

Membership goals for AAF Midlands have fluctuated over the years, as despite being able to maintain our division III status within the structure of AAF National for several years now, including during the pandemic, we have experienced some challenges and difficulties with regards to retention and recruitment for members. An overall goal of the board this year was to create better transparency and transfer of knowledge and tactics year over year, and so when approaching our membership and communications goals for the year, we wanted to ensure that we knew precisely where we stood, and how we got there.

Membership and Communications Goals for 2022-2023

Our membership chairs set an ambitious goal for the year. Building off the success of previous years, they wanted to see growth and set an ambitious overall membership goal of 150 members, initially broken down as follows.

1. Achieve a total membership count of 150
 - a. 75 Individuals
 - b. 50 Corporate
 - c. 25 Students

However, after examining our membership counts over the last several years, including at least one pre-pandemic year, we realized some adjustments needed to be made. As our membership structure and costs have changed significantly over the years and we wanted to look at trends rather than just the previous year's number. Our membership counts by year are as follows.

2021-2022 - 108 Members (32 Individual, 74 Corporate, 2 Students)

2020-2021 - 130 Members

2019-2020 - 112 Members

2018-2019 - 100 Members

Though our pandemic year (2020-2021) appears to be our most successful, we know the strategy to achieve that kind of growth involved deeply discounted membership rates, including a \$40 rate for student members that made up for almost 23% of membership, or 29 individuals. This was a smart approach during an almost fully virtual year when costs were significantly reduced, but we knew this strategy was not sustainable long term. During our recovery year (2021-2022) we had already made the decision to return our membership rates to where they were prior to the pandemic, but as we went through the year and saw our budget struggle to keep up, we knew we would have to explore opportunities to raise even more additional funds to keep up with inflation.

The executive board met at the beginning of the year to review the budget. After adjusting expenses to more closely match raising costs, and reviewing our anticipated revenue at current membership rates, we quickly realized that we would not be able to cover our expenses. We made the difficult decision to raise membership rates by around 11% at each level, and set an additional goal for the membership committee, to retain 80% of members. We also eliminated our lowest tier membership, the associate membership, which was for first year members only and offered at a discount to entice new members to join. Though we had concerns about recruitment without this level, we knew we could no longer afford to offer it and still hope to cover our costs.

Results: We are incredibly proud of our ability to make significant strides towards our membership count and create a larger safety net for the club with increased rates. Through our hard work on all club activities, including programs, communications, the American Advertising Awards and more, we are proud to share that we currently sit at 116 members. All of these members joined at an increased rate and represent the highest number of fully-paid professional members we have had in recent years when removing student outliers in 2020-2021. Additionally, when looking at retention, we were able to retain the goal of 80% of renewals, and several members even jumped up to a tier, going from one or two

individual memberships to a group, or an existing group membership jumping up to a higher member count.

Membership Feedback

An important goal to assist in the success of both member retention and new member recruitment was to ensure that our member benefits were engaging and also communicated effectively to our target audience. To gauge our success throughout the year, our communications team sent out several surveys to members and event attendees to gauge their satisfaction and solicit their feedback [Exhibits 1-4]. The overall feedback we received through these surveys was strongly positive. Attendees noted that they enjoyed the selection of speakers at our Lunch & Learns and the flow of the events. Most attendees heard about these events from our social media channels and emails, proving our promotions over the course of 2-3 weeks prior to each event were effective (Exhibit 5-7). A few attendees mentioned that they wished for more assistance networking, which has come up in the past. As a solution, AAF Midlands hosted a Speed Networking event to help connect members and non-members connect. The feedback on this particular event was overwhelmingly positive. Attendees appreciated how well organized the event was and how it allowed them to connect with a diverse pool of other members, new and returning. They also appreciated how the format forced them to step outside their comfort zones while having safety nets in place with the conversation starters that were given throughout to help keep conversations flowing. This event also helped showcase how we are listening to the feedback members send us, and adjusting our programming accordingly.

