

Chamber News • Business publication of the LaGrange County (IN) Chamber of Commerce • Phone (260) 463-2443 • Jan. 2024

Board of Directors Election, Members Showcase & State of the Chamber

Join us at the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce's Annual Luncheon and Meeting on January 11, 2024 at the Blue Gate Garden Inn in Shipshewana.

Before the luncheon, the Members Showcase is an opportunity for members to display their business or organization and interact with members and non-members alike in a tradeshow-style showcase. Election of Board Directors, Chamber Legacy Awards winners, and a State of the Chamber address will also take place at the luncheon.

Nominating committee members and current Chamber Board of Directors Andrea Howe, Austin Miller, and Sabrina Miller have announced the slate of nominees for the 2024 Board of Directors Election.

Nominees include:



Lauri Couture, representing Farmers State Bank, is currently up for re-election having served the past three years on the Chamber Board of Directors. Lauri retired from Farmers State Bank in 2022 after 32 years in the banking industry. She is a lifelong LaGrange County resident, having graduated from Westview and residing in Shipshewana for the past 30 years. Lauri serves on the Chamber Board as the Treasurer, as the Finance Chair of her church council, and serves in other community volunteer organizations. She thoroughly enjoys assisting people in the community and within the Chamber and would be honored to serve another three years on the Chamber Board of Directors.



Denise Landers is the Area Director of LaGrange & Noble Counties for Crossroads United Way, serving Elkhart, LaGrange & Noble Counties. Denise has been a resident of LaGrange County on and off since 1978, returning permanently in 2012. A graduate from Prairie Heights, Denise received her bachelors in Business Administration and Marketing from Indiana Institute of Technology and later earned her Masters in Human Services and Gerontology from Kansas State University. She spent over 30 years in administration and business development in long term healthcare and behavioral health, before joining Crossroads United Way in August of 2021. Denise has been a volunteer with the Alzheimer's Association for 26 years. She is also a member of the Kendallville Rotary Club, is involved with several non-profit steering committees and groups, a part of the Chamber Ambassadors, and is on the Board of Directors for St. Martin's Healthcare, which serves patients in LaGrange, Steuben, DeKalb and Noble Counties. I love connecting people with resources in our community through United Way. Having an opportunity to share in the leadership and vision of our Chamber would be an honor.



Ben Martin is the owner of Lake Country Landscaping and Martin's Self Storage. Ben is a lifelong resident of LaGrange County. He graduated from Lakeland in 2008 then went on to graduate from the University of Saint Francis in 2012 with a degree in secondary education. Ben believes in investing time and energy in the youth of our communities so that they are able to thrive, grow, and learn through extracurricular activities. He is excited about the opportunity to show other small businesses the full potential of what the Chamber has to offer them, but also to be a part of an organization that has a greater vision for the entire community in developing the youth and offering them a place to grow and call home for years to come.



Scan to Register!

More Board Nominees on page 4!

Welcome to our New Member

Children First Center

1610 S. Grandstaff Dr.
Auburn, IN 46706

Renewing Members

Bradenberry Furniture
Sow-N-Grow Greenhouse
Ernsberger & Helmer
Kappa Kappa Kappa
LaGrange County Trails
Caldwell Appraisals
Buggy Lane Tours
Schlemmer Hardware
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and is distributed free of charge to
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surrounding areas. Advertising is available
only to Chamber members who invest in the
business community by supporting the
Chamber.**

LaGrange County Chamber

ANNUAL MEETING & LUNCHEON

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

● *Everyone is invited to attend the meeting*

For more information: +260-463-2443 or info@lagrangechamber.org

● Thursday, January 11

- Member Showcase 10:30pm
- Luncheon & Annual Meeting 12:00pm at Blue Gate Garden Inn

● Topic of Discussion

- State of the Chamber
- Legacy Awards
- Board Election



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Valerie Whitaker is the owner of Radiant Hair Salon in LaGrange. Valerie was born and raised in LaGrange and is a graduate from Lakeland. In addition to being a small business owner, Valerie is also an educator for Sunlights Pro in which she travels to

salons, distributor events, and hair shows to educate other stylists about the Sunlights Pro brand and techniques. She and her husband, Shannon, have four children and two grandchildren. Valerie also serves on the local Night to Shine Board. She is excited for the opportunity to help serve other businesses in the community by promoting growth and education in local businesses. Continued education in her own business is something she is very passionate about and believes this pairs well with the Chamber, as it is always working hard to facilitate educational workshops and events for Chamber members.



Brittany Sams is the Marketing and Strategy Manager at LaGrange County REMC. She has deep roots in LaGrange County as she was born, raised, and now works here. Brittany loves the friendly and neighborly culture of our area and is passionate about

building connections, promoting local homemakers and businesses, and helping our communities thrive. Brittany has been an avid Chamber Ambassador for several years and is a leader in the LaGrange County Young Professional Network. She is actively involved in the worship team at St. John Lutheran Church, volunteers as a coach at the YMCA, serves as the vice president of the Indiana Electric Cooperatives human resources and administrators' section, and is a committee member of LaGrange County Obesity Collaborative. Brittany states, "I am truly excited for the opportunity to serve on the Chamber Board. Above all, I value my faith and family most. I believe that my experiences, values, and passion align well with the Chamber's mission to foster hometown culture and drive exponential success."

2024 LaGrange County Legacy Award Finalists Have Been Named

Over a six-week span, numerous nominations were made for the 2024 LaGrange County Legacy Awards. These nominations fell into a number of different categories designed to highlight and celebrate Chamber members from every industry.

