

Chamber Annual Meeting ~ February 27

The Little Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting was held Thursday, February 27 at the Falls Ballroom with over 210 members in attendance. The Annual Meeting provides the opportunity for both the Chamber membership and the community at large to hear first-hand the accomplishments from the past year.

The highlight of the evening was the announcement of the 2019 award winners by the Chamber's Outstanding Service Committee. We would like to thank the Morrison County Record for their in-depth coverage of these awards in the February 23 issue. Photo's courtesy of *Terry Lehrke, Morrison County Record*.

2019 Chamber Large Business of the Year - **Rice Creek Hunting & Recreation, Inc.**



Pictured left: *Gregg LeBlanc, Rice Creek Hunting & Recreation, Inc.*; Chamber President/CEO *Debora K. Boelz* and *Joe LeBlanc, Rice Creek Hunting & Recreation, Inc.*

Incorporated in 1984, Rice Creek Hunting & Recreation has evolved from a shooting preserve to a full-service event venue. Hunters enjoy 1,500 acres of prime habit for the finest pheasant, duck, turkey & chukar hunting in the Midwest with guaranteed results. Hunters get to shoot at, stalk, and flush as many birds as requested. Hitting the birds, of course, is up to the skill level of the hunter! Birds are processed on site to take home. If game

birds are not for you, league Sporting Clay are available, as are smoked birds, pheasant pot pies, and duck chili.

2019 Chamber Small Business of the Year - **Little Falls Radio**



Pictured left: *Chris Grams, Little Falls Radio* and Chamber President/CEO *Debora K. Boelz*

On October 8, 1950, KLTF hit the airwaves and never looked back! In its 70th year, Little Falls Radio has been the source of local and national news, weather, and sports for multiple generations of loyal listeners. WYRQ was added in May of 1980 and KFML in July of 1988 making Little Falls Radio a multi-genre station and number one source for local high school and professional sports news. Radio is such an important part of our daily lives and we are so fortunate to have a local station that is so supportive of the community.

2019 Chamber Volunteer of the Year - **Michelle Waldvogel**.



Pictured left: *Michelle Waldvogel, Hilmerson Collison Center*. *Michelle was unable to attend the Annual Meeting*

When Michelle's first words were "I don't feel I deserve this recognition" it's a pretty good indication that she does. Michelle Waldvogel from Hilmerson Collison Center is the type of volunteer that every organization covets! In her words, "I just show up and have fun as I feel we should all be doing our share to support the community".

From the Desk of the CEO. . . .

Debora K. Boelz



With the turn of another calendar page, we are that much closer to the next season. I like that Minnesota has such varied seasons, but as I am not a winter sports person, I just would like the winter to be one month long.

The 132nd Annual Meeting of the Chamber is in our rearview mirror.

Thank you to our corporate sponsors and attendees who joined us on February 27th for an evening of great conversation and fun! Congratulations to our award winners and special guests that made the evening an event to remember. There are photos in this issue that highlight the evening's winners.

2019 Annual Report will be posted on the Chamber website once it is approved by the Board at their March meeting. If you would like a hard copy, please contact the Chamber and we will get you one.

The Board of Directors approved the 2019 financial review at the February board meeting. Each year the Chamber conducts a financial review and files a 990 report. The 2019 review reflects a positive cash balance due to the increase in the membership dues and booth fees for the Arts & Crafts and Market Place Fairs.

In "Chamberland", we continue to have the discussion about labor shortages that is impacting business up and down main street and across the country. In this election year, the presidential candidates repeatedly expound on the need for good paying jobs with benefits. They should realize that these good paying jobs with benefits already exist!

*To help get younger workers into the workforce, the Bridges Career Academies & Workplace Connection offers Chamber members **FREE** job postings on www.BridgesConnection.org/Jobs. This website, known as the Bridges Career Depot, is the region's only job listings exclusively for 14 - 18 year olds. It is actively promoted in local high schools and used as a classroom tool by teachers and counselors.*

*To get your jobs posted, simply complete the online form. The posting is **FREE** and it can run for as long as or as little as you'd like. You can even schedule when your positions would be viewable, so you can set up your jobs now even if you'd like to wait until later in spring to recruit employees. If you have questions, email Erica at Erica@BridgesConnection.org, or call Mary Gottsch at (218) 855-8161.*

*The Career Depot is a regional program funded in part by Sourcewell and the **Central Lakes Perkins Consortium**.*

In closing, my husband optimistically bought his garden seeds in February this year. Our quest for spring continues!

