



# RENSCONNECT

WHERE BUSINESS + COMMUNITY CONVERGE

MESSAGE FROM OUR OUTGOING BOARD CHAIR

## A Firm Foundation Ensures a Successful Future



Brian Williams  
2023 Board Chair

When I look back over 2023 and my time as Chair of the Chamber Board of Directors, the word that keeps coming to me is *foundation*. At the same time that the Chamber was providing services, programs and resources to our membership, we were working hard to build up a staff — starting with leadership — that could take our mission into a successful future. We were building a firm *foundation*. Fast-forward a few months and here we are with a crew of talented and diverse individuals under the leadership of Chamber President Norris Pearson. Norris is continuing the legacy of previous presidents, including Kate Manley and Linda Hillman. He recognizes that the Chamber’s role is to evolve with the needs of our members and the changing business community. It’s not business as usual with Norris; its business unusual, in the spirit of our strategic plan. His vision for the Chamber sees “outside the box,” allowing our organization to be flexible, creative and dynamic in responding to members’ needs and finding solutions to their challenges ahead of the curve. That’s why Norris has surrounded himself with an energetic, skilled and accomplished team that is already showing results. The Chamber’s firm foundation is being built upon in new and exciting ways.

### Workforce Development

I started my career in workforce development while working for a chamber of commerce. What I learned then is even more true today: workforce development dovetails perfectly with the mission of a chamber. For our Chamber, it’s in our DNA. Human capital is the lifeblood of business and attracting and retaining qualified employees is the number one concern of our members. The Chamber leads the way in workforce development by connecting members with important resources that provide tangible results for your bottom line. From CEO Roundtables

to our “Connect with Careers” virtual video series, the Chamber collaborates with businesses, educators, public and private entities to develop a strong pipeline of workers. Contact us to learn more about workforce development assistance.

### The Leadership Institute

When you hear about succession planning, it’s usually related to businesses or non-profit organizations. But as a business community, we need to be proactive about succession planning and finding the leaders of tomorrow. Once more, the Chamber delivers a solution. Our award-winning Leadership Institute is the region’s premier program because it takes an innovative approach to the traditional leadership development model. The training program integrates skill-building with valuable networking opportunities to propel careers to the next level. Participants are highly-motivated individuals who learn from accomplished CEOs and executive-level professionals. Graduates join hundreds of alumni who are taking leadership roles in their places of business and within their communities. It’s always inspiring to see a new Leadership class get underway and experience the energy of these future leaders.

### A Culture of Listening

We do a lot of listening here at the Chamber. Our purpose as an organization is to hear what your business needs are, your challenges and your concerns. Every day, we respond by providing the connections, training and resources that help our members find solutions. Businesses and organizations join the Chamber in order to grow. How can we help you to overcome obstacles and achieve your goals? We look forward to hearing from you.

It’s been my privilege to serve as Chair. As we transition to 2024 Chair Mike Hamel, I know the Chamber is in good hands. May the coming year bring you opportunities for success!

### HEALTH INSURANCE

## Open Enrollment Month

The month of November is the open enrollment period for health insurance through the Chamber, available to all members in good standing and their employees. Now is the time to get information about money-saving options exclusive to our membership.

OneDigital, the Chamber’s health benefits administrator, and regional insurance carriers are ready to present 2024 rates and plan designs. Chamber members can choose from HMOs, high-deductible health savings accounts, transitional EPOs and more. Learn about plans, understand your options, compare choices and find the best fit for your needs and budget.

The experts at OneDigital can help you navigate options and find a plan that brings affordable value to your employee benefits package. For health insurance information, contact OneDigital at 518.720.8888.

### AT-A-GLANCE

- This is the only time of year to add or modify your insurance
- New benefits/rates take effect on January 1, 2024; enrollment deadline is December 1, 2023
- New ID cards are issued for anyone changing or joining a plan for January 1
- Pediatric Dental Coverage is required for all dependents through age 19 (waivers are available)
- All COBRA subscribers have the same opportunities to make changes
- Convenient monthly ACH billing/processing
- Remember your 2023 CDPHP Lifepoints/ MVP Wellness credits



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## New Members

**Bernier, Carr & Associates**  
Architectural Engineering  
Rep: Volker Husel  
17 First Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.720.6425  
[VISIT thebcgroup.com](http://visit.thebcgroup.com)

