



Highlights

- Membership Counts
- Reflections
- Member Programs
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- Extra Nuts & Bolts
- Calendar/Events



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From The Director's Doorway

It's great being a Chamber member! And your comments & kind words of support make all the hard work worth the effort.

A few years ago, the Shapiro Group, an Atlanta-based strategic consulting firm, was commissioned to conduct a national survey to measure the impact of chamber membership upon businesses. The findings weren't a surprise to those in the "chamber world", but it did provide relevant and useful information.

Summarizing the findings, the survey affirmed that chamber membership does indeed affect consumer perception in a positive fashion. The data indicated that customers had an enhanced perception of businesses which were active in their local chamber of commerce. Those surveyed felt that these businesses were very likely to be customer focused, reputable, deliver quality goods and services, and recognized the overall importance of community involvement.

The image that customers (and potential customers) have of businesses is a complex blend of both tangible and intangible factors—and chamber membership seems to be one of those factors.

So many times each day, people call our chamber and ask about businesses. They want referrals, they want to know about your business and what you offer. They use our visitor guide and website as their telephone book, wanting to shop and do business with a chamber member.

Consumers are looking for a sign of 'excellence' and businesses that they can trust. That's why it is

important that you hang your membership sign in a location that can be seen upon entry to your business. For retailers it is important that you place your chamber sticker on your door so that consumers can see it prior to entering your store.

If you have neither of these chamber essentials, then contact us right away so that we can get this identification to you!



It's also important that you have our sign stating that you accept Chamber Gift Certificates at your location. This is a new sign that we began distributing last year. If you do not have one, you may be missing out on some Merrill shoppers! Each year we sell on average \$100,000 in gift certificates that can only be spent here in Merrill!

And the image of being a chamber member doesn't only have an affect on small businesses, it also has an impact on larger businesses too. It says something about your reputation, customer service, quality and community involvement.

This month our new Retail Advisory Committee begins. This committee will offer advice on marketing and advertising our retail districts, they will also work with the city on proposed revitalization efforts for the districts and offer workshops designed for the retail community. One of the 1st workshops will be hosted in April. The topic will be Credit Card Protection for the businesses and your customers.

The City of Merrill has put forth a revitalization plan for our center city downtown area. This

plan will involve the city stepping forward and investing dollars. That's a great first effort, but the complete picture will take all of us.

The revitalization of the downtown is important. Private dollars and volunteers have made the River Bend Trail a reality and it will be a huge draw to the downtown and boost to our economy. Having a revitalized center city is what is needed to ensure the vitality and future success of any future development—anywhere. We want and need to attract visitors to our center city and beyond.

Merrill has come so far in the past few years. We need amenities that are attractive—amenities that will attract young families to not only work in Merrill, but live in Merrill.

We are on the right course. As any business knows, you have to spend a little to grow little. And the time is right for Merrill to grow our center city area. Especially now that there are financial tools available & the city is ready to invest. By working together, we can create a plan that works for Merrill.

For the **Love of Merrill** and our outstanding membership!

Happy Valentine's month!

Debbie
Chief Executive Officer



Business After Hours

Date: February 19

Place: System Technologies



Business After Hours

Time: 5:00 pm

Sponsor: System Technologies



Celebrate with business friends!

Join us in March at Johnson's Gifts & Collectibles on March 17!



Morning Mixer

Date: 2015 1st Q—TBA

Place: Church Mutual Insurance

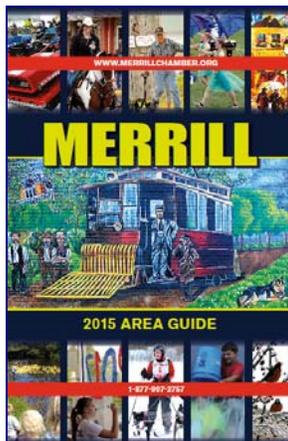
Time: 7:30—9:00 am

Sponsor: Church Mutual Insurance



Location
Nature
People

The new 2015 Merrill Visitor Guide is now available!



