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CHAMBER

# LEADING BUSINESS

February/March 2025



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*The mission of the Chamber is to be the leading resource for making connections that foster collaboration which serves and promotes efforts to strengthen the Greater Elkhart business community.*

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Levon Johnson  
President/CEO  
[ljohnson@elkhart.org](mailto:ljohnson@elkhart.org)

# We Are Better Together

So many things in the world we live in are changing at a pace never seen in the history of our mankind.

We have advances in technology, medicine, architecture, manufacturing, art, and aeronautics. Advanced forms of communication, new discoveries, and faster, more efficient transportation are creating new conveniences and new complexities at the same time. The bottom line is the more things change, the more opportunities and challenges arise.

What does all of this mean for the business community in Greater Elkhart?

It means we continue to lean in, even more, to the strengths that have always made us an agile, adaptive, resilient, leading, creative, and forward thinking economic forerunner. Ingenuity and hard work meeting opportunity is what has Greater Elkhart poised to grow our legacy businesses, expand into new business sectors, and attract new markets to engage with the talent in this region.

To continue being a business-friendly city, county, and state for economic growth and opportunities, it is imperative that the legislation and policies support the foundation of trust that leads to investment.

The key is having voices at the table that have strong relationships within and understand the communities they represent.

This isn't done by reading books or watching documentaries. It is done by putting shoes to pavement and being where your constituents are, so that a genuine exchange of meaningful dialogue can happen.

On more than one occasion in my weekly Briefly Speaking articles, I have mentioned that I believe in the statement "All politics is local."

This doesn't mean that all legislation and policies are passed here in Elkhart County, but it does mean that those who represent us at the municipal, state, and federal levels are gathering information and feedback locally to take back to their legislative bodies. The local connection helps provide guidance in their decision making.

Traveling around Greater Elkhart, I have been struck recently by the history of collaboration that has built, and continues to build, the very fabric that makes up the business community, housing developments, and shared amenities. It is an in-your-face reminder that we are better together.

A simple four-word phrase that is the actual essence of how we get things done in our area.

*We Are Better Together* is a phrase that goes beyond the boundaries of Elkhart County. It is evident in the collaboration that makes up the South Bend-Elkhart Region, and it is accentuated by our collective voices being heard in the Indiana Statehouse, and it is sought for its common-sense approach in the halls of the United States Congress. To be clear, we are not perfect and there is still much work to be done.

However, we continue to move in the right direction and are fortunate to have elected officials at every level who understand and represent us in that way.

At each level of government, the legislative bodies have very specific responsibilities to their constituents, but the decisions that are made often impact the other levels of governance.



Therefore, it is always best that communication about opportunities and challenges are clear.

As your Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce staff, we meet with and hear from our town, city, and county council members in their Council Chambers, we travel to Indianapolis to engage with our state Representatives and Senators, and we fly to Washington D.C. to meet with our U.S. Representatives and Senators.

However, we rarely get to hear from representatives from all levels of legislative government in one place at one time.

We want to share this rare opportunity with all of you.

As part of the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting presented by Lake City Bank, we will host Elkhart City Council President Arvis Dawson; Elkhart County Commissioner Suzie Weirick; Indiana State Representative Joanna King; and U.S. Representative Rudy Yakym for a great conversation about how working together, we all will continue to make Greater Elkhart, the State of Indiana, and The United States of America the best place possible to do business.

Join us on March 7 at 11:30 a.m. in the Crystal Ballroom at the Lerner Theatre. You can register for the Annual Meeting on the Greater Elkhart Chamber website. This is our largest event of the year and it sells out quickly, so don't wait until the last minute to try and register.

We hope to see you there.



