



**Letter from the President**

Christie Ransom, President & CEO  
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce

The Winona Area Chamber of Commerce, like many other organizations, has spent the last three months assessing our programs and trying to determine what we could safely do in light of this new territory we are in. June is typically a very busy month, filled with events. One of our mainstays is Family Night on the Farm, and we were sad that it would not be able to happen this year. When our newly formed Agri-Business Committee discussed this, we knew that we had to do something innovative to continue to support our producers during Dairy Month. Through many thoughtful conversations and insight from the amazing crew with Lewiston-Altura FFA, the Dairy Bucket initiative was born.

Throughout the process, we were blown away by the support of the many businesses that sponsored this event to make it such a success. It is times like this that have shown me what this community and region is made of.

The outpouring of support was beyond anything that we could have imagined; from the many sponsorships to the bucket donations by Behrens Manufacturing Co. and Winona Sign & Design/Formgraphics to a community that rallied behind this project to purchase the buckets. With an eager team, we set our sights on selling 1000 buckets and hit that goal in two weeks. This feat is all thanks to the hard work done by our Agri-Business committee members and my amazing Chamber staff! I also want to highlight that this process showed how immensely people care for our community and through philanthropic donations from several organizations, buckets were purchased for Home and Community Options, Sauer Health Care, Winona County Sheriff's Department, and the Winona Police Department.

I want to thank Associated Milk Producers Inc., Elba Co-Op, Ellsworth Creamery, Metz Hartland Dairy, Plainview Cooperative, Kwik Trip, Hy-Vee Winona, and McDonald's Courtesy Corporation for helping us get all the amazing goodies for the buckets. Finally, and most importantly, we want to recognize and thank all our Winona County dairy producers for the work that they do, day after day, to feed all of us. You are very appreciated, not just during Dairy Month, but always.

**About the Chamber**

**Our Vision:**

To be the premier business advocate in Southeastern Minnesota.

**Our Mission:**

To provide value to our members through business advocacy, training, economic development and the support of tourism.

**Officers:**

- Dave Jensen - Chair
- Michael Charron - Chair Elect
- Corey Hancock - Past Chair
- Jolene Vaselaar - Treasurer
- Scott Rodeghier - At Large

**Retiring 2020:**

- Dave Erickson
- Corey Hancock
- Scott Rodeghier
- Dan Welsh
- Terry Klonecki

**Retiring 2021:**

- Ben Adank
- Joanne Thompson
- Dave Jensen
- Rebecca Lamberty
- Jolene Vaselaar

**Retiring 2022:**

- Michael Charron
- Danny Rivers
- Kyle Rupprecht
- Randy Skarlupka
- Ellen Smith

**Staff:**

- Christie Ransom – President & CEO
- Kay Mathews – Vice President of Finance and Operations
- Amanda Steine – Membership Development and Programs Manager
- Ben Strand – Main Street Program Manager
- Nicole Schossow – B.E.N./REACH Program Manager



**Committee Spotlight**

Mike Dieter, Committee Chair  
Economic Development Committee

The Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee likes to keep a finger on the economic pulse of our community. Through its partnership with the Minnesota State Chambers 'Grow MN' Program, The EDC has conducted visits with over 300 local businesses in the last 15 years. These Grow MN visits are a chance for business leaders to be heard and discuss any potential challenges they might be facing. This is an opportunity for collaboration between the Chamber to discuss possible solutions and help with issues such as finding local suppliers, new real estate,

help in securing funding or even just making business connections in our area. Information gathered during these visits are confidentially reported to the State Chamber of Commerce where it is used to influence business friendly legislation at the state and even national level. A Grow MN visit is one of the best ways to create positive change for our local economy for generations to come. Initiatives that have come out of local Grow MN visits include, the Downtown Main Street Program, the Business Education Network (B.E.N) and the REACH Program just to name a few. We support opportunities for economic growth in our area and are here to help in any way possible. Please call the Winona Area Chamber today if you are interested in participating in a Grow MN visit of your own.



**Main Street News July 2020**

Ben Strand, Program Manager  
Main Street Program

We hope the community has been able to safely enjoy Dine Out Downtown these last few Fridays! We are excited to see how the initiative continues to grow in the coming months with more community participation and street activity through live music, fitness, yoga classes, and more! If you're interested in getting involved with Dine Out Downtown or have ideas you'd like to pitch that will make the events better please reach out to Ben at [bstrand@winonachamber.com](mailto:bstrand@winonachamber.com).