The Merrill Map is now available too!

If you need new guides or maps stop into the Chamber office.

Location. Nature. People.

Merrill Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc. News



Friends of Normal Park



Bricks make great gifts for any occasion!

There are 4 sizes of bricks to choose from & each brick can be engraved with names, dates or special messages. The bricks make wonderful gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, holiday gifts or simply to honor someone in a permanent way.

Friends  Normal Park

Friends of the Merrill City Band



Friends of the Merrill City Band is kicking off a capital fundraiser to help with needed supplies and improvements to Normal Park for their concerts. The Merrill City Band has been actively entertaining Merrill residents since 1911 and now they need your help.

To make a tax-deductible donation:

Friends of the Merrill City Band
Merrill Chamber of Commerce Foundation
705 N. Center Avenue
Merrill, WI 54452

Donations can be made in any amount.

Fire Department 125th Anniversary Prints



SUPPORT THE MEMORIAL! Proceeds will help to fund the Firefighter Memorial to be erected outside of the new fire station. The prints depict the current fire station blending the current and old.

Cards—25 cards/envelopes for \$20.00
8x10 print—\$25.00
10x13 print—\$35.00



Available at the Chamber of Commerce & Merrill Fire Station.

River District Development Foundation



The Capital Campaign is off & running! The goal is to raise \$1 million for the Phase I River Bend Trail that will begin downtown and travel west to Council Grounds State Park.



www.riverdistrictfoundationofmerrill.com

Donations can also be made on-line. Look for the link and/or donation button on the River District website.

You can also 'friend' us on Face Book now.

The Chamber Foundation is the fiscal administrator of the River District Development Foundation & the Friends of the River District.

Other Foundation Programs



Other programs that the Chamber Foundation administers include:

- Discover Downtown Merrill
- Emergency Relief Fund
- Courthouse Christmas Tree Lighting
- Foundation Community Fund
- For the Love of Merrill

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to any of the foundation programs. Send your tax-deductible donations to:

Merrill Chamber Foundation
705 N. Center Avenue
Merrill, WI 54452

Courthouse Christmas Trees



Make your donations now to help support the beautiful lighted Christmas trees on the courthouse lawn. We must pay for the electricity year-round as well as bulb replacement.

Make your tax-deductible donation to:
Merrill Chamber Foundation
705 N. Center Avenue
Merrill, WI 54452



Ambassadors Club: Beautification & Facade Recognitions & Ribbon Cuttings

Ambassador News & Ribbon Cuttings



Ribbon Cuttings



Associated Bank

Welcome New Ambassadors

CJ Robinson
Edward Jones Investments



2015 Ambassadors

- Anna Winningham—Waid Funeral Home
- Chad Olson—Clabough Insurance
- Cheri Bocek—Walgreens
- Cheryl Hanson—Ballyhoos
- CJ Robinson—Edward Jones Investments
- Debbie Schleif—Ministry Good Samaritan
- Dena Lueck—Lincoln Community Bank
- Dennis Grefe—Ye Olde Sweet Shoppe
- Dona Beyer—Foto News
- Dr. Carri Kennedy—The Wellness Center
- Elizabeth Messner—River Valley Bank
- Heidi Borchardt—River Valley Bank
- Jennifer Porath—WIPFLI
- Julie Weber—Our Way
- Dr. Kathy Gress—Gress Chiropractic
- Kelly Zagrzebski—WPS
- Krissy Emmerich—WJQ
- Leah Nelson—Associated Bank
- Lori Wendt—Merrill Sheet Metal Works
- Mark Bares—Les & Jim's
- Nancy Stadler—BMO
- Nicole Johnson—Park City Credit Union
- Becky Roberts—River Valley Bank
- Sue Kunkel—Park City Credit Union



Building Business One Ribbon at a Time

Wanted: Ambassadors

We are looking to grow our Ambassadors Club in 2015 and we need YOU! Our Ambassadors are the 'welcome wagon' of the Chamber. They celebrate new businesses, business expansions & membership!