Social Media: AAF Midlands has a strong following on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Thanks to our cross-platform social media strategy, our online presence has built a strong brand voice and engaged members and non-members alike. Benchmarked against the same time frame the year before, our Facebook Page visits have increased by 137.8% and our Instagram Profile visits have increased by 58.% [Exhibit 8]. Our content averages 485 interactions (reactions, saves, comments, shares, and replies to

posts and stories) per month, ranking in over the 75th percentile for this metric. By embracing national AAF branding while incorporating seasonal or trending spins into content, we saw cross-platform digital success contributing to our chapter's overall club success. On Facebook, our posts reached 11,147 people and 2747 of them visited our profile at least once, with the latter being a 185.6% increase from the same time period one year prior. Our best performing post was our release of the American Advertising Awards photo album (Exhibit 9). We turned the album around in just three days and it paid off by successfully reaching 1,013 unique users who shared photos they appeared in, earning significantly more impressions. On Instagram, our posts reached 2757 people and 1,147 of them visited our profile at least once, with the latter being a 75.9% increase from the same time period one year prior. Our best instagram performing post was a Reel we created on Award Judging Day (Exhibit 10). On LinkedIn, our posts had 4,751 impressions on 2,837 unique users. Our LinkedIn posts about our job board see the highest engagement with click-through-rates as high as 19.23% (Exhibit 11).

Email Marketing: Our email communications hit the ground running and hit their stride early this year, setting a timely and relevant cadence and tone. Our Mailchimp messages have been gaining momentum for several years and we feel we have had continual success in gauging and reflecting our audience's interests. Since July 1st, we have deployed 33 email campaigns to our subscribers [Exhibit 12]. Of those 33 email campaigns, 13,138 emails were sent, our average open rate was 30% and average click rate was 30%, both higher than the MailChimp averages. Over the past year, our subscriber list has grown to 929, a 6.78% increase from last year.

Website: Early in the board year, our chapter was faced with web challenges when we had to switch domains and replace sunsetting Wordpress plugins. Thanks to the dedication of five different board members, we were able to react quickly and redesign our website with a seamless member experience. From upcoming events at least once per month, to local job openings several times per month, to updating

logos as corporate membership increased throughout the year, our website is up-to-date and serves as a reliable resource for members and non-members. (Exhibit 13)

Cross Promotions: On December 8th, 2022, our club partnered with Public Relations Society of America, American Marketing Association, and International Association of Business Communicators South Carolina to host Jingle Mingle at a prime collaborative location, Femme X. This festive event allowed our chapter to reach new audiences and social groups in the creative realm of the Midlands. With around 70 attendees, each room of the unique venue was filled with networking creatives. We each promoted the event through our respective websites, social media channels, and email listservs, targeting professionals in the advertising and marketing industries. (Exhibit 14-15).

Combining our clubs into one event ensured that we didn't have to compete with each other for attendees during an incredibly busy December, and it allowed all clubs to cross promote their engagement activities to new members. This was especially successful for AAF, who provided a calendar of our immediate upcoming events to everyone who checked in (Exhibit 16) and even had event attendees reference the calendar and event specifically as their reason for attending (Exhibit 17). We also partnered with other community businesses who graciously attended our events as a team, sponsored events, or highlighted and engaged with us on social media.

Club Communication Use Cases

Communications with Members

Goals: Our goal communicating with members was to send out 2-3 emails per month, which included club updates, event invitations (Lunch & Learn, Life After Work, etc.) or urgent upcoming deadlines (AAF Awards submissions). We also posted regularly to our Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts.

Target Audience: Our current audience was current and active members

Budget Recap: Free with our no-cost Mailchimp plan for email communications.

Distribution System: Email and social media channels

Results Achieved: In addition to the figures mentioned above related to social media and newsletters, as well as responses to our survey as to how our members hear about our events, we believe our event attendance and membership increase are evidence of our consistent and regular communication with members.

Events/Meeting Promotions & Announcements

Goals: Our goal for event promotions and announcements this year is to interact with the community where they are. This meant posting regularly to social media, and sending out 2-3 event announcements and reminders via email. Social media has the shareability factor that we're looking for to drive awareness to members and non-members for all of our events. Through all social media and email invites, we directed people to our website to access the link to claim their tickets.

Target Audience: Our target audience for these communications is local business professionals and students, whether they are members or not. Our events provide a great way for non-members to become acquainted with our chapter of AAF.

