



RENSCONNECT

WHERE BUSINESS + COMMUNITY CONVERGE

FROM OUR PRESIDENT'S DESK

Not 'Back to Normal' but Forward to Excellence



Joan Heffler Photography

Signs of a long-awaited spring are all around us. The ValleyCats are ready to play ball, sign-ups have begun for summer camps and the Schaghticoke Fair has set its 2021 dates (September 1-6). Community gathering spots like Kay's Burden Lake Pizza and Duncan's Dairy Bar in Brunswick are getting ready to welcome back seasonal customers, just like they've been doing for more than six decades.

Spring is the season of optimism and a renewal in the belief that along with challenges come opportunities. It makes me even more optimistic when I talk to our members and hear their positive, forward-thinking attitudes. Members are signing up for networking and training events, both virtual and in-person programs. More people are reaching out to us, filling out online membership applications and looking for resources to help start or expand a business. Together, we are doing more than finding a "new normal." We are creating a better way of doing business. I say that because the past 14 months, while certainly the roughest road we've faced in generations, were not without positive changes and new encouraging ways of building the business community.

Cultivating Agility & Innovation

When our Board of Directors finalized the Chamber's current strategic plan in 2019, we had no way of knowing the pandemic was ahead. But the foresight and flexibility built into this three-year roadmap gave us the agility to refocus and respond to the urgent needs of our members. Since day one, we've been a headquarters for breaking COVID-related news and resources on recovery, an advocate to local, state and federal governments, and an online connection to counteract increasing isolation. The Chamber never stopped reaching out to our members with real solutions that made a difference in their businesses and their lives. Now more than ever, we're committed to the economic recovery and helping businesses not just survive, but thrive.

"We turned to the Chamber for help navigating COVID regulations and PPP loans...I don't know how other businesses were doing it without the Chamber. They were a lifeline for us."

**Theresa Moroukian, principal
Mosaic Associates Architects**

Flexibility and technology enable us to keep bringing events to members, partnering with them in education, training and professional growth. Is networking by Zoom ideal? Maybe not for all, but it has its perks. Because of the convenience, we've connected with members who never participated before. Even long-time Chamber members say there is definitely a place for virtual programs, given their increasingly busy schedules.

"I'm delighted to participate and connect through all of the Chamber's virtual events. The fact that the events have been free during the pandemic shows their sensitivity and understanding in a dire situation. I can always count on the Chamber to help."

**Joan Heffler, owner
Joan Heffler Photography**

As always, the Chamber's focus is on people and how we can help every one of our members to succeed. That's why our strategic plan expanded the lens of our organization's diversity, equity and inclusion goals to be intentional about representing all of our members, inclusive of race, gender and industry. These initiatives have placed the Chamber ahead of the national curve.

A New Springtime

The pandemic showed us the type of members we always knew we had. They are business owners and community stakeholders who don't give up, entrepreneurs who thrive on problem-solving, creative professionals who generously share their unique talents and individuals who go out of their way to help others. For the Chamber, we've never helped people more powerfully than in the past year. And we plan to go on raising the bar.

As the days get longer and the sun gets brighter, take some time to consider if there are any changes you've made during the past year that can be part of a new outlook going forward. What challenges have made you grow? What can we do for each other and how will we, ourselves, be enriched by the effort? We really are one community — here's to fresh opportunities and new horizons for all of us.

Best regards,

Kate Manley

kmanley@renscochamber.com

ASK A BOARD MEMBER:

Mentoring & Coaching



Mike Hamel is the owner of HMA Paving & Contracting, a \$15 million-a-year asphalt paving and excavating company, founded in 1994, that serves commercial, municipal, institutional, specialty and custom residential clients in upstate New

York. He is also the founder of Hamel Coaching & Consulting, inspiring business owners and leaders to become their best for themselves, their teams and their businesses.

Q » How did you become interested in mentoring and coaching others?

A » I spent a lot of years working hard, and I still do, but I realized along the way that I felt a growing responsibility to take the time to pass on some of what I've learned about business and about people. Most business owners want to build a positive team culture but in order to influence people you need to start by understanding them, by listening to them, so that you can appreciate what they have to offer. The first step in influencing anyone, of any generation, is to understand their perspective. Teaching them the mechanics of the actual job comes afterwards. Mentoring is a daily mindset, a continual attitude of reaching out to others instead of being turned in on yourself. Mentoring keeps me self-developing, challenging me to grow while I help others to grow. My passion is to share this vision.

Q » What are some of the ways you mentor or coach others?

A » At HMA, we work daily to encourage and instill a deep core value of respect for each other and for every client. We try to give every employee a sense of their value within our company. In addition, HMA Contracting partners with Questar III to offer job shadowing to high schoolers interested in the industry. Hamel Coaching & Consulting has enabled me to work with new business owners, pro bono, to help them grow personally and professionally. I've also been a volunteer with Capital District YMCA for 20 years, including the Caring Community Basket Brigade to feed families. In addition, I'm involved with Double H Ranch in Lake Luzerne and with North Country Ministries. I'm a big believer in peer groups and serving on the Chamber Board allows me to "pitch and catch" with a dynamic group of professionals. The Chamber's CEO Roundtables also give me the opportunity to interact with some great business owners as we share ideas and support.

