per sale and on average than they had spent pre-pandemic. This may be partially due to the discerning consumer, the economic stimulus packages, or that the product we are now selling is a higher quality. This is a trend we will continue to monitor as the recovery continues.

## Shifting Online Presence

We are also monitoring the number of visitors to our websites versus Facebook. While websites will likely never disappear, the traffic to our websites has continued to slowly decline. At the same time, the volume of traffic we are getting for posts on Facebook is exploding. The question is whether the Facebook traffic and ads will generate in-person visits to town. Again, this is data we continue to monitor closely and will report back over time.

## Relocation Guide

We have prepared and printed a Relocation Guide that primarily focuses on relocating to Calico Rock, but is also useful for those relocating outside of town in rural areas of IZARD County. These one-page flyers will be available at City Hall and the visitor center. It's an important service for folks that are moving into the area.

## Living Windows & Lighted Christmas Parade

We are proceeding with our plans for the Living Windows and Lighted Christmas Parade. The event takes place on **Saturday, December 11** at dusk. Unless cases have skyrocketed out of control, this event will be taking place as planned.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,



# CALICO ROCK RELOCATION GUIDE

**Welcome to Calico Rock!** We're so glad you moved here. This guide provides a quick reference for utilities and agencies that you will need to complete your move. Please visit our website for a complete listing of every business licensed to operate within our city:

**[www.ExploreCalico.com](http://www.ExploreCalico.com)**

## **Water, Sewer, & Trash**

City of Calico Rock  
870-297-3772

## **Electricity (In City Limits)**

Entergy Arkansas  
800-368-3749

## **Electricity (Outside City)**

North Arkansas Electric Cooperative  
870-895-3221

## **Internet, Phone & Cable**

Yelcot Communications  
870-269-3232

CenturyLink  
877-535-8832

Next Communications (Some Areas)  
870-895-3221

## **Propane**

Izard County Propane  
870-368-0022

MFA Propane  
870-425-2737

Reeves Propane  
800-432-5172

## **Natural Gas**

Black Hills Energy  
888-890-5554

## **County Offices**

Assessor 870-368-7810  
Collector 870-368-7247  
Sheriff 870-368-4203  
Clerk 870-368-4316

## **Vehicle Registration/Driver's License Offices**

Melbourne 870-368-4335  
Mtn View 870-269-3436  
Mtn Home 870-425-2571

## **Calico Rock Public Schools**

Elementary 870-297-8533  
High School 870-297-3745

Need more information?  
Just One Click or Call Away:

**[www.ExploreCalico.com](http://www.ExploreCalico.com)**  
**870-297-6100**