

MetroNorth

Chamber of Commerce

Mission Statement: The MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce advocates and promotes business in the northern metropolitan trade area, strengthening our community.

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Chamber@metronorthchamber.org

www.metronorthchamber.org

Tom Snell, Executive Director

Rita Moser, Administrative Assistant

Lori Higgins, Manager of
Administration

Membership Appreciation Party: It's For You!

We appreciate your being a Chamber member. Hopefully you already know this. But we'd like to take a night and formally thank everyone for joining this great organization. So please join us at Brookhall for this free event on Tuesday, April 21st from 5-8 pm. There will be food, gifts, and plenty of time to socialize and network with others in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

You can also add your company's promotional items to the event: if interested, we need 200 of your items ASAP that we can put with the free gifts. If you want to be even more visible, it's not too late to sponsor a table for \$99. Contact rita@metronorthchamber.org for more information on these options or to RSVP.

Small Business Resource Expo April 23rd

On April 23rd from 1:00-7:00 pm, the MetroNorth Chamber will participate in the Small Business Resource Expo at the Earle Brown Heritage Center in Brooklyn Park. The theme is "Today's

Solutions for Tomorrow's Challenges." Besides many exhibitors, there is a panel on gaining access to scarce financial resources from 2-3 pm, a panel on effective marketing in a troubled economy from 4-5 pm. A networking event is scheduled from 5-7 pm. Cost to attend is \$35. However, the Chamber has about 30 complimentary tickets to this event that we'd like to offer to our members on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact rita@metronorthchamber.org if you're interested in a ticket to this event. You can also visit www.nbmexpo.com for more information.

BEL Presents Innovation in Sales & Marketing During Uncertain Times

On Friday, April 10th at 7:30 am, the BEL Committee hosts guest speaker Dr. Richard Brynteson at Anoka Ramsey Community College. Dr. Brynteson will teach innovative methods, strategies, and tactics that will help your organization improve its sales and marketing objectives. His presentations are always humorous, inspiring, and thought-provoking. Contact rita@metronorthchamber.org to RSVP; cost is \$20 for members and \$25 for nonmembers.

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Committee Chairs:**Ambassador:**

Deb Barbeln, Independent Beauty Consultant

Gala: Heidi Heroff, SPIRE

Golf: Tom Newland, Allegra Printing, and Leonard Gandel

Government Affairs: Mike Kraft, HTG Architects

Marketing: Randy Korus, Cyberex

Membership: Mike Thorsland, Nationwide Insurance

Sunrise: Dean Hancy, PC Bits, and Dean Prince, Tidbits

Wine Tasting: Jim Kugler, Kugler Financial Services, and Tom Newland, Allegra Printing

If you are interested in joining a committee or learning more, contact the Chamber. We'd love to hear from you!

Event Recap: Look what went on!

What do red wine, Gen Y's, basketball, HR, and legislators have in common? They were all highlights of recent MetroNorth Chamber events.

On February 18th, about 25 members spent a few hours at the Coon Rapids Olive Garden tasting several delectable wines paired with amazing appetizers. Many thanks to Jim Kugler and Tom Newland for organizing and to Jeanne Christoffer at the Olive Garden for hosting. See the below article for more details.

A day later, Sarah Sladek gave a fascinating presentation to approximately 80 members at Majestic Oaks during the February 19th Membership Meeting. This local author and presenter spoke on the generational differences found in the workplace today and how businesses can effectively communicate with not just Gen Y's but all generations.

On March 4th, the Government Affairs Committee heard information from Gary Schmidt, director of reliever airports for the Metropolitan Airports Commission, about the Anoka County airport runway extension idea. It was a full house at the Chamber...many people came to hear his comments and give their thoughts about the subject, and a very good and informative discussion was had. Just two days later on March 6th, about 40 people gathered at the TPC in Blaine to hear from State Senator Tom Bakk.

His comments on the state budget were insightful and sparked much discussion.

About 2 dozen Chamber members attended the Timberwolves game on March 11th. Thanks to some special tickets from the MN Timberwolves, these members had a chance for an 'executive networking session' while watching the T-Wolves from a private suite.

The morning of Friday the 13th was a lucky day for those who attended the March BEL meeting at Anoka Ramsey Community College. Brad Guck, District Manager of Administaff, and John Olson, labor and employment attorney for Seaton, Beck and Peters, provided ideas to help communicate with employees during times of stress and change, including discussing HR strategies and recent changes to COBRA. Later that day, members of the Government Affairs Committee and others joined State Representative Tim Sanders for a discussion on legislative priorities.

