

BBB|Northwest Florida 2011 Annual Report





Your BBB® | Northwest Florida

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The BBB system as a whole reaches its centennial anniversary this year, and we're pleased to mark the twenty-sixth year with a local office to serve our community!

The economy is slowly improving, showing signs of life in the holiday shopping season. However, 2011 was still a challenging year in northwest Florida.

What did this mean for you? In a down economy, consumers continue to be diligent in researching to find trustworthy businesses. This gives you a distinct advantage as a BBB Accredited Business.

You will see in the following pages, BBB experienced a significant increase in the number of inquiries from consumers. They contacted our office looking for unbiased information and trustworthy businesses and organizations.

We encourage consumers to Start With Trust® and we proactively advanced this conviction. While we were happy to provide information as consumers requested it, we also actively provided information through special events, presentations, media interviews, alerts to BBB Accredited Businesses and Charities, on our social media sites, iPhone app and more.

BBB is 100 years old this year and yet is still just as trusted and relevant as when we started, if not more so, today. BBB is proud of our history and we do not take our role in the marketplace lightly. In this information age, consumers are simply not content to do business with someone they know little or nothing about. 87 million times a year, consumers turn to the BBB system as a whole for information. We offer this information free to everyone to better educate consumers.

On behalf of our 2011 BBB Board of Directors and staff, I would like to personally thank you and our nearly 1,600 BBB Accredited Businesses in northwest Florida for your continued support and commitment to promoting ethical business practices. Your adherence to our Standards for Trust allows your BBB to work toward our vision of an ethical marketplace, where buyers and sellers can trust each other. We look forward to serving our community for the next 100 years.

Sincerely,

Norman Wright
President and CEO

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Union

Don Schroeder
WPNN AM 790

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Gulf Power

Jeff Vannoy
Vannoy's Tires

Belie Williams
The Villas at Gulf
Breeze

John Williams
John Williams
Construction

Greg Yordon
Beltone Hearing Center
Panama City

Accredited Charities

- Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida
- Community Drug and Alcohol Council (CDAC)
- Council on Aging of West Florida
- Gulf Coast Kid's House
- Junior Achievement of Northwest Florida
- Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Florida
- Santa Rosa Kid's House
- West Gadsden Historical Society
- United Way of Escambia County
- United Way of Northwest Florida
- Waterfront Rescue Mission

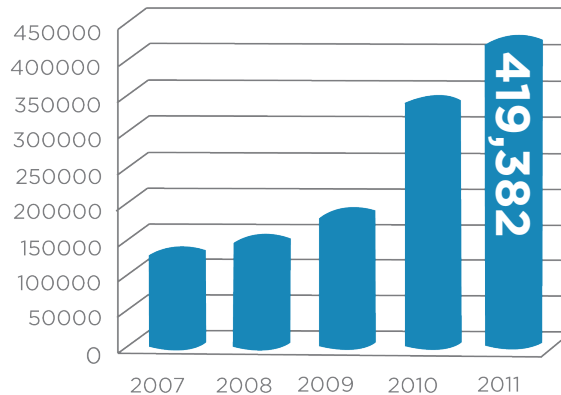
Top 10 Inquired About Industries

1. Travel agencies & bureaus
2. Roofing contractors
3. Auto dealers - used cars
4. Heating & air conditioning
5. Contractors - general
6. Insurance companies
7. Auto repair & service
8. Home builders
9. Internet marketing services
10. Real estate