Q » What can the business community do to mentor younger generations?

A » The first thing we can do is start reaching out to connect with young people where they are. We have to believe they have something unique to bring to the table and invest the time and effort to discover who they are. What are their values, their perspectives? It all starts there. Then you can start talking about how they can make a difference in your business.

Market. Develop. Connect.

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20 Years

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Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation

10 Years

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Park Pub Restaurant & Catering
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New Members

Curtis Lumber
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Rep: Joe Sanchez
885 Route 7
Ballston Spa, NY 12020
Phone: 518.378.4477
[VISIT curtislumber.com](http://www.curtislumber.com)

Nelnet Renewable Energy
Renewable Energy
Community Solar
Rep: Kate Seifert
Phone: 303.696.3424
[VISIT nelnetenergy.com](http://www.nelnetenergy.com)

Please remember to patronize your fellow Chamber members. You can also invite businesses and organizations to join our growing Chamber. Contact us at info@renscochamber.com or 518.274.7020 to learn more.



“RENSCONNECT” is published monthly. Submissions are considered for publication based upon content and space availability.

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The Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce is the proud recipient of the 2020 Chuck Steiner Memorial “Chamber of the Year” Award presented by The Business Council of New York State, Inc.

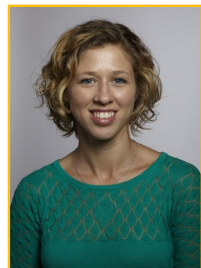
Member News



Troy Web Consulting achieved Amazon Web Services (AWS) Select Consulting Partner status within the AWS Partner Network. The new status

reflects Troy Web Consulting’s dedication to providing leading-edge technologies that help client businesses to grow and scale reliably. Troy Web clients can take advantage of several AWS services that are cost-effective, secure, agile and innovative. [VISIT troyweb.com](http://troyweb.com)

Unity House of Troy, Inc. received a \$88,596 grant from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to help address the dramatic increase in demand for the nonprofit’s emergency food services, stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds will support additional food purchases and help pay for the staff necessary to process and distribute food supplies to the public. [VISIT unityhousesny.org](http://unityhousesny.org)



Whitney Young Health announced the addition of Colleen Surlyn, MD, MPH, as associate medical director for adult medicine, and Kenneth Kroopnick, MD, as staff pediatrician. Dr. Surlyn provides direct patient care as well as clinical supervision for medical staff

providing care to adult patients. Dr. Kroopnick brings several decades of general practitioner experience to his position. He is also a clinical instructor at Albany Medical College.

[VISIT wmyhealth.org](http://www.wmyhealth.org)



Alaant Workforce Solutions’ Managing Partner Miriam Dushane was named to the board of directors of the New York Staffing Association. She will provide critical insight and perspective to address the particular recruiting needs of the region, as well as the general issues and interests of staffing agencies across New York State. [VISIT alaant.com](http://www.alaant.com)

Russell Sage College formed a partnership with Capital Region Sponsor-A-Scholar to help make college education more accessible to high schoolers. Eligible students in Albany, Schenectady and Troy can earn college credit through Russell Sage during the school year and through a summer college immersion program. Other highlights include a Leadership Certification Program, mentoring and early acceptance to Sage. [VISIT sage.edu](http://www.sage.edu)

Promotions



Mosaic Associates Architects promoted architect Matthew Gaspary to associate principal and architect Steve Lovelett to associate. A graduate of the Chamber’s Leadership Institute, Gaspary has worked on many educational projects, including the Center for Advanced Manufacturing Skills at Hudson Valley Community College. Lovelett has been on the Mosaic team for 11 years and has worked on such education projects as the Center for Instruction, Technology and Innovation for Oswego BOCES and the new science center for Hudson Valley Community College. [VISIT mosaicaa.com](http://www.mosaicaa.com)



EventsCalendar 2021

Visit renscochamber.com to register for these upcoming events

TUE
APR
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NetworkingPlus
Get connected, develop leads and build relationships at our popular networking event,

gone virtual! Reconnect at this fast-paced event including three breakout-room rotations and a system designed to avoid repeat introductions. You are guaranteed to make new business contacts.

🕒 **Virtual event via Zoom, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., EST.** No cost. Register online at renscochamber.com. Sponsored by MicroKnowledge, Inc. and Sunmark Credit Union.

THU
APR
22

**Ask the Experts
Futurescaping: The Entrepreneur’s Approach to Strategic Planning**
Learn the newest

approach to goal-oriented growth and business development based on purposeful decision making.

🕒 **Virtual event via Zoom, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., EST.** No cost. Register online at renscochamber.com. Ask the Experts series sponsor is CAP COM Federal Credit Union.

WED
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U.S. Reps. Delgado and Tonko Virtual Discussion
Meet Antonio R. Delgado (D-NY) and Paul D. Tonko (D-NY)

for a discussion about today’s important issues facing our communities, followed by an informative Q & A. Come prepared to join the conversation!

