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Something's Poppin' in Shipshewana – Welcome Dutch Kernel!

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is excited to welcome The Dutch Kernel to our membership family! Located at 250 Berkshire Dr., Shipshewana, this growing gourmet popcorn business is bringing bold flavor and exceptional customer service to our community.

to achieve the perfect light and crispy texture, using thoughtfully sourced ingredients and innovative flavor creations. Just as important as their product is their dedication to outstanding customer service, ensuring every customer enjoys a top-notch experience from start to finish.

Founded in 2018 by Veronica Miller in Nappanee, The Dutch Kernel has built a reputation for creating unique and delicious popcorn flavors that satisfy every kind of snack craving. From the smoky goodness of bacon popcorn to the sweet nostalgia of birthday cake, and the irresistible chocolate and peanut butter combination found in their Buckeye flavor, there is truly something for everyone.

Whether you are looking for a personal treat, a gift idea, or something unique to share at your next gathering, The Dutch Kernel offers a one-of-a-kind snacking experience.



What sets The Dutch Kernel apart is its commitment to quality and experience. Each batch is carefully popped



Pictured Above: Chamber Ambassadors representing The Wellness Way, Polish Girl Collectibles, First State Bank, LigTel, Farmers State Bank, LaGrange County Arts, LaGrange County CVB, LaGrange County Chamber, Interra Credit Union, LaGwana, and Shipshewana Trading Place Auction & Flea Market joined the owners and team of Dutch Kernel to welcome them to the Chamber family officially.

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5 questions (and answers) about employee handbooks for 2026

Adapted from HRDive

Here are the top five questions I most often receive from clients during this time of year as they create or revise their employee handbooks.

1. What are some important policies to include?

This answer may vary depending on the state, but employers should have language explicitly prohibiting discrimination and harassment and a process for reporting and investigating those claims.

Additionally, it is recommended that handbooks include language related to leave requests and medical and religious accommodations, including a clear process for making those requests.

Finally, include language related to workplace conduct rules, including any guidance on how discipline and other types of corrective action may be taken by the employer. Honorable mention goes to pay practices, at-will employment language and language on benefits. If you have operations in a state with employee-friendly laws, check all laws that require specific notifications that often appear in handbooks such as paid sick leave or specific workplace posters.

2. How often should I update my handbook?

The recommended practice is to establish a consistent timetable for making updates. Employers should review handbooks at least annually and depending on your industry, you may want to consider reviewing every six months or at least setting alerts for potential changes in federal or state law that might impact your existing workforce policies.

Many companies have drafts of handbooks sitting on the shelves but currently operate under ones that are obsolete. Regular updates help ensure the company is responsive to changes in the law and that employees are managed appropriately.

3. Should I have multiple handbooks if I have employees in at least one other state?

It depends on the specific location and in some instances, the city where you conduct business.

Many company handbooks can have carve-out language for other states, and some companies choose to have a completely different supplement to meet the requirements under state and local employment law.

There should be some consideration as to whether employees in other states are subject to specific requirements related to handbooks and employee notice. For example, several states like California, New York, Illinois, and Massachusetts have specific requirements that typically appear in employee handbooks. Illinois and California also have city-specific requirements that should be taken into consideration in any handbook draft.

4. Should I have a clear reporting process for managing complaints or concerns?

This is one of the most important aspects of any handbook because it provides management employees with a clear roadmap for addressing concerns with clearly assigned roles designated to taking complaints and investigating them promptly and efficiently. It also sets expectations for non-management employees on what to expect when they raise concerns. The policy must be clear on how a complaint will be managed, and individuals should not be required to report a complaint to a person who is the alleged wrongdoer.

Employers should also provide clear direction, typically in consultation with a board or other governing body, on how to manage complaints of an individual at the C-Suite level, including a president or CEO.

5. How should companies communicate handbook changes to employees?

Updates to company policies and practices must be communicated to employees. Employers should track that all employees receive and sign an acknowledgment of receipt. If possible, host a meeting with employees to review updates and address questions. (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Having a memo or other explanation summarizing key changes is also helpful. Employers may want to consider separate meetings with HR and senior leaders to walk through changes before a complete rollout.

