

devils lake

Chamber of Commerce

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



The **good life** is in our **nature**



CHAMBER DIRECTOR
Suzie Kenner

Dear Members, Partners, and Friends,

The Devils Lake Area Chamber of Commerce isn't just an office with a logo — it's a movement powered by people who believe in this community. It's where collaboration meets action and where ideas turn into real results for our businesses, workforce, and future.

This past year, we've leaned into growth — not just in numbers, but in impact. From workforce development initiatives supported by our Regional Workforce Impact Program to tourism campaigns that drew record interest in our area, the momentum is unmistakable. We've strengthened partnerships, built new connections, and worked tirelessly to keep the Lake Region on the map as both a place to visit and a place to build a life.

As we look ahead, our focus is clear: connection, collaboration, and community growth. We'll continue expanding opportunities for our members, amplifying their visibility, and ensuring Devils Lake is seen as a place where businesses thrive and people belong.

Your Chamber isn't just here to serve you — it's here to elevate you. Together, with the leadership of our Board of