🕒 **Virtual event via Zoom, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., EST.** No cost. Register online at renscochamber.com. Sponsored by Groff NetWorks, LLC.

THU
MAY
27

Wonder Women Panel
Top women professionals share their experiences and strategies for success, sparking lively conversations about

career challenges and solutions. Join us in an open-air setting at the Hilton Garden Inn.

🕒 **Check-in & breakfast 7:30 a.m.; networking and conversations 8-9:30 a.m.** \$35 for members. Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick Street in Troy. Sponsored by Sunmark Credit Union and WB Games New York.

Welcome Back

The Arts Center of the Capital Region reopened its galleries to the public, featuring Winter 2021 exhibitions including work by artist Jamie Rodriguez and the 120° Intercollegiate Art Regional student artworks. “Warenfetischismus: Commodity Fetishism” is on view through April 16. [VISIT artscenteronline.org](http://artscenteronline.org)



First New York Federal Credit Union is offering four \$1,000 scholarships for eligible college-bound high school seniors. For online applications and information, go to firstnewyork.org/home/accounts/youth/scholarships. Deadline is May 7. [VISIT firstnewyork.org](http://firstnewyork.org)

The Epilepsy Foundation of Northeastern New York (EFNENY) is celebrating 40 years of providing programs and services at no cost to an estimated 45,000 individuals affected by epilepsy in the region. EFNENY created a 40th Anniversary Campaign to raise \$40,000 to support its essential work, including Studio e Art Therapy, educational webinars, support groups, information and referral. To donate and be recognized for your company’s support, contact Susan at skaczynski@epilepsyneny.org or call 518.456.7501. [VISIT epilepsy.com/local/northeastern-new-york](http://www.epilepsy.com/local/northeastern-new-york)



The Tri-City ValleyCats announced its schedule for the team’s first season as a member of the Frontier League, starting with a two-game set on Thursday, May 27 in Ottawa, Canada against the Titans. The

‘Cats opening day home game is on Friday, June 4 as they host Capitales de Québec. For a full schedule, mini-plans, season ticket packages and group ticket options, go to the team’s website. [VISIT tcvalleycats.com](http://www.tcvalleycats.com)

Hudson Valley Community College was designated a Military Friendly® School for 2021. Originally established as the Veterans Vocational School, Hudson Valley has a long tradition of assisting active duty personnel and veterans. [VISIT hvcc.edu](http://www.hvcc.edu)

New Partnership

Capital CFO, Integra HR and other partners have formed C Suite Advisors (CSA), a newly-launched business partnership network. This group of senior professional leaders, representing decades of expertise in finance, operations, marketing communications, human resources, growth and business strategy, is providing cost-effective support to businesses seeking to grow and expand with less overhead expense. [VISIT capitalcfolllc.com](http://capitalcfolllc.com) and integra-hr.com

UPDATE YOUR PROFILE

Chamber’s Online Membership Directory

Get your business noticed and drive visitors to your products and services with the Chamber’s online Membership Directory, the most frequently visited section of our website. With more than 20,000 visits in the past year, potential customers from near and far look to this important resource for solutions to meet their business and personal needs. Our directory gives your business the exposure it deserves and the credibility of Chamber affiliation. The Chamber’s Membership Directory is accessible to members and to the general public at no charge.



SEARCH OUR MEMBER DIRECTORY

Our website provides a great opportunity to describe and market your business. Enhance your online profile with greater detail about your products or services, specialties, niche markets and information that sets you apart from the competition. Update your description and add social media platforms at no charge. Complete your optimization by linking your profile directly to your company website for a one-time fee of \$25. Elevate your brand with the Chamber’s online Membership Directory by contacting us at info@renscochamber.com.

MAXIMIZE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Chamber Benefits Make it Easy to Market, Develop & Connect

- ☐ Submit business news and press releases to our website to share with fellow Chamber members.
- ☐ Post job, internship and volunteer opportunities to our online Job & Volunteer Board at no cost.
- ☐ Submit upcoming events to the Chamber’s Member Events page for instant exposure among our membership.
- ☐ View available office/retail space and submit entries of your own on our Commercial Real Estate Board.
- ☐ Take advantage of the Chamber’s Ribbon Cutting, Grand Opening or Re-Opening assistance.
- ☐ Network at our events. Visit renscochamber.com/events to view upcoming opportunities.
- ☐ Business to Business Introductions. Notice a business in our membership directory that you'd like to connect with? Contact the Chamber and we'll be happy to make a personal introduction for you!
- ☐ Quick Learn workshops offer affordable virtual training with expert instructors from MicroKnowledge, Inc.
- ☐ CEO Roundtables gather top-level executives and small business owners to develop lasting relationships within the business community. Contact the Chamber to sign up for an upcoming discussion.
- ☐ Take advantage of our cost-effective digital marketing and sponsorship opportunities to provide your business with high-impact results.
- ☐ Apply for on-the-job training for new employees and get reimbursed for up to 50% of new employee wages (up to 10 weeks). Contact us for more information.
- ☐ Sign up for our weekly e-newsletters and stay current with all Chamber news, events and regional information. Visit renscochamber.com.
- ☐ Utilize Chamber Social Media for promoting events, new hires and business milestones. Follow us on Twitter: @Renscochamber; Facebook: Facebook.com/Renscochamber; and our LinkedIn page by searching for Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce at linkedin.com.
- ☐ If you are using Constant Contact or are considering email marketing, Constant Contact offers Chamber members a discount of up to 25%.
- ☐ With a variety of health and dental plans to choose from, the Chamber makes health insurance benefits management easy for you and your employees. All plans are administrated by Bouchey & Clarke Benefits, Inc.
- ☐ Certificates of Origin can be validated through the Chamber at no cost for members.
- ☐ Engage with area K-12 schools for career awareness and preparedness by participating in the Chamber’s WE Advance Initiative.
- ☐ Sign up for our Energy Savings Program and save on your monthly gas and electric expenses. Contact us to learn more and enroll your business.