## Service Project



5220 Middlebury St, Elkhart  
February 27 | 1:30 - 4 pm

A project hosted by the Young Professionals Council - all ages welcome Register at [elkhart.org](http://elkhart.org)




## Power of Prevention

### Essential Health Tips for Women

Panelists: Dr. Talia, Heart City Health; Connie Chalko, Clinical Pharmacist;  
and Dr. Munkle, Beacon/Elkhart General


Thursday, March 20 11:30 am - 1 pm

IVY Tech Community College



### Women's Council

Register at [elkhart.org](http://elkhart.org)



# Artificial Intelligence Use in Safety

Wednesday, March 19 - 7:30 am

Matterhorn Conference Center 2041 Cassopolis St, Elkhart

Annual Sponsors



An OSHA Council Training Breakfast Register at [www.Elkhart.org](http://www.Elkhart.org) Pre-registration required

# THIRD HOUSE MEETINGS

March 28  
12 pm - 1:30 pm

presented by  
We Impact Group


**weIMPACT**

hosted by  
The Greater Elkhart  
Chamber of Commerce

**FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Come and engage with your  
State Senators and Representatives  
as they discuss the 2025 Indiana  
General Assembly legislative  
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Rep. Doug Miller, Rep. Timothy Wesco



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## Member Celebrations



ADEC celebrates their new Resource Center at 1205 Middleton Run Rd in Elkhart. This new facility will expand opportunities for skills training, summer camp, and therapy resources. [www.adecinc.com](http://www.adecinc.com)



Celebrating the Grand Opening of **Los Cabos Mexican Grill and Bar!** Located at 3011 Belvedere Rd in Elkhart, Los Cabos offers delicious, authentic Mexican cuisine and drinks. [www.loscabosmexicangrillandbar.com](http://www.loscabosmexicangrillandbar.com)



**Tru by Hilton** celebrates their Grand Opening (delayed by COVID) and their 5 Year Anniversary! Located at 3500 Cassopolis St in Elkhart, Tru features the amenities and experiences that matter most. [www.truelkhart.trubyhilton.com](http://www.truelkhart.trubyhilton.com)





## Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce 2025 Board of Directors

### *Front Row (seated L to R)*

Ahmanda Smith, South Bend Orthopaedics; Melissa Ramey, Godfrey Marine; Cedric Waters, Airxcel, Inc; Dina Harris, Past Chair; Emma Jordan, Specialized Staffing Solutions, Board Chair; Kathy Sears, Centier Bank, Treasurer; Jason Demeter, Patrick Industries, Inc; Valentina Jaurer, Mariscos Don Miguel; Jessica Hilary, Junior Achievement & Lemonade Day Serving Elkhart County

### *Second Row (standing L to R)*

Megan Mars, Hotel Elkhart, Tapestry Collection by Hilton; Sheila Snyder, Indiana University South Bend; Dan Gartee, Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Center of Northern Indiana, Inc.; Ernesto Rivas, Ernesto Rivas Insurance Agency; Tony Gaipa, Gibson; Derald Gray, DG Visionaries; Levon Johnson, Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce; Gary Paston, Majority Builders, Second Vice Chair; Allen Stanley, NIBCO; Chrissy Mast, Crowe LLP; Craig Joachim, Adams Remco; Hugh Johnson, J2 Marketing; Anita Wilson, Hopman Jewelers

### *Not Pictured*

Evan Estep, Excel Electronics; Matt Krathwohl, THOR Industries, First Vice Chair; Byron Sanders, Baugo Community Schools



## Executive Board 2025

### *Front Row (seated L to R)*

Dina Harris, Past Chair; Emma Jordan, Specialized Staffing Solutions, Board Chair; and Kathy Sears, Centier Bank, Treasurer.

### *Second Row (L to R)*

Levon Johnson, Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce, Secretary; and Gary Paston, Majority Builders, Second Vice Chair

### *Not Pictured*

Matt Krathwohl, THOR Industries, First Vice Chair



## New Board Members 2025

### *Front Row (seated L to R)*

Tony Gaipa, Gibson; Dina Harris; and Allen Stanley, NIBCO Inc.

### *Second Row (L to R)*

Cedric Waters, Airxcel, Inc; Anita Wilson, Hopman Jewelers; and Craig Joachim, Adams Remco Inc.