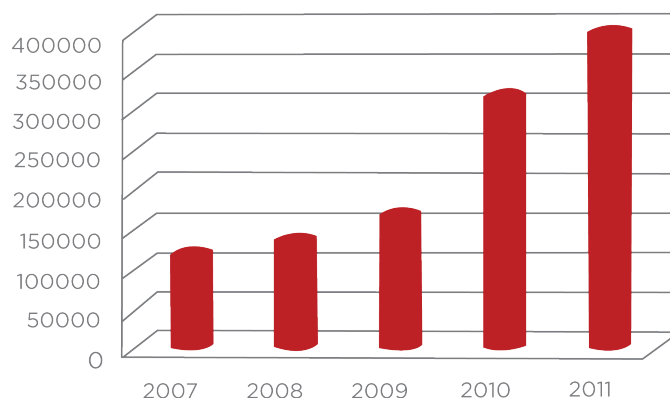
Top 10 Complained About Industries

1. Travel agencies & bureaus
2. Auto dealers - used cars
3. Auto repair & service
4. Auto dealers - new cars
5. Real estate
6. Television - cable, CATV & satellite
7. Appliances - major - service & repair
8. Internet marketing services
9. Furniture - retail
10. Motel/ Hotel

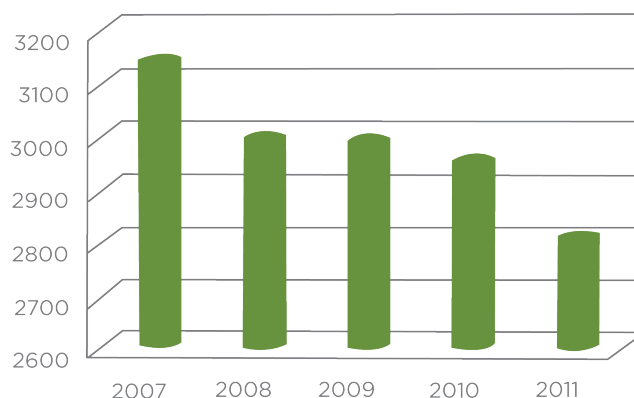
Instances of Service



Inquiries



Complaints





Your BBB, working for you

Visibility

Your BBB introduced or improved the following benefits for BBB Accredited Businesses:

Co-branded marketing: Your BBB|Northwest Florida partnered with the Panama City News Herald and the Northwest Florida Daily News to print a monthly ad. BBB's portion of the ad includes tips to educate consumers in the marketplace. BBB Accredited Businesses have the opportunity to advertise in a portion of the one-half to full page ad, with prices starting as low as **\$20** a month. New in 2011 was the option to add color to ads! Additionally, twice a year, your BBB advertises on local television stations and offers BBB Accredited Businesses the exclusive opportunity to be included in the ad.

Request a Quote: We have seen a **2725%** increase in requests as a result of adding Request a Quote to our Business Reviews for Accredited Businesses. Yes, you read that right! Consumers looking for trustworthy businesses in northwest Florida can request bids and information from BBB Accredited Businesses in a particular industry and zip code. Once a request is submitted, the consumer's contact information and specific request is emailed to the selected BBB Accredited Business. Consumers can also visit <http://nwfl.app.bbb.org/equote>, to select multiple businesses at once.

Communication

Lighthouse: Your BBB|Northwest Florida distributed nearly **10,000** copies of this quarterly newsletter. With information created specifically for BBB Accredited Businesses and Charities, the *Lighthouse* includes valuable information about BBB programs and services, business tips and important scam alerts.

Tuesday Tips: Weekly To-the-point tips offering current BBB news releases, scam alerts, information on upcoming events and more. Tuesday Tips will help you in your two roles in the marketplace: as a business leader and as a consumer.

Social media: Stay on top of local BBB news and alerts through Facebook and Twitter and national news through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Impact

BBB's efforts to increase visibility in the marketplace paid off in big ways in 2011!

Our Start With Trust® campaign continues to encourage consumers to check with BBB before signing a contract or handing over a credit card. By checking out a business in advance or by requesting a list of BBB Accredited Businesses in a specific industry, consumers can save themselves a great deal of hassle down the road.

As a result, BBB has seen a decrease in complaints in the last several years while inquiries and total services provided continue to increase.