Budget Recap: Most of our efforts used existing digital channels, so there was little to no cost. The only charges we accrued were from annual website hosting and domain fees, and for our Canva Premium account, which we used to create all graphics and promotion materials for our events.

Distribution System: We shared all information regarding events/meetings via e-blasts, social media posts, and our website calendar.

Results Achieved: Our events this year achieved a total of 508 unique attendees across 348 ticket purchasing orders, depicting not only our attendance success, but the camaraderie we've built with businesses in the Midlands that leads them to attend our events in groups because they know there's value in our professional development programs. We have hosted 9 events so far including:

- AAF Annual Membership Kickoff
- Life After Work: Speed Networking
- October Lunch and Learn featuring Leigh Farrow of Stamp Idea Group
- A Low Country Boil and Media Auction Fundraiser
- Jingle Mingle with AAF, PRSA, AMA and IABC
- December Lunch and Learn featuring Simone Jackson with Spotify
- January Lunch and Learn featuring Laura Laire with Lair Digital
- February Lunch and Learn featuring Adam Constantine with Ace Creatives
- March lunch and Learn featuring Dean Browell with Feedback

We have two additional events planned for later this year on our full event calendar. (Exhibit 18)

Thanks to our board's successful contingency planning, our club successfully pivoted with short notice to rebrand our annual Oyster Roast to a Low Country Boil when DNS halted oyster harvesting due to Hurricane Nicole. Due to the change in event, we pivoted to offer free tickets to members to encourage attendance despite the lack of oysters, which led to higher pre-sales and better results in our silent and live media auctions. Our event campaign performed well and led to a profitable, engaging event with 42 people in attendance and \$4,600 raised for the club through our silent lifestyle and media auction. (Exhibit 19-21).

Self-Promotion

Goals: Consolidate information sharing so our audiences can better understand our mission within our community to show the value and benefits of AAF membership, as well as highlighting the board and the organization's accomplishments. Instagram is a popular platform but it has the added challenge of not allowing clickable links in the copy of a post, and we additionally needed a streamlined way to share information on that platform, using multiple messages at a time.

Target Audience: Marketing, communications, and advertising professionals in the Midlands

Budget Recap: We did not have a budget for self promotion and there was no cost to create the Linktree account, making it an ideal solution.

Distribution System: We established a LinkTree account (linktr.ee/aafmidlands) for our chapter, improving engagement with our Instagram profile and leveraged to create evergreen print materials to distribute at events.

Results Achieved: Our LinkTree [Exhibit 22] performance continues to grow steadily with 121 views, 78 clicks, and an average click rate of 64.46%. We will continue to push our LinkTree as a one-stop-shop resource for all things AAF Midlands to our audiences.

Overall this year, our offerings to members were very strong and we felt our membership results reflect our commitment to ensuring our members get excellent value out of their membership, particularly at an increased rate. Despite hurdles, we made it a priority to communicate as often as possible and to communicate regularly to keep our members engaged. Our events were met with positive feedback and have included a diverse range of content. We are looking ahead to 2023-2024 with a plan to continue the momentum we have built up this year, and grow our membership even more in future years.

EXHIBIT 1

AAF September Life After Work - Speed Networking

This survey is to help us gather feedback about our programming. Please let us know your thoughts so we can continue to improve these events!

Satisfaction of Event

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Overall, how would you rate this life after work event?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you hear about the event?

What did you like about the event?

What did you dislike about the event?

EXHIBIT 2

Luncheon Speaker

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
How would you rate the presenter(s) at this luncheon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you plan on attending our next event?

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience at this event?

Are you currently a member of AAF?

Yes No

Submit

EXHIBIT 3

2023 AAF January Lunch & Learn - Laura Laire

This survey is to help us gather feedback about our professional development luncheon. Please let us know your thoughts so we can continue to improve these events!

Satisfaction of Event

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Overall, how would you rate this professional development luncheon?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you hear about the luncheon?

What did you like about the luncheon?

What did you dislike about the luncheon?

EXHIBIT 4

2023 American Advertising Awards Gala

This survey is to help us gather feedback about the 2023 American Advertising Awards Gala. Please let us know your thoughts so we can continue to improve these events!

Satisfaction of Event

	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Overall, how would you rate this event?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What did you like about the event?

What could we improve for next year?

Did you purchase a VIP ticket?