### *Not Pictured*

Byron Sanders, Baugo Community Schools

**The mission of the Chamber is to be the leading resource for making connections that foster collaboration which serves and promotes efforts to strengthen the Greater Elkhart business community.**



## WHY

A strong business community is the foundation of a vibrant and healthy city.



## LEADING RESOURCE

We aim to be amongst the first contacts you make when you need business or community information.



## CONNECTIONS

We connect individuals, businesses, residents, and visitors to people, information, services, community, and organizations.

## COLLABORATION

Bringing individuals and businesses together for the purpose of building strong relationships creates positive outcomes.



## BUSINESS COMMUNITY



The Greater Elkhart business community includes businesses of all sizes and varieties of economic focuses.



## PROMOTES

With a multifaceted communications and media approach, the Chamber will be a voice that highlights our greater Elkhart businesses.

## SERVES



Utilizing our 9 councils, we advocate on behalf of the business community and provide programming that elevates business members.







## Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce 2024-2027 Priorities

### Education/Training

Lifelong learning will be increasingly important to our workforce. The Chamber will continue to provide education/training programs and information to meet the needs of an ever-changing economic environment.

### Advocacy

The foundation of the Chamber's work is advocating on behalf of our business community. Regular meetings with local, state, and federal elected officials and other decision makers ensure legislation, policies, and decisions are being made in support of our vibrant and growing business community.

### Business Connections

The Chamber will continue to facilitate collaboration between businesses and individuals to address their unique needs. Increasing business and individual networks is important to keeping our community connected.

### Leadership Coaching/Development

Coaching and development of leaders must be intentional with an emphasis on learning, skill application, and mentorship. The Chamber is committed to fostering leadership development.

### Inclusivity

As we strive to be a reflection of our community, the Chamber is focused on recognizing and engaging with the wide range of sectors and sizes of businesses that operate within the Greater Elkhart community.

## Objectives

### Customer Density

Working with economic development partners, we are focused on quality of place and life initiatives that make Greater Elkhart an even more desirable place to live, work, and play.

### Strengthening and Growing Our Skilled Workforce

Alongside our local and regional partners, we are collaborating to ensure our employers have more highly trained employees to meet the needs of our ever-changing work environments.

### Increased Supply Chain Access

Advocating for policies, legislation, and transportation infrastructure is a top priority, ensuring local businesses have access to the resources needed to do their work.

### Business Retention, Expansion, and Attraction

Partnering with public and private institutions and regional organizations, we will continue to support a local business environment that encourages business investments in our region.

### Entrepreneurship

We will work collaboratively to connect startups and early stage businesses to information, training, support, and resources.

## Why are businesses joining the Greater Elkhart Chamber?

"To further our business's development in the community, to connect with business resources, and network with like-minded members."

"Best and most direct connection to the pulse of the Greater Elkhart business community."

"Allows us to foster the continued growth of the Elkhart business community and create synergies with other community leaders."

"Provides opportunities to showcase our business and collaborate with a group focused on enhancing our community by enhancing each other."

# Chamber Councils: Driving Growth and Collaboration

At the Greater Elkhart Chamber, we believe that collaboration and shared vision are the cornerstones of a thriving business community. That's why we have established Chamber Councils, specialized groups that bring together industry leaders, professionals, and entrepreneurs to address specific challenges and opportunities in our vibrant region. These councils are instrumental in driving growth, fostering innovation, and strengthening our local economy. Our Chamber Councils serve as powerful platforms for networking and relationship-building.

Over the next three issues of Leading Business, we will feature insights and impacts from each of our nine Councils, beginning with Economic Development, OSHA, and Transportation.

**Ambassadors - Business Diversity Initiative - Business Recognition - Economic Development Leadership - OSHA - Transportation - Women's - Young Professionals**

If you're ready to take our business community to new heights, we invite you to join one of our Chamber Councils. By becoming a member, you'll become part of a dynamic community dedicated to your professional growth and the prosperity of Greater Elkhart as a whole. Whether you're seeking knowledge, networking, or advocacy opportunities, our councils offer a range of benefits designed to meet your specific needs. Together, let's drive growth, foster collaboration, and build a brighter future for Greater Elkhart. Join a Chamber Council today and experience the power of collective success.