Our 2024 LaGrange County Legacy Awards Finalists, in no particular order, are:

Member of the Year:

- Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
- Linder's Tavern on Main
- LaGrange County REMC

Small Business of the Year:

- Shawna Rae's
- Music's Heating & Cooling
- Trading Post Outfitters

Non-Profit of the Year:

- LaGrange County Council on Aging & LCAT
- Elijah Haven Crisis Intervention Center
- Crossroads United Way

Young Professional of the Year:

- Cole Alber, Cole's Auto Detailing
- Emilee Fincher, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
- Andrea Howe, Farmer State Bank

Educator of the Year:

- Brittany Cowley—Lakeland Jr/Sr High
- Kendra Helmkamp—Topeka Elementary
- Jill Hamm—Westview Jr/Sr High

Professional of the Year:

- Erica Cook, Cook's Bison Ranch
- Sherri Johnston, LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation
- Dan Byler, LaGwana

The winner of each category will be announced at our Annual Meeting & Luncheon on January 11th. We want to thank all those who submitted nominations and we want to congratulate the finalists of each category.

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Kaufman's Hometown Sales Scores with Chamber Membership

What started as a business in their garage, has since undergone two relocations due to continued growth and expansion. Kaufman's Hometown Sales began in 2017 as Creative Power Cell-Utions. An company dedicated to manufacturing aftermarket batter powered appliances and lighting solutions.

In 2021 after outgrowing their garage, they moved into Topeka in hopes of expanding into the retail market while also keeping their wholesale clientele. They then needed to expand in 2023, which caused them to rebrand themselves as Kaufman's Hometown Sales, as they didn't just want to be know for their Creative Power Cell-Utions products, but also wanting to be an all inclusive product shop.

You can visit Kaufman's Hometown Sales at 105 S. Main Street in Topeka, or by calling them at 260-350-4720.



Pictured left to right: Sara Patrick, LaGrange County Chamber; Tony Schneider, LigTel; Erin Olinger and Lauri Couture, Farmers State Bank; Tammy Wells, MedMutual Protect; Denise Lander, Crossroads United Way; and Kenny Wright and Quinn Groff, Farmers State Bank.

Phoenix Office Machines Supplies the Chamber with a New Membership

Phoenix Office Machines Phoenix is a local office supply dealer located in Kendallville. They support many known companies like Canon, Lexmark, and HP. Phoenix also sells and supports shredders, office furniture, and toner supplies.

Phoenix prides itself on being a local, nonaffiliated company. Allowing them to sell you a business relationship and not just a product.

If you're in need of office machine upgrades or are looking for a local office machine company, give Phoenix Office Machines a call today at 260-318-6565.



First Presbyterian Church, LaGrange

This month, the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church will be praying specifically for:

January 4: Wolf Co-op

January 11: Raber Patio Enclosures

January 18: Spreuer & Son

January 26: South Milford Grain Company

February 1: Yoder's Homestyle Cooking



Pictured left to right: Erin Olinger, Farmers State Bank; Mareen Barton, Lake City Bank; Sara Patrick, LaGrange County Chamber; Mike Jenkins, Phoenix Office Machines; and Tina Hopper and Doreen Miller, LaGrange County Council on Aging & LCAT.



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4 Reasons To Make New Year's Resolutions (Even If You Don't Keep Them)

Adapted from Forbes Magazine

Many people will make New Year's resolutions, however the majority will also fail to achieve them. But making resolutions is still a good idea—with plenty of positive effects.

Data from YouGovAmerica suggests about a quarter of Americans will make resolutions, and most people think they'll accomplish them—20% in fact. Most people are optimistic, with 86% expecting 2022 to be the same or better than 2021. And the younger people are, the more optimistic they are about the future.

The Nature of New Year's Resolutions

The most popular New Year's resolutions are about self improvement (living healthier 23% of people, getting happy 21%, losing weight 20%, exercising 7%, stopping smoking 5%, reducing drinking 2%). In addition, people resolve to meet career or job goals (16%) and improve their relationships (11%).

Despite their big plans though, only 8% of people will achieve their New Year's resolutions. This is according to a study by the University of Scranton.

Why It's Smart to Make New Year's Resolutions

But all is not lost. Even if you don't keep resolutions, it's a really good idea to make them anyway. Here's why.

#1 – Intention

Being honest with yourself about your current condition and the distance to your preferred situation is key to improvement. And being intentional about how you want to grow and develop will help you achieve results. This intentionality will also contribute to your happiness and fulfillment. When you're moving forward with clear direction, you make a positive contribution to your emotional and mental health.

#2 – Hope and Engagement

Making New Year's resolutions is inherently hopeful and optimistic. You expect things can get better for you, for your work experience or for your community. This positive view of the future, in turn, tends to motivate action. If you don't believe tomorrow can be better, you're unlikely to take steps to improve yourself or your community. So optimism is doubly beneficial—contributing to your own mental health, but also engaging you toward positive action which has an effect on those around you.

#3 – Responsibility

Most New Year's resolutions have some impact on others. Even if they are about individual self-improvement, they affect families, friends, colleagues and communities. Your resolution to get healthy will keep you around longer for your family and friends. Your resolution to stop procrastinating will contribute to a positive team dynamic with your co-workers. And your plans to do more volunteer work at the community garden will help feed people in your locale. New Year's resolutions are terrific ways to focus on yourself, but also to consider your broader responsibility—and to expand and multiply your positive effects on others.

#4 – Inspiration

When you seek to be better, do better or contribute more fully, you tend to inspire others as well. The primary way people learn is through experiencing the behavior of others. Even if they're not consciously aware of it, people pick up on choices and cues from others—constantly. When you focus on the future and focus on improvement, you necessarily inspire those around you.

In Sum

Strive to be in the minority of people who keep their New Year's resolutions. But know even if you don't keep every one, the act of making them and striving toward them will have positive effects for you and for others.



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