Yes No

If so, what did you think of the VIP experience?

EXHIBIT 5



Join Us for October's Virtual Lunch & Learn!

We don't know who needs to hear this, but it's time to find some work/life balance and get a life!

To find out how, grab your lunch and join us virtually on **Tuesday at 11:45 am** for our **October Lunch & Learn** featuring Leigh Farrior of [Stamp Idea Group](#). Registration is free for members and \$5 for non-members. Click the button below to attend!

Reserve Your Spot

Save the Date: Oyster Roast & Auction

It's almost time for one of the best events of the year – our annual Oyster Roast & Auction! Save the date to join us on Thursday, November 17 at Swamp Cabbage Brewery. More details to come!

EXHIBIT 6



Join us tomorrow for this month's Lunch & Learn!



There's still time to register to join us for tomorrow's Lunch & Learn! Laura Laire with Laire Digital Marketing Agency will be walking us through some of the common marketing pain points that Marketers and Communicators feel in their role, particularly when working with other teams or departments who are less in the know. **Whether you're a team of 1 or 100, these tips will help you navigate turbulence and explain value within your department, with your clients, or even to your C suite!**

Reserve Your Spot

Save the Date:

- American Advertising Awards Gala – February 18th
- Lunch & Learn – February 23rd

More details to come! Keep an eye out on social and your inbox!

EXHIBIT 7



NEXT TUESDAY: This month's Lunch & Learn!



Have you reserved your spot yet for next Tuesday's Lunch & Learn? There's still time to join us for a tough talk about generations! Dean from Feedback will explore each generation's unique roles and challenge the notion that generations are effective or even helpful ways to segment audiences. This is a data-driven luncheon that you don't want to miss!

Save Your Seat

You Get an ADDY! You Get an ADDY! You Get an ADDY!

If you or a project you worked on won an American Advertising Award and you'd like to order a duplicate trophy, please complete the form linked below to place your order by **EOD TODAY, March 16**.

Not sure if this applies to you? You can view the full winners list [here](#).

Order Your Duplicate Award

EXHIBIT 8

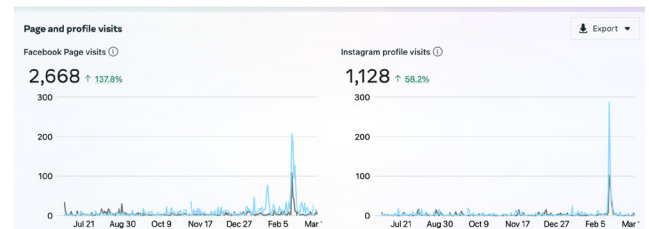


EXHIBIT 9

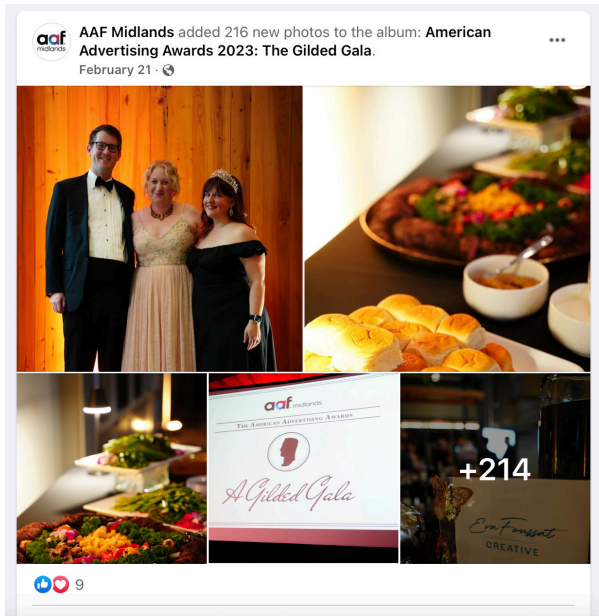


EXHIBIT 10




EXHIBIT 11

aaf midlands AAF Midlands
153 followers
1w · 🌐

United Way of the Midlands (SC) is hiring a Marketing Manager! Check out the position description below and submit your application by the end of the month. **#JobAlert**

United Way of the Midlands
Marketing Manager
Job by United Way of the Midlands (SC)
Richland County, South Carolina, United States (On-site)
Medical, 401(k), Vision, Dental

