

March 2021

www.winonachamber.com | (507) 452-2272 | 902 E. Second St., Suite 120, Winona, MN



Going into the 2021 legislative session

Christie Ransom, President & CEO
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce

Going into the 2021 legislative session, it is my goal to ensure that the voices of our area businesses are heard, and their needs are addressed. The most important item of focus for me is ensuring that economic recovery and re-opening our economy are paramount. Additionally, it is imperative that the State of Minnesota conform to Federal PPP tax rules to ensure that our struggling businesses are not heavily taxed on aid that they so desperately needed.

While I have worked together with state legislators as well as our members of congress to address some concerns facing our businesses, I have also been grateful for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Federation. As a Federation partner, our voice is amplified, and our needs are heard in a grander way at the State Capitol. There are 37 Chambers in the state that make up the Federation and below are the priorities that are being addressed this legislative session.

I am always ready to fight on your behalf. If you have needs or concerns that are not addressed in our session priorities, please do not hesitate to reach out and let me know. I look forward to working for you.

MINNESOTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION PRIORITIES – MINNESOTA’S ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS IMPERATIVE

Local chambers represent economic vitality in their communities. The Minnesota Chamber Federation unites and amplifies the voice of local chambers by advocating for policies to advance business in every corner of the state. Federation partners represent more than 43 communities and more than 21,000 businesses. They have worked to promote pro-growth policies to the Legislature for more than a decade, helping ensure that state lawmakers understand the needs and interests of Minnesota’s diverse and successful local business community.

Support employers and employees throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

The impact of COVID-19 on the statewide economy and many sectors of the business community will have lasting impact and the legislature must first “do no harm” and instead pass measures that spur recovery and economic growth. Businesses cannot sustain additional tax and fee increases, mandates, regulatory burdens and other measures that will further impede business recovery.

We support:

Tax reforms and small business grants to provide hard-hit industries with immediate cash flow.

Enacting COVID-19 lawsuit liability protections for businesses.

Maintaining and enhancing connectivity, i.e. broadband.

Reorienting workforce development programs based on immediate needs in a post-COVID-19 economy.

Maximizing the ability of schools to bring students safely back to campus for in-person, full-time instruction.

Providing one-time targeted child care funding to meet the needs of low-income and essential workers and providers.

Maintaining benefit flexibility

We are committed to providing the best workplaces for employees. As demonstrated throughout the pandemic, Minnesota employers adhere to strict safety protocols, labor laws and workplace standards to maintain healthy, respectful and inclusive workplaces. We support employer

flexibility in determining workplace wage, benefit, scheduling and staffing decisions. Employers design benefit packages to meet their employees’ needs. Employer protections must be recognized, addressed and implemented if Minnesota legalizes use of recreational marijuana.

Ensuring high-quality, affordable health care

Health insurance is an increasingly important benefit, allowing employers attract and retain talent in the marketplace and ensure their employees stay healthy and productive at work. We oppose additional mandates and taxes that drive up costs and instead, urge the legislature to improve coverage options including continued stability in the individual market through reinsurance. We oppose a government-sponsored public option which would lead to significant financial impacts on providers and hospitals – especially in rural areas and underserved communities and increase costs for those with private coverage – whether fully-insured or self-funded – because health care providers will be forced to shift even more costs to these Minnesotans.

Transportation Investment

Current estimates indicate that the state’s transportation revenues will decline by roughly \$400 million in the current biennium due to the reduction in travel and economic activity associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognize that finding solutions to the near-term revenue shortfall will be difficult during a time of General Fund budget deficits, economic turbulence, and pandemic, however we must maintain, and if possible increase general fund revenues dedicated to transportation. Other funding options include increased fees for electric vehicles, increased tab fees (through a depreciation schedule adjustment) and achieving more investment through greater efficiencies.

Energy and the environment

Environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness, if done right, are not mutually exclusive. We support achieving Minnesota businesses’ sustainability goals while keeping Minnesota energy rates competitive. We must continue needed progress on permitting efficiencies and streamlining.