**Brown & Brown**  
Insurance  
Rep: Wesley Price  
6 Tower Place  
Albany, NY 12203  
Phone: 518.360.2511  
[VISIT bbrown.com](http://visit.bbrown.com)

**Columbia Family Dentistry**  
Dental Office  
Rep: Laura Peretta  
1654 Columbia Turnpike  
Castleton, NY 12033  
Phone: 518.477.8706  
[VISIT saratogaspingsdentists.com](http://visit.saratogaspingsdentists.com)

**Crafted Catering & Events**  
Catering  
Rep: Amanda Trackey  
769 Pawling Avenue  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.959.3223  
[VISIT craftedcateringandevents.com](http://visit.craftedcateringandevents.com)

**JDRF International**  
Nonprofit  
Rep: Heidi Dillmann  
200 Vesey Street  
28th Floor  
New York, NY 10281  
Phone: 800.533.2873  
[VISIT jdrf.org](http://visit.jdrf.org)

**Law Office of Arthur Dunn**  
Law Firm  
Rep: Arthur Dunn  
P.O. Box 1282  
Troy, NY 12181  
Phone: 518.266.9355

**M & T Freight Desk**  
Shipping  
Rep: Tamatha Dulong  
P.O. Box 190  
East Schodack, NY 12063-2405  
Phone: 518.766.7685

**Pines at Heartwood**  
Assisted Living  
Rep: Laurie Park  
2405 Fifteenth Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.266.9654  
[VISIT pinesatheartwood.com](http://visit.pinesatheartwood.com)

**Rachel Malik International**  
Business Coach  
Rep: Rachel Malik  
Phone: 518.752.9707  
[VISIT rachelmalikinternational.com](http://visit.rachelmalikinternational.com)

**Troy Beer Garden**  
Restaurant  
Rep: Amy Conway  
2 King Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.250.3538  
[VISIT thetroybeergarden.com](http://visit.thetroybeergarden.com)

## Member News

**Hudson Valley Community College** is building an \$85 million center to prepare students for skilled labor jobs, enabling the college to double the number of students enrolled in skilled trade programs. The 130,000-square-foot Applied Technology Education Center will take the place of Williams Hall and encompass nearby Cogan Hall. Inside the new manufacturing labs, students will learn how to work with superconductor chips, manufacture electric vehicles, build off-shore wind turbines and more. [VISIT hvcc.edu](http://visit.hvcc.edu)

**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute** established the Office of Strategic Alliances and Translation, a new area within the university that incorporates a number of key translational activities. These pursuits include intellectual property and technology licensing; large-scale corporate partnerships; initiation and growth of start-up ventures; and translational campuses, including the Rensselaer Technology Park. The center will be led by Professor of Chemical and Biological Engineering Jonathan S. Dordick, Ph.D., who was named its vice president. [VISIT rpi.edu](http://visit.rpi.edu)

**Russell Sage College** President Christopher Ames announced he will retire on June 30, 2024, at the conclusion of a seven-year tenure. His time with the college saw its financial stabilization and positioning as a leading institution for social mobility meeting the needs of today's students. [VISIT sage.edu](http://visit.sage.edu)

## Promotions & New Hires

**Fenimore Asset Management**, manager of the FAM Funds national mutual funds, promoted Anne Putnam to Chief Executive Officer. An accomplished leader, she has delivered results, built strong relationships and carried out a vision of growth over her two-decade investment management career, contributing significantly to the success of the firm, founded in 1974 by her father, Tom Putnam. She served as Senior Vice President since 2017. Fenimore will celebrate its 50th year of service to investors in 2024. [VISIT fenimoreasset.com](http://visit.fenimoreasset.com)

**Berkshire Bank** welcomes Rob Nichols as Senior Vice President, Business Banking Team Leader. He brings more than 33 years in commercial banking. Nichols leads the sales team for Berkshire's business banking in New York, Berkshire County, Massachusetts and southern Vermont. [VISIT berkshirebank.com](http://visit.berkshirebank.com)

**Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna LLP** announced two associates have joined the firm. Arthur Nix is a new member of the firm's Litigation and Labor & Employment Practice groups, and David Craft has joined the Real Estate Practice group. [VISIT woh.com](http://visit.woh.com)

## Kudos & Congratulations

**Capital Region Living** is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The publication is the premier magazine highlighting the best New York's Capital Region has to offer, including entertainment, restaurants, style and more. Check out two decades of digital issues on the website. [VISIT crlmag.com](http://visit.crlmag.com)

**Vanderheyden** was awarded a \$346,141 grant from the New York State Office of Court Administration's Division of Professional and Court Services. The funding will provide Enhanced Parenting Time Services (EPTS) to the Rensselaer County Family Treatment Court. EPTS supports vulnerable youth and their families through visitations and treatment plans. [VISIT vanderheyden.org](http://visit.vanderheyden.org)

## EventsCalendar 2023

All events are members only. Visit [renscochamber.com](http://renscochamber.com) to register!