In 2011, your BBB|Northwest Florida:

- Had a **71%** resolution rate on the **2,808** complaints opened in an attempt resolve disputes between consumers and businesses. This is a **4.9%** decrease in complaints opened in 2010.
- Responded to **416,515** inquiries, including requests for BBB Business Reviews on specific businesses, requests for rosters of BBB Accredited Businesses by industry, processing Request a Quotes for consumers looking for information from BBB Accredited Businesses and more. This is a **31%** increase over last year.
- Helped the **244,519** consumers who visited BBB|Northwest Florida's website. This amounted to **857,356** pageviews.
- Provided **87,471** customers a list of trustworthy local BBB Accredited Businesses by industry. This is a **30%** increase from 2010.
- Welcomed **120** businesses that made a new commitment to BBB's 13 Standards for Trust and earned BBB Accreditation.
- Offered **447** people the opportunity to hear one of **20** educational presentations tailored for them through the BBB Foundation last year.
- Opened **59** advertising review cases where local advertising did not adhere to BBB's Code of Advertising, creating a level playing field.
- Directed **12,065** potential consumers from our website to Accredited Businesses websites.

You are in business to make money. BBB is in business to educate consumers on how and where to spend their money wisely.



Your BBB, working for you



Check Out a Business or Charity

News Center

Find a BBB

Contact Us

[Full Web Site](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Trademarks](#) [Terms of Use](#)

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Technology

BBB mobile site: The newly redesigned m.bbb.org allows users to find a BBB Accredited Business from their cell phone, PDA or wireless handheld device. The latest revision provides a cleaner “Find a Business or Charity” interface and now includes the BBB News Center and the ability to find your local BBB office’s contact information.

BBB Business Reviews: We introduced new BBB Business Reviews with more information that consumers seek. As a BBB Accredited Business, you have the ability to upload photos, a video, your hours of operation, and more. Business Reviews make it that much easier for consumers to get information about your business.

QR Codes: Each Accredited Business has a QR code that links consumers to the company’s Business Review. Add your QR code to advertisements to let consumers instantly look up your Business Review.

BBB Jobs Link: BBB Accredited Businesses can now post job openings for free under our Jobs Link, letting job hunters know that a trustworthy business is hiring.

BBB iPhone app: The new BBB iPhone App allows consumers to review businesses on the go. Consumers can view the BBB Business Review for the over 17,000 business listings in northwest Florida, complete with BBB rating, contact info, photos and videos for Accredited Businesses, BBB Accreditation status, consumer complaint history, and more.

Dynamic Seal: Your BBB Accredited Business seal is available online to place on your webpage and Facebook page with a call to action and with your BBB rating dynamically updated.



Click for Review



A+ BBB Rating
Click for Review

Social media



Facebook: Find us locally at www.facebook.com/nwfl.bbb. Find national news by searching for “Better Business Bureau US”



Twitter: Get our local tweets at www.twitter.com/nwflbbb. Find national tweets at www.twitter.com/bbb_us



Flickr: See where your BBB|Northwest Florida has been in our community. View photos online at www.flickr.com/nwflbbb.



LinkedIn: Connect with BBB employees and BBB Accredited Businesses across the country at www.linkedin.com and search for “BBB - U.S.”



YouTube: Get information on current marketplace issues at www.youtube.com/BBBVideoTips

Exposure

52 news releases, scam alerts and articles were distributed to over **150** local TV, radio, online and print media outlets.

At least **329** times BBB was mentioned in local TV, radio, online and print media news stories with well over **17 million** exposures.

Ads from BBB ran on TV, radio and in print **3,075** times; BBB Accredited Businesses who included the Accredited Business seal in their own advertisements promoted their own elite standing while increasing exposure for BBB as well.

Mission: To be the leader in advancing marketplace trust



BBB Foundation|NWFL highlights

Your BBB Foundation|Northwest Florida

Last year, your BBB Foundation was the featured speaker at **20** presentations across northwest Florida, reaching **447** people. Topics included *Scams Against Seniors*, *Protecting Yourself Against Identity Theft* and BBB Military Line's *Smart Consumer*.

Your BBB Foundation also reached out to individuals by participating in **7** different tradeshow and expos held across northwest Florida. Speaking one-on-one with **1,047** people, BBB employees educated both consumers and business representatives on ethical marketplace practices.