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

- OUR MISSION -

To Serve Businesses How and When They Need Us

- OUR VISION -

Be the Foremost Resource and Advocate for Businesses in the Winona Area

Officers:

Michael Charron – Chair
Andrew Puetz – Chair Elect
Dave Jensen – Past Chair
Jolene Vaselaar – Treasurer
Kyle Rupprecht – At Large

Retiring 2021:

Ben Adank
Joanne Thompson
Dave Jensen
Rebecca Lamberty
Jolene Vaselaar

Retiring 2022:

Michael Charron
Danny Rivers
Kyle Rupprecht
Randy Skarlupka
Ellen Smith

Retiring 2023:

Andrea Northam
Dave Pederson
Kelly Pronschinske
Andy Puetz
Mike Dieter

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 -



MEET OUR NEWEST CHAMBER BOARD MEMBER

Mike Dieter is the General Manager of **Express Employment Professionals**, a locally owned staffing firm in Winona MN. Express was voted “Best of Staffing” for both Clients and Talent in 2021. Mike has been with Express for almost three years after moving to the Winona area from Colorado with his wife and three children. Mike enjoys serving as the chair for the Winona Chambers Economic Development Committee and is involved with the REACH committee helping High School students “Reach their full potential”. When not helping local businesses thrive with unique workforce solutions, Mike can be found somewhere enjoying nature either on the Mighty Mississippi, hiking in the bluffs or cooking a tasty meal for family and friends.



Main Street News March 2021

Ben Strand, Program Manager
Main Street Program

Shop Local – Winter Edition

Well, that frigid cold spell sure was fun wasn’t it!? You have got to love living in the Midwest during winter. All jokes aside, one thing I think we certainly should all love and appreciate is the amount of support our community showed our downtown businesses during Main Street’s first ever “Shop Local – Winter Edition” from February 15-28. Your continued support of the small business community is one very important thing that is helping them continue to push through and navigate these times, and they greatly appreciate it. But remember, just because this initiative is over does not mean you have to stop supporting our local small business community – they really appreciate seeing everyone’s faces each and every time you step foot in their shop. I would also like to give a huge “thank you” to Sugar Loaf Ford Lincoln and Chrysler Winona for sponsoring the “Shop Local – Winter Edition” initiative! Without their generous support we would not

have been able to make it happen. Next time you are in the market for a vehicle or need to service or repair your current vehicle, make sure you give one of them a call!

Touch-A-Truck

One thing to keep an eye out for in the coming weeks is the announcement of our plans for 2021 ~~Touch-A-Truck~~! We did not get to hold this event last year, and we are working very hard to make sure to bring you one of Main Street’s biggest (and most fun) annual events this year. It will not look the same as it has in years past, but an innovative awesome experience will still happen for families to enjoy!



You can stay up-to-date with all things Main Street by liking our Facebook page (facebook.com/winonammainstreet) or visiting our website at winonamainstreet.com.

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BIZ BITES



Saint Mary's University has named **Gary Klein** Vice President for Advancement. Klein, who most recently served as Vice President of University Development and Alumni Engagement at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake, Iowa, is no stranger to Saint Mary's. A Saint Mary's alumnus, with a Master of Arts in Philanthropy and Development, Klein spent several years in progressive leadership roles in advancement at Saint Mary's early in his career. Prior to Buena Vista, he served as vice president for institutional advancement at Edgewood College in Madison, Wis., from 2015-2019. There Klein completed and surpassed a campaign that funded the 2017 construction of a new residence hall. Additionally, he developed and implemented an advancement plan that strengthened fundraising infrastructure resulting in a systematic process capable of predictable results, regular growth, and more. During his tenure, he secured the largest gift commitment in the history of the college. Klein also previously served as vice president for institutional advancement at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wis., from 2002 to 2015, during which time he oversaw two successful capital campaigns and increased fundraising by more than 400 percent. "Gary Klein has 25 years of experience in development and is a proven leader with a collaborative vision," said Father James P. Burns, IVD, Saint Mary's president. "He has a proven track record in major gifts, advancement leadership, managing capital campaigns, and growing affinity and engagement with alumni and benefactors. He will be an excellent fit to help us advance our strategic plan, build strong and innovative partnerships, and to further our Lasallian Catholic mission."



