



# RENSCONNECT

WHERE BUSINESS + COMMUNITY CONVERGE

MESSAGE FROM OUR INCOMING BOARD CHAIR

## Chamber Membership is a Living Relationship

Welcome to a new year at the Chamber! As I begin my tenure as Chair of the Board of Directors, let me say how excited I am to work with a group of such dedicated members, staff and board. I have seen firsthand what it means to be involved with this Chamber, how effective its resources are and the tangible results that come from working together as a team. That's the plan for 2024: to come together with a single mission to serve, support and build up our regional business community.

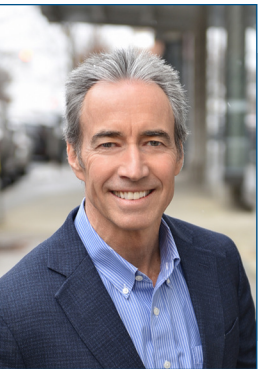
### Following the Leader

As we discovered in 2023, President Norris Pearson has definite ideas and plans to take our Chamber into a successful future. My job this year is to support his efforts and lend a guiding hand along the way. Norris continues to grow in his role as president and his ability to connect with people is incredible to see. He is building confidence within our membership and has curated a staff that is enthusiastic,

in new members and achieve a deeper connection with existing ones. All three goals are certainly well served by the Chamber's events and programs, from NetworkingPlus to our award-winning Leadership Institute to CEO Roundtables and more. When it comes to these offerings, the Chamber really does it right. If you haven't attended one of our events, the new year is a great time to start.

### More Workers for More Jobs

Workforce Development is the most important need in our business community today and the Chamber is a leading advocate for reaching the underemployed as well as the workers of tomorrow. Through our We Advance initiative, Connect with Careers video series, Career Jam and much more, we are helping to build a pipeline of skilled and ready workers to meet the demand of employers. We partner with such leaders as the Capital Region Workforce Development Board and Rensselaer County One-Stop Career Center to bring resources



Joan Heffler Photography

**"As a member of the Chamber, you are part of a living relationship, a peer group that can help with strategies and solutions, mentoring, career advancement and more. All you have to do is engage."**

**Mike Hamel, Owner, HMA Contracting Corporation  
2024 Chamber Board of Directors Chair**

creative and hard working. For me, that sets the stage for making good things happen.

### Rules of Engagement

Speaking of building membership confidence, there are three goals for our organization that I'd like to encourage during my year as Board Chair. The first is **hands-on engagement** that makes a tangible difference in the lives of our members and their businesses. The second is **person-to-person engagement** so that our members can feel SEEN, HEARD and VALUED. The third is **mentoring engagement**, the type that lifts people up towards their goals, sharing information and experience for the good of others. These strategies will draw

to employers and potential employees. This coming year, we will continue to build on these relationships and resources.

### Stay Tuned in 2024

As we move through the challenges and successes of 2024, I urge you to get in touch with the Chamber and discover exciting ways to get involved. Whether it's allowing us to help you troubleshoot problems or meeting your peers at an event, check out all the Chamber has to offer by contacting us today.

Best wishes,

*Mike Hamel*

A CONVERSATION WITH:

## Board Member Paul Kelly

You could almost say that Paul Kelly's "side hustle" is building up Rensselaer County as a great place to live and work. The Chief Human Resources Officer at Sunmark Credit Union, and member of the Chamber's Board of Directors, has lived here for more than 30 years.



"It's a beautiful area, with places of peace and ruralness as well as busy communities. Plus, it's just a short drive to downtown areas that have so much to offer," said Kelly. "I love Rensselaer County and the thing I really love to see is the growth of the county."

When the opportunity came to serve on the Chamber Board, "I jumped on it," said Kelly. "When you look at volunteering for an organization like the Chamber, with its programs and resources, you don't hesitate. My passion for Rensselaer County and the Chamber's mission are a perfect match."

Chambers make "good business sense, particularly this one with its strong commitment to small businesses, which are the backbone of the economy," said Kelly. "Networking, training, money-saving resources and professional assistance are the hallmarks of our Chamber."

At a recent networking after-hours, Kelly met a prospective employee, a young person who was unfamiliar with job opportunities in the financial services industry. "I was able to introduce her to Sunmark's COO, who began her career as a teller. That kind of impactful face-to-face networking is invaluable to the business community," said Kelly. "That's the Chamber at its best."