As you can see, the Chamber was very busy this past month and we hope you took advantage of some of the many events and opportunities we provided. As always, we'd appreciate your feedback on the events we've had and/or what you'd like to see in the future. Contact Lori at lori@metronorthchamber.org. Thanks!

February Wine Tasting Event: What a Success!

Wine, food, and conversation were the key ingredients for another successful MetroNorth Grape Vine Wine tasting February 18 at the Coon Rapids Olive Garden, hosted by Jeanne Christoffer, their Service Manager. To say everyone had a good time would be an understatement; we had a great time!

We began with a Tuscan Villa Antori wine consisting of Sangiovese, Cabernet, Merlot and Syrah grapes paired with a delectable smoked mozzarella fonduta. Next, bruschetta was paired with Bertani Due Uve, a combination of two grapes: Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc. The third selection was a superb Sangiovese and Syrah blend. The fourth wine, a sparkling Prosecco Brut Zonin, perfectly complemented the white chocolate

raspberry cheesecake. Needless to say, everyone had plenty of wine, lots of good food, met folks from the chamber whom they had never met before, and went home planning to be back for the next wine tasting event on Tuesday June 16th. It will be hosted by Sam Leon at the Coon Rapids Acapulco. It starts at 5:17 pm; however, you are encouraged to come early to network. Seating is limited and reservations are required; to RSVP send \$29/person to the Chamber.

The Grape Vine Committee meets the first Wednesday of the month at 4:44 pm; the next meeting is at Space Aliens on April 1. If you have questions contact Tom Newland or Jim Kugler via their information in the Chamber Directory. Cheers!

Are You LinkedIn? It's the place to be!

Millions are doing it. It's been around since 2002, has over 35 million users, and keeps growing. It's the new way to network. Even if you still use a Rolodex – ESPECIALLY if you still use a Rolodex -- you need to fire up your computer and see what this business/social networking tool is about.

To begin, go to <http://www.linkedin.com> and create your profile, which is akin to a virtual resume/business card. Once you've completed that, start a search for colleagues and send them an invitation to connect; the goal is to build a large connection base to expand your relationships. Of course, other people can see your profile, which can also create business leads, job opportunities, etc.

If you connect to someone with whom you've done business, you can leave a written recommendation on their profile. Many of you utilize Chamber member businesses...what a great way to highlight your experiences! It's yet another way to promote our members' businesses.

Last but not least, you can join various groups, everything from professional associations to social interest groups. By joining a group you can join various "discussions" on topics of interest, or else use it to simply network with people with whom you share a common interest. The MetroNorth Chamber has its own group and we'd love for you to join! Simply do a group search for MetroNorth and click 'join this group.' Let's keep building business and building relationships!

Sunrise – it's not just for the birds

Many of you have been to a Sunrise breakfast and know its immense value. For those who haven't attended one yet, we strongly encourage you to do so. Now more than ever chamber members need to take every opportunity to network and promote their business. Usually 15-30 members attend any given breakfast and use this forum to give their '60 second commercial' about their business. You can pass out business cards, marketing collateral... whatever you like. At the end there's time to give written referrals to others, allowing these members to leave with tangible leads. Steve Schack of The Greenery Schack confirmed that they are important to attend. "People

assume that they will just hear the same thing from the same people. But they need to look beyond that. By going you are keeping your name out there. And while the other people there might not need your services, they might know someone else who does. When you stop going, your name goes away too," stated Steve.

Breakfast is included, so for only \$10 you have started your day off right! The Sunrise breakfasts are on Friday's at 7:30 am; see the back page for this month's schedule.

COBRA Subsidy Information

Included in President Obama's recent stimulus bill was a change to COBRA benefits. Employees who involuntarily terminated their employment between 9/1/08 and 1/1/2010 are eligible for a subsidy of up to 65% of the normal COBRA premium for up to 9 months. The terminated employee pays 35% to the employer, and the employer pays the remaining 65%. The employer may then recover the subsidy through a credit against the employer's liability for employment taxes. The subsidy

became available on March 1, 2009 and is not retroactive; employees terminated between 9/1/08 and 2/28/09 will only be paid the subsidy for nine months following March 1 2009. However, there are new election opportunities available for these employees. Note: COBRA generally does not apply to plans sponsored by employers with less than 20 employees. If you need more information, see <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/cobra.htm>