Training leadership to serve as ambassadors on the changes allows employees to feel comfortable with big shifts in policies and provides some relief to HR when navigating questions and concerns.

Compliance, with a side of comfort

Handbooks are an extension of your organization, and while the policies and procedures are helpful to the operations of your business and to show compliance with relevant laws, they also provide useful processes and comfort to employees that there is a clear, consistent process and a means of understanding the terms and conditions of their employment.

Incorporating regular updates should be a key component of corporate policy as companies approach the new year.

5 questions (and answers) about employee handbooks for 2026

Adapted from HRDive

Both American job candidates and talent acquisition professionals find themselves between a rock and a hard place as 2026 kicks off. According to new LinkedIn data, more than half of professionals surveyed report being on the hunt for a new job this year, but about 80% say they're unprepared. At the same time, two-thirds of talent acquisition pros are struggling to find qualified candidates, even as the vast majority say they're facing greater pressure to do so.

AI could ease friction on both sides of the equation, according to LinkedIn's report out this week, based on surveys of 19,000 consumers and more than 6,500 HR professionals, conducted late last year.

Unsurprisingly, AI is squarely on the radar of TA professionals. LinkedIn found that, among those already tapping the tech for recruiting and hiring .(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



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nearly 60% say it's helped them find better-fit candidates, and more than 90% anticipate increasing their use of AI this year. However, gaps often exist between intention and operationalization.

"TA—like all functions in every business—is just struggling to absorb the innovation that AI is presenting to us," talent expert Hung Lee of Recruiting Brainfood said in a recent conversation with Erin Scruggs, vice president and head of global talent acquisition at LinkedIn. "That's one of the biggest challenges that we've got in 2026: How do we not get drowned in all of the new stuff? How do we identify the bits that we think are going to make the biggest impact—quickest—in amongst all the innovation?"

Focus on the problem, not the solution

TA is often under pressure from leadership to lean into the technologies that will drive efficiencies. However, Scruggs says it's more effective to prioritize tools with a demonstrable impact on the quality of the hiring experience, as efficiencies will follow.

When it comes to where to look for those opportunities for AI integration, Scruggs recommends thinking small. At LinkedIn, TA teams are in "heavy pilot on 100 different things."

"I have in past lives gone very big on technology implementations" with multi-year plans, she says, only to find gaps between the tech's promise and the outcomes.

Now, at LinkedIn, she advocates for "small, controlled pilots."

"Instead of going big on one initiative or one AI promise, we are really dissecting every step of our process and figuring out where AI can have the most impact," she says.

That work needs to be rooted in a deep understanding of the business problems the team is hoping tech can solve. Being "much more in love with the problem than the solution that's being offered," she says, has given LinkedIn's TA function more confidence in where it should scale.

Also critical has been segmentation: One AI-powered TA solution may not be equally effective for attracting both early-career talent and senior leaders, or both engineers and sales professionals.

"Where we used to look for one solution to go across all of our hiring," Scruggs says, "now we're segmenting to make sure we get the right solution for the right problem, for the type of hiring we're doing."

Drive adoption with culture

Getting buy-in from TA teams to embrace AI innovation is key to long-term success.

LinkedIn has turned to power users to help. Not just TA pros who demonstrate the most technical prowess, but rather those who are amenable to trying new things and are "not married" to their processes.

"It's not necessarily people who are vibe coding in their spare time," Scruggs says. "Power users are open to believing that tech can transform things, and they're open to looking at processes in a different light."

Identify TA power users, ask them about their biggest friction points, and work with them to pinpoint spots where tech can be part of the solution, Scruggs advises. Collaborate to "dream aloud" how AI could improve processes—and then see if the tech follows through.

Not all TA professionals may be as eager as early adopters to hop on board, so it's up to TA and HR leaders to build a culture where learning and experimenting are celebrated.

