



**We will rise and tackle 2022 with the same determination**

Christie Ransom, President & CEO  
Winona Area Chamber of Commerce

We are a month into another new year and many uncertainties remain. It is surreal to think that we have been in this new COVID-19 world for two years. As I think about where we are headed, for our businesses, as a community, and as an organization, I cannot help but to reflect on the past years and what we were collectively able to accomplish. Knowing that makes me feel certain that we will rise and tackle 2022 with the same determination.

I know that the one thing that really helped our community continue to survive and stand out is the deep-rooted sense of supporting its own, of supporting local businesses and keeping our dollars here. It is imperative that we continue to do that. The reasons to do so are innumerable but let me share some very key reasons for keeping your loyalty local matters.

In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character have an economic advantage. These locally owned and operated businesses build strong communities by sustaining vibrant town centers, linking neighbors in a web of economic and social relationships, and contributing to local causes. Local ownership ensures that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the

community and who will feel the impacts of those decisions. And while chain stores are vitally important to our diverse economy, locally owned businesses recycle a much larger share of their revenue back into the local economy, enriching the whole community. Entrepreneurship fuels America's economic innovation and prosperity and serves as a key means for families to move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class. Winona is a model of this entrepreneurial and innovative spirit. In addition, a marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long-term. A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based, not on a national sales plan, but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices. And frankly, in a workforce crisis, such as the one that we are in, the vibrancy and economic vitality of the entire community is what attracts people to our area.

At the end of the day, I know that we continue to work hard to keep our businesses open, but it is the immense support of the community coming together to support local that will continue to truly make a difference. Let us not forget what the past two years have taught us and let us carry that knowledge, passion, and determination to do good into 2022. We, at the Chamber, have already resolved to make this year more notable than last. We will not stop working hard for our businesses because that is why we are here. They need us and they need you!

**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:**

- Andrew Puetz – Chair
- Katrice Sisson – Chair Elect
- Michael Charron – Past Chair
- Randy Skarlupka – Treasurer
- Kyle Rupprecht – At Large

**Retiring 2022:**

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

**Retiring 2023:**

- Andrea Northam
- Dave Pederson
- Kelly Pronschinske
- Andy Puetz
- Mike Dieter

**Retiring 2024:**

- Dr. Marsha Danielson
- Janneke Soback
- Katrice Sisson
- Jared Literski
- Kendra Maggart

**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

**CHAMBER CHAMPIONS**

**- VISIONARY -**



**- PREMIER -**



**VITERBO**  
UNIVERSITY



**- EXECUTIVE -**




**Rolling Out The Red Carpet FOR THE 2021 ANNUAL BANQUET & AWARDS**

*Congratulations to our 2021 Award Winners*

<p><b>BUSINESS OF THE YEAR</b></p>  <p>Powered by Possibility</p>	<p><b>SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR</b></p> 	<p><b>HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP AWARDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GARRY WATTS WA GROUP</li> <li>• KEN BITTNER THRIVENT FINANCIAL</li> <li>• MARK PETERSEN WINONA COUNTY HISTORY CENTER</li> </ul>
<p><b>MAIN STREET BUSINESS OF THE YEAR</b></p> 	<p><b>INNOVATION AWARD</b></p> 	<p><b>VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAVE ERICKSON NORTHWESTERN MUTUAL</li> <li>• JORDAN FREDERICK MERCHANTS BANK</li> </ul>



**Main Street February Newsletter**

Ben Strand, Program Manager  
Main Street Program

It's been a good month since the Holiday season. It tends to be a slower month for the Main Street Program but now that February is here things start picking up again, beginning with Shop Small Winter Edition which is set to take place toward the end of February. Shop Small Winter Edition is something we introduced last year with a goal of spurring local shopping in our downtown district during what tends to be a slower time of year for many small businesses. Be sure to tune into our website and Facebook page for more information as it comes out!

Once Shop Small Weekend is over we'll begin planning for Touch Parade-of-Trucks in May. Last year, due to the state of the pandemic at the time, we had to completely rethink how we'd execute the event. We decided to

switch up the format to a parade style event instead of the traditional "park, touch, interact" format the event had been known for.