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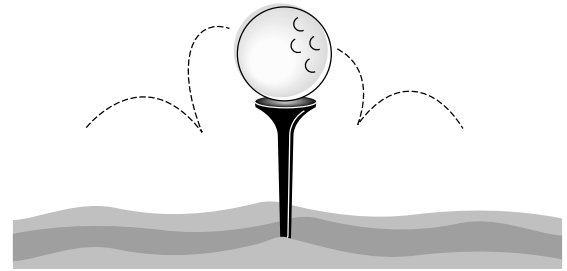
Ted Erhart, Dan Grassman & Barry Oxton, Advisors at Ameriprise financial, invite you to join them at the Chamber offices on April 23rd from 12-1 pm for a seminar entitled **Retirement Plans For Small Businesses**. You owe it to yourself to stay up to date on the types of business retirement plans that can help you and your employees to save for future years. Even if your business already sponsors a plan, changes to tax laws in recent years may have created better alternatives to your current plan. In this complimentary seminar they'll explore issues like: the benefits of sponsoring a retirement plan for you, your business and your employees; the types of retirement plans available for businesses; one size does not fit all; flexible contributions that may allow you to save on taxes; advantages of asset consolidation; retirement plan loan availability; & the features and benefits of SEP, SIMPLE, 401(k) and Individual (k) plans.

Space is limited. RSVP to Rita at rita@metronorthchamber.org or 763-783-3553 for you and up to 3 guests. This is an educational seminar with no cost or obligation. Lunch will be provided.

Please note: the chamber office is available to all our members. If you are interested in reserving the conference room for an educational seminar hosted by your business, email rita@metronorthchamber.org for further information.

2009 Golf Tournament: May 12th, Majestic Oaks

There must be spring fever in the air, because a multitude of members have already confirmed their participation in this year's golf tournament. Don't miss out on this opportunity...not only can you golf on a great course, but each hole will be sponsored by various chamber businesses so you can network throughout the day. Singles are \$139, foursomes are \$500 and hole sponsorship is \$185. We're also accepting donations for the silent auction, raffle, and goody bags. Contact Rita by April 28th at rita@metronorthchamber.org to register or to discuss donations. Thanks to ACE Solid Waste for their 2009 Tournament Sponsorship.



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Ribbon Cutting



The Blaine Post Office

is a great new facility located in the heart of Blaine. It's roomier, provides customers with safer, easier access to the Post Office and has more ample parking. Customers can now access Postal products and services 24/7 through their Automated Postal Center (APC) which allows customers to buy stamps, post and send packages and perform most Postal transactions.



Ambassadors present: Bill Gavin, AmRes Mortgage; Jim Huff, Achieve Services Inc.; Deb Barbeln, Independent Beauty Consultant; Diane Nichols, Courtyards of Andover; Christina Akinola, Anoka Hennepin Credit Union, Pam Becker, Reflection Promotional Products; Mike Schardin, betmar languages. Blaine Mayor Tom Ryan, Minneapolis Postmaster Cynthia M. Larson and Blaine Post Office Manager James Stanek are also pictured.

The Daily Shake is a nutrition club that provides personal wellness coaches to customers interested in weight loss, including free weekly weigh-in's/measurements. They carry nutritional products, energy, heart-health,

children's supplements, body & skin care line, protein snacks and more. Customers can also enjoy breakfast or lunch to go with our meal replacement shakes. Cutting the ribbon are owners Trisha Raich and Clara Johnson.



Ambassadors present: Deb Barbeln, Independent Beauty Consultant; Ernie Bedor, Bedor Agency; Denny Stolp, Comprehensive Benefits; Patrick Wilson, AFLAC; Dave De Buhr, EcoQuest International; Patrick Dohls, AFLAC; Kari Hefnider, American Family Insurance-Jeff Baker Agency; Mike Schardin, betmar languages; Jim Kugler, Kugler Financial Services; Diane Nichols, Courtyards of Andover; Bill Gavin, AmRes Mortgage; Jim Huff, Achieve Services Inc.

Ameriprise Financial

provides comprehensive financial planning, investing and insurance services. As planners, they focus on six key areas to assist clients in realizing their financial goals and dreams. These 6 areas are: Financial situation review, Protection planning (insurance/risk management), Wealth accumulation & strategies, Tax strategies, Retirement planning, and estate planning.



Ambassadors present: Deb Barbeln, Independent Beauty Consultant; Bill Gavin, AmRes Mortgage; Mike Schardin, betmar languages; Dave De Buhr, EcoQuest International; Christina Akinola, Anoka Hennepin Credit Union, Pam Becker, Reflection Promotional Products; Scott Bromley, Bromley Printing, Gail Fackler, GFA Interiors; Damian Kussian, North Metro TV; and Chad Gomez. Ameriprise representatives are Ted Erhardt, Dan Grassman and Barry Oxtan.