Want to meet new businesses? Then become an Ambassador! Contact us for all the details. It's a great way to grow your business & celebrate what makes Merrill so great—our local business members!

Do you know someone opening a new business that would like to have a ribbon cutting?

Have you recently remodeled your business or façade & would like a ribbon cutting? Contact us & let us know!

Member Programs



So...What's New?

24-Hour Information Center

Did you know that only Chamber members & other Chamber/visitor centers can advertise in the Information Center? Place your brochures, flyers and/or business cards for FREE. The Information Center is a very busy place & is restocked daily.

Newsletter Inserts

Did you know that only members can advertise in the Chamber e-news/newsletter? Cost is only \$25 & your message will reach over 500 people. It's also on our website that receives over 6000 hits per month.

Member to Member

Did you know that you can offer other members discounts on purchases and services as a way of advertising & marketing your business? If you are willing to offer a discount to other Chamber members, please contact us so that we can get the word out to other members!



Office Assistance

Did you know that only members can make copies free of charge at the Chamber? Or use our fax machine? Or bulk mail stamp for large bulk mailings? Contact us for details.

Red Carpet Pak

Did you know that only members can advertise & make special offers in our Red Carpet Pak's that given to new Merrill residents to welcome them & introduce them the Merrill area?



Webvertising

Advertise on our website! Cost for this great new webvertising is only \$25 per month! Great way to grab attention to your business Our website & links receive 7000+ hits per month so it's an economical way to advertise!

Our membership depends on volunteers! Here are some ways that you can help:

Join one of our **NEW Events & Promotions** sub-committees and see what's new for 2015! Help us promote Merrill with new and creative programs and events!

Contact Debbe for more information. Email director@merrillchamber.org



At the Chamber, it's all about You!
We are bringing the Best to the Best!

Our **Merrill Vision 20/20 Program** is kicking off with a program designed to link our employers with middle school students. Now is the time to educate students about what it takes to work in your business! We will be working with all segments of our employer population linking Merrill employers with Merrill students. If you are interested in more information contact **Debbe** at **715-536-9474**.

Women of Distinction is changing a bit in 2015. We will be kicking off a Leadership Series and will end the year with an award dinner in November. Want to be a part of the Leadership Series? **Contact Debbe** at **715-536-9474**.



We are teaming up with **NorthCentral Technical College and Rasmussen College** to bring you **Chamber 101** workshops. Let us know what you would like to see.

We are investigating starting a **Young Professionals Program**. If you are 45 years of age or under and interested in being a part of this special network, please contact **Debbe** at **715-536-9474**.

Morning Mixer (Business before Hours) take place at your business from 7:30 to 9:00 am. Sign up now to sponsor a Morning Mixer! For info contact Cheryl at 715-536-9474.

We will be sending out a **Daily News** from WMC that will highlight the daily news of interest. Just click on the links that interest you. A simple way to get today's news highlights!



Member-to-Member Club Join Today & Save

The Chamber's **Member to Member Club**, is a product discount program for Chamber members only. If your business is willing to offer a discount to other Chamber members contact us now! Gain marketing exposure & potential new business customers. Be a part of the Club!

As a Chamber member you will receive a **discount** at the following businesses:

Put Your Business Name Here!

- *Ye Old Sweet Shoppe—10%
- *Blooming Wishes —10%
- *Super Lube—15%
- *Creative Card Acceptance—1/2 priced USB reader or \$25 off USB signature pad

*VIP On-line Member Discounts— to join email them at VIP@dwave.net for complete details on discounts.

