



Let us be YOUR Chamber of Commerce

Christie Ransom,
President & CEO

It's June and quite frankly I don't know where the year has gone. We started 2020 with an amazing Annual Banquet and a new logo, some awesome workshops, the unveiling of our revitalized Young Professionals program, a newly formed Ag Committee, and plans for a year full of exciting new things. Fast forward to March, and suddenly our world turned on its head. While it required agility and innovation as an organization, we knew that times like these are what Chambers of Commerce were made for. The time was now that we lead the charge for businesses and do our very best to carry them through. While we had no idea how long things would continue or how great the impact would ultimately be in mid-March, it wasn't long before we realized that this was going to be a long and winding road. With no hesitation, we rose to the challenge. No other organization represents the business community like the Chamber of Commerce and while we got to work, we knew that there would have to be a balance between the needs of the business community and the needs of the general community.

As businesses focused on how to adapt and in some cases to even survive, we were navigating complicated

government processes and doing our best to protect your rights. My effort has been on communicating with our legislators, County officials, City Officials and staff, members of Congress, the US Chamber of Commerce, the MN Chamber team, as well as to the Governor. Having the ability to elevate the concerns we have heard was my focus and those came in many forms. Our intention was to be the life raft for businesses as we journeyed through these waters. Our staff certainly worked hard to make sure we supported every business and brought relevant training and information immediately as it was coming at us.

Now, we are excited to remove the word crisis from our vocabulary and replace it with resurgence. We are looking to the future and how we must help our partners in recovery. We are so thankful for the many businesses that have invested in us so that we can continue to work hard on your behalf. As you look at your businesses today and find struggles or areas of vulnerability, remember that we are here for just those things. As we forge ahead, we will help businesses discover new ways to market themselves, we will create leaders and community servants, we will be a voice and be an ear, we will celebrate with businesses, we will celebrate industries, we will work hard to create workforce solutions, we will continue our Main Street work with fervor, we will be a relationship builder, we will bring relevant education and training, and we will passionately promote our area and our businesses. We will be your champion. We believe in you and we are so proud to serve you! Let us be YOUR Chamber of Commerce!



Supporting our students during COVID-19 restrictions

Nicole Schossow,
B.E.N./REACH Program Manager

Due to the timing of the school closings, the last time we saw our REACH students in person at the school was the first week of March. So how are we still supporting our students right now? As with many of our local businesses, we have turned to technology to fill some of the gaps. Our connections to our students through email and text have allowed us to share articles and videos about professional soft skills. Thanks to Express Employment Professionals, we have access to a full video library that can be shared with our students to prepare them for work. Our business partners came together through Zoom to do a panel presentation on how COVID-19 has changed the workplace and will continue to change it moving forward, preparing our students for the workforce they will enter upon graduation.

While some activities for juniors have been postponed to fall (we only completed two of the four immersions), we

will not have the opportunity to see our seniors in person before they graduate. For this reason, much of the focus for sharing information is on preparing our seniors. Typically, we spend spring semester updating resumes, practicing interviews, covering personal finance, and supporting students through the process of applying for jobs and school. All of this continues in virtual formats.

In early June, there will be a total of 18 REACH students graduating. Of those 18 students, we will have two join the military to support our country while they continue their education in mechanics and psychotherapy. Three students will focus on continuing to work in their chosen career field (manufacturing and healthcare), while another two will focus on school exclusively (radiology and physical therapy.) Finally, the rest of the student will both continue their education AND continue to work in related jobs. We are proud of all of our REACH students and wish our graduates the best.



Main Street News June 2020

Ben Strand, Main Street
Program Manager

As businesses get the okay to start reopening in various capacities, Main Street is looking at new and creative ways to support them through the process. We're looking to implement some new programs to help promote downtown, such as #AliveDowntown, where we go live on social media and visit with different businesses each week, ask them what they've been up to, what their plans are moving forward, and how the community can best support them at this time. We are also working with the City of Winona on viable options to support the downtown businesses with outdoor options.

Additionally, in partnership with the Winona Fine Arts Commission, we applied for and received a Winona

Foundation grant for several beautification projects downtown. Sarah Johnson, the Winona Creative Laureate, will be painting a series of doors with positive greeting messages on them to add splashes of color to our downtown. Later this year she will also make a couple of murals in collaboration with community members for downtown businesses to add to their buildings. We will also be adding about a dozen planters filled with native plants downtown. These projects will take place throughout the course of the summer, so keep your eyes peeled as you venture downtown in the coming months!