## Economic Development Council

The Economic Development Council assists economic development and quality of place partners with a focus on housing, use of tax incentives, education, parks, downtown development, workforce, real estate, and other trending topics.



**Andrew Asma  
Edward Jones**

Economic Development  
Council Co-Chair



**Trevor Wendzonka  
Elkhart Public Library**

Economic Development  
Council Co-Chair

### In the past two years what have been the most impactful outcomes of the work of the Economic Development Council?

**Andrew:** *One outcome that I've observed is greater collaboration between folks in the education field and people in business. There are meaningful conversations taking place about how to best prepare our community's students for success, and that ties directly into the needs of our local employers both now and into the future. These conversations also allowed us to give meaningful feedback to our state legislators recently when they were re-working Indiana's high school graduation requirements. Additionally, attendance at our Annual Economic Update Luncheon has been outstanding. In 2023, we heard from a panel of local government officials, and in 2024 a panel of local entrepreneurs. I feel that this was an effective showcase of the types of conversations that take place every month during our meetings.*

**Trevor:** *Personally, it's about the relationships created at that table...and the all-important meeting after the meeting. It's the one place I can count on to talk with government reps, job creators, community builders, educators, financial folks, and on and on.*

### What makes the work of the Economic Development Council effective?

**Andrew:** *For me it's the strength of the people who attend our meetings, and our shared goal of positive growth in our community. The recent addition of our partners in the education field has enhanced that strength as well as provided valuable new perspectives. We view our areas of focus as being inter-connected parts that all contribute to the betterment of Elkhart County and our region. Collaborating is much easier when the goals and outcomes are shared. For our group, we might not always agree on the specific path to take, but we all agree on the direction we want to go. Sharing these goals makes collaboration easier and more effective.*

**Trevor:** *Really, this is a direct result of the perspectives shared around the table each month. Under Levon's leadership, the Chamber has been effective in pulling together all the information we provide to get us headed toward a North Star. The Benham housing and redevelopment initiative came about in part due to the Council's discussions and ideas. Education is a significant issue in front of us now since we're all deeply impacted by the success of our schools. Going back a few years, shovel-ready development sites and improved permitting processes came from our monthly talks and informed, behind-the-scenes efforts.*



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## OSHA Council

The OSHA Council consists of member companies with an interest in safety awareness in the workplace. Breakfast meetings provide updates on regulatory changes. Networking allows for safety directors, human resources personnel, plant managers and members of plant safety committees to better understand OSHA requirements and best safety practices.



**Mary Barrett**  
Patrick Industries

OSHA Council  
Co-Chair

### What should others know about the OSHA Council?

**Mary:** *You do not have to be an EHS (environmental, safety and health) professional to attend. Many of those involved are from other professions that have safety and health as a part of their responsibilities such as frontline managers, human resources, medical providers, staffing resources, and safety committee members. Anyone who desires to learn more about safety and health and network with others with the same interests is welcome!*



**Darrick Parker**  
THOR Industries

OSHA Council  
Co-Chair

**Darrick:** *This is a group of area professionals that have a strong desire to increase the safety awareness and overall workplace environment within the Greater Elkhart area. Your level of knowledge or experience in this field does not matter. We are all here to help one another achieve the same goal, zero workplace injuries.*

### How do you decide what areas or topics the OSHA Council will focus on each year?

**Mary:** *Our council continues to focus on the foundational topics of health and safety and strives to stay up to date on emerging technology. At the end of each season a survey goes out to all attendees to learn what topics they found to be of value, which they would like to learn more about, and if there are any topics not yet covered, they would like to see.*

**Darrick:** *At the end of each OSHA Council season, we send out surveys asking our members to rank the effectiveness of each presentation and provide ideas for new topics. Then we meet as a committee to discuss their feedback and determine our direction for the upcoming OSHA Council season.*

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## Transportation Council

The Transportation Council has built valuable relationships with local, regional, and state transportation officials, and advocates for continuous and coordinated improvement in the network which serves transportation needs in Elkhart County and connecting our community to other areas.