We also have some downtown beautification projects in progress through a partnership with the Fine Arts Commission and Winona Creative Laureate. Keep your eyes open when you are out and about downtown this summer, you might just notice some new splashes of color you have never noticed before.

**You can stay up-to-date on all things Main Street by visiting our website at [winonamainstreet.com](http://winonamainstreet.com) or our Facebook page Winona Main Street Program, or emailing Ben Strand at [bstrand@winonachamber.com](mailto:bstrand@winonachamber.com)**



**CHAMBER CHAMPIONS**

- VISIONARY -



- PREMIER -



- EXECUTIVE -



**Chamber Welcomes New Intern**



**Mikaela Mohr, Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Intern**, is a 2020 graduate of Winona Senior High School and, thanks to PSEO credits through WSU, will be an incoming sophomore at Winona State University with a major in Marketing and a minor in English. Mikaela is a life-long resident of Winona and has found a deep passion for giving back to the community. She has worked with Advocacy Center of Winona, Big Brothers Big Sisters, ASAP of Winona and has competed in the Miss Winona Scholarship program. Mikaela has a strong passion for helping victims and survivors of sexual violence and building awareness for special needs children in the foster care system. Mikaela's involvement in the REACH program offered through a partnership between the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce and Winona Senior High School has brought her to this internship at the Winona Area Chamber. In high school, Mikaela participated in the Human Services pilot of the REACH program. CareerForce Winona, previously known as the Winona Workforce Center, has allowed her to be the telework pilot through the state "Young and Youth Program" which will fund her education and internship. Mikaela's goal is to pay it forward to the Winona community which holds a special place in her heart. When she is not volunteering, she works for a family as special needs nanny in Holmen, WI. In her free time, she is part of the worship band at her church and likes to hike the bluffs. Mikaela is looking forward to working with the Chamber staff in helping students, local schools and area businesses work together to bridge the gap between the classroom and local manufacturing employers.



**BE SEEN • BE HEARD • BELONG – JOIN THE CHAMBER!**

It's not just business as usual in Winona. The potential dividends from an investment in the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce are unlimited, because what develops at the Chamber is everyone's business.

If you are interested in leading the way with us, go to [www.winonachamber.com](http://www.winonachamber.com) and complete the online form. To set up an appointment to explore the advantages of Chamber membership or to learn more about available resources at the Winona Chamber contact us at (507) 452-2272 or email [info@winonachamber.com](mailto:info@winonachamber.com)

**BIZ BITES**



**Minnesota State College Southeast** announced the promotion of **Josiah Litant** to the position of Vice President of Student Affairs. Josiah joined MSC Southeast's administration in October 2018 as Dean of Students and will continue in that role, holding both titles. As Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Josiah provides innovation, leadership, strategy, and supervision to all student services operations including recruitment, admissions, marketing, registration, financial aid, academic advising, and student success. He also oversees student conduct, mental health services; testing and tutoring; veteran's affairs; and diversity and inclusion. He also serves as a member of the President's Cabinet and as Title IX Officer for the college. "Josiah Litant's role at the college has greatly expanded during his short time at MSC Southeast," said Interim President Larry Lundblad. "His promotion to vice-president is in recognition of the leadership he is providing in transforming student affairs and the larger role that he plays within the college as a member of the Interim President's cabinet."



**Hawkins Ash CPAs** has a new Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the firm's Winona, Minn., office. Senior Tax Associate **Steve Arnold** recently achieved his CPA designation from the Minnesota Board of Accountancy. To qualify, he had to pass a rigorous, four-part written exam, have a four-year college degree and demonstrate at least a year of experience in public or private accounting. With more than 15 years of accounting experience, Arnold joined Hawkins Ash CPAs in 2017. In his current role, he prepares tax returns for businesses, individuals, trusts and exempt organizations, as well as the review and compilation of financial statements. What I enjoy most about working in my field is having the resources to help clients make smart tax moves." said Arnold. "I am quite happy when I am able to keep them from paying unnecessary taxes!"



The **AmericInn by Wyndham Winona** announced it has been awarded the annual "Best of AmericInn", which recognizes the brand's top performing hotels and their staffs. In celebration of the achievement, Jeremy Nelson, regional director at Discover Lodging Management, accepted the award from AmericInn and Wyndham Hotels & Resorts leadership. "Receiving this honor again is a testament to the incredible work of our hotel teams in delivering top-notch hospitality day in and day out," said Nelson. "Winning the hearts and loyalty of guests is all about maintaining a quality hotel and cultivating a staff that's passionate about the details; we've succeeded on both fronts, and we'll continue striving to set the bar even higher for what it means to be a 'Best of AmericInn.'" To be eligible for the award, hotels must demonstrate strong quality scores, outstanding guest reviews and an unwavering commitment to the Wyndham Rewards loyalty program and its members.