Make the most of your Chamber membership with our money-saving benefits for you and all of your employees by visiting renscochamber.com/cost-saving-benefits or call us at 518.274.7020.

Do you know a business or organization that would be interested in joining the Chamber and enjoying these benefits and more? Send potential member contacts to Membership Sales Manager Matt Jensen at mjensen@renscochamber.com or call him at 518.687.1240.

CHAMBER MEMBER

spotlight

A leading provider of light, heat and power, National Grid is committed to bringing clean energy to its customers, with a goal of net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. “Everyone wants cleaner energy and a cleaner environment for future generations,” said Laura J. Poltynski, director of customer and community management for National Grid’s eastern New York division. “Our long-term transition plan is focused on net zero for company operations and for emissions that occur in the delivery of electricity and gas to our customers.”



To achieve a net zero goal, National Grid has formulated a 10-point plan. It starts with reducing customer energy demands through greater energy efficiency in homes and businesses and through demand response programs in which consumers reduce energy use during peak periods of demand and under-supply. National Grid also plans to decarbonize its gas networks. Renewable natural gas and hydrogen are some of the alternatives under consideration. To reduce methane emissions from distribution mains, the power company is replacing leak-prone pipes with new infrastructure (about 400 miles of pipe per year for the past five years). National Grid is also aiming at decarbonizing heat by utilizing innovative technologies, such as hybrid gas-electric and geothermal systems. In addition, the company is committed to transmission investment in large-scale renewables, including solar and wind, as well as storage technologies to make renewable energy more reliable.

National Grid is advancing clean transportation by introducing Electric Vehicles (EV) within its company and through its EV Fleet Advisory Services program for businesses, organizations and public entities. The energy company’s EV Make-Ready program will add 16,000 EV charge stations in upstate New York, including at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Crossgates Mall and in the City of Troy, at little or no cost to participating partners. Businesses and municipalities are welcome to apply.

In order to assist customers impacted financially during the COVID pandemic, National Grid has proposed a \$50 million relief fund to benefit low-income residents and businesses that need help paying energy bills. The fund also includes grants for commercial, industrial and small business customers. The proposal is being reviewed by the Public Service Commission.

NATIONAL GRID
1122 Broadway | Albany, NY 12204 | ph: 1.800.642.4272 | nationalgrid.com
For information on National Grid’s Economic Development Grant program, visit shovelready.com

To purchase a Spotlight, contact the Chamber at 518.274.7020 or info@renscochamber.com

News from The Leadership Institute

Applications for New Class Due by June 9

Make this YOUR year! Applications are being accepted for The Leadership Institute’s Class of 2022. Learn more and submit online applications at renscochamber.com/develop-chamber/leadership-institute or attend one of our virtual open house information sessions. Choose from Tuesday, April 13 at 3 p.m. or Tuesday, April 20 at 9 a.m. To register for a free session, visit renscochamber.com/events. Application deadline is Wednesday, June 9 at 5 p.m.



The Leadership Institute is sponsored by CDPHP



Christopher Loszynski ‘18, director of finance at DeCrescente Distributing, and Starletta R. Smith ‘14, executive director of the YWCA of the Greater Capital Region, Inc., are both alumni of The Leadership Institute who are currently serving on the Chamber’s Board of Directors. Chris directs the financial operations of DeCrescente, a multi-generation, family-owned

beverage distributor that works with suppliers and retailers to increase market share and profitability. Starletta has been with the YWCA for more than 11 years, serving as executive director since January 2020. She heads the agency’s mission to provide victim advocacy, food, shelter, clothing, case management, career assistance and more to women and their children. VISIT decrescente.com or ywca-gcr.org



Submit your Leadership Institute alumni news to Communications Manager Tom Engle at tengle@renscochamber.com.

Did You Know?