*Paul J. Kelly is Chief Human Resources Officer at Sunmark Credit Union. He leads, designs and deploys innovative and effective human resources services, policies and programs that are aligned with the credit union's strategic objectives.*

The Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce is a business, civic and economic development alliance that strives to enhance the economic vitality of Rensselaer County and the neighboring gateway communities of Cohoes, Green Island, Waterford and Watervliet. The Chamber seeks to improve the quality of life within the community for both residents and businesses.

"RENSCONNECT" is published by the Chamber. Submissions considered for publication are based upon content and space availability.

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Rensselaer County Regional Chamber of Commerce

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Market. Develop. Connect.

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New Members

**Fancy Feet Dance Studio**  
Dance Studio  
Rep: Amanda Durst  
76 North Greenbush Road  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.203.6054  
[VISIT fancyfeettroy.com](#)

**Osborne Association**  
Non-Profit Organization  
Rep: Shannon Chatterton  
415 River Street  
Third Floor  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 917.890.3255  
[VISIT osborneny.org](#)

**River Street Market**  
Food Hall  
Rep: Maria Decker  
433 River Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
Phone: 518.801.6925  
[VISIT riverstreetmkt.com](#)

Milestones

45 Years

- **Marinstein & Marinstein, Esqs., PLLC**

40 Years

- **Bryce Funeral Home, Inc.**

35 Years

- **Nigro Retail Properties**
- **Victorious Life Christian Church**
- **Wynantskill Family Medicine**

20 Years

- **Capital Roots**
- **Opalka Family Investment Partners, LP**

15 Years

- **Hilton Garden Inn, Troy**

10 Years

- **Columbia Development Companies**

A Fond Goodbye to the Clements



The Chamber was proud to host a small farewell gathering for the owners of Clement Frame Shop & Art Gallery, our longtime friends Tom and Ray Clement. After more than 50 years in business, the brothers have sold the building at the corner of Second Street and Broadway, where their street-level shop has long graced the view of Monument Square and where generations of shoppers have visited. Best wishes to them!

Member News

**St. Peter’s Health Partners (SPHP)** joined **Capital District Transportation Authority’s (CDTA)** Universal Access Program, giving all employees at SPHP unlimited ridership within CDTA’s service network. SPHP has more than 11,000 employees at more than 185 locations. Employees can use any of CDTA’s transit services by swiping a Navigator card. The Navigator app is downloaded from the Apple or Google Play stores. The app provides trip planning, so employees can use the CDTA route network to get to other parts of the Capital Region as well. [VISIT sphp.com](#) or [cdta.org](#)

**GlobalFoundries (GF)** announced its U.S.-based employees may receive tax-free financial assistance from the company to pay down student loan debt. The new benefit program is part of a multimillion dollar investment by GF to strengthen the semiconductor workforce by helping with the cost of higher education and training. Starting this year, the program allows employees to receive a lifetime cap of \$28,500 toward payment of student debt for eligible loans connected with any degree type or credit-based certificate program offered by American universities and colleges. [VISIT gf.com](#)

**Capital Roots** opened a 2,000-square-foot incubator kitchen designed to give local food entrepreneurs a place to get started before spinning off into the business community. Part of the Urban Grow Center’s nearly \$9 million expansion, the incubator kitchen includes four cooking areas (baking, food trucks/catering and two large volume production areas); a food prep area; rentable cold and dry storage space; a dedicated loading bay and 24-hour access. Businesses also have access to smaller equipment and there are two food stalls for selling products. [VISIT capitalroots.org](#)

**The City of Troy** launched a new tourism campaign, “Troy Has It!”, to attract visitors locally and beyond to visit the Collar City. The initiative, made possible through the support of the **Troy Redevelopment Foundation**, promotes Troy’s unique charm, cultural richness and economic vitality while fostering a sense of community among its diverse residents and supporters. [VISIT troyhasit.com](#)

Kudos & Congratulations

**Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute** alumnus and member of the Class of ‘59 Sheldon Weinbaum, Ph.D., received the National Medal of Science, the highest honor for scientific achievement bestowed by the United States. Dr. Weinbaum was recognized for a lifetime of research in biomechanics, including models used for innovations in physiology, bone biology and blood flow that led to lifesaving treatments of cardiovascular disease. [VISIT rensselaer.edu](#)

**Mosaic Associates Architects** received national recognition for its design of the Peekskill High School STEAM Innovation Center. The benchmark facility, which incorporates next-generation learning space design and planning methodologies, earned an Outstanding Project Award from *Learning by Design* magazine in its recent *Architectural and Interior Design Awards of Excellence* edition. [VISIT mosaicaa.com](#)