**C.J. Cunningham**  
Lochmueller Group

Transportation Council  
Co-Chair

### Why would someone want to join the Transportation Council?

**C.J.:** *Someone should want to join our council if they are at all interested in knowing more about local transportation improvements – whether it be roads, multi-modal pathways, transit, or air travel (Yes! we even discuss airports!). The easiest way to participate is to join us during our monthly meetings, occurring most months on the second Friday. Additionally, we have two major events each year: The Transportation Council INDOT Luncheon, held every August; and our Transportation Breakfast, held each December.*



**Debra Hughes**  
Surveying And Mapping

Transportation Council  
Co-Chair

**Debra:** *It was started over 40 years ago and is the only group that has this focus in the area. It has built valuable partnerships with transportation agencies to improve the quality of transportation in our region. We have monthly presentations from representatives of the primary transportation operating entities. This allows for sharing information and collaboration between agencies and businesses supporting them.*

### What makes the work of the Transportation Council effective?

**C.J.:** *The Transportation Council connects people to help solve local transportation issues. Our regular meetings introduce topics that spur discussion among participants. Often, that discussion reveals issues that other are adept in solving. Those connections have contributed to the advancement of local transportation projects.*

**Debra:** *It is the collaboration between representatives from transportation agencies, government agencies and businesses interested in transportation planning, construction and operations. Anyone working for a transportation agency or working as a supplier to an agency would gain valuable information and contacts to expand their business.*

# NEW MEMBERS

## Activa Medspa

www.activatelehealth.com  
234 Waterfall Dr, Ste C  
Elkhart, IN 46516  
(575) 743-0755  
Talhia Juarez-Aguilar  
*Medical Spa*  
Referred by Jeremy Perez, Lexington Event Center

## Beary Landscape Management

www.bearylanscaping.com  
621 Kollar St  
Elkhart, IN 46514  
(574) 786-4100  
Andre Flake  
*Lanscaping & Lawn Maintenance*

## Bright and Shiny Cleaning Services LLC

brightandshinycleaningservices.com  
Goshen, IN 46528  
(574) 903-2152  
Angela Hernandez  
*Cleaning Services: Commercial & Residential*  
Referred by Business Diversity Initiative

## Cabrales, LLC

www.cabralesllc.com  
1429 El Reno St  
Elkhart, IN 46516  
(773) 679-5798  
Alma R. Claro  
*Building Contractors*  
Referred by Business Diversity Initiative

## Candl•ogic, LLC

www.candlogic.com  
Chad Teter  
*Candle Manufacturer*

## CrisStyle Clean

www.crisstyleclean.com  
421 S 2nd St, Ste 105  
Elkhart, IN 46516  
(833) 225-3260  
Christy Matthews  
*Cleaning Services: Commercial & Residential*

## Devoted Health

www.devoted.com  
1732 W 455 S  
Atlanta, IN 46031  
(317) 376-2442  
Charles Woelfert  
*Insurance*

## Jointly Studios

www.jointlystudios.com  
Elkhart, IN  
(989) 860-1845  
Kara Royer  
*Marketing*

## Latin Marianny LLC

1620 S Nappanee St  
Elkhart, IN 46514  
(574) 347-0627  
Marianny Bracho  
*Accounting & Tax Service*  
Referred by Business Diversity Initiative

## LecsIT

www.lecsit.com  
124 W Garro St #1214  
Plymouth, IN 46563  
(888) 606-8805  
James Horvath  
*Information Technology Consultants*

## Lycro Manufacturing, Inc.

www.lycropducts.com  
66557 SR 19  
Wakarusa, IN 46573  
(574) 862-4981  
Nate Wojtysiak  
*Metal Fabricators*