You and your employees can take advantage of significant savings with an exclusive membership at the award-winning Country Club of Troy. Established in 1925, the club is a premier facility in the Capital District and the only private club in Rensselaer County. Initiation fee is waived for all members of the Chamber, a value of up to \$2,500 per family. To schedule a tour or discuss membership options, call 518.274.1000. VISIT countrycluboftroy.com

2021 Chamber Board of Directors

- EDWIN C. ANKER IV, AIA***
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- ASHLEY CASTLE**
GlobalFoundries
- TAMI COLE***
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- CHRISTOPHER CONWAY**
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HMA Contracting Corporation
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- KENDRA HART**
Martin Electric
- MEGHAN KEENHOLTS, ESQ.***
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- DAVID KRUPSKI**
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- REGINA S. LAGATTA**
Hudson Valley Community College
- CHRISTOPHER LOSZYNSKI**
DeCrescente Distributing
- CHRISTOPHER MCKENNA**
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- CHRISTINE NEALON***
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- E. PATRICE PERKINS***
Startup Grind Albany
- KATHLEEN PINGELSKI**
MicroKnowledge, Inc.
- ELIZABETH REISS**
The Arts Center of the Capital Region
- DANIEL SAUER***
CDPHP
- JEFFREY SIMONS**
East Greenbush Central School District
- STARLETTA R. SMITH**
YWCA of the Greater Capital Region, Inc.
- CECIL F. STODGHILL**
The Doane Stuart School
- JAIME WATSON**
Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)
- SCOTT WILEY**
Hoosick Valley Contractors, Inc.
- BRIAN WILLIAMS***
Capital Region Workforce Development Board

* Executive committee members



Upcoming Events for Your Calendar

SPRING INTO NETWORKING | APRIL 13

Connect with Chamber’s Virtual NetworkingPlus



Get connected, develop leads and build relationships at our popular networking event, gone virtual! Reconnect with business professionals at this fast-paced forum, including three breakout-room rotations and a system designed to avoid repeat introductions. You are guaranteed to leave with new business contacts.

“Networking with the Chamber is always a valuable investment of my time, even with a busy schedule, because I know I’m going to walk away with new ideas and new contacts.”

Elizabeth McGarry, Assistant Director of Advancement and Alumnae Relations, Academy of the Holy Names

TUE
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Register now at renscochamber.com/events
🕒 Virtual event via Zoom on Tuesday, April 13, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. EST. No cost. Sponsored by MicroKnowledge, Inc. and Sunmark Credit Union.



GOAL-ORIENTED GROWTH | APRIL 22

Find Your New Direction with Futurescaping

Tired of spinning your wheels? Need a path to the future? Register today for the Chamber’s “Futurescaping: The Entrepreneur’s Approach to Strategic Planning.” Futurescaping is the newest approach to goal-oriented growth and business development based on purposeful decision making. Futurescaping reveals the impact of business planning, outlining the importance of accountability and a clear bottom line. This session, presented by Kate Baker, interim director of the New York State Small Business Development Center, gives an overview of the process, tips for your business and ways to implement a new plan.



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Register now at renscochamber.com/events
🕒 Virtual event via Zoom on Thursday, April 22, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. EST. No cost. Sponsored by CAP COM Federal Credit Union.



LOCAL ISSUES THAT MATTER | APRIL 28

Meet U.S. Representatives Delgado and Tonko

Join us for an inside look at Washington, D.C. from the perspective of U.S. Representatives Antonio R. Delgado (D-NY) and Paul D. Tonko (D-NY) in this virtual presentation. We’ll discuss today’s important issues facing their respective congressional districts and take a look at legislation and priorities ahead. Discover what’s at stake for businesses, nonprofits and constituents in our region. This informative discussion will be followed by a Q&A with our guests. Come prepared to join the conversation and meet your elected officials!



WED
APR
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Register now at renscochamber.com/events
🕒 Virtual event via Zoom on Wednesday, April 28, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. EST. No cost. Sponsored by Groff NetWorks, LLC.



WONDER WOMEN PANEL | MAY 27

Engage in Empowering Conversations for Success



Harness your power within, build professional and personal networks and find inspiring mentors with the Chamber’s Wonder Women Panel. Our panel of professional women from diverse industries, generations and life experiences will discuss how they have achieved leadership positions, sharing stories and unique strategies that led to their personal and professional success. This is a great opportunity to bring a client, co-worker, or friend to enjoy a morning of conversation and valuable learning experiences. Our moderator is Patrice Perkins, director of Startup Grind NY - Capital Region. She has more than 25 years of experience in the private, non-profit and state government sectors as a business analyst, researcher and content creator.



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Register now at renscochamber.com/events
🕒 Check-in & breakfast 7:30 a.m.; mentoring and conversations 8-9:30 a.m. \$35 members; \$50 walk-in members. Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick Street in Troy. Sponsored by Sunmark Credit Union and WB Games New York.



MOVING FORWARD IN 2021

A Conversation with Co. Exec. Steve McLaughlin

Chamber President Kate Manley checked in with Rensselaer County Executive Steve McLaughlin for a look at how the county is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 economy and what's in store for our local business community.

Kate: As the business community continues to move forward through the pandemic, what is the outlook for Rensselaer County's economy? How have we fared?