**Excelsior University** was named among the best institutions in the nation for military veterans. The recognition in the *Military Times’ 2023 Best for Vets: Colleges* is the largest and most comprehensive annual ranking of schools for military service members and veterans. The rankings are a go-to resource helping veterans make important decisions about their educational planning and use of education benefits earned through military service. [VISIT excelsior.edu](#)

Ribbon Cuttings



Stacks Espresso Bar celebrated a ribbon cutting at 652 Albany Shaker Road in Colonie. A place for coffee, cuisine and community, Stacks offers pick up, delivery and full service in-house and off-site catering. [VISIT stacksespresso.com](#)



Emry’s Garden (formerly Troy Beer Garden) marked its new name with a ribbon cutting. Located at 2 King Street in Troy, Emry’s serves fresh meals and drinks in a casual atmosphere and for pick up or delivery. [VISIT emrysgarden.com](#)



Osborne Association held a ribbon cutting ceremony at 415 River Street in Troy. Osborne seeks to transform lives, communities and the criminal legal system through programs and advocacy. [VISIT osborneny.org](#)



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

EventsCalendar 2024

Visit [renscochamber.com](#) to register!

THU  
JAN  
04

**Member Benefits Breakfast**

Maximize your Chamber membership by discovering all of the benefits available to you AND your employees. Whether you are a new or long-time member, this presentation will open your eyes to what you may be missing. Bring a staff member with you!

☎ Check-in and breakfast 8:30 a.m.; benefits overview 8:30-9:30 a.m. No cost; RSVPs requested. Chamber’s first floor conference room, 90 Fourth Street in Troy.

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.*

THU  
JAN  
25

**New Program! Member Feedback Forum**

Join us for an open and candid conversation as the Chamber listens to and discusses your feedback. What are your business needs? What programs and services would you like to see offered? How have you interacted with the Chamber? See you there!

☎ Check-in and breakfast 8:30 a.m.; benefits overview 8:30-9:30 a.m. No cost; RSVPs requested. Chamber’s first floor conference room, 90 Fourth Street in Troy.

THU  
MAR  
28

**The Leadership Institute Class of 2024 Graduation Ceremony & Dinner**

Celebrate this year’s class, network with business professionals and find out about the Chamber’s award-winning skills development program.

☎ Networking reception 5:30 p.m.; graduation ceremony 6:30 p.m. \$60 per person with tables of 10 available for purchase. Franklin Terrace Ballroom, 126 Campbell Avenue in Troy. *Sponsored by CDPHP and HMA Contracting Corp.*



SERVING OUR MEMBERSHIP

New Board Members Announced for 2024

The Chamber extends a warm welcome to the newest members of its board of directors, elected in December. Each has a three-year term, beginning in January 2024 (for a full listing of the Chamber’s board of directors, see page four). We look forward to working with these talented professionals as we continue to grow the Chamber and serve our membership:

JASON ABARE eBizDocs	PAT HUGHES Mosaic Associates Architects	NATALIE ORCUTT KIPP
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SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES FOR ALL BUDGETS

High-Impact Marketing & Advertising

Get the attention your business or nonprofit deserves in 2024 with customized marketing packages designed to target your goals and stay within your budget. The Chamber’s marketing and advertising offerings include a full menu of high-impact print, digital and sponsorship opportunities that bring the tangible results you are looking for. Mix and match a cost-effective package!

- » Sponsor Chamber events and get maximum exposure. Choose from a variety of popular programs to suit your timing, audience and budget. Bundle a customized package for year-long results.
- » Tap into our digital marketing with website advertising and e-newsletters, both featuring higher-than-average visit/open rates.
- » Newsletter inserts are ideal for businesses and organizations. Direct-mailed with no postal costs to you, the inserts are included in our print newsletter and on our website.
- » Purchase a Spotlight article in our membership newsletter. Direct-mailed by the Chamber, newsletter Spotlights are also posted on our website.

For information on all of the Chamber’s marketing and advertising, contact Lucas Terwilliger, Events Coordinator, at lterwilliger@renscochamber.com or 518.952.5430.

Check Out These Chamber Benefits

Here’s a quick reminder of important benefits we offer to you and your employees. For additional member benefits, visit [renscochamber.com](https://renscochamber.com).