Become a "master storyteller," she suggests, both about the promise of AI for TA, but also about its pain points.

"That's my job as a leader," she says. "I have no choice but to create that culture."

Advancing Marketplace Trust: Welcome BBB of Northern Indiana

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is pleased to welcome the Better Business Bureau of Northern Indiana to our Chamber membership.

Headquartered at 4011 Parnell Ave., Fort Wayne, the BBB of Northern Indiana serves consumers and businesses across 23 counties, working to advance one critical mission: to be the leader in marketplace trust.

The BBB accomplishes this by setting standards for ethical business behavior, encouraging and supporting best practices, and engaging both consumers and businesses through education and outreach. They celebrate marketplace role models, address substandard business practices, and foster a community of trustworthy businesses and charities throughout Northern Indiana.

In addition to accreditation and business resources, the BBB offers valuable services to the public. Consumers can file a complaint or submit a review

online at bbb.org, or pick up and drop off complaint forms at the Parnell Avenue office. Dispute resolution specialists are available by appointment to assist with resolving concerns between businesses and customers. Businesses and consumers can also contact their office directly by calling 260-423-4433.

As the Chamber continues fostering community connections and driving business success, we value partners who elevate integrity, accountability, and trust in the marketplace. The BBB of Northern Indiana plays a vital role in strengthening the credibility and confidence of our regional business environment.



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Leadership LaGrange County Seeks Interested Participants for 2026 Cohort

Are you ready to grow your leadership skills and make a greater impact in LaGrange County?

participants gain tools and relationships that extend far beyond the classroom.

Leadership LaGrange County is now accepting expressions of interest for the 2026 cohort.

Leadership LaGrange County is a joint initiative of the LaGrange County Economic Development Corporation and the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, working together to strengthen leadership, support workforce development, and invest in the long-term success of our community.

This premier leadership development program is open to LaGrange County residents and employees of local businesses and organizations who want to strengthen their leadership abilities, build meaningful community connections, and gain insight into issues that affect every industry.

Interested in being part of the 2026 class?

Contact the Chamber or the EDC to express your interest and receive the official application when it launches. (Submitting interest does not register you for the program.)

The 2026 cohort will run from May through December, meeting once a month on the third Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The program kicks off with a full-day leadership experience in May, including CliftonStrengths training to help participants better understand and leverage their unique strengths.

For more information:

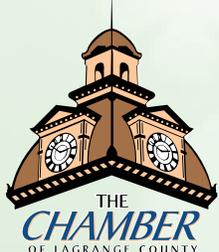
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Through engaging sessions, community-focused discussions, and cross-sector collaboration

Take the next step. Invest in yourself. Lead local.



Pictured the 2025 Leadership LaGrange Graduates: Back Row - Left-to-right: Brandon Altimus, LaGrange County REMC; David Mullet, Wana Acres Fencing; Ashya Klopfenstein; Jackie Feller, LaGrange County Health Department; and Tylor Lichtenberger, Hostetler & Young Insurance. Front Row: Jamie Cunningham, Community Health Clinic; Stephanie Blake, Farmers State Bank; Sonya Nash, LaGrange County CVB; Bridget Sage, Precision Financial; Mareen Barton and Kourtney Jackson, Lake City Bank; and Samantha Davis Kana, Interra Credit Union. Not pictured: Taylor McClish, DutchCrafters.



Where Care and Community Grow: Welcome Green Oaks of Goshen

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is excited to welcome Green Oaks of Goshen to our Chamber membership family!

Services such as three daily meals, housekeeping, and laundry are included, along with opportunities for social connection and recreational activities that foster friendship and engagement.

Green Oaks of Goshen is an affordable assisted lifestyle community serving adults 62 and older who need a little extra support while maintaining their independence. Located in Elkhart County, this newly opened, four-story community features 120 studio and one-bedroom apartments and is now taking reservations as apartments continue to rent quickly.

This multimillion-dollar development provides a full spectrum of services designed to help seniors embrace independence in a comfortable, supportive environment. With amenities that promote both well-being and community, Green Oaks of Goshen is creating a place where residents and families can feel confident and cared for.