## MAKS Plastics

www.maksplastics.com  
13077 McKinley Hwy  
Mishawaka, IN 46545  
(574) 303-1726  
Fay Flournoy  
*Roto Molding*

## Nanochem Technologies

www.nanochemtechnologies.com  
1203 Kent St  
Elkhart, IN 46514-1739  
(574) 970-2436  
Brittany Dack  
*Coatings: Manufacturer*

## Powerhouse Health Partners

www.powerhousefin.com/tsuazo  
24265 Belmar Dr  
Elkhart, IN 46517  
(574) 349-1758  
Tracy Suazo  
*Insurance*  
Referred by Business Diversity Initiative

## Symasis

www.symasis.com  
123 S Main St  
Goshen, IN 46526  
(888) 208-2128  
Jay Hochstetler  
*Cybersecurity Consultants*  
Referred by Susie Miller, The Window

## FEBRUARY AND MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

### 70+ YEARS

Anderson Silver Plating Co., Inc.  
The Horton Group  
Shaum Electric Company, Inc.  
Warrick & Boyn, LLP

### 50+ YEARS

BABSCO Supply Inc.  
Elkhart Clinic LLC  
Goshen College

### 45 YEARS

Gibson

### 35 YEARS

Potawatomi Zoological Society

### 30 YEARS

Axle, Inc.

### 20 YEARS

Elkhart Child Development Center  
SonSet Solutions, Inc

### 15 YEARS

Foundations Child Care Center, Inc.  
LaSalle Bristol

### 10 YEARS

1st Source Insurance  
Elite Kitchens, LLC

### 5 YEARS

Bin There Dump That Michiana  
Hydro Extrusion USA LLC  
Modern Woodmen Fraternal Financial  
Tru by Hilton Elkhart

### 1 YEAR

Anco Steel Company  
ATI Physical Therapy  
Avid Hotel Elkhart  
Blaze  
El Rancho Viejo #3  
Ferret, Inc.  
Financial Empowerment  
Geenex Solar  
La Raza Indiana  
McKinnies Realty - Devoted Agents  
Michiana Family Center  
Omega National Products by Rev-A-Shelf  
Paramount Plastics, Inc.  
Planet Fitness  
Quad 4 Plastics, LLC  
Rocket Mortgage  
Runnings  
SDG  
Tolson Center for Community Excellence  
Town Square Publications



# Business Recognition Awards



**The Electric Brew**, with locations in Elkhart and Goshen, has received a Business of the Month Award from the Greater Elkhart Chamber Business Recognition Council. The Electric Brew was founded in 1996 in a former shoe repair shop in Goshen by Brenda Hostetler-Kaufman and Tony Kauffman. Myron and Dana Bontrager bought the coffee shop in 2007. In 2008, Myron began roasting his own coffee and The Electric Brew became approved as a Fair Trade Certified Coffeehouse. Jeremy and Shivy Bontrager became joint owners with Jeremy's parents in 2009 and the company moved to the Washington Street location in 2013. In 2015, a second location was opened in Elkhart followed by the Ivy Tech Campus location in 2023. They have over 30 employees in the three locations. The company is known for Relationship Coffee and they work hard to ensure ethical pay for the farmers and producers of coffee. They take it a step further by getting to know the families they buy green coffee from and growing those relationships around the world. This includes an all-women's cooperative in Sumatra and Guatemala. Buying beans from Nicaragua has produced income for workers during times of national crisis. Their relationship with Café Justo in Mexico provides income for two families for a year. In our community, The Electric Brew is involved with The Window and Faith Mission, and offers fundraisers for schools.