By partnering with BBB Accredited Business **Gilmore Services**, BBB Foundation along with media partners **WEAR-TV**, **CatCountry 98.7 FM Radio** and **Quantum Communications** was able to help a total of **3,961** people across northwest Florida responsibly destroy **112,880** pounds of sensitive documents, keeping them out of the hands of identity thieves.



The 2011 Torch Awards Winners

Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics: Medi-Weight Loss Clinic, Sea Gallery Stores, Gulf Coast Kid's House, Cooling Services, LLC, M D Billing Solutions

Honorable Mention: Santa Rosa County Chamber of Commerce, Island Realty of Pensacola Beach

Customer Service Excellence Award: Gretchen Shields with Granny Nannies, Amber Wright with BBB, Denise Wright with Dune Allen Realty, Diana Whitmire with Gulf Coast Work Force Center

Student Ethics Scholarships: Amber Briana Cotten, Sarah Renee Green, Sarah Malinda Killam, Jenna Leigh Hyde, Kevin Alexander Pabst, Warren Paul Wilson, Kali Lynne DeBerry, Sahara Rayne Peters, Lacey L. Rudd



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Hour A/C & Heating

Ronnie Gilmore
Gilmore Services

Mike Grossman
Cox Communications

Ted Kirchharr
Landrum Companies

BBB Foundation's mission: To support BBB's vision of an ethical marketplace through community education and recognition programs.



Your BBB

BBB Standards for Charity Accountability

A BBB Accredited Charity:

1. Has a board of directors that provides oversight of operations and staff.
2. Has a board of directors with a minimum of five voting members.
3. Has a minimum of three evenly spaced meetings per year of the full governing body with a majority in attendance, with face-to-face participation.
4. Has not more than one or 10 percent (whichever is greater) compensated person(s) serving as voting board member(s). Chair or treasurer cannot be compensated.
5. Has no transaction in which any board member or staff members have a material conflicting interest, resulting from any relationship or affiliation.
6. Has a board policy of assessing, no less than every two years, the organization's performance and effectiveness and future actions required to achieve its mission.
7. Submits to the board, for approval, a written report giving the results of standard six.
8. Spends at least 65 percent of its total expenses on programs.
9. Spends no more than 35 percent of related contributions on fund-raising.
10. Avoids accumulating funds that could be used on programs.
11. Makes available financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.
12. Includes in the financial statements what portion was allocated to program, fund raising and administrative activities.
13. Accurately reports the charity's expenses in its financial statements.
14. Has a board-approved annual budget.
15. Has solicitations and informational materials, distributed by any means, that are accurate, truthful and not misleading.
16. Has an annual report that includes mission, program, officers and finances.
17. Includes annual report on charity website(s), as well as the mailing address and access to its most recent IRS Form 990.
18. Addresses privacy concerns of donors.
19. Clearly discloses how the charity benefits from the sale of products or services.
20. Responds promptly to and acts on complaints brought to its attention by BBB.

The Standards for Charity Accountability included have been abbreviated for space purposes. For a complete listing of Standards, start with bbb.org/charity.

BBB Standards for Trust

A BBB Accredited Business agrees to:

Build Trust:

Establish and maintain a positive track record in the marketplace

Advertise Honestly:

Adhere to established standards of advertising and selling

Tell the Truth:

Honestly represent products and services, including clear and adequate disclosures of all material terms

Be Transparent:

Openly identify the nature, location and ownership of the business, and clearly disclose all policies, guarantees and procedures that bear on a customer's decision to buy

Honor Promises:

Abide by all written and verbal agreements

Be Responsive:

Address marketplace disputes quickly, professionally and in good faith

Safeguard Privacy:

Protect any data collected against mishandling and fraud, collect personal information only as needed and respect the preferences of consumers regarding the use of their information

Embody Integrity:

Approach all business dealings, marketplace transactions and commitments with integrity

Please start with bbb.org for more details on BBB's Standards for Trust



Advancing Trust TogetherSM

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