✓ ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

The Rensselaer County Department of Employment & Training can connect you with potential job seekers and/or provide partial reimbursement of training costs for eligible individuals when hired. The procedure is simple and short, with the assistance of an Employment Specialist. Learn more at [renscochamber.com/cost-saving-benefits/job-training](https://renscochamber.com/cost-saving-benefits/job-training).

✓ ONLINE JOBS & VOLUNTEER BOARD

Find your next employee, intern or volunteer with the Chamber’s online Jobs, Intern & Volunteer Board. Post your opportunities at [renscochamber.com/develop-chamber/job-internship-volunteer-board](https://renscochamber.com/develop-chamber/job-internship-volunteer-board), one of our most-visited pages, and reach the right candidates from around the region at no charge. Positions are reviewed before publication.

✓ CONSTANT CONTACT DISCOUNTS

Constant Contact is a one-stop source for your marketing needs. Chamber members receive exclusive savings on Constant Contact’s entire suite of online tools, including: email marketing, social campaigns, event marketing, surveys/polls and e-commerce. Features include landing pages, websites, a free logo builder and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to drive traffic to your website. Contact our representative Erik Bunaes at [erik@endorphindigital.com](mailto:erik@endorphindigital.com) to get up to a 25% discount.

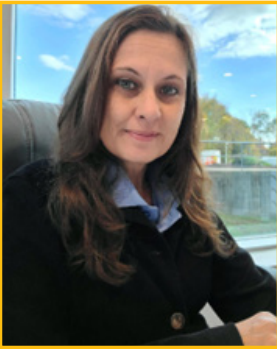
✓ CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN

Did you know that only chambers of commerce can legitimately issue a certificate of origin? Our Chamber is here to issue, sign and stamp certificates of origin at no charge to members in good standing. Certificates of origin are prepared by exporters to verify the origins of overseas exports and are required by law. Fraudulent certificates can lead to exports being rejected at ports, fines and other penalties. VISIT [renscochamber.com/cost-saving-benefits](https://renscochamber.com/cost-saving-benefits)

CHAMBER MEMBER

spotlight

Businesses, crafters and makers looking to save money on their shipments over 150 pounds are contacting M & T Freight Desk, a locally-owned partner in the Priority1 logistics network. Priority1 is a full-service brokerage that works with thousands of national and regional truckload and LTL carriers, offering less than truckload (LTL), full truckload (TL), drayage (DRAY), expedited, roadshow, warehousing and ocean freight services.



“M & T Freight Desk is local, person-to-person customer service that saves businesses on the cost of their shipping,” said Owner Tamatha DuLong. “That’s my favorite part of the job: building relationships and providing cost-effective shipping solutions.”

DuLong was recruited by Priority1 for her deep experience in the freight industry and prides herself in providing outstanding customer service to local businesses. M & T Freight Desk, which is certified by the Better Business Bureau, uses Priority1’s industry-leading technology and group purchasing power that comes from its partnerships with carriers in the North American freight market. In this way, DuLong is able to help small and medium-sized businesses manage their transportation needs more cost-effectively.

“As a nationwide 3PL, Priority1 leverages its shipping volume - more than 1.5M in annual shipments - for large discounts with carriers. We pass the savings on to our small and medium-sized business customers,” said DuLong. “In addition, our proprietary technology gives shipping customers the necessary tools to control their freight and transportation costs. We’re like another employee, handling all of your shipping needs and saving you money.”

Through the assets of a parent company, Priority1 is able to pay carriers faster than the competition, growing its relationships across the logistics network, said DuLong. “As a privately-help company, Priority1 makes quick and flexible decisions based on customer relationships and needs. Thanks to an industry-best Transportation Management System (TMS), our success is driven by a strong partnership of employees, customers and carriers, selling multiple modes across thousands of carriers.”

M & T Freight Desk, LLC  
P.O. Box 190 | East Schodack, NY 12063  
Ph: 518.766.7685 | E-mail for quotes to: MTFD@PRIORITY1INC.NET

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



Cheryl Stock, Class of ‘24, was promoted to Facility Security Officer (FSO)/Security Director for the Port of Albany. In her new role, she oversees the security of port operations, which includes facilities encompassing 400 acres on the east and west sides of the Hudson River. She also ensures the development and implementation of the port’s Facility Security Plan, according to federal regulations.

Stock began as an office manager at the port more than five years ago, working her way up and gaining experience along the way. “When I went before the hiring committee for this position, they saw The Leadership Institute on my resume and wanted to know all about it,” said Cheryl. “It was definitely part of their decision to choose me over the other candidates.”