Minnesota State College Southeast graduate returns as Basic Needs Outreach Specialist through AmeriCorps VISTA program. When **Akilah Childs** was a student, she made a major impact, serving on Student Senate, working as a peer tutor, planning campus-wide events, and helping Student Services with recruiting and admissions. She graduated from the college's Early Childhood Education program in 2016. MSC Southeast is excited to welcome Akilah back in a new. She will provide service on both the Red Wing and Winona campuses, developing new relationships within the communities to help college students in need. This semester Akilah is focused on expanding and organizing the college's food pantries. By offering students access to fresh food and non-perishable staples, the college hopes to reduce the stress of wondering where their next meal will come from. "We want to normalize the idea of getting help, remove the stigma," Akilah stated, "Especially in a time like now with COVID-19, everybody could use a little bit of help."



WNB Financial is pleased to announce the recent promotions of two employees: **Chad Anderson** and **Latonia Schmitt**. Anderson has been promoted to Senior Lending Manager. With over 20 years of banking experience, he oversees the strategic initiatives for both the Business Banking and Mortgage Departments. Anderson's vast experience with serving as a trusted financial advisor, enhancing systems, and overall management skills create a natural fit for his leadership position. He'll continue to serve Business Banking clients in Winona. Schmitt has been promoted to Mortgage Manager. While continuing to serve as a mortgage originator in Winona, she now supports the Bank's overall mortgage lending efforts in all markets, with a key focus on enhancing the customer experience. Schmitt's enthusiasm and commitment to excellent service are instrumental in driving the success of WNB Financial customers and the community as a whole. "Chad and Latonia provide outstanding leadership and dedication to their responsibilities, and they're very deserving of these promotions," said Erica Jerowski, WNB Financial Senior Vice President and Chief Credit Officer. "Their commitment to our Mission, Vision, and Values, coupled with their new and expanded roles, will help advance our team and the Bank as a whole to higher levels of performance and service."



Certified Physician Assistant (PA-C) **Shelby Rockafellow** has joined **Winona Health's** General Surgery department. "Growing up, I knew that I wanted to be in healthcare. My grandma was a nurse, and it was always interesting to talk to her about what that was like," said Rockafellow. "I also really liked science and learning about the human body. One of the things that drew me to the surgery field is that it's a specialty that can help some patients find immediate relief from health issues." Rockafellow said she chose Winona Health in part because of a friend who is a nurse at Winona Health. "She has always had great things to say about the people she works with at Winona Health, and my husband and I love this area when we come to visit. It's just beautiful and there are so many opportunities for hiking and being outdoors." Rockafellow earned her Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies from University of South Dakota in Vermillion. She graduated with honors from Minnesota State University, Moorhead, with a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a minor in Immunology and Chemistry. She is certified by the National Commission of Physician Assistants.



Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Mental Health Therapist, **Shelby Marx, MSW, LICSW** joined the **Winona Health** Behavioral Health team and will provide counseling and behavioral health services to people of all ages. Marx also will continue serving part-time as a social worker in the Dialysis department. "The best part of being a social worker and mental health therapist is cultivating relationships, planting seeds and witnessing growth," said Marx. "My therapy practice is guided by approaches that are client centered, relational, strengths based, developmental, behavioral and trauma informed, and may incorporate creativity/art, mindfulness and motivational interviewing." Marx earned her Master of Social Work (MSW) at Minnesota State University in Mankato. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Criminal Justice from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in Winona. She is certified by the Minnesota Board of Social Work. Marx's background includes working with diverse populations and in diverse settings including nonprofits, public policy, outpatient treatment, residential treatment, child and family services, school-linked mental health, and dialysis.



February has already come to an end

Mikaela Mohr,
Chamber Intern B.E.N./REACH

It is crazy to think the month of February has already come to an end. However, it only brings excitement for all the events happening in the coming months. The Winona Area Chamber Young Professionals Program has grown and adapted throughout our monthly events. In January, the Virtual Coffee and Networking Social was a great opportunity to connect and digitally meet our 2021 Young Professionals (YPs). In late February, we hosted Virtual Happy Hour, our second networking event, as well as welcoming Mary Abbajay, a New-York Times Bestselling Author for her book, "Managing Up". Mary was exhibited in Forbes and the Harvard Business Review and spoke to the YPs about how to "Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss!"