Friday Morning Coffee

Friday, March 20

7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber of Commerce, 200 1 St. NW, Little Falls

sponsored by:



North Risk Partners specializes in strategic insurance solutions for businesses and individuals. We offer large firm resources delivered with the personalized service of a local agency.

Networking is a powerful tool. After announcements, at 8:00 am, attendees will have the opportunity for 30 second testimonials for another Chamber Member business.



Thank you to our February Friday Morning Coffee sponsor **Little Falls Health Services**



Pictured above from the left: *Brett Buchite, Brian Menke, Krista Bauch, Michele Halvorson and Betty Rakow, Little Falls Health Services.*

Lunchtime on Location

Wednesday, March 25

noon

Edina Realty, 15594 Hwy 27 Ste. 2, Little Falls

sponsored by:



a Berkshire Hathaway affiliate

Edina Realty has operated under the core values of honesty, integrity, and commitment. When you do right by people, you find they return the favor.

Join us for Lunchtime on Location a noon time networking event. Each Lunchtime on Location is sponsored by a member. As the sponsor they provide a light lunch and information about their business. There is a \$5 fee to attend. Make your reservation by Monday, March 23 by emailing ginav@littlefallsmnchamber.com or call the Chamber (320) 632-5155 or by visiting our website at www.littlefallsmnchamber.com. ***It is important to RSVP to allow the host to plan accordingly for food.***

Thank you to our February Lunchtime on Location sponsor **Hands of Hope Resource Center**



Pictured above from the left: Julie Kapsch, Steph Och and Steve Meyer, **Hands of Hope Resource Center.**

Congratulations to our March Employee of the Month, Lesley Pearce, Fresh Hair Professionals



The Little Falls Area Chamber Commerce is pleased to announce our March Employee of the Month, Lesley Pearce, Fresh Hair Professionals.

Lesley has been a cosmetologist and manager for the past 8 years.

Janet McCoy states about Lesley, "We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives . . . AND BUSINESS! Thank you, Lesley. Lesley makes a real difference here at Fresh Hair! She deserves recognition for being committed to her work – staying up with the latest trends and giving each guest exceptional customer service. Lesley is very reliable, witty, engage, a strong leader and friendly. We appreciate her so much!"

Lesley states: "I was definitely not expecting to be chosen as the Chamber Employee of the Month, but it was a very nice surprise. I get to work alongside some of the most fun stylists every day and a boss that encourages us to do our best while taking care of our guests and making our work space home. I appreciate all of them and all of the clients that have spent time in my chair, past and present. They have all made me the stylist I am today. Thank you!"

Thank you to our March Employee of the Month sponsors: **Bursch Travel Agency, Domino's, Fitness Connection, Franciscan Sisters, Linden Hill Historic Event Center, Melgram Jewelers, Perkin's Restaurant & Bakery, Subway, Thrive with Vision.**

Congratulations Lesley Pearce!

Welcome New Businesses

The following Lindy Greeters *Lori Frederick, US Bank* and *Angie Petersen, Keller Williams Realty Professionals* visited the following new business and treated them to a Chamber mug full of treats and were presented with their "first dollars of clear profit". Welcome!

Mama Bear Signs Designs & Apparel



Pictured left: Lindy Greeter *Angie Petersen, Keller Williams Realty Professionals*; *Stephanie Dolney, Mama Bear Signs, Designs and Apparel* and Lindy Greeter *Lori Frederick, US Bank*.

Mama Bear Signs Designs & Apparel is located at 24 E Broadway, Little Falls. They are your local provider of screen printed of t-shirts, sweatshirts, sweatpants, bags, tumblers and more. No order is too small or large. Stop by or call today (320) 630-7896.

Lindy Greeter Visits

The following Lindy Greeters *Sheila Avenson, The Office Shop*; *Heather Brill, Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union* *Lori Frederick, US Bank* and *Angie Petersen, Keller Williams Realty Professionals* visited the following members to thank them for their continued membership. The businesses were treated to a Chamber mug full of treats.