McLaughlin: We've worked hard, before the pandemic and throughout the past year, to make Rensselaer County a place for job creation and investment. Foundationally, our team has produced three consecutive budgets that lowered taxes and were approved unanimously. Rensselaer County now has the highest bond rating in its history and has earned a series of positive independent audits. These accomplishments make for fertile ground to attract investors who bring quality economic development that results in good-paying jobs, as well as opportunities for small businesses. In addition, Rensselaer County had the highest rate of sales tax growth in New York State in 2019. In 2020, despite the pandemic, we actually bettered our 2019 totals. In 2021, we've received more good news — we're the only county in the region to have an increase in sales tax revenues. More and more shoppers are coming to our county to make purchases and investments.

Kate: What economic development initiatives are in the works?

McLaughlin: We're excited about R&L Carriers' investment of \$8.5 million to build a new fleet maintenance facility adjacent to its trucking center on East Industrial Parkway in South Troy, a facility that will create 70 new jobs. The county is also working with an agricultural product supplier interested in locating at a site in the Town of East Greenbush. Further, we are optimistic about more investment and job creation coming to the Town of Schodack's Route 9 corridor, near the Amazon Distribution Center. To encourage Route 9 investment and development, the county has received a grant through the efforts of Senator Daphne Jordan to extend a water line along Maple Hill Road. We are also optimistic about other retail outlets that have been making inquiries and learning about all the county has to offer in workforce talent, economic opportunities and quality of life.

Kate: Businesses need qualified workers and individuals are looking for good paying jobs. How does the county bridge the gap and bring them together for a healthy economy?

Our Department of Employment & Training and the Rensselaer County Career Center are experts in bringing together businesses and qualified job seekers. As we recover from the pandemic, we've assisted many displaced workers with navigating the state's unemployment insurance system, connecting to employment opportunities with essential businesses and guiding them through career training pathways that lead to better-paying jobs. A great number of individuals who lost their jobs during the pandemic came from lower-wage industries. The county is working to address the skills mismatch between these potential candidates and the in-demand jobs available. We're providing access to the training they need to qualify for higher-wage positions in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, IT support and the construction trades. Rensselaer County is committed to assessing current and future workforce needs through one-on-one discussions with business owners, workforce roundtables and industry-specific surveys to map out this recovery effort. Using a business-driven approach to workforce development is the key to success and a healthy economy.

Kate: What about tourism? It looks like outdoor and indoor venues will be opening up in time for spring and summer. What does Rensselaer County have to offer for the enjoyment of visitors and residents?

Rensselaer County has many activities and attractions to offer as we rebound from COVID. Multiple summer concert series have been announced for in-person enjoyment and a centerpiece of county events, the Schaghticoke Fair, is ready to return after celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2019. The county is ready to work with all community partners to ensure a safe return to fun events, especially for community concerts several nights a week during the summer. The Tri-City ValleyCats are back with an expanded schedule in a new league for the team's 20th season at "The Joe," and we've been working with the team to sponsor the return of community events in 2021, including a movie night. Late summer brings harvest time, including a series of events at Windy Hill Orchard, the former home of Goold's Orchard. The county is also sponsoring a fall harvest celebration at S&S Farm Brewery in Nassau and we look forward to future opportunities to feature a growing number of local breweries in the county. Rensselaer County really is a great place to live, work and enjoy. [VISIT rensco.com](http://rensco.com)

Chamber President Kate Manley is talking with some of the key leaders in our business community about recovery and moving forward in a COVID-19 economy. This is the latest in an ongoing series of conversations published in our newsletter. For ongoing COVID-19 resources and information, visit renscochamber.com/coronavirus-resource-guide.



Joan Heffler Photography

CHAMBER INITIATIVE

Helping Students to "Connect with Careers"



The Chamber released new online videos in our "Connect with Careers" workforce development series, designed to help educators and students grades 8 through 12 to discover career opportunities and pathways to meaningful employment. The growing virtual series, featuring interviews with local business professionals, helps students

explore the skill-sets needed to fill quality jobs in our regional communities. The new videos were released in March and the entire series is available online.

[VISIT renscochamber.com](http://renscochamber.com)

"Connect with Careers" series is sponsored by CAP COM Federal Credit Union and WB Games NY



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LOOKING FOR A SMART INVESTMENT?

With the Chamber's **WE Advance** program you can invest in the success of our regional business community. In conjunction with the Rensselaer County Industrial Development Agency and the Center for Economic Growth, we serve as a catalyst for businesses starting up, expanding, or looking to make a profitable move.

Our high-impact marketing attracts regional, national and international attention to our county's dynamic quality of life and thriving business environment. Join the Chamber in this economic and workforce advancement initiative. [VISIT renscochamber.com/workforce-economic-advancement](http://renscochamber.com/workforce-economic-advancement)



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ph: 518.274.7020

"WE Advance" is published quarterly. Submissions considered for publication based upon content and space availability.

CAREER EXPOSURE

Virtual Event Seeks to Spark Young Minds



In an effort to shape the region’s 21st century workforce, the first virtual Career Jam launches April 26 through May 27. The event connects local employers from diverse industries with area students through a virtual forum featuring business booths and learning interactivities. The experience is designed to introduce youth, educators and families to employers offering promising careers in the region.