Stonebridge Kitchens

provides innovative and functional kitchen design, quality products, excellent service, and unbeatable workmanship for anyone seeking kitchen design and renovation...all at a great value! Their goal is to provide an extraordinary renovation experience that will meet your highest expectations.



Ambassadors present: Leonard Gandel; Bill Gavin, AmRes Mortgage; Pam Becker, Reflection Promotional Products; Danielle KoKora, ECM; Jean Frank, Costco; Jim Kugler, Kugler Financial Services; Kari Hefnider, American Family Insurance-Jeff Baker Agency; Deb Barbeln, Independent Beauty Consultant; Tom Snell, Executive Director MetroNorth Chamber. Cutting the ribbon are owners Linda LaFrenier and Amy Pflieger.

The MetroNorth Chamber congratulates Pam Becker of Reflection Promotional Products on being named March's AmBASSador of the Month!



FEBRUARY 2009

Membership Renewals

Thank You!!

1. Acapulco Mexican Restaurant
2. Achieve Services, Inc.
3. Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc. – Erhart
4. Andover, City of
5. Asset Management Advisors, Inc.
6. Blaine Lock & Safe, Inc.
7. Bolduc Aviation Specialized Serv., Inc.
8. Coon Creek Watershed District
9. Culligan Bottled Water Co.
10. Culligan Soft Water Company
11. Dynamic Group
12. Eagle Trucking, Inc.
13. Edward Jones-Fish
14. FM.107 / Hubbard Broadcasting
15. Four Paws And A Tail
16. Guldán Group
17. Harco Moving & Storage, Inc.
18. House Doctors Handyman Service
19. Interstate All Battery Center
20. John's Auto Parts
21. Lakeland Door & Remodeling
22. Lowe's – Coon Rapids
23. Mediation Services for Anoka County
24. Nelson Cheese & Deli
25. Northway Shopping Center
26. Oakwood Insurance Agency, Inc.
27. PhoneJacks Unlimited Inc.
28. Re/Max Real Estate Properties-Jechorek
29. Risdall Advertising Agency
30. Sannerud, Savarese & Associates P.A.
31. Shred It
32. Today's Window Fashions
33. Top Tool Company

February New Members

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Aflac - McGaver 901 West Highway 10, Suite 102 Anoka MN 55303 Ph: 612 802-2990 www.aflac.com Financial Services/Employee Benefits	HTMF Consulting 325 107th Lane NW Coon Rapids MN 55448 Ph: 763 670-7826 www.htmf.com Computers/Web Design/Development
Ameriprise Financial - Grassman 900 Long Lake Road, Suite 300 New Brighton MN 55112 Ph: 651 635-1762 Financial Services/Financial Planning	Lori Clark, EA, RAP 10833 Fillmore St. NE Blaine MN 55434 Ph: 763 754-7643 Manufacturers/Mfg Representatives
Comcast Spotlight 9705 Data Park Drive Minnetonka MN 55343 Ph: 952 238-8960 Fx: 952 238-8998 www.comcastspotlight.com Advertising/Marketing	Main Event 3420 129th Avenue NW Coon Rapids MN 55448 Ph: 763 422-9100 Restaurants
Creative Kids Academy Child Care Center 9100 Lake Drive Lexington MN 55014 Ph: 763 780-4087 info@creativekidschildcarecenter.com Child Care	Spruce-It-Up Cleaning Services 5175 - 149th Lane NW Ramsey MN 55303 Ph: 763 242-7803 Cleaning Services/Deck Refinishing
	The Daily Shake 10950 Club West Parkway, Suite 130 Blaine MN 55449 Ph: 651 304-1788 www.thedailyshakeblaine.com Specialty Food Products/Meals

Members in the News:

HTG Architects, an architectural firm with offices in Minneapolis and Mesa, AZ, has announced the recent opening of the firm's third office in Tampa, Florida. The team at HTG, also celebrating 50 years of experience, has completed work in more than 22 states and continues to grow its business through expanded service offerings and new locations. HTG Architects also recently received an Award of Excellence for its Platinum Bank project in Oakdale, MN. The award was given from the MN chapter of the National Association of Industrial Office Properties in the "Office Build-to-Suit Under 50,000 square feet" category. The MetroNorth Chamber congratulates HTG Architects on its many achievements!