Edward Jones Investments – Zach Klosowski



Pictured left: *Zach Klosowski, Edward Jones Investments*; Lindy Greeters *Heather Brill, Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union* and *Sheila Avenson, The Office Shop, Inc.*

Zach Klosowski and wife, Katie, are currently working out of his branch office at 14759 19 St NE Ste. 102, Little Falls as Financial Advisors. She is planning to open an office in Rice, MN next fall. Contact Zach at (320) 632-2244 or visit <http://www.edwardjones.com>.

Welcome to our Newest Members!

Allison White Insurance

Allison White
118 Wood St. Ste. 102, Little Falls MN
56345
(320) 414-7910
allison@allisonwhiteinsurance.com
<http://www.allisonwhiteinsurance.com/>
At Allison White Insurance our guidance allows you to make the best and most informed decision(s) possible. Fast-forward to after the paperwork is signed; we will still be in your corner. We will be there acting as an ally for all of your health insurance needs – questions, policy reviews, claims, and more.

Autumn Antlers Lodge and Event Center

Troy / Mary Hoekstra
1280 180 St., Long Prairie, MN 56347
1-866-424-4282
bigbucks@autumnantlers.com
<http://www.atumnantlers.com>
Hunting preserve, lodge and event center specializing in weddings, bachelor and bachelorette parties, bridal showers, family reunions, corporate events.

Farmer's Insurance

Mark Lipke
[394 Lake Ave. S. #600, Duluth MN 55802](http://394.LakeAve.S.#600.Duluth.MN.55802)
(218) 520-3001
mlipke@farmersagent.com
<http://www.recruitment.farmers.com/mark-lipke>
With over 30 years experience at Farmers, I know a thing or two, because I've seen a thing or two. If you have an entrepreneurial spirit and are willing to work hard but have lots of fun, my team will work with you to achieve whatever your business and personal goals are. I am proud to support and work with the finest Farmers agents in northern Minnesota and would love to have you join this great group of Farmers' finest.

FALS



Pictured left: 2019 - 2020 FALS participants touring LeBlanc's Rice Creek Hunting & Recreation.

The February FALS (*Falls Area Leadership Series*) session was focused on communication and personal development.

Thank you to our session sponsor LeBlanc's Rice Creek Hunting & Recreation, Inc.

The March 11 session will focus on health and human services.

Recent Board Action

- Approved the 2019 financial review as presented by Schlenner Wenner & Co.
- Approved new members Allison White Insurance and Farmers Insurance
- Finalized details for the Chamber's Annual Meeting

2020 Chamber Board & Staff

2018-2020

Steve Andres, **Design Electronics**
Dr. Allison Girtz, Chair of the Board, **Allison Zak D.C., LLC**
Patrick Watercott, Vice Chair of the Board, **Vernon Sales Promotion**

2019-2021

Nancy Berg, Treasurer, **Berg's Bug Removal**
Tim Matros, Immediate Past Chair of the Board,
Five Pines Senior Solutions
Pete Mooney, **The Source Computing**
Laurie Whitlow, **PrimeLending**

2020 - 2022

Jana Festler, **Edward Jones Investments**
Paula Kampa, **Kampa Gerbi & Associates**
Tom Hoggarth, Secretary, **Golfers Organized for Little Falls - GOLF**
Rob Ronning, **Pine Country Bank**

Chamber Staff

Debora K. Boelz, President/CEO
dboelz@littlefallsmnchamber.com
Mary Bednarek, Office, Arts & Crafts Fair and Financial Coordinator
mary@littlefallsmnchamber.com
Gina Vetter, Project & Volunteer Coordinator
gina@littlefallsmnchamber.com

Lindy Greeter Visits

The following Lindy Greeters *Sheila Avenson, The Office Shop; Heather Brill, Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union Lori Frederick, US Bank and Angie Petersen, Keller Williams Realty Professionals* visited the following members to thank them for their continued membership. The businesses were treated to a Chamber mug full of treats.

Bursch Travel Agency



Pictured left: Lindy Greeter *Sheila Avenson, The Office Shop, Inc.; Lois Sullivan and Nancy Peltier, Bursch Travel Agency* and Lindy Greeter *Heather Brill, Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union.*

Utilize our Experience and Expertise to Save Money. Bursch Travel Agency is a team of highly skilled professionals averaging over 25 years of experience. This high level of experience and ongoing training enables Bursch Travel to provide you with the highest level of service. Why not put this experience to work for you?