The new parade style was so well-received by attendees and participants alike, we're sticking with that format moving forward and we couldn't be more excited. We have yet to select a specific date but it will be on a Saturday mid-May before Memorial Day Weekend, so be sure to keep your calendars open and check in with our website and Facebook page for updates as we approach spring.



**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.

**BIZ BITES**



**A.B. Systems, Inc.** names **Nels Pierson** as President. "We are energized and thrilled by the addition of Nels Pierson. His knowledge and background enhance our experienced team," said Peter Schuller, Chairman of A.B. Systems, Inc. Nels Pierson brings to A.B. Systems his real-world application of construction methods through his years of development and real estate experience. "No matter what a business, non-profit, or worship space might need, A.B. Systems can provide design build construction methods as well as value-engineering that will be effective for our clients," said Pierson. Pierson is a 1995 graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College as well as a 2012 graduate of Hamline University School of Law. In addition, Pierson presently serves as a State Representative in House District 26B. He joins A.B. Systems as the company prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary. A.B. Systems was incorporated in 1972 by brothers Karl and Peter Schuller. The company is 49% owned by employees through its Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP). Since 1972 A.B. Systems has constructed over 12 million square feet of commercial building space in over 2000 jobs for such notable companies as Viracon, McNeilus Steel, Alumacraft, Wells Fargo, Hormel, Pepsi-Cola, Fed-Ex, Rochester Medical, Halcon, West Bank, and Tom Kadlec Honda.



**Raymond L. Hansen** has joined **Merchants Bank** as a Trust Officer, according to Trust Department Manager, Masood Dehnavifar. "Ray's knowledge and experience will enhance our ability to provide excellent customer experiences when serving our clients. He will also help us expand our wealth management presence throughout our entire footprint as we continue to exhibit significant growth," said Dehnavifar. "Ray is excited to embrace our unique approach of providing personalized and local service combined with sophisticated expertise within the wealth management industry." Hansen's experience includes more than 30 years as an attorney assisting clients with estate planning, probate and trust administration. He was an estate planning and probate attorney at O'Brien & Wolf, L.L.P. in Rochester, MN for the past 20 years. He was also previously a Law Instructor at Rochester Community and Technical College. "I'm looking forward to connecting with clients on a personal level and sharing the unique ways we can serve them through Merchants' Wealth Management offerings," said Hansen. "My focus has always been on listening and learning about my clients' goals. I'm excited to continue building relationships through my work at Merchants."



President **Marsha Danielson** at **Minnesota State College Southeast** announced the restructuring of college to include two new divisions, Strategic Initiatives and Student Success, effective January 1, 2022. "I am energized by the passion, creativity, and enthusiasm that I have witnessed in every corner of Minnesota State College Southeast. It is clear there is a deep sense of purpose here," said President Danielson. "This is the right time for our college to adopt a new growth mindset and a new organizational structure." Previously the Vice President of Academics, **Chad Dull** will move into a new position as Vice President of Student Success. In this division, both academic and student affairs will be fully integrated and will provide holistic student support. The creation of a Student Success division, integrating student and academic affairs, will help the college provide a more rapid and holistic response as student needs are addressed. It will also allow MSC Southeast to build on its noteworthy basic needs work, which is an important tool to growing a larger and more inclusive workforce in the region.



Previously the Vice President of Student Affairs, **Josiah Litant** will move into a newly created leadership role, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives. The Strategic Initiatives division brings several core functions under one umbrella to support new and emerging priorities for the college. Vice President Litant will oversee marketing and communications, grant development, college accreditation, strategic and operational planning, and new growth initiatives for the college. In addition, he will provide leadership and direction to the Minnesota State College Southeast Foundation, which raises funds for the college and distributes student scholarships. "The creation of the Strategic Initiatives division is exciting and visionary. By bringing all of these functions together, we will be in a stronger position to achieve our institutional aspirations," said Vice President Litant. "Most importantly, we will continue to grow in our ability to provide world-class education to our students as they work to achieve their goals." The Strategic Initiatives division will give the college the ability to move at "the speed of change." In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, this new division will allow Minnesota State College Southeast to work more effectively with its internal and external stakeholders.



