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Welcoming Lasting Impressions Gift Shoppe - Locally Made, Community Loved

The LaGrange County Chamber is excited to welcome Lasting Impressions Gift Shoppe as our newest member!

Locally owned and operated since 1997, Lasting Impressions has been a staple for unique and thoughtful gifts. Owner Tonya Rich first began her journey selling from a kiosk at Glenbrook Mall in Fort Wayne before purchasing her storefront in downtown Shipshewana in 1996. Since then, she has grown her shop into a beloved destination for home décor, seasonal items, personalized gifts, and meaningful keepsakes for every occasion.

What makes Lasting Impressions truly special is their commitment to selling American-made goods, with many items crafted right here in LaGrange County. From locally made treasures to carefully curated gifts, every product carries a story of quality and connection.

By joining the Chamber, Lasting Impressions continues its commitment not only to creativity and craftsmanship but also to supporting the growth and vibrancy of our community.

You can find lasting impressions by visiting them at 145 Harrison Street in Shipshewana.

Lasting Impressions
gift shoppe



Pictured Left-Right: Jessica Rawlins, LaGrange County Council on Aging & LCAT; Jamie Fennell, LaGwana; Denise Landers, Crossroads United Way; Mareen Barton, Lake City Bank; Jennifer Engle, Polish Girl Collectibles; Tonya Rich, Lasting Impressions; Kimberly Hays, LaGwana; Kelsey Rich, Lasting Impressions; Tony Schneider, LigTel; Sara Patrick, LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce; Mike Howard, Hosler Realty & Steadfast Auctioneering; and Lauri Couture, Farmers State Bank.

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16th Annual LaGrange County

Power of the Purse & Wallet

Ensure "No tummy goes hungry"



The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce the 16th Annual Power of the Purse & Wallet Auction Fundraiser on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at the Farmstead Inn & Conference Center in Shipshewana. This beloved community event has raised over \$250,000 to date and continues to have a direct impact on local families and students.

All proceeds from this fundraiser support the Boomerang Backpacks and Blessings in a Backpack programs at Lakeland, Prairie Heights, and Westview schools. These vital initiatives provide food to children facing food insecurity throughout the school year, ensuring they have meals to take home during weekends and holiday breaks.

This year's event will feature two opportunities to attend:

- Lunch Session: 11:00 AM (doors open at 10:30 AM)
- Dinner Session: 6:00 PM (doors open at 5:30 PM)

Guests will enjoy a lively atmosphere, a delicious meal, and the opportunity to bid on a wide selection of purses and wallets. They can also purchase raffle tickets to increase their chances of winning a prize, all while supporting a cause that directly benefits children in LaGrange County.

Tickets are \$40 per session, \$70 for an all-day pass, or reserve a full table of 8 for your group.

"Power of the Purse & Wallet is more than just a fundraiser, it's a chance for our community to come together and ensure no child goes hungry," said LaGrange County Chamber Executive Director Sara Patrick. "The generosity shown through this event over the past 16 years has been incredible, and we look forward to another impactful year."

Businesses and individuals are encouraged to get involved through corporate sponsorships, donations, or organization-wide employee challenges to help expand the reach of this program.

For tickets, sponsorship details, or more information, please visit www.lagrangechamber.org/POP2025 or call the chamber office at 260-463-2443.

Turning Passion into a Flame: The Lighthearted Candle Story

In our latest Chamber Chat Podcast, we sat down with Lindsay MacDonald, owner and creator of Lighthearted Candle Company, to hear the inspiring story behind her business journey.

Before becoming a business owner, Lindsay spent eight years teaching English and History at Prairie Heights High School. She thought she'd retire from teaching until a pivotal moment in her personal life shifted everything. When her second daughter was born, Lindsay felt called to step back, embrace time with her family, and explore her creativity.

That season of slowing down led to a new passion. She began sewing handcrafted dog collars, and later, candles entered the picture and quickly took over. "I noticed that all I wanted to do was work with candles or create new scents," Lindsay shared. That passion soon grew into a full-fledged business, and in June 2024, she officially launched Lighthearted Candle Company online.

The name "Lighthearted" reflects not only the joy of creating but also the gratitude Lindsay felt in having the time to be present and soak in life's little moments. "My first collection of candles sought to capture and celebrate little moments of deep joy, like your first cup of coffee in the morning, watering your flowers, or climbing into freshly washed sheets," Lindsay explained.