The "How to Start A Business" guidebook has had its own growth as well. As formatting and the overall look is a work in progress, the content has been solidified and is in the beginning process of

being placed within the draft of the book itself. I would like to extend a huge thank you to the members of the Winona Economic Development Committee for their work and dedication towards the content of the guidebook. Ads are still available for purchase and are a great way to promote your business or service. To learn more about advertising in this guidebook, reach out the Chamber via phone or email!

Lastly, the REACH program within our local schools has been adapting the recruitment season. We virtually meet with our sophomores and parents through the high schools to highlight the opportunities the program offers to its students for free! We have also been working hard to pair our seniors with local internships in their respective fields. As Covid-19 has impacted the program in various ways, it is amazing watching the students and program supporters persevere and find ways to adapt and grow in not only their education, but also their future careers. Thanks to inspiration from our students, we hosted our first, "Virtual Post-Graduation Workshop". The REACH students heard from a local WSU Professor, Wayne Wicka, and MN State Southeast Admissions Representative, Chris Cook, to discuss what to expect after high school through a university or trade school perspective.

NEW MEMBERS



ellie Family Services provide individual and couples counseling, child, teen and family therapy, medication management, psychological testing & evaluation, ARMHS & CTSS, embedded programming & organizational mental health support, and additional customized services both in-office and in-home. They are proud to be able to serve the Twin Cities metro (with 8 metro locations), the Brainerd Lakes Area, Grand Rapids and now Winona, with brick-and-mortar clinics, and the entire state of Minnesota via online therapy and medication management services.

Each of their counselors, therapists, psychologists, and practitioners bring their own unique experience, passion, specialty and personality to therapy, and they all understand the power and importance of human connection and good relationships in the process of healing and self-discovery.

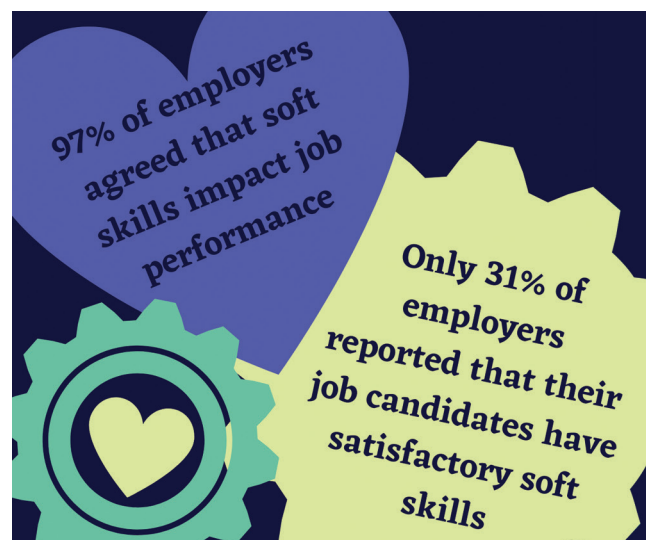
For more information on ellie Family Services contact them at 651.313.8080 or visit them online at elliefamilyservices.com.



A.B. Systems, Inc. is a design/build commercial construction company headquartered in Rochester, Minnesota. They were incorporated in 1972 by brothers Karl and Peter Schuller, are an employee-owned (ESOP) company, with 49% employee ownership, making them one of the few construction companies to participate in an employee stock ownership program. They have constructed over 12 million square feet of commercial building space in the past 45 years and specialize in the design and construction of commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings. They have done over 2,000 jobs in their company's history, and have worked with notable companies such as Viracon, McNeilus Steel, Alumacraft, Wells Fargo, Hormel, Pepsi-Cola, Fed-Ex, Rochester Medical, Halcon, West Bank, and Tom Kadlec Honda.

They produce a quality structure that is on-time, fair-priced, functional, appealing, and matches their customers' expectations. They have built their business on quality, and demand that their management, employees, suppliers, and sub-contractors do the same. If you are looking for a dependable construction company with design/build experience and a reputation for high-quality, attractive, and functional facilities – start with A.B. Systems, Inc.

For more information about their capabilities contact them at 507.288.9397 or visit www.absystemsinc.com.



REACH
YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

Preparing high school students for the future is about more than just teaching skills.

REACH graduates are valued members of your team as a result of soft skills gained through classroom learning and live interactions with local employers.

Learn more about REACH at www.hotjobscoolcompanies.com



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.