**Minnesota State College Southeast** is pleased to announce the appointment of **Dr. Rita Raho-Gilchrest** as Dean of Faculty and Academic Operations. In this role, she works with faculty in liberal arts and sciences as well as career and technical programs on student success, assessment, quality improvement, articulation agreements, accreditation/certification, course and curriculum development, online education, performance evaluation, and professional development. "Dr. Rita Raho-Gilchrest not only brings deep experience as a faculty member and administrator, she also brings a focus on student success which supports the culture of MSC Southeast," said Chad Dull, Vice President of Student Success. "I am delighted to be fully engaged in supporting the mission, vision, and values of MSC Southeast, where I am finding among faculty, staff, and students true 'passion for compassion' in all we do," said Dr. Raho-Gilchrest. "Dr. Raho-Gilchrest has already begun to enhance transfer opportunities for students and build strong relationships with faculty. We are very excited to have her as part of the MSC Southeast family," said Vice President Chad Dull.



**The Minnesota Marine Art Museum** is pleased to announce **Scott Pollock** as its new Executive Director. With more than 15 years of experience in the arts field across Minnesota and Ontario, Canada, Pollock has led a variety of artistic and cultural institutions, including working as the inaugural Program Director and Communications Coordinator for the North House Folk School (Grand Marais, MN) from 2000-2010. He also played a significant role in transforming the American Swedish Institute (Minneapolis, MN) into a vibrant arts and cultural center where he served as Director of Exhibitions, Collections and Programs from 2012-2018. The community-centered and audience-focused work Pollock oversaw would be recognized as a "model of how a small institution can draw visitors with exciting programs" (Wall Street Journal), "a museum party done right" (Vita.mn), and a "sophisticated museum" committed to "educating the whole person" (New York Times). "I'm excited to do much of the same for MMAM," says Pollock. Pollock began his new role at MMAM January 1, 2022.



Financial Advisor, **Aaron Dienger** has relocated his **Edward Jones** office in Winona. Aaron had the opportunity to open a brand new location at 1215 Gilmore Avenue Suite A, within the Winona Mall, relocating from the Latsch Square building. Aaron has been with Edward Jones for 11 years and is originally from Winona. Edward Jones has been helping clients achieve their financial goals for 100 years, focusing on the needs of the individual client and the personal one on one relationship between financial advisor and client. Aaron's team strives to meet these needs by regularly reviewing your goals and portfolio progress. Aaron and his Branch Office Administrator, Megan, look forward to continued growth in their new office, connecting more with the community and understanding what is most important to you. If their team can be of assistance to you, contact them at 507-312-6602.

**RIBBON CUTTING**



**Suola Spa** celebrated the grand opening of their new spa in the heart of Downtown Winona (170 E. Third Street) with an Ambassador's Ribbon Cutting in the beginning of January. Suola Spa specializes in salt therapy, or Halotherapy, and sauna therapy. They have a beautiful tranquil space that will help anyone to just breath and relax. At Suola Spa they believe in the power of slowing down and taking time to rest and retreat. Suola was brought to life out of the desire to help people heal holistically with modalities that revive the spirit and nourish the soul.

For more information visit them at 170 East 3rd Street, visit them online at [suolaspa.com](http://suolaspa.com), or shoot them an email at [hello@suolaspa.com](mailto:hello@suolaspa.com).

*Pictured with Chamber Ambassadors and Staff: Owners, Anne Scharmach and Heather Beier, and employees Nancy Denzer and Karen Sullivan.*

**NEW MEMBERS**



**Sandbar Storytelling Festival** is a two-day storytelling festival happening October 14th and 15th, 2022. They will be providing performances which celebrate and preserve the power and pleasure of our varied cultural traditions and human experiences; this will promote the art of storytelling for all ages. Sandbar Storytelling values excellence, inclusivity, equity, diversity, integrity, fun, community, and the power of storytelling. They will be encouraging excellence in the art of storytelling for all and will bring people together to share our common humanity, in an inclusive and welcoming environment.