THU  
NOV  
02

**Congressional One-on-One with U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko**  
Join us for a discussion with U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko about the issues

facing Congress and initiatives that will impact our local business community. Bring your questions and get ready to participate in the conversation.

☎ Check-in and breakfast 8:30 a.m.; program 9-10 a.m. \$50 members. Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick Street in Troy.

THU  
NOV  
16

**College Presidents Panel**  
A dynamic discussion with regional college and university presidents. Discover

how these institutions collaborate with businesses for mutual success. Voice your ideas during an interactive Q&A.

☎ Check-in and breakfast 7:30 a.m.; panel discussion 8-9:30 a.m. \$50 members. Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick Street in Troy. Sponsored by Architecture +; Broadview FCU; Mosaic Associates Architects; and UHY LLP.

SUN  
DEC  
03

**41st Troy Victorian Stroll**  
☎ 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Visit [victorianstroll.com](http://victorianstroll.com).

THU  
DEC  
07

**Holiday Networking**  
☎ Check-in and luncheon 11:30 a.m.; networking 12-1:30 p.m. \$50 members. Crowne Plaza Albany – The Desmond Hotel, 660 Albany Shaker Road in Albany. Sponsored by First New York FCU; The Foundation of St. Catherine's Center for Children; HMA Contracting Corp.; National Grid and OrbitalFire.

THU  
JAN  
11

**State of the County**  
Rensselaer County Executive Steven F. McLaughlin presents what's ahead in 2024, including local

economic development initiatives. Have your questions ready for a Q&A session. Be sure to register early for this sell-out event.

☎ Check in and luncheon 11:30 a.m.; program 12-1 p.m. \$50 members. Franklin Terrace Ballroom, 235 Campbell Avenue in Troy. Sponsored by Rensselaer County IDA.



## Ribbon Cuttings



Apricot Fine Jewelry Works celebrated a ribbon cutting at 188 River Street in Troy. Apricot specializes in locally designed handcrafted Jewelry, expertly made to exquisite standards. [VISIT apricotworks.com](http://visit.apricotworks.com)



The Village of Castleton-On-Hudson recently marked the completion of more than \$7 million in upgrades to its municipal wastewater treatment plant. [VISIT facebook.com/VillageofCastleton/](http://visit.facebook.com/VillageofCastleton/)



Rensselaer Riverfront Farmers Market opened for its first season, featuring fresh produce, crafts, live music and more. [VISIT rensselaermarket.com](http://visit.rensselaermarket.com)

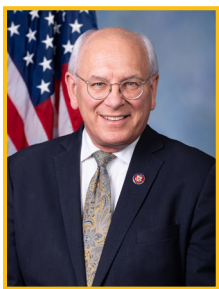
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COUNTY  
Life looks good from here

Ribbon cuttings are presented by the Chamber, in partnership with Rensselaer County IDA.



Ask Your Questions at Congressional One-on-One with Rep. Paul Tonko

Plan to participate in the Chamber’s upcoming Congressional One-on-One, featuring U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko. We’ll moderate a discussion about the issues facing Congress and initiatives that will impact our local business community. This is your opportunity to speak directly with the congressman as the Chamber provides a unique and effective forum. Come with your questions and ideas to take part in a Q & A following Rep. Tonko’s remarks.



**THU NOV 02** Register now at [renscochamber.com/events](https://renscochamber.com/events)  
🕒 Check-in and breakfast 8:30 a.m.; discussion and Q&A 9-10 a.m. \$50 members. Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick Street in Troy.

Discover How Higher Ed Drives Economy

As major employers in the Capital District, colleges and universities have an economic impact that reaches beyond campuses. Discover how these institutions collaborate with businesses for mutual success at the Chamber’s College President’s Panel. Hear regional leaders discuss their academic communities, future plans and the impact of higher education as



an economic driver. Our panel includes (top row, l-r) Christopher Ames, Ph.D., The Sage Colleges; Lynn Ortale, Ph.D., Maria College; Roger A. Ramsammy, Ph.D., Hudson Valley Community College; (bottom row, l-r) David Schejbal Ph.D., Excelsior College; Martin A. Schmidt, Ph.D., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; and Charles Seifert, Ph.D., Siena College. Bring your questions for a dynamic discussion.