**NEW MEMBERS**



**Whalen's at Westfield** is a restaurant and event center with a casual to upscale ability. They can seat 350 and have a large dance floor perfect for any event. The area can also be split into multiple rooms with a divider built into the ceilings. The restaurant moved to Westfield Golf Course after formerly being location in Minnesota City and being known as Whalen's Cove. Whalen's main goal is quality service and homemade food, which includes homemade pizzas, tartar sauce and soup, along with anything breaded and fried. Call to make a reservation today 507.452.8700 or visit [whalensatwestfield.com](http://whalensatwestfield.com).



**Farm Bureau Financial Services – Jessica Looman Agency** provides insurance and financial strategies that can help you protect what matters most. From insurance for your auto, home, life, business, and farm or ranch, to a comprehensive financial plan to help you achieve your goals for the future, their team can help customize your coverage to fit your specific needs. They make insurance simple. Farm Bureau Financial Services Agent Jessica Looman does things a little differently. She cares about Your World and what's most important to you. Jessica's job is far more than an "insurance agent". Her job is to build a wall of protection around what you have worked so hard to build and help you achieve even bigger dreams for the future. Farm Bureau Financial Services does this by identifying risks and coming up with a strategy to block risk from destroying your future. Does this sound important to you? Would you like help building your strategy? Contact them today because nothing is more important than protecting Your World. Call 507.474.6210 or visit [jessicalooman.fbfsagents.com](http://jessicalooman.fbfsagents.com).

**IMPRESSIONS**



I'm so grateful to be a Winona Chamber/Main Street member. During this pandemic they have gone above and beyond with helping and guiding their members, and keeping connected and well informed about important local and state information our businesses need to know and/or be aware of. The Chamber/Main Street is always looking to the future and coming up with new and creative ways to support its members and community during these times. Great job as always! Thank you for all you do!

-José Peláez, Graphic/Website Designer  
Peláez Creative, LLC



Connecting with others is vital during this time. The Chamber's virtual events during the current pandemic have been fun and exciting. I was able to meet other members in the community and really get to know them. One of my favorites was an event about mentoring. The course was very informative, professionally and personally. I would encourage all members to get involved, learn, and have fun!

-Jodi Eggert, Distribution Center Administration/Recruiter  
Fastenal Co.



The Winona Area Chamber of Commerce was able to connect us with people who could answer questions on essential employees allowing Knitcraft to bring key people back to work and minimize the impact of COVID-19 on production.

-Sue Pronschinske, Director of HR and Operations  
Knitcraft Corporation



As a former Chamber board member, businessperson, and resident, I want to just send a quick note of appreciation for the Chamber team we have in place. No one could ever prepare for a pandemic and what that really means to us until we experience it firsthand. The first of April we did not see a soul. We prepared for the worst like everyone. Christie and the Chamber team mobilized and advocated for the opening of businesses, opened the downtown, and stayed close to local and state legislators all the way to the Governor's office, with us in mind. The impact, without their assistance, would be considerably worse, for that I am thankful. Really, we all should be. It renews my commitment to do business locally, to dine here, and enjoy all our community has to offer. Personally, we have seen much more local business at both Chrysler Winona and Sugarloaf Ford. People seem to appreciate local business now more than ever. So, if you get a chance, thank your Chamber team. And if you are not a member, you should be. Join. Be part of something that matters to you. It is money well spent to have a team promoting local business. They have your back, especially now when we need help the most.

-Mike Puetz, Owner  
Sugarloaf Ford Lincoln/Chrysler Winona



**WINONA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 GRADUATES!**

**THANK YOU FROM THE WINONA AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AGRIBUSINESS COMMITTEE TO ALL OF THE DAIRY BUCKET SPONSORS & VOLUNTEERS**

Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee  
Chair: Kyle Rupprecht  
Dave Erickson, Jordan Fredrick, Ryan Grobe, Glen Growth, Duane Klein, Jeremy Kreidermacher, Dan Kunst, Anne Schultz, Kaleb Storm, Jim Vrchota, Duane & Liz Wirt, Michelle Woodard

For more information on joining the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee, call 507.452.2272