For more information visit them online at [sandbarstorytellingfestival.org](http://sandbarstorytellingfestival.org) or shoot them an email at [info@sandbarstorytellingfestival.org](mailto:info@sandbarstorytellingfestival.org)



**Muddy Waters Yoga** is in the heart of Winona, at 270 West 3rd Street. Muddy Waters Studio is a mindful movement studio offering flow and pulse classes. They specialize in education and host accredited teacher trainings throughout the year. Whether you are just beginning or have a daily practice, they've got something for everyone: from beginning to advanced; gentle and meditative; to hot, vigorous and challenging. Muddy Waters is all about building community while growing your personal practice. They hope you'll enter feeling welcomed and leave feeling inspired, challenged, and uplifted.

For more information visit them online at [muddywatersyoga.com](http://muddywatersyoga.com) or give them a call at (507) 458-9535.



**Suola Spa** believes in the power of slowing down and taking time to rest and retreat. Suola was brought to life out of the desire to help people heal holistically with modalities that revive the spirit and nourish the soul. Suola Spa offers salt therapy, or Halotherapy, which is an all-natural method used to ease a variety of conditions. While you enjoy a calm and quiet salt session, use the time to reflect and relax while deeply breathing in the healing benefits of salt. The salt therapy room is meant for quiet relaxation, meditation, or reading. They also offer private sauna therapy, which is a great way to reduce stress. Heat bathing in a sauna provides a warm, quiet space without any distractions coming from the outside. The heat from the sauna relaxes the body's muscles, improves circulation and stimulates the release of endorphins.

For more information visit them at 170 East 3rd Street, visit them online at [suolaspa.com](http://suolaspa.com), or shoot them an email at [hello@suolaspa.com](mailto:hello@suolaspa.com).

**ISLAND CITY LIVING**

**Island City Living's** mission is to help you find a home! Are you looking for a rental residential property or looking to buy or sell a home in Winona, Minnesota? You've found the right place. With over 25 years in property management, owner Shawn Beier prides himself on making sure that his tenants are taken care of. He bought and lived in his first rental when he was 19 and has continued to invest in real estate ever since. He is a licensed real estate agent in Minnesota and will help the buying and selling process go as smooth as possible. Island City Living has many properties for you to call home! They own and manage Island City Properties at 270 West Third Street, Central Square at 317 Market Street, and multiple other rental houses and properties around town.

For more information visit their office at 270 West 3rd Street, visit them online at [islandcityliving.com](http://islandcityliving.com), or give them a call/shoot them a text at (507) 312-0680.



**Metz's Hart Land Dairy, Creamery, and Honey** is located between Winona and Rushford, and provides fresh cheese, flavored cheese curds, a growing list of dairy products and locally-produced honey to southeastern Minnesota food stores. Their products are deliciously fresh, straight from their cows to our creamery, ready for you at their farm store or at your favorite grocery store. Jeff Metz started dairy farming in 1983 with 24 cows. He and Mariann were married in 1985 and moved to their present location in Hart, where they continued to grow their farm--along with their family. They have 4 children all of whom continue to be involved in the farm. Through the years, the farm continued to grow to a 220-cow herd, and a decision was made to start their own cheese plant on the farm by August, 2014. As their dreams have become a reality, southeastern Minnesota can now enjoy the delicious products from Metz's Hart-Land Creamery year round.

For more information visit them online at [metzhartland.com](http://metzhartland.com), visit their farm store at 25909 County Road 102, Rushford (M-F 9AM-6PM, Sa. 10AM-2PM), or give them a call at (507) 864-2627.



**Bell Bank Mortgage - Heather Larsen** is here to help whether you're thinking about buying your first home or your next home, considering a build, purchasing a vacation home, or refinancing to save money, Heather at Bell Bank Mortgage will walk you through every step of the loan process. She can help you find the mortgage you need - one that makes sense for your unique situation. Your home is probably the biggest purchase of your life. She and Bell Bank want to answer all of your questions, so you feel completely comfortable with your decision. And they're confident that you'll enjoy Bell's unequalled customer service for the life of your loan!

For more information give Heather a call at (507) 459-6416, send her an email at [hlarsen@bell.bank](mailto:hlarsen@bell.bank), or visit her online at <http://heather-larsen.com>.