Jim Hughes CRS, ABR, CDPE, of **Greenwell Realty**, Andover

has earned the prestigious Certified Distressed Property Expert (CDPE) designation, having completed extensive training in foreclosure avoidance and short sales. This is invaluable expertise to offer at a time when the area is ravaged by "distressed" homes in the foreclosure process. "In Anoka County, approximately 90 home owners fall into foreclosure each week. It is happening in all price ranges. Even high-priced homes are not immune. The CDPE designation is invaluable as I work with sellers and lenders on complicated short sales," said Hughes. "It is rewarding to be able to help sellers save their homes from foreclosure." Please join the Chamber in commended Jim on achieving this important designation.

Get to know your Chamber!

Each month the newsletter will spotlight various Chamber members.

This month focuses on 3 board members.

JoAnn Evans, member of the Board and past Chair:

I have been married for 26 years and have worked almost everyday with my husband, Paul. We have 3 children; Allison, Kali, and Wesley. Wes is in the Marines. We have one granddaughter and one grandson coming this May.

We joined the Chamber around 1999 for networking; I started out as a Sunriser. We love the Chamber. It is about giving back to the community. I joined the Board of Directors because I wanted to give back for as much as the Chamber has brought to my business.

My advice to fellow members: Be active. Because I am in sales, one of the best things that works for me is that when the newsletter comes out, I enter all of the events in Outlook right away. If I am available, I can attend more events. The more events I attend, the chance of more business opportunities I can make. Also, the more businesses I meet, the better chance I have to give other companies business back. I am a firm believer in doing business with as many chamber members as possible. This makes our community grow. Also, I appreciate the time the chamber takes for our businesses to keep our taxes in line.

Something you may not know about me: I love to drive on long road trips.

Lisa Tollakson, Board of Directors: I'm the District Manager for ADP. I'm married to Brett with two daughters Ally 4 1/2 and Whitney 2 1/2. My background is 10 years in banking prior to ADP.

TCF, my former employer, has been a member of the Chamber for many years. I became active in this Chamber in 2003 when I was a Business Banker in the Blaine/Coon Rapids area, and I stay a member because of the relationships I have gained through membership and the board involvement. I joined the Board to participate in the economic development and growth of the residential and business community in Anoka County, where I work and live. My advice to members: Make the first move to get involved. Find a way to impact the organization and to

share your resources and knowledge.

People may not know that I absolutely love being by water, just not in it. I am a terrible swimmer. I failed the beginner swimming lesson several times before giving up. Life jackets are my friend.

John Connelly, Board of Directors As Director of Sales and Development for the National Sports Center in Blaine, I am responsible for sponsorships and advertising at the venue and with our events. For 25 years, I have worked within the travel and tourism industry in a variety of positions. One of the primary goals of the NSC is to create economic development through sports tourism. Our largest event is Schwan's USA Cup which celebrates its 25 year anniversary this year! Because we are involved in generating tourism dollars for Minnesota, we find that belonging to the Metro North Chamber is a wise investment to communicate and create relationships with area businesses.

The Board of Directors invited me to participate in their efforts over two years ago. This is one way that the NSC can be involved in the business community and strengthen relationships with small businesses and elected leaders.

My advice to our members is to not be too selective in what functions and committees you participate in. You cannot assume anything. You might see a program that you think may not apply to you but that may be the meeting you share a great idea or meet someone who can help in your business strategy.

Something people might not know about me is that for 7 years I traveled extensively around the world to many unique places.



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APRIL

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
		1 7:30 a.m. Government Affairs Committee Legal Grounds 4:44 p.m. Wine Tasting Committee Space Aliens	2 8:15 p.m. Gala Committee Chamber Office	3 7:30 a.m. Blaine Sunrise Networking Time Out
6 4:14 p.m. Golf Committee Chamber Office	7	8 7:30 a.m. Board Meeting Chamber Office	9	10 7:30 a.m. BEL Meeting Anoka Ramsey Community College
13	14 11:30 a.m. Marketing Committee Chamber Office 4 p.m. Ambassadors Chamber Office	15 4:00 p.m. Membership Committee Chamber Office <small>Deadline for Advertising in the MetroNorth Issue Please call Danielle at 763-712-3327</small>	16	17 7:30 a.m. Sunrise Wingate, Coon Rapids
20	21 5 p.m. Membership Appreciation Party Brook Hall, Blaine	22	23 12:00 p.m. Retirement Plans Chamber Office 1 p.m. Small Business Expo Earl Brown, Brooklyn Park	24 7:30 a.m. Sunrise Lino Lakes Hampton Inn
27 4:30 p.m. BEL Committee Chamber Office	28	29	30 8:01 a.m. Finance Committee Chamber Office	1 7:30 a.m. Sunrise Time Out Blaine

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