Guided by a focus on love, compassion, and dignity, Green Oaks offers a wonderful residential alternative to a nursing home or to struggling alone at home. Residents enjoy the privacy of their own thoughtfully designed apartment while receiving personalized assistance, including medication management and 24-hour certified staff support.

Please join us in giving Green Oaks of Goshen a warm Chamber welcome. We look forward to their continued impact in our region and the valuable services they provide to seniors and families in our community.



Pictured Left-Right: Denise Landers, Crossroads United Way; Tony Schneider, LigTel; Jamie Fennell, LaGwana; Mike Howard, Hosler Realty & Steadfast Auctions; Mary Gallardo, Green Oaks; Joe Walter, Farmers State Bank; Jackie Feller, LaGrange County Health Department; Cori Vilardo, First State Bank; Brett Hahn, Indian Lakes Marketing; Jennifer Engle, Polish Girl Collectibles; and Christina Blaskie, Bowen Health.

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Now Registering: Field of Dreams Career Expo

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is excited to invite businesses and organizations to participate in the upcoming Field of Dreams Career Expo! This impactful event connects local employers directly with students, helping showcase the wide range of career opportunities available right here in our community.

The Field of Dreams Career Expo brings together students, educators, and employers for an interactive experience designed to inspire future workforce connections. Participating businesses have the opportunity to highlight career pathways, share industry insights, demonstrate hands-on activities, and build awareness about job opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and more.

This event is more than a career fair. It is a chance to invest in the next generation of talent, strengthen partnerships with local schools, and help students envision their future in LaGrange County. By engaging directly with students, businesses play a vital role in

shaping a strong and prepared workforce.

We encourage companies from all industries to join us in making this event a success. Whether you are hiring now or building awareness for the future, the Field of Dreams Career Expo is a powerful way to connect and make an impact.

Interested in participating? Contact the Chamber today to reserve your booth and be part of this exciting workforce development initiative. 260-463-2443 or by emailing sara@lagrangechamber.org. Let's continue working together to foster community connections and drive business success.

We also want to extend a sincere thank you to our Chamber Partners who have chosen to support and champion this initiative: LaGwana, Farmers State Bank, Bowen Center, Tiffany's Restaurant, Freedom Finish Works, Parkview LaGrange Hospital, Lake City Bank, MEC, Alpha Building Center, Lewis & Lambright, LaGrange Veterinary Clinic, and IROG Media.



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A Community That Feels Like Home: Welcome Greencroft of Middlebury!

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is pleased to welcome Greencroft Middlebury to our Chamber membership family. We are excited to partner with an organization that is deeply committed to service, compassion, and community.

With a vision to provide a continuum of long-term care services in a small-town setting, Greencroft Middlebury plays an important role in supporting seniors and strengthening our regional community.

Greencroft Middlebury is united by its CROFT values, which guide every decision and interaction within the community. These values include Creativity, Respect, Openness, Fairness, and Teamwork. More than words, they represent a daily commitment made by team members to create a culture where residents, staff, and families feel supported and valued.

We are grateful to welcome Greencroft Middlebury to the Chamber and look forward to building connections and celebrating the positive impact they bring to our area. Please join us in extending a warm Chamber welcome!

Their mission reflects a dedication to creating a dynamic living community that embraces the creativity, contributions, and challenges of aging, grounded in service excellence, compassionate care, and Mennonite values.



Pictured Left-Right: Back Row: Mike Howard, Hosler Realty & Steadfast Auction; Joe Walter, Farmers State Bank; Emilee Buller, LaGrange County EDC; Denise Landers, Crossroads United Way; Brett Gearheart, First State Bank; & Loretta Johnson. Front Row: Andrew Coblentz, The Wellness Way; Tony Scheider, LigTel; Darci Gaff, Greencroft Middlebury; Cori Vilaro, First State Bank; and Jennifer Engle, Polish Girl Collectibles.

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