**THU NOV 16** Register now at [renscochamber.com/events](https://renscochamber.com/events)  
🕒 Check-in and breakfast 7:30 a.m.; panel discussion and Q&A 8-9:30 a.m. \$50 members. Hilton Garden Inn, 235 Hoosick Street in Troy. Sponsored by Architecture+, Broadview FCU, Mosaic Associates Architects and UHY LLP.



It’s the Season of Good Cheer & Networking!

Start the holiday season with the Chamber’s Holiday Networking Luncheon. Get connected, develop leads and build business relationships at this fast-paced signature event. A sell-out every year, nearly 100 members gather to make connections that matter and to celebrate the holidays. Bring plenty of business cards to pass around, plus a door prize to spread cheer. More than 50 prizes will be given away!

**THU DEC 07** Register now at [renscochamber.com/events](https://renscochamber.com/events)  
🕒 Check-in and luncheon 11:30 a.m.; networking 12-1:30 p.m. \$50 members. Crowne Plaza Albany – The Desmond Hotel, 660 Albany Shaker Road in Albany. Sponsored by First New York FCU; The Foundation of St. Catherine’s Center for Children; HMA Contracting Corp.; National Grid and OrbitalFire.



spotlight



Since 1988, the Capital District Women’s Employment & Resource Center (WERC) has been advancing the success of women in the workplace. The Albany nonprofit has provided quality workforce development services to more than 10,000 women from the Capital Region — specifically displaced homemakers — by helping them successfully find or improve their employment. Each year, approximately 300 program participants receive 2,700 services at no cost, including career readiness, computer training, job search, placement assistance and ongoing supportive services until they find employment.

Displaced homemakers are women who have lost their source of support due to divorce, separation or their spouse’s job loss, disability or death. Single mothers or women who soon will lose public assistance benefits also participate in WERC’s training programs. Executive Director Elizabeth Miller Guthier said a gap in their work history, typically five to 20 years, puts these women at a disadvantage when seeking employment, while often leaving them ineligible for unemployment benefits and other social service programs. WERC’s programs can be essential to the success of women in the community who must reenter the competitive job market to support themselves and their families.

“The classes through WERC were the reset I needed. I gained the support system I was lacking and found the opportunities I had been missing or lacked the confidence to pursue.” WERC graduate

“They may not have the time or finances for an extended transition period and are often under great emotional stress resulting from their sudden change in status,” Miller Guthier said. “WERC offers women in transition proven pathways for becoming gainfully employed and making a positive impact on our region’s economy.”

Historically, 75% of the women who complete WERC’s training programs find employment and 90% of those women are still employed after 90 days, according to Miller Guthier.

To serve an increased number of women in need of services, WERC has responded with additional training workshops in Rensselaer County and more links to community resources and WERC’s employer network. A grant from the Workforce Development Institute allowed WERC to recently expand training to a satellite office on Defreest Drive in the Rensselaer Technology Park in Troy. WERC plans to offer free computer training, facilitated by MicroKnowledge, Inc., for applications such as Excel and Power Point.

WERC is also busy creating a community of mentors, volunteers and sponsors to support its mission. In October, WERC hosted a Constellation Building event and in November the nonprofit kicks off a new well-being series called “The Power of Self Care.” For more information, contact WERC.

“What I learned at WERC cannot be measured and will be with me forever. I am invincible!” WERC graduate

Capital District Women’s Employment & Resource Center, Inc. | W E R C  
155 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor | Albany, NY 12210  
120 Defreest Drive | Troy, NY 12180  
Ph: 518.225.3131 | [bmiller@cdwerc.org](mailto:bmiller@cdwerc.org)

To purchase a Spotlight, contact the Chamber at 518.274.7020 or at [info@renscochamber.com](mailto:info@renscochamber.com)

News from The Leadership Institute

The Leadership Class of 2024 is well underway! This year’s participants began their experience with a two-day orientation retreat at Camp Is-Sho-Da in East Greenbush. The retreat included diverse team-building exercises and opportunities to bond. Top it all off with a campfire dinner and s’mores — it added up to great start for this year’s dynamic class. In October, the Leadership class continued with a deep dive into **Communications**. Held at WMHT Public Media, the day-long session featured **Principles of Communication, Communication Barriers and a Communications and Media Training** panel.