*Northwood's Evergreen & Wire Co. —20%

*Ziesemer Photography - 15% on business portraits

*Off the Grid Technologies—they build your website & receive 1/yr Free web-hosting

*Lincoln & Timeline Windows—factory direct—10%



Just mention the Member-to-Member Club & start saving today!



Additional Programs



Chamber on Tour

We believe that your business is a STAR. Showcase your business by joining the Chamber Tour Program. Contact us to get your business on the tour schedule today!

Sign-up now for 2015 tours....



Morning Mixer

Sign-up now to host/sponsor a quarterly program in 2015. Business before Hours is a great way to showcase your business & have social interaction with your fellow business members—especially if you are unable to attend Business after Hours!



Government News

This program will email blast government information to members such as City of Merrill agendas & other state & federal government information, programs & newsletters.



Business of the Month Musky Moon Guide Service



The Business of the Month for February is **Musky Moon Guide Service**. It is located at 511 East Street in Merrill.

Musky Moon Guide Service is owed by Todd Schulz. Todd offers full day and 1/2 day guided Musky trips to Northern and North Central Wisconsin.

Musky Moon's mission is to provide customers with the best experience on the beautiful waters of Northern and North Central Wisconsin whether you are a youth, a beginner or a well experienced Musky fisherman.

As your guide, **Musky Moon's** goal is not only for you to catch muskies on your trip, but also to teach you the skills and techniques to consistently put more muskies in your boat!

Musky Moon Guide Service provides you with

- Knowledge to locate seasonal muskies;
- Teach about the moon phases & weather & how they affect muskies;
- Boat side tactics
- Proper musky release
- Fishing equipment

- Boat
- Proper lure choices
- Memories that last a lifetime!

Musky Moon Guide Service rates are based on 1-2 anglers. For a 1/2 day (4-5 hours) the rate is \$225. For a full day (8-10) the rate is \$300. They are currently booking for the 2015 season. Gift certificates are available.

For information or to book a trip contact Todd at (715) 212-9745 or by email at www.muskymoon@yahoo.com

For more information go to their website at www.muskymoonguideservices.com

Musky Moon Guide Services is a unique business and it's just one more hometown business that Merrill can be proud of!



Chamber Education: 2015 Workshops

Coming in 2015

- ✓ **Credit Cards—How to Protect Your Business & Customers—April 8**
- ✓ **Social Media Series**
- ✓ **Peer to Peer Series**
- ✓ **Government Contracts**
- ✓ **Theft: How to Protect your Business**
- ✓ **20/20 Vision Program**

If there are other educational programs that you would like the Chamber to bring to you, please contact us with your ideas.

Send us your suggestions via email at info@merrillchamber.org

In the subject line type: **Education Topic**



Chamber Chat....did you know?

Ireland Fundraiser—Join Us!

There is still time to join us! That's right the Chamber is planning a unique fundraiser—a 9-day trip to Ireland in March 2015! Join us as we explore this beautiful land and spend St. Patrick's Day on the Emerald Isle! Cost is \$2975 for Chamber members or \$3175 for non-chamber members. The trip is being coordinated by Chamber member Chamber Discoveries. Contact us for all the details.



NTC to Host Grant Workshop

NTC will host a Grant Research & Management Workshop on March 18 from 10am to 3pm at the Wausau campus. To register call 715-675-3331 and press #1. Or www.ntc.edu/ce/business_communication



River Bend Trail

The Friends of the River Bend Trail hosted a pancake breakfast at the Eagles Club with more than 300 in attendance! The first paved leg of the trail is scheduled to open this spring.



Very Merrill Christmas Print

We now have just a few of the 12x18 limited edition, signed prints available that are fully framed & matted in oak/glass. The cost for a completed framed print is \$150. They are absolutely beautiful & framed the same way as the original artwork at the Chamber.



Ministry Good Sam Foundation

Looking for a Valentine night out? The foundation is hosting **Deuces Wild Dueling Pianos on Feb. 14** at Les & Jim's. Doors open with raffles & hors d'oeuvres at 7pm with an 8pm show. Tickets are \$30/pp. For info call 715-539-5042.