 4 connections work here

[View job](#)

EXHIBIT 12

Subject	Audience	Send Date	Send Weekday	Open Rate	Click Rate
You've Invited: AAF Midlands Annual Membership Kickoff Event!	AAF Midlands	8/12/2022 11:14	Friday	36.13%	3.78%
Reserve Your Spot for Next Week's Kickoff Event! 🏆	AAF Midlands	8/19/2022 9:34	Friday	38.63%	2.61%
Join me for tomorrow's kickoff event! 🏆	AAF Midlands	8/22/2022 16:25	Monday	41.85%	2.14%
Life After Work: Speed Networking	AAF Midlands	9/20/2022 15:33	Tuesday	39.19%	2.99%
How to save \$50! 🏆	AAF Midlands	9/23/2022 9:45	Friday	38.02%	1.67%
Speed Networking + Win a Bottle of Veuve Clicquot	AAF Midlands	9/26/2022 8:40	Monday	34.77%	2.15%
Thanks For Joining Us for Speed Networking!	AAF Midlands	10/3/2022 16:40	Monday	69.57%	13.04%
Early Bird Membership Rates Extended!	AAF Midlands	10/3/2022 16:43	Monday	39.53%	1.42%
Join us for October's Virtual Lunch & Learn!	AAF Midlands	10/17/2022 8:30	Monday	37.71%	2.27%
THIS TUESDAY: Virtual Lunch & Learn	AAF Midlands	10/21/2022 13:10	Friday	37.80%	1.32%
Oyster Roast & Auction @ Swamp Cabbage Brewing	AAF Midlands	11/3/2022 10:00	Thursday	40.81%	1.91%
Save \$! on Oyster Roast Tickets TODAY ONLY!	AAF Midlands	11/11/2022 9:45	Friday	40.14%	1.79%
Say What?! Oyster Roast Member Tickets are Now FREE!	AAF Midlands	11/14/2022 12:18	Monday	40.02%	2.39%
TOMORROW: Get Ready to Bid!	AAF Midlands	11/16/2022 9:54	Wednesday	39.19%	0.48%
It's The Season To Be Social!	AAF Midlands	11/22/2022 11:23	Tuesday	38.55%	1.66%
NEXT THURSDAY: Jingle Mingle!	AAF Midlands	11/29/2022 13:35	Tuesday	38.54%	1.07%
December Events with AAF!	AAF Midlands	12/2/2022 11:40	Friday	37.04%	1.91%
THIS THURSDAY: Let's Get Ready to Mingle!	AAF Midlands	12/5/2022 10:31	Monday	38.20%	1.33%
TODAY: Jingle Mingle! 🎉	AAF Midlands	12/8/2022 10:13	Thursday	43.73%	1.19%
Join us TOMORROW to Lunch and Learn with Simone Jackson!	AAF Midlands	12/12/2022 11:35	Monday	36.89%	1.68%
🏆! American Advertising Awards Call for Entries! 🏆!	AAF Midlands	12/14/2022 13:29	Wednesday	38.92%	3.47%
It was great seeing you on Tuesday! Let us know how we did.	AAF Midlands	12/16/2022 10:15	Friday	75.00%	29.17%
Will You Be A Winner?	AAF Midlands	1/5/2023 10:08	Thursday	35.81%	2.00%
THIS WEEK: AAwards Take-in Days	AAF Midlands	1/9/2023 13:00	Monday	37.94%	1.65%
LAST CALL: AAwards Entries	AAF Midlands	1/13/2023 7:30	Friday	38.51%	1.54%
TOMORROW: Lunch & Learn	AAF Midlands	1/16/2023 10:33	Monday	39.50%	1.42%
It was great seeing you on yesterday! Let us know how we did.	AAF Midlands	1/18/2023 15:56	Wednesday	52.63%	26.33%
Who Will be the Diamond of the Season?	AAF Midlands	1/27/2023 14:30	Friday	38.69%	2.45%
Lord Addy Goldington Requests Your Presence at the AAF Awards Gala	AAF Midlands	2/7/2023 8:30	Tuesday	39.12%	2.31%
Lord Addy Goldington Requests Your Feedback!	AAF Midlands	2/21/2023 10:31	Tuesday	40.33%	4.48%
Reserve Your Spot for Next Week's Lunch & Learn!	AAF Midlands	3/16/2023 10:53	Thursday	39.31%	2.28%
TOMORROW: Lunch & Learn	AAF Midlands	3/20/2023 9:15	Monday	40.17%	1.84%