“Career Jam is an innovative and inspirational workforce development approach to promote our region’s businesses and organizations to our future workforce,” said Ryan Van Amburgh, co-founder. “Geared to ‘tap the minds’ of our future workforce, we reinforce that every skill level and career choice can be employed right here at home. Already more than 4,700 eighth and ninth grade students across the region have registered.”

Students from 78 school district in more than 11 counties will learn about career opportunities by viewing videos and other uploaded content from employers. Through exposure to career clusters and specific skill-sets, students learn key factors in career planning, work priorities and job outlooks. The Virtual Career Jam offers a visually rich online environment that mimics the dynamics of a physical live event, including a virtual lobby, information booth, auditorium for presentations, and halls with booths and sponsors. Career Jam delivers a unique and immersive experience for students, educators and employers that seek to reshape career pathways.

For employers, Career Jam delivers a regional approach to connecting with future workers by providing a forum where they can interact with students in realtime. The engaging virtual platform also provides businesses with valuable contacts for potential collaborations with education leaders.

Businesses are invited to showcase their companies and demonstrate the skills needed for quality employment by registering for a virtual booth. Exhibit booths offer 24/7 access to students and educators during the month-long forum, for maximum impact.

Career Jam is presented through Junior Achievement’s JA Inspire program and is co-hosted by the Capital Region STEM HUB and the Workforce Development Institute. VISIT career-jam.com/capital-region-career-jam

A YEAR OF PRIORITIES

Capital Region Workforce Development Board

When local craft breweries needed to train workers, the Capital Region Workforce Development Board (CRWDB) brought businesses together with Schenectady County Community College to find a solution: creation of Craft Beer Brewing certificate and associates degrees, with national accreditation, that enable students to participate in hands-on internships at area breweries. The result is qualified workers filling in-demand jobs that allow brewery businesses to thrive and grow. It’s a good example of the type of innovative partnerships CRWDB initiates and why Executive Director Brian Williams, his staff and board are so committed to their mission.

“Our role is to act as a convener, a central hub for all workforce programs and resources in the Capital Region,” said Williams. “We bring together people and ideas to solve workforce challenges. We’re passionate about what we do because it affects everyone.”



“ Human capital is as crucial to businesses as tax credits. Our economy depends on skilled workers.”

Brian Williams, Executive Director

FAQ-Check

- » 3 One-Stop Career Centers in Troy, Albany and Schenectady
- » 45,000 businesses and job seekers helped in 2020
- » 33 workforce boards statewide, managing \$300 million in annual WIOA and other funding
- » 400,000 individuals and 27,000 employers served statewide

CRWDB is finalizing a new strategic plan and first priorities are to convene workforce system partners, coordinate regional workforce activities and strengthen collaborative relationships. This effort includes educating private and public stakeholders as to the board’s mission and high-impact services and resources. Key to the plan is ensuring that the on-the-ground workforce needs of businesses drive forward all training programs and initiatives.

“We’ve moved into a skills-based economy. We need to be ‘training up’ displaced and underemployed workers,” said Williams. “Of the top ten occupations that were

growing before the pandemic, nine out of ten jobs did not require a degree or credential but paid less than \$32,000 a year. With 42% of New Yorkers having a high school diploma or less, these workers make up a majority of these jobs impacted by a surge in layoffs related to COVID-19. On the

other hand, there are good-paying jobs going unfilled in such industries as advanced manufacturing, healthcare and more. By providing short-term vocational training, we can build on an individual’s soft skills and move them into an in-demand job that pays a family wage. Upscaling incumbent workers to the next level also opens up jobs for people who are entering the job market. That’s how we build a healthy workforce.”

A few years ago, CRWDB sponsored a job readiness “boot camp” for individuals through the Department of Social Services. The two-week training ended with an informal ‘graduation.’ Participants surprised trainers when they arrived with family members, some of them carrying flowers to celebrate. “It made a huge impact on their lives,” said Williams. “Sometimes people are just stuck and need to be lifted up and out of where they are. Workforce development is not just about filling jobs. It’s about changing lives and communities.” VISIT capreg.org



The Capital Region Workforce Development Board endeavors to make a real difference in the lives of people and businesses. We’re getting the word out to businesses, elected officials and to the public about all we have to offer.

Ian Glasgow, 2021 CRWDB Board Chair

There are 33 Workforce Development Boards (WDB) statewide, comprised of 500 private-sector businesses, along with public partners. WDBs effectively leverage more than \$300 million in annual funding to strengthen regional workforces through programs, services and partnerships with business, education and community-based organizations.

CRWDB sponsors three Career Centers that work to help adults and youth identify career pathways and receive the appropriate training and skills to achieve a higher quality of life. Programs are funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to provide job training, placement and tools to build in-demand skills. The centers also connect businesses to employee recruitment, training and business retention programs, often at no cost. For the past year, the centers have provided services remotely, due to COVID regulations.

“We continue to provide services by telephone, email, video meetings and mail,” said Williams. “By removing hurdles that often come with in-person services, we assisted more people in 2020 than in 2019 — 10,000 to 11,000 in the Troy center alone.”