You can stay up-to-date on all things Main Street by visiting our website at winonamainstreet.com or our Facebook page Winona Main Street Program, or emailing Ben Strand at bstrand@winonachamber.com



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

CHAMBER CHAMPIONS

- VISIONARY -



- PREMIER -



- EXECUTIVE -



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 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

Biz Bites



Merchants Bank is one of 40 banks in the state to be named a Community Champion by the Minnesota Bankers Association in recognition of the Bank's local community contributions, service and support. "We are proud to be recognized for our community engagement efforts in 2019, but the current state of the world provides a stark reminder that we have great challenges ahead of us in all of our communities," said **Greg Evans**, President & CEO. "As we always have, we will embrace those challenges as opportunities. By working together, we can and will help those in need and support the heroes on the front lines of the pandemic response." As a commitment to local community leadership, Merchants Bank employees volunteered more than 15,000 hours to 211 organizations in 2019. In addition to last year's volunteer efforts, Merchants Bank contributed to more than 500 organizations with total charitable donations of more than \$595,000.00, or 2.63% of Merchants Bank's pre-tax income. Local community commitment and support has been key priority for Merchants since it's founding in 1875.

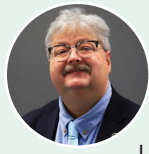


RiverStar, Inc. has signed a new business deal with a leading provider of electronic test and measurement equipment to assemble, test, and distribute environmental test chambers. These chambers are used for wide-ranging test applications by industry leaders in mobile phones and tablet devices, semi-conductors, aerospace, and automotive. The chambers feature the latest advances in refrigeration systems, insulation, metal fabrication, and micro-processor controller technology for advanced control of devices under test. Manufacturing, testing, and distribution of these chambers will be conducted in one of RiverStar's Winona, MN facilities. This unique opportunity for the local area will create approximately 20 new positions in production, electrical, refrigeration, and testing. In addition to local job creation, RiverStar will be sourcing and qualifying additional suppliers in areas such as metal fabrication, copper tubing, hardware, and wire harnesses. RiverStar, Inc. is a contract manufacturer which specializes in kitting, assembly and supply chain management for its partners. RiverStar manages everything from sourcing and procurement of materials to worldwide inbound and outbound logistics, production, warranty, and maintenance/repair operations.

In celebration of its heritage, **Saint Mary's University** virtually presented awards to one faculty member and one staff member in honor of Founders' Day



Karen Hemker, director of access services, received the Bishop Heffron Award. Given by the university every other year, this award is bestowed on an employee who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the values of the university, is a positive member of the university community as demonstrated by their ability to work successfully across constituencies for the good of the university, and is a model of the Lasallian Catholic spirit. Hemker, who has been part of Saint Mary's for 15 years, has worked with countless students, parents and guardians, and educators over those years to ensure all students have the needed accommodations to be successful at the university.



Matthew Nowakowski, Ed.D., program director of the Doctor of Business Administration program, core associate professor, and interim vice provost of Academic Affairs, received the Distinguished Lasallian Educator Award. Presented each year, the award recognizes a member of the faculty, staff, or administration whose life of faith and service exemplifies the ideals of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. The award is given by Lasallian institutions like Saint Mary's in the Lasallian Region of North America of the De La Salle Christian Brothers to honor contributions and commitment to the Lasallian mission of education. Dr. Nowakowski has taught and been an administrator at Saint Mary's for 12 years and is a mentor, teacher, and scholar who is deeply committed to the success of faculty, staff, and students at Saint Mary's.



JUNE IS DAIRY MONTH SOME FUN DAIRY FACTS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE WINONA AREA CHAMBER

The first cow in America arrived in the Jamestown colony in 1611.

The largest ice cream-producing states include California, Indiana, Texas, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Minnesota. It also takes 12 pounds of whole milk to make one gallon of ice cream and 21.2 pounds of whole milk to make one pound of butter.

The U.S. enjoys an average of 48 pints of ice cream per person, per year, more than any other country. Maybe we should make ice cream the fifth food group.

There are roughly 350 "squirts" in a gallon of milk.