Congratulations

Church Mutual has promoted Angela Bailey to VP of Human Relations Dept!



Congratulations

The Merrill Dance Team has qualified to send two dance teams on to State! Merrill placed 1st in Hip Hop & 2nd in High Kick. They will compete at the State Competition in LaCrosse on Feb. 7! Good Luck Girls!



Taking Notes.....

2015 Visitor Guide & Maps

The new guides & maps are here! Pick yours up at the Chamber.



Credit Card Workshop

Mark your calendars for April 8 for our workshop on credit card protection for you & your customers. It will be at the Chamber office from 8-9am. Free for Chamber members.

Tourism Commission

Recommended that the City of Merrill move towards opening the city's streets to snowmobile and ATV travelers because it will be good for tourism & our businesses.

Other Tourism Stats

The stats are in from our other (chamber) website locations (May-Dec):

- Itinerary & calendar downloads: 28,857
- Visitor Guides mailed: 4746
- Visitor Guides festivals/shows: 15,750
- Visitor Guides restocked: 2262

Moonlight Snowshoe Walk

There will be a moonlight snowshoe walk on the River Bend Trail on Feb. 6 at 6:30pm. Meet at Polk & Stange Streets. Afterwards join everyone at First Street Coffee Station. For more info contact the chamber website www.merrillchamber.org



Extra Nuts & Bolts



Requests for Merrill information only during the month of January:

Phone calls: 172

Emails: 129

Walk-ins: 101

Info mailed out: 296

Website Visits: 2206

Restock Center: 550



"Positive Possibilities"

Thanks to our members, sponsors & numerous partnerships, the Chamber supports dozens of community programs & is actively involved in many initiatives that you may not be aware of.

Look for this symbol to learn more about our history & our future & the community programs we are involved in.



Promote your upcoming events

Be sure to promote your upcoming events by contacting the Chamber to get them on one of our calendars! Best way to get your event seen!



Do you have news that you would like to share with our membership? Contact the Chamber at 715-536-9474 for information!

Mark Your Calendar

Feb 7, 14, 21 —Merrill Ice Drags

The Merrill Ice Drags kicks-off 50 years of racing! Join them on the ice at Council Grounds State Park and see the fastest racing on ice! For more info visit www.merrillicedrags.com

Feb 14—Ice Oval Racing

Experience the fun of night racing on ice at Gleason Community Club Park on Hwy 17 in Gleason! Admission is \$5/adults & kids under 10 are free. For more info contact Garrett at 715-873-4811 or visit www/gleasoncc.org

Feb 14—7th Annual Artisans Showcase

Enjoy an afternoon of wine, cheese & music as you view the talents of area artists. Held at Bell Tower from 1-5pm, cost is \$5/pp. For more info contact Pat Sherley at 715-536-5575.

Feb 17—Fat Tuesday Gumbo Supper

Enjoy Louisiana Gumbo featuring chicken & sausage or chicken & shrimp gumbo, served with bread & desert. Carry-outs are available. Held at Bell Tower from 4:30-6:30pm, cost for adults is \$7 & children under 12 is \$4. For more info contact Linda Schmidt at 715-536-5575.

Feb 22—Dancing through the Decades' Sock Hop

Dance, watch demonstrations or just listen & reminisce. Also refreshments & a slide show from back in the day. A DJ spins a wide assortment of tunes. Held at the Merrill History & Cultural Center from 1:30-4:30pm. Cost is \$10 in advance/\$15 at door. For more info contact Bea Lebal at 715-536-5652.

Feb 27—Variety Show

Watch local talent perform at Lincoln Lanes sponsored

by Haven. Show starts at 7pm, cost is \$10. For more info contact Karen at 715-536-1300.