2024 Chamber  
Board of Directors

MIKE HAMEL\* | BOARD CHAIR  
HMA Contracting Corporation

JASON ABARE  
eBizDocs

KELLI ARNOLD  
Pioneer

KIM BAKER  
St. Peter’s Health Partners

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Schodack Central School District

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MARK DUFFY  
Broadview Federal Credit Union

AARON FAGAN  
Fagan Associates

KENDRA HART\*  
Martin Electric

PAT HUGHES  
Mosaic Associates Architects

RUSSELL HUTA  
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DeCrescente Distributing

JAMES MONKS  
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NATALIE ORCUTT  
KIPP

TOBI SAULNIER  
1st Playable Productions

BOB SHEVY  
National Grid

STARLETTA R. SMITH  
YWCA of the Greater Capital Region, Inc.

TARA WHITTLE  
The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group

BRIAN WILLIAMS\*  
Capital Region Workforce Development Board

\* Executive committee members



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WE Advance

WORKFORCE &  
ECONOMIC  
ADVANCEMENT

A SPECIAL REPORT FROM THE RENSSELAER COUNTY REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN TROY

Mayor Says Businesses are Backbone of Economy

The Chamber recently talked with incoming City of Troy Mayor Carmella Mantello. A longtime Troy City Council member, she is the first woman to hold the mayorship in Troy, the seat of Rensselaer County and an influential hub of the business community.



**Q:** As Mayor-elect of the City of Troy, what can businesses expect from your incoming administration?

**A:** Our focus is on creating an environment where businesses of all sizes from start-ups to multinational corporations can thrive. We’re committed to making Troy safer, cleaner and more affordable to encourage businesses to start-up, relocate and grow here. Public safety is the most important responsibility of government and we will work to make Troy the safest city in the state.

Moreover, we’re dedicated to improving Troy’s infrastructure to deliver cleaner water, build better roads and more open and inviting public spaces that spur creativity and attract private sector investment.

Collaborating with local stakeholders like the Chamber, we’ll work to streamline city bureaucratic processes and identify opportunities for partnership. Small businesses are the backbone of our community and we will actively engage with them to cultivate a city where success thrives and all of the neighborhoods of Troy prosper.

**Q:** What role should government play in workforce development and in addressing the shortage of skilled employees to fill crucial jobs in all sectors?

**A:** In the post-COVID world, the challenge of recruiting and retaining a workforce has intensified, but our city stands uniquely prepared to address this challenge. Troy boasts a remarkable advantage with three prestigious higher education institutions — Hudson Valley Community College, Russell Sage College, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute — within our city limits. This distinctive collection of educational resources sets us apart in a city of our size, providing an extraordinary asset.

My administration is committed to collaborating with these institutions, the business community, and Troy city schools to leverage this strength for our residents’ benefit. Together, we’ll establish programs engaging grade school students, particularly in underserved areas, exposing them to various career paths from an early age. This won’t be a top down effort, this will be bottom up reaching directly into grade schools and neighborhoods to reach the young people, especially our disadvantaged youth, and educate them on the opportunities that are available to them.

Furthermore, by cultivating partnerships with these institutions, we aim to launch initiatives offering practical, skill-focused training that aligns with local businesses’ needs. Through internships, apprenticeships, and job readiness programs, our goal is to equip residents, especially those in marginalized communities, with sought-after skills for prospective employers. This alliance seeks to bridge the education-industry gap, ensuring a steady stream of skilled workers for businesses seeking to hire within Troy.

We Advance Sponsors

VISIONARY



Rifenburg is one of upstate New York’s oldest and largest family-owned construction firms. Rifenburg specializes in earth moving and restoration, including landfills, site work, highway and bridge and utility installations. Since 1958, Rifenburg’s reputation is dedication to project, emphasis on safety and getting the job done on time and on budget. [VISIT rifenburg.com](http://visit.rifenburg.com)

CHAMPION



LEARN WHAT’S AHEAD IN 2024

Chamber’s State of the County Address

Join the Chamber at the 2024 State of the County Adress and learn what’s ahead for Rensselaer County and the business community. Rensselaer County Executive Steven F. McLaughlin will review the past year and present his vision and plans for the future, including the status of significant economic development initiatives and opportunities for business. Attendees are encouraged to participate in a Q&A session after remarks.



Register now at [renscochamber.com/events](http://renscochamber.com/events)

🕒 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.