“We have a very engaged board and staff that are vested in providing business-driven strategies to help employers and job seekers. We strive to be the primary resource for labor, funding, partnerships and collaborations.”

Denise M. Padula, CRWDB Board Member Youth & Emerging Workers Committee

IN-PERSON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Back2Work Community Job Fair on April 28

The Chamber is partnering with Hudson Valley Community College and Rensselaer County to present a “Back2Work Community Job Fair” on April 28 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the Hudson Valley campus. Rain date is May 6. To make it easier and more accessible to job seekers, the fair will be an outdoor, socially distant walk-through event with employers arranged by industry. The layout and flow of foot traffic will be designed according to COVID protocols. It will be Hudson Valley’s first-ever outdoor job fair.

“It’s critical that our businesses have a workforce pipeline and it’s important to note that many of our members are hiring, which is a path to pandemic recovery,” said Chamber President Kate Manley. “This is a safe and innovative way to connect job seekers to businesses and meet urgent business demands.”

“One of Hudson Valley’s primary commitments is training our local workforce and helping connect employers with qualified individuals,” said Hudson Valley Community College President Roger Ramsammy. VISIT <https://events.hvcc.edu/event/back2work-community-job-fair>

“ Efforts like this are a key part of assisting our regional workforce to get back on its feet and for our economy to thrive again.”

Roger Ramsammy, Ph.D. President, Hudson Valley Community College

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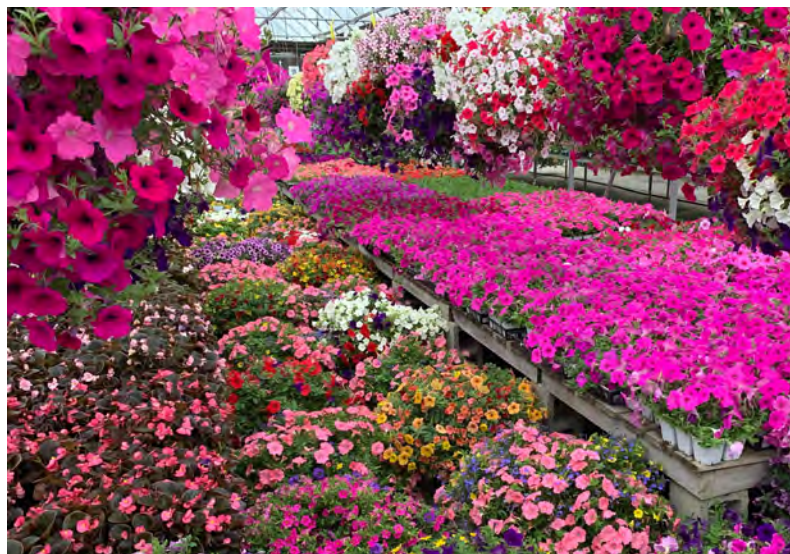


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Monday, May 3rd-Friday, May 7th

On May 3rd Catholic Charities Tri-County Services will launch a one-week virtual event illustrating the needs within our communities and the ways in which Catholic Charities is making a difference. Virtual attendees will have an opportunity to support our work by making a gift of their choosing.

Amidst the challenges our world is facing today, Catholic Charities meets people where they are. A Place at the Table will offer a glimpse into the world our clients navigate every day, having to ask themselves questions such as:

My son is growing and needs new clothes. How will I ever make ends meet?

Should I pick up food for my children or pay the heating bill?

I have recently been furloughed from my job and have fallen so far behind.

How can I keep enough food on the table?

Their struggles are very real and hunger is most often a symptom of a larger issue in their life such as: having no bus fare to get to work, a past due heating bill, or needing to pay for Internet now that their child's education depends on it. Our goal is to see that no person goes hungry with a larger hope to strengthen their lives and our communities.

I invite you to join me in supporting our local communities. You can help by liking our Facebook page at facebook.com/ccatricounty or by signing up for our e-newsletter by contacting Justine Carroll at jcarroll@ccalbany.org. Our work will be highlighted through daily videos shared via these venues from May 3rd-May 7th. The success of our work is truly the result of community support. We simply cannot do it without you.

Sincerely,

Jenn Hyde, Executive Director
Catholic Charities Tri-County Services





Virtual -A Place at the Table

Virtual-A Place at the Table a one-week virtual event benefitting the outreach programs of Catholic Charities Tri-County Services:

- **CoNSERNS-U**
- **Hilltowns Community Resource Center**
- **Roarke Center**
- **Sister Maureen Joyce Center**
- **St. John's/St. Ann's Outreach Center**

Annually, these five Catholic Charities outreach programs not only provide food but a sense of reassurance for the nearly 16,000 people that turn to Catholic Charities for help.

Special thanks to First New York Federal Credit Union for making this flyer possible! Sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information, contact Justine Carroll at jcarroll@ccalbany.org or by phone at (518) 512-3577 x115.

Photo: The Welcome Table at the St. John's/St. Ann's Outreach Center provides warm meals to Guests.



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