Feb 28—Love Me Tender

Watch Elvis perform at Lincoln Lanes hosted by Haven. Show starts at 7pm, cost is \$15. For more info contact Karen at 715-536-1300.

Feb 28—Ice Oval Racing

The fun kicks off at 11 am at Gleason Community Club Park on Hwy 17 in Gleason for the last race of the season. Admission is \$5/adults & kids under 10 are free. For more info contact Garrett at 715-873-4811 or visit www.gleasoncc.org

Check the Chamber Calendar 1st

For a complete listing of area events & activities check out the Chamber of Commerce website www.merrillchamber.org or the digital sign at the Chamber office for event info.

Listen to us every Wednesday on WJJQ 92.5FM or the 2nd & 4th Friday on WJMT 730 AM.

CHAMBER MEETINGS

Legislative – 2/9

Foundation— 2/27

Ambassador Club – 2/17

Board of Directors— 2/18

Retail Promotions—2/24

Pork in the Park—2/27



Comments, Questions & Concerns

The Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce wants you to read about area businesses and other information that we feel is important to our members. If there are any topics you think we should cover, please let us know. Call the office (715-536-9474), fax us (715-539-2043) or stop in at our office (705 N. Center Ave).

Our individual emails are:

Debbe Kinsey—Chief Executive Officer

director@merrillchamber.org

Cheryl Skoug—Program Manager

manager@merrillchamber.org

Autumn Doyle—Office Assistant

info@merrillchamber.org

Website -

www.merrillchamber.org

MERRILL AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE THE ADVANTAGE

705 North Center Avenue
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452
TOLL FREE Phone: 877-907-2757

Phone: 715-536-9474
Fax: 715-539-2043
Website: www.merrillchamber.org



Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce

Mission Statement

The Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce is directed by its membership to support the area's businesses to grow, succeed and thrive

Vision Statement

To promote Merrill as a community to live, work and play for today

Executive Board

Marty Heyne— Chairman
Tonia Speener—Chair Elect
Randy Wixson—Vice Chair
Noel Bushor – Financial Officer
Kurt Rust – Past Chairman

Board Members

Dan Frick
Pat Hinner
Nancy Kwiesielewicz
Jim Medley
Val Mindak
Shelly Mondeik
Craig Rezin
Brian Richards
Kurt Wendt
Mayor Bill Bialecki
Ex-Officio
Dave Johnson—Ex-Officio

Staff

Debbe Kinsey – Chief Executive Officer
Cheryl Skoug – Programs Manager
Autumn Doyle – Office Assistant

Return Service Requested

Mailing Label

PRESORTED
STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
MERRILL WI
PERMIT NO. 11

Members...working together since 1911



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Sponsored By:

Systems Technologies

Come Enjoy Business after Hours and your Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce friends!!

February 19th at Systems Technologies

Thank you to this month's sponsors Systems Technologies for inviting us. This is a great chance to network with other Chamber business members, which you might not otherwise have the opportunity to see. Relax, unwind, and socialize with both old and new acquaintances.

Members are invited to bring a friend, spouse or business associates. This is a Chamber mixer. At 6:00pm get ready for the raffles, and meeting Systems Technologies. **Mark this date on your calendar!!** No RSVP required -- just show up as soon as you are able after work.

IMPORTANT DETAILS!!

- WHEN:** Thursday, February 19th
5:00pm to 7:00pm (???)
- WHERE:** Systems Technologies
W5331 Park Ave.
(Old John Deere location)
- COST:** \$2.00 per person
- WHAT:** Hors D'oeuvres
Cash Bar
- OPTIONAL:** Bring your business cards to give to new acquaintances.
Put a card & \$1.00 into the 50/50 drawing. One lucky winner will go home with half the pot.



Purchase your raffle tickets for a chance to win at 39" Sharp LED TV, Google Chrome, and System Technologies gear.

Special THANKS to

Systems Technologies

For sponsoring this Business after Hours!! Questions?? 715-536-9474