Member Milestones

35 Years

W. J. Lyons, Jr. Funeral Home, Inc.  
United Group of Companies

25 Years

Bob Talham, Inc.  
Dynamic Systems, Inc.  
TAP, Inc.

20 Years

Berkshire Hathway  
HomeServices Blake Realtors  
Lavelle & Finn, LLP

15 Years

Berkshire Farm Center & Services for Youth

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YWCA of the Greater Capital Region, Inc.

TARA WHITTLE  
The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group

\* Executive committee members

41st TROY VICTORIAN STROLL | SUNDAY, DECEMBER 03

Celebrating ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas’

Join us as the streets of downtown Troy come alive with Gilded Age splendor for the 41st Annual Troy Victorian Stroll on Sunday, December 3 from 11 to 5 p.m. Experience the holiday spirit, make new memories and enjoy unique attractions, shops and restaurants all dressed up for the yuletide season.

This year, we’re celebrating the 200th anniversary of the poem, “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” first published in the *Troy Sentinel* on December 23, 1823. With its famous opening line, “‘Twas the night before Christmas,” the poem quickly spread in the publications of its day and became a holiday tradition around the world. We’re honoring its bicentennial with special events, including a celebratory luncheon on December 23 and a “Santa Classics” exhibit at The Arts Center of the Capital Region (see related articles below).



beyond the one-day event, inspiring year-round visitors to return again and again.

Parking will be available in public garages with CDTA buses providing free shuttle service to downtown from outlying areas. Printed maps of attractions will be available. The Stroll is coordinated by the Chamber, in cooperation with the City of Troy, and funded by sponsors and donors. To become a Stroll volunteer, email lterwilliger@renscochamber.com.

The Annual Troy Victorian Stroll draws thousands of visitors from throughout the Northeast to discover Troy’s historic architecture and downtown community. Strollers of all ages enjoy a day of free festivities, including live performers, musicians, dancers, magicians and family-fun activities. Troy’s stores, boutiques and galleries are open for holiday shopping and as well as eateries, restaurants and outdoor food vendors in Monument Square. Be sure to check out the Hart Cluett Museum’s Annual Holiday Greens Show, the Maker’s Market at the Troy Atrium and The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall’s free tours and live music. It’s a magical day and the holiday spirit on the street spills into the storefronts with music and good cheer. Even more, the Stroll’s impact goes



Mark Your Calendars for Special Stroll Events

NOVEMBER 29  
Santa Classics Art Exhibit

Be our guest at an opening reception for nationally-recognized artist and photographer Bob Wheeler and his new exhibit at The Arts Center of the Capital Region, on November 29 from 6-8 p.m. We’ll celebrate the 200th anniversary of “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas,” meet the Pennsylvania-based artist and enjoy an exhibit of 15 original Wheeler prints. His “Santa Classics” is a series of artistic images featuring Wheeler dressed as Santa Claus stepping into masterpieces of art history, including Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper,” Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s “At the Moulin Rouge: The Dance,” Cassius Marcellus Coolidge’s “Dogs Playing Poker,” and many others. Talk with the artist and be among the first to see this exciting exhibit, on display through December 20. Open to the public; no charge.

DECEMBER 07  
“‘Twas 200th” Stroll Dinner

We’re celebrating “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas” with a special dinner exploring Troy’s rich history as the birthplace of the landmark poem. Meet Pam McCall, a Canadian publisher and historian of the poem, and Sally Veillette, who has developed an app translating the poem into different languages. The Chamber will also recognize and thank those who have had an impact on the Stroll during the past four decades. Held at Franklin Plaza Ballroom, 4 Fourth Street in Troy. To register, email jsingh@renscochamber.com

DECEMBER 23  
Two Centuries Ago Today...

On the bicentennial anniversary of its inaugural publication, the Chamber is co-hosting a luncheon at the Troy Public Library to honor “A Visit from St. Nicholas,” first published in the *Collar City* on December 23, 1823. City of Troy Mayor Patrick Madden will present a proclamation declaring December 23 “Orville L. Holley Day,” in recognition of the editor who first published the beloved Christmas poem. The Friends of the Troy Public Library, the Rensselaer County Historical Society and others will be joining the celebration. To RSVP for this event, email jsing@renscochamber.com.

Troy Victorian Stroll Major Sponsors

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