**GDC Inc.** has received a Business of the Month Award from the Greater Elkhart Chamber Business Recognition Council. Founded in 1955, GDC, Inc. has grown from a single employee working out of a barn, to a powerhouse in engineered solutions with over 450 employees and seven locations, five of which are in Elkhart County. A testament to resilience and adaptability, GDC remains family-owned, now led by the third generation and proudly women-owned. This history of family ownership has instilled a unique culture of commitment and community involvement. GDC's offerings span three main product lines: Engineered Solutions and Die Cutting – Delivering precise, custom-engineered components; Thermo Plastics (Durapreme) – Specializing in extrusion and compression molding; and Acoustic Division (Sonozorb) – Providing top-tier acoustic solutions that set industry standards. GDC stands out as a unique entity specializing in automotive and engineered solutions. The company actively supports initiatives like the Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, and 4-H programs. GDC values its employees and consistently strives to foster a positive and engaging work environment. Running three shifts, they maintain a robust employee engagement program, including quarterly activities, costume contests, employee dinners, and carry-in events to emphasize the importance of a supportive workplace culture.



**Nelson's Catering and Fundraising**, located at 607 Nelsons Pkwy in Wakarusa, has received a Business of the Month Award from the Greater Elkhart Chamber Business Recognition Council. For over 50 years, Nelson's has served Indiana and Michigan with the finest barbecued products. During the Great Depression, Nelson Gongwer was a manager of a small poultry processing plant in Wakarusa, and continuously toyed with new and innovative ways to promote poultry products. He was convinced there was a better way to cook large quantities of chicken while maintaining the high quality only found in "grandma's kitchen." Weekend after weekend, he labored over makeshift grills, trying to automate the process. Eventually, in 1967, Nelson accomplished precisely what he had set out to do, and the famous Port-A-Pit® BBQ machine was

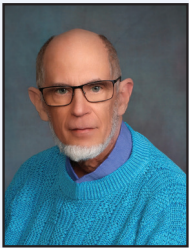
introduced to the world. After years of persistence, Nelson had created the process that would soon make Nelson's a household name throughout northern Indiana. By the 1980s, under the new leadership of Nelson's son Dean Gongwer, the company was barbecuing over 500,000 halves of chicken per year. Dean's son, Tad Nelson Gongwer, took over the third-generation family-owned company in 1997 and has continued the tradition of quality and inventive business thinking by emphasizing the catering division. Nelson's now serves over 1.2 million halves of chicken through its fundraising and catering services every year, serving groups from 10 to 40,000.

## Ambassadors of the Month



**Chris Cossin**  
**Lighthouse Leadership Group**  
[lighthouseelg.org](http://lighthouseelg.org)

*"Being an Ambassador for the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce for the past four years has been a wonderful experience. It allows me to do what I enjoy, connecting with people and adding value to the community. I enjoy advocating for our Chamber."*



**Michael Wolff**  
**Life Style Photography**  
[www.lsphoto.biz](http://www.lsphoto.biz)

*"Being an Ambassador has been a rewarding experience. I've been introduced to a number of entrepreneurs making their own way in the Elkhart business community. It has given me better perspective and an appreciation for the hard work being done each day."*



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## NEWS ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

ADEC has promoted **Courtney Smith** to Director of Community Engagement.

**Barletta Pontoon Boats** has been recognized with a 2025 Discover Boating Minneapolis Boat Show Innovation Award.

**Ashley Meyerdierks** has been named the 2024 HERM Award recipient from **Krugger Lawton**.

**Brad Sechrist** and **Clint Stoelting** are now Co-Owners of **Helman Sechrist Stoelting Architecture**.

INOVA Federal has promoted **Joseph Messenger** to Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President; **Claire Kellems** to Chief Digital Officer and Executive Vice President; and **Kerie Sekal** to Senior Vice President of Marketing and Retail Banking.

**Kristin L. Pruitt**, President of **Lake City Bank**, has been elected to the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Board of Directors for a three-year term.

**Oaklawn** has received the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) official designation.

**Dr. James R. Jastifer** has joined **Orthopedic & Sports Medicine Center of Northern Indiana, Inc.**

**Surf Internet** is celebrating "25 Years of Pioneering Connectivity" throughout 2025.

**THK Law, LLP** announces the promotion of **Elizabeth "Libby" Klesmith** to Partner.

**Welch Packaging Group Inc.** has named **Gesumino "Jessie" Agostino** as Chief Financial Officer.

*Submit your company's news and information to [marketing@elkhart.org](mailto:marketing@elkhart.org)*



## Fairbanks Award



**Hull Lift Truck** has received a Fairbanks Award from the Business Recognition Council of the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce. The award was for their beautiful new facility, located at 22105 Elkhart East Blvd in Elkhart.