Today, Lighthearted Candle Company is about more than beautiful candles; it's about encouraging gratitude, presence, and joy in the everyday.

Want to hear Lindsay's full story?

Catch the episode now on the Chamber Chat Podcast! Visit www.lagrangechamber.org/ChamberChat or search LaGrange County Chamber Chat on Spotify or Apple Podcast.



Where It All Began: Traci Blazie's Lakeland Story

Dr. Traci Blaize shares her "accidental" journey into educational leadership, from a short teaching career in special education to becoming Lakeland's Superintendent. Her story is one of unexpected opportunities, perseverance, and a deep-rooted passion for supporting students and staff alike.

During the episode, Dr. Blaize reflects on the influence of mentors in her life, including her father, a longtime basketball coach, and teachers who recognized her potential early on. She also emphasizes the importance of creating opportunities for students to discover their strengths and passions, noting programs like Lakeland's Dental Clinic and Vet Careers Academy, which provide hands-on, real-world experience for high school students.

A significant focus of the conversation is Lakeland's commitment to preparing students for the workforce through initiatives like the Learn to Work Academy, a partnership with local businesses to offer certifications, internships, and dual-credit opportunities in fields such as electrical maintenance. Dr. Blaize highlights the vital role that local businesses, nonprofits, and the community play in supporting work-based learning programs, which equip students with valuable skills while fostering economic growth in LaGrange County.

When asked about what excites her most about Lakeland, Dr. Blaize points to the district's diverse community, innovative programs, and the chance to celebrate student achievements, both academic and extracurricular. Her philosophy? Always lean forward, embracing progress, innovation, and opportunities that help students reach their full potential.

Whether you're a parent, educator, business owner, or community member, this episode offers insight into how Lakeland School Corporation is shaping the next generation of leaders while strengthening the ties that make LaGrange County a thriving community.

Tune in to the full episode of LaGrange County Chamber Chat to hear Dr. Blaize's full story, her perspectives on education, and the exciting initiatives underway at Lakeland.

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Upskilling and Reskilling: HR's Strategy for Workforce Agility

Adapted from HRMorning

When HR leaders approach upskilling and reskilling in a way that supports the employee, the People Manager, and the organization together, they uncover a talent mobility strategy that leadership may not have realized was available to tap into.

So, what can employees do to raise their hand, so to speak, to gain access to this next-level training? Are there ways employers can better identify and use their team's hidden potential?

Absolutely. This exploration should be a central goal of an organization's talent retention and mobility strategy. Here are steps I've counseled HR heads on when developing that strategy:

1. Collaborate with team and division leaders to identify four talent factors at every level of the organization: top performers, high-potential employees, solid and steady talent, and non-performers.
2. Work with these leaders to define current and emerging critical skills needed to operate the company at its highest level over the next three to six years.
3. Establish an ongoing internal communications framework for People Managers (training here may also be required) to have biannual discussions with direct reports. These should focus on individual strengths, the requirements of their current role and next projected position, and any gaps that exist. Think of this as reverse engineering an employee's career path from their perspective.
4. Use insights from this process to build a strong business case for executive leadership that includes recommendations for near-term talent resourcing, necessary workforce upskilling or reskilling, and long-term succession planning.

Regular conversations around career pathing opportunities within the organization foster trust between employee and manager — one of the most powerful retention strategies. This trust encourages employees to more regularly share aspirational career insights, helping managers and HR teams uncover hidden potential.

For companies that build a workplace culture that supports learning and progression, this approach could be the most influential factor in impacting longevity and market resilience. Why? A workforce that is more agile will win in competition.

A future leadership team that can lead through change will build a deeper bench of durability. And the investment here will pay off because it's established in purpose, aligned with career paths, and supported by managers who know how to spot and nurture potential already sitting inside the business.



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2026 Legislative Priorities Survey

The LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce is preparing to develop its 2026 Legislative Priorities and Advocacy Agenda. Your insights will help us better represent your voice in local, state, and federal matters.