Confused by the myriad of internet offerings? Our travel counselors are conversant in helping you decipher all the product offerings and plan a vacation that will represent the trip of a lifetime, not just the cheapest!

Whether your needs are as simple as an airline ticket or you need assistance planning your dream wedding or honeymoon, Lois and Nancy would like to share their expertise and knowledge with you. For more information visit <http://www.burschtravel.com>

Domino's



Pictured left: Lindy Greeters *Lori Frederick, US Bank and Angie Petersen, Keller Williams Realty Professionals;* *Shane Cole and Shanda Jennings, Domino's.*

Open for lunch 7 days a week. Ask

about our group discounts perfect for employees or meetings. Hot pizza, sandwiches, pasta and more along with and icy cold pop delivered right to your door. Order online today by visiting www.dominos.com

Invest Financial Solutions



Pictured left: Lindy Greeter *Sheila Avenson, The Office Shop, Inc.;* *Jean Balaski and Kevin Kloeckl, Invest Financial Solutions* and Lindy Greeter *Heather Brill, Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union.*

Invest Financial has been in Little Falls for about 20 years. They are dedicated to helping their clients create, grow and distribute their wealth and to help them get financially organized. We treat people with respect in a low-pressure environment. Invest Financial offers many investment products, helps people with 401k rollovers, IRA's and Legacy and Estate Planning. Make your appointment by calling (320) 631-0777.

Keller Williams Realty Professionals



Pictured left: Lindy Greeter *Heather Brill, Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union;* *Anna Hansen, Keller Williams Realty Professionals;* *Lindy Greeter Sheila Avenson, The Office Shop, Inc.;* *Angie Petersen,*

Molly Nelson and Bob Coffin, Keller Williams Realty Professionals.

Keller Williams Realty Professionals would like to thank their clients, the local businesses, the community and their families for all of your support. It's because of all of you that Keller Williams have expanded and moved into their new office location. They are looking forward to serving even more of central Minnesota with all of their real estate needs. For more information visit <http://www.kw.com/kw/>

Chamber Federation Launches Legislative Agenda

By Doug Loon

Strike up a conversation with any business owner on the challenges to growing jobs in Minnesota, and the themes ring familiar.

High taxes hinder growth. Access to quality health care at an affordable price. The increasing number of government-mandates on employee benefits. Shortage of skilled workers.

Businesses of all types and sizes feel these stresses. Job-creators across the state hold their collective breath as the 2020 Legislature gets underway. Listen to those on the front lines as we seek ways to lessen these headwinds and create economic opportunity for all Minnesotans.

St. Cloud and River Heights are among the 40-plus members of the Minnesota Chamber Federation, which unites and amplifies the voice of local chambers by advocating for policies to grow business in every corner of the state. Together with the Minnesota Chamber, the Federation is launching its 2020 agenda as the Legislature gets underway.

Workplace regulations are center stage for St. Cloud businesses, says Teresa Bohnen, president of the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce. Among their concerns is the broad wage theft law that, among other things, penalizes employers for unintentional payroll errors. "It seemed like the wage theft law sailed through last year without much consideration of the unintended consequences. Now we are requiring all businesses to absorb additional costs related to excessive paperwork and compliance to regulations that the vast majority of them were already following."

The Federation will pursue modifications in the wage theft law.

We also continue to oppose "one size fits all" state mandates that limit employers' ability to design competitive benefit packages for their employees. The patchwork of local mandates is cited in Inver Grove Heights. "Many small businesses don't just work in one community," says Brenda Dietrich, co-owner of Hardline Concrete & Masonry. "When cities make their own legislation, such as mandating wages and benefits, it is a hindrance to small businesses."

Kari Rihm, president and chief executive of Rihm Family Companies, underscores the most widespread difficulty facing businesses: Finding workers. "Too few people are going into trades, and too many people are retiring from them," she says. "It's no secret. Businesses will be stymied if they can't hire enough experienced, skilled workers." The Federation continues to seek systemic reforms to raise all student achievement, ensuring every high school graduate is ready for postsecondary education or a career.