## CHAMBER EVENTS

**7 New Member Welcome**  
8:30 am  
Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce  
418 S Main St, Elkhart

**18 Entrepreneurial Business After Hours hosted by Brightpoint at AlphaGraphics**  
5 - 7 pm  
Alphagraphics, 22158 Elkhart East Blvd, Elkhart

**19 OSHA Council Breakfast - Federal Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division**  
7:30 am  
Matterhorn Conference Center, 2041 Cassopolis St, Elkhart

**20 Women's Council Luncheon - Three Stages of Financial Planning**  
11:30 am  
Ivy Tech Community College, 22531 CR 18, Goshen

**27 YP Service Project**  
1:30 - 4 pm  
Cultivate Food Rescue  
5220 Middlebury Street, Elkhart



**EMPOWER SMALL BUSINESS**  
NETWORKING AND CAPITAL ACCESS NIGHT

Eat, Drink, and Network with us  
Feb 18th  
5-7pm

Event Location  
**alphagraphics**  
22158 Elkhart East Blvd  
Elkhart, IN 46514



*Three Stages of Financial Planning*

Presenters: Leigh Holland, Cressy & Everett  
and Tammy Dickson, Thrivent Financial

Thursday, February 20 11:30 am - 1 pm  
IVY Tech Community College

 **Greater Elkhart CHAMBER**  
Leading Business...Leading Our Community

**Women's Council**  
Register at [elkhart.org](http://elkhart.org)

**4 OSHA General Industry 20 Hour Training**  
March 4 - 6, 8 am - 5 pm  
Matterhorn Conference Center  
2041 Cassopolis St, Elkhart

**7 Annual Meeting 2025**  
11:30 am - 1:30 pm  
Crystal Ballroom at the Lerner  
410 S Main St, Elkhart

**18 Business After Hours hosted by Everence**  
An 80th Birthday Celebration!  
5 - 7 pm  
1110 N Main St, Goshen

**19 OSHA Council Breakfast - Artificial Intelligence Use in Safety**  
7:30 am  
Matterhorn Conference Center, 2041 Cassopolis St, Elkhart

**20 Women's Council Luncheon - Power of Prevention**  
11:30 am  
Ivy Tech Community College  
22531 CR 18, Goshen

**27 YP Lunch with the Mayor**  
11:30 am  
Hotel Elkhart  
500 S Main St, Elkhart

**28 Third House Meeting**  
12 - 1:30 pm  
Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce  
418 S Main St, Elkhart

CELEBRATING

**80**

YEARS OF IMPACT

Join Everence as we commemorate our 80th anniversary on March 18 from 5 - 7 p.m. at our corporate headquarters in Goshen.

 **Everence®**



**Lunch with the Mayor**  
with updates on the Aspire Plan  
March 27 | 11:30 am  
Hotel Elkhart

Presenting Sponsors  
 

Event Sponsor  




A Luncheon hosted by the Young Professionals Council - all ages welcome Register at [elkhart.org](http://elkhart.org)





# Annual Meeting

March 7, 2025 | 11:30 am

Crystal Ballroom at the Lerner Theatre

# We Are Better Together

Panel Discussion featuring



**Arvis Dawson**  
President  
Elkhart City Council



**Suzie Weirick**  
Elkhart County  
Commissioner



**Joanna King**  
Deputy Speaker  
Pro Tempore Indiana  
House of Representatives



**Rudy Yakym**  
U.S. House of  
Representatives  
Indiana 2<sup>nd</sup> District



**Master of Ceremonies**  
Brian Conybeare, ABC57

Register to attend at  
[elkhart.org](http://elkhart.org)

Presenting Sponsor