1. What are the biggest policy or government-related challenges your business is currently facing? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Workforce shortage | ☐ Roadway infrastructure |
| ☐ Workforce readiness | ☐ Local permitting, zoning, regulations |
| ☐ Talent retention | ☐ State regulations |
| ☐ Housing availability for employees | ☐ Federal regulations |
| ☐ Healthcare access | ☐ Access to capital |
| ☐ Healthcare affordability | ☐ Transportation access |
| ☐ Childcare availability | ☐ Trade/international business |
| ☐ Childcare cost | ☐ Education |
| ☐ Taxes/Tax burden | ☐ Innovation/digital logistics |
| ☐ Supply chain/logistics | ☐ Energy access/infrastructure |
| ☐ Broadband infrastructure | ☐ Other (please specify): |

2. Which level(s) of government are you most concerned about when it comes to business-related policies? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Local - Municipalities
- ☐ Local - County
- ☐ State
- ☐ Federal

3. Are there any specific regulations, policies, or government issues that are directly impacting your operations or growth opportunities?

4. Which of the following areas should the Chamber focus its advocacy efforts on in 2026? (Pick up to 3)

- ☐ Workforce development and education alignment
- ☐ Housing development and zoning reform
- ☐ Affordable and accessible childcare
- ☐ Transportation and infrastructure investment
- ☐ Tax policy/business incentives
- ☐ Entrepreneurship/small business support
- ☐ Permitting and regulatory streamlining
- ☐ Broadband and digital access
- ☐ Other (please specify):

5. Would you be willing to participate in future roundtables, forums, or calls-to-action related to these issues?

- ☐ Yes - I'd like to stay informed and participate
- ☐ Maybe - Keep me in the loop
- ☐ No - I prefer to stay out of advocacy work

If YES or MAYBE, please fill in your information below.

Name: _____

Email: _____

6. OPTIONAL: What type of business do you represent?

- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Professional services
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Nonprofit
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Hospitality/Tourism
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Other (please specify):

7. OPTIONAL: How many employees does your business have?

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-20
- ☐ 21-50
- ☐ 51-100
- ☐ 100+

*Please return to 513 W. Central Avenue, LaGrange, IN 46761
or email completed form to sara@lagrangechamber.org*

10 Tips to Help Your Small Business Get Ready for the Holiday Season

The holidays bring a surge of energy and opportunity for small businesses. It's a time to increase sales, welcome new customers, and showcase what makes your business unique. At the LaGrange County Chamber, we're here to help our members make the most of the season. Below are ten practical ways to get your business ready:

1. Start Planning Now

Lay out your holiday calendar early. Mark down key dates, sales, and special events so you can stay organized and prepared when the busy season arrives.

2. Refresh Your Online Presence

Check that your website is easy to use, visually appealing, and mobile-friendly. If you don't have e-commerce options, consider adding simple online ordering to meet today's shoppers where they are.

3. Add a Holiday Twist to Marketing

Holiday-themed campaigns catch attention. Use social media, email, and ads to highlight seasonal promotions, gift ideas, or exclusive holiday products.

4. Roll Out Special Offers

Shoppers look for deals this time of year. Limited-time discounts, product bundles, or loyalty perks can bring people back again and again.

5. Make Your Store Inviting

Decorate your storefront and create a cheerful atmosphere. A festive space not only attracts shoppers but also makes the overall experience more enjoyable.

6. Review Your Inventory

Be sure you're stocked up on in-demand products. Offering something limited-edition or partnering with a local artisan can give you an edge.

7. Focus on Customer Service

Prepare your staff for the holiday rush. A welcoming attitude and product knowledge go a long way in creating a positive experience for customers.

8. Keep Safety in Mind

Provide a comfortable environment with options like contactless checkout and clear store policies. Customers shop with confidence when they feel cared for.

9. Partner with Other Local Businesses

Collaboration builds community. Joint promotions, bundled giveaways, or co-hosted events can expand your reach and bring in new customers.

10. Join Chamber Programs

Be part of the Chamber's Small Business Season and Shop Local & Win campaign. These initiatives encourage residents to support local businesses, giving you more visibility during the busiest shopping time of the year.

The holiday season is an opportunity for small businesses across LaGrange County to shine. With careful planning, creative promotions, and community support, you can create an experience that keeps customers coming back long after the holidays are over. From all of us at the LaGrange County Chamber of Commerce, best wishes for a joyful and successful season!

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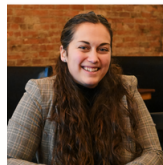
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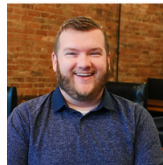


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