



# CHAMP

*Heritage, Cultural, and Agritourism*

*Free Peer-to-Peer Mentoring*

**Expand or Improve Your Public-Facing Attraction**



**San Luis Valley Museum Association, Alamosa**

### **Project:**

The San Luis Valley Museum Association (SLVMA) is a network of 19 history museums that support saving and celebrating the history of the San Luis Valley.

### **Mentor: Judy Walden**

Judy Walden learned the tourism business from the ground up when she became a partner in a travel business that brought international travelers into the Rocky Mountain Region for recreation, business, and cultural exchange. The majority of her programs operated in rural areas. With no previous experience, she had to learn quickly how to make money in tourism. Today, her work centers on sharing this practical knowledge with individuals and small groups who are seeking to increase their profitability through tourism.



### **CHAMP Project Overview, Deliverables and Results:**

The SLVMA was seeking advice on how the association could better support the needs of the Valley's museums. They were in need of a marketing plan that would offer specific strategy and tactics to double the attendance and double the income of each museum.

#### *Deliverables:*

- Review the current marketing plan and develop goals and measurable objectives with clear tactics and target audiences to increase exposure for the museum network.
- Create specific tactical plans for outreach and increasing attendance.

#### *Results To-date:*

- An extensive marketing plan with clearly defined goals and objectives
- New website
  - When comparing web site traffic in 2014 to 2015, there has been a 500% increase in sessions, 446% increase in users, and the average session duration up 85%.
- Visitor Numbers
  - The twelve participating museums experienced a combined 44% average increase in visitors. The 12 participating museums include Conejos, Creede, Crestone, Fort Garland, Hinsdale, Monte Vista (2), Rio Grande, Saguache (2), SLV-Alamosa and Homelake.

- The Saguache County Museum experienced a 202% increase in visitors.
- Facebook
  - When comparing October 2014 to October 2015, there was a 62% increase in Facebook likes.
- Google+ Circles
  - The Museum Association pages have experienced a 94% increase in views.
- Colorado.com
  - Several museums signed up for the paid account. Within a month of signing up, new page sessions increased of +7%.

“I would describe Judy's effort as compelling and practical guidance for making our museum more than just a collection of old stuff. Judy helped us see our facility as a community asset with an important and fascinating story to tell about the boom, bust and survival of a western mining town. More than anything else she gave us a vision for



the museum along with concrete advice on how to capitalize on our assets. I've worked with a lot of consultants over the years and Judy is one of the very best.” Jim Loud, Creede Historical Society Museum

**Words of Encouragement for Peers:**

“Do It. Just do it!! The CTO staff is very helpful and encouraging, don't let the fear of change stop you from being a success. Getting new perspectives from a dedicated, invested peer mentor is priceless.” Kat Olanca, SLV Museum Association

“She [Judy Walden] stretched our minds and ideas so the "box" no longer existed and we could do or try anything.” Joyce Gunn, SLV-Alamosa Museum

“Do the legwork, push yourself, get out of your comfort zone, work with the consultant to turn things upside down, shake things up. I would recommend to others to start the program with an open mind and being ready to learn and perhaps change some of those longstanding processes.” Louise Colville, Rio Grande County Museum



**Has your new venture inspired further expansion with your project or others in your community?** All the information on reports and successes were sent to all the museums including those that were not able to participate in the CHAMP process. Seeing the % increases has spurred them all to kick it up a notch. Exhibits, presentations and events for 2016 are looking to be significantly higher for the participating museums. We are continuing to expand our social media presence including getting more involved in Twitter. The museums and the Association are getting more respect and attention.

**About CHAMP**

The Cultural, Heritage/Agritourism Mentor Program, or CHAMP, exists to stimulate the development of high-quality cultural, heritage and agricultural tourism experiences for travelers in Colorado. CHAMP is a FREE peer-assistance and training program for farms and ranches, businesses, museums, attractions and organizations that want to improve or expand their own cultural, heritage tourism or agritourism offerings.

**To Learn More or Apply to the Program**

Please visit the CHAMP website: <http://industry.colorado.com/champ-program>

**Questions?** CHAMP Coordinator: Kara Penn| [kara@missionspark.org](mailto:kara@missionspark.org) | 303.579.2219