Cows can walk upstairs but not down because a cow's knees are unable to bend the way that is needed to walk downstairs.

Cows have 32 teeth, all of them on the bottom with a dental pad on top and can produce 125 pounds of saliva in a single day.

Dairy cows give more than 7 gallons of milk each day. That's 400 glasses of milk!

Cheddar cheese is the most popular natural cheese in the U.S.

The Top 10 Reasons to be a Member of Winona Chamber

Now is a great time to join the chamber – and here are 10 reasons why you should – although you really just need one!

1. Being a member of the Chamber says a lot about your business. It puts you in the company of a community of businesses who care about our quality of life and work hard to enhance the well-being of our area, for everyone. Invest in the Chamber to:

- Help maintain a quality of life that is attractive to their employees.
- Advocate for regulations that are reasonable in their impact on the business environment.
- Act strategically to enhance our area's potential.
- Support area businesses that are the engine of our local economy.
- Lead on workforce development projects to grow area workforce.

2. We are your link between your business and the business community within Winona and the surrounding areas. Membership in the Winona Area Chamber keeps business owners on top of important, ever-changing issues and trends within the community and local marketplace.

3. Research shows that consumers are more likely to do business with a company that is a member of their local chamber of commerce. According to a study by The Shapiro Group, Inc. and Market Street Services, consumers are 44% more likely to think favorably of it and 63% more likely to purchase goods or services from the company in the future.

4. We offer our members low cost access to Professional Leadership Development. More than 4000 hours per year!

5. With hundreds of hours of networking activities, we initiate more business-to-business commerce and more opportunities for networking and connecting local professionals than is available through most other local organizations.

6. Who you know is often as important as what you know. Let us help to expand your prospect base for new potential customers and vendors through our referrals. We have hundreds of people walk in, call, email and view our website daily.

7. We've got your back! We assist scores of chamber member businesses to overcome challenges and to grow their businesses. How can we help you today?

8. We offer our members various avenues of exposure such as:

- a. Website
- b. Business Directory
- c. Ribbon Cuttings & Ambassador Presentations
- d. Chamber ADvantage
- e. Program Sponsorships
- f. Community Profile Book
- g. Chamber Bucks Program
- h. Social Media

9. State of the art Conference Room available for your business to use.

10. If you do business in or with people who live and work in the Winona area, then the Winona Chamber is for you.



Contact us at (507) 452-2272 or email info@winonachamber.com

Winona County Ag Update

Kyle Rupprecht

Chair, Winona Chamber Agri-Business Committee



This spring has been full of ups and downs for farmers and the agricultural community. The weather has been great and dry conditions made for earlier planting than we have seen in this area for quite a few years. After a few weekends of needed rain and warmer weather, growing conditions are excellent heading into summer. Yet with all of that said, the economic impact has been a very different story.

COVID-19 has caused major disruptions for every business sector. For the farmers it has been a sudden decrease or change in demand for products, followed by turmoil in the distribution chain and processing. Board of trade milk prices fell from \$16.25 per hundredweight in February to \$13.07 in March, which is close to a 20% drop. Corn, soybeans, and beef experienced similar drops at the same time. Hogs might have seen the hardest hit with so many of their processing plants shutting down and nowhere to sell their pigs. Meanwhile, stores were running out of some foods and/or had very limited availability. What an odd and unusual situation overall for the farmers and the consumer. However, as one farmer so calmly stated "the sun keeps coming up each day and people still need to eat". While we do not know the specifics of the future markets, we do know commodity markets adjust and stabilize over time. Dairy prices have already started to rebound, and meat packers are slowly opening back up.

With Minnesota ranking fifth in total agricultural production and eighth in livestock production, it accounts for over \$57 billion in sales and provides more than 147,000 jobs. Agriculture plays a huge role in our state's economy as well as our local economy. With the staggering impact that the producers have faced, our hope is that the rebound and recovery happens quickly, and that good weather continues to come their way.

We celebrate the farmers in Winona County and our mission is to continue to support them in everything that we do!

The Chamber Agri-Business Committee has been working on some great plans for 2020. If you are interested in joining the committee please contact the Chamber at 452-2272 or email info@winonachamber.com

Kyle Rupprecht is the Vice President of Ag Banking at Minnwest Bank