Local employer concerns resonate with Jennifer Gale, president of the River Heights Chamber. "We need to align our state's legislative policies with our desire to keep Minnesota competitive," she says. "Local chambers can work side by side with our legislators to connect them with business owners who know firsthand the everyday challenges."

Conforming Minnesota law with the federal Section 179 tax code tops our tax agenda to allow immediate expensing equipment purchases. Rounding out our priorities are requiring a cost-benefit analysis as part of any proposal to add insurance mandates to state law and supporting environmental policies that drive private investment in Minnesota while helping employers reduce environmental impacts.

Federation partners have collectively advanced employer priorities for more than a decade; they represent 43 communities and 21,000-plus businesses.

If you want to be in the know – and lend your collective voice to help improve the lives of all Minnesotans – I encourage you to become a member of your local chamber or the Minnesota Chamber. Sign up for email updates throughout the legislative session to keep abreast of what is happening at the Capitol.

As one employer, your voice can be a whisper. Combine it with hundreds of others, and your voice becomes a roar.

Doug Loon is President of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce - www.mnchamber.com

March Calendar of Events

The Little Falls Area Chamber of Commerce event and meetings are in bold. For an expanded list of community events, visit our website at www.littlefallsmnchamber.com

March

3 ~ **Lindy Greeter Committee Meeting**, 12:30 pm, Perkin's Restaurant & Bakery, 201 16 St NE, Little Falls

4 ~ Little Falls Business Association, noon, Pizza Ranch, 202 LeMieur St., Little Falls

5 ~ Taize Prayer, 6:00 pm, Gathering Space, St. Francis Convent, 116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

5 ~ Open Mic, 7:00 pm, Great River Arts, 122 1 St SE, Little Falls

6 ~ Kinship Fish Fry, 4:30 - 7:00 pm, Little Falls VFW, 1210 3 Ave NE, Little Falls

7 ~ Petite Picasso Art Class, 10:30 am, Great River Arts, 122 1 St SE, Little Falls

7 ~ Mini Monet Art Class, noon, Great River Arts, 122 1 St SE, Little Falls

11 ~ **FALS (Falls Area Leadership Series)**, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Initiative Foundation, 405 1 St SE, Little Falls.

Session sponsor: **Little Falls Health Services**

11 ~ American Red Cross Blood Mobile, 1:00 pm, St. Francis Hall, St. Francis Convent, 116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

12 ~ **Chamber Board of Directors Meeting**, 11:00 am, Chamber of Commerce, 200 1 St NW, Little Falls

12 ~ American Red Cross Blood Mobile, noon, St. Francis Hall, St. Francis Convent, 116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

13 ~ American Red Cross Blood Mobile, 8:30 pm, St. Francis Hall, St. Francis Convent, 116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

13 ~ Battelegs, 6:30 pm doors open, 7:30 pm, show, Great River Arts, 122 1 St SE, Little Falls

14-15 ~ Girls' Night at the Mansion, 2:00 pm, Linden Hill Historic Event Center, 608 Highland Ave, Little Falls

19 ~ Centering Prayer, 6:00 pm, Gathering Space, St. Francis Convent, 116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

20 ~ **Friday Morning Coffee**, 7:30 - 9:00 am, Chamber of Commerce, 200 1 St NW, Little Falls.

Sponsored by: **North Risk Partners**

20-22 - Family of Origin Workshop, 2:00 pm, St. Francis Hall, St. Francis Convent, 116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

25 ~ **Lunchtime on Location**, noon, Edina Realty, 15594 Hwy 27., Little Falls. Sponsored by: **Edina Realty**

27 ~ Hope Rocks Concert, 6:30 pm, doors open, 7:30 pm show, Falls Ballroom, 15879 Hwy 27, Little Falls

28 ~ Habitat for Humanity Ladies Day Luncheon, 10:00 am, St. Francis Hall, St. Francis Convent,
116 8 Ave SE, Little Falls

28 ~ Sprout Growers & Makers Markets and A la cARTE, 10:00 am, Sprout, 609 13 Ave NE Ste. 8, Little Falls

31 ~ Kinship Annual Chili Cook Off, 5:00 pm, Falls Ballroom, 15879 Hwy 27, Little Falls

LITTLE FALLS AREA



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Little Falls MN 56345