EXHIBIT 13

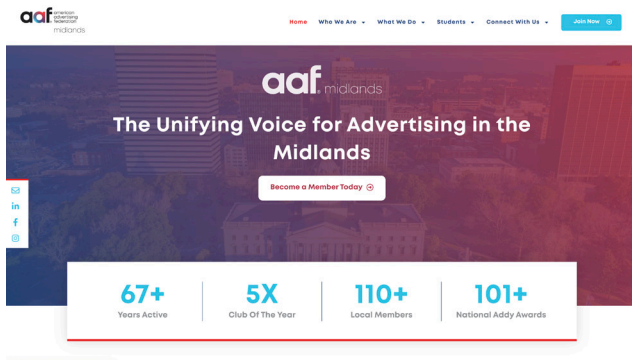


EXHIBIT 14



Liked by eva_lasvegas and 12 others

aafmidlands The Midlands chapters of AAF, IABC, AMA, and PRSA are joining forces to host Jingle Mingle at Femme X on December 8th from 6-9pm!

Holiday cheer will be in the air as we mingle, network, enjoy tasty bites, and sip beverages! Tickets are \$5 for members (of any of the four organizations) and \$15 for non-members. Tickets come with hors-d'oeuvres and one drink; additional drinks will be available for purchase at a cash bar. We hope you will join us for this rare and exciting cross-club holiday meetup! Get your tickets using the link in our bio! 🎄

EXHIBIT 15



EXHIBIT 16



EXHIBIT 17

Overall, how would you rate this professional development luncheon?

Very Good

How did you hear about the luncheon?

Through the Jingle Mingle flyer.

What did you like about the luncheon?

Content delivered by speaker.

EXHIBIT 18

Date	Type	Topic	Presenter
August	Kickoff	N/A	AAF Midlands
September	Life After Work	Speed Networking	AAF Midlands
October	Lunch and Learn (Virtual)	"Get A Life!"	Leigh Farrior, Stamp Idea Group
November	Fundraiser	Low Country Boil	AAF Midlands
December	Life After Work	Jingle Mingle	AAF, PRSA, AMA, IABC
December	Lunch and Learn	"Brand Connection Through Personalization & Self-Creation"	Simone Jackson, Spotify
January	Lunch and Learn	"24 Tactics, Templates, and Tips to Help You Own and Crush Your Marketing Role"	Laura Laire, Laire Digital Marketing
February	Lunch and Learn	"Improving Brand Identity Through Content"	Adam Constantine, ACE Creatives
March	Lunch and Learn	"Tough Talk About Generations"	Dean Browell, at Feedback
April	Lunch and Learn	"Guiding Brands to Intentional Inclusivity"	David Gaesco, Hierarchy
May	Life After Work	End of Year Social	AAF Midlands

EXHIBIT 19



Low Country Boils Are The New Oyster Roasts

Due to recent hurricanes and high tides, DHEC is not allowing oyster harvesting. Therefore we are happy to announce that our annual Oyster Roast & Auction will instead be a **Low Country Boil & Auction!**

There's still time to grab your tickets! AAF Members can now attend the **Low Country Boil & Auction for FREE!**

The **Low Country Boil** will feature our signature live media auction, featuring packages from WACH, Grace Outdoors, As Told By, and Lamar - just to name a few! In addition to media packages attendees can hit up our lifestyle auction for tickets, hotel stays and more! And don't worry about the chilly weather, we'll have plenty of heaters placed inside and outside the venue to keep you warm while you're bidding and mingling all evening.

Be sure to join us **TOMORROW, November 17th** from 6-9pm at **Swamp Cabbage Brewing Company**. Use code **FREETHEOYSTERS** at checkout! Tickets are \$40 at the door regardless of member status. Click the link below to get your free tickets!

[Get Your Ticket](#)

EXHIBIT 20



EXHIBIT 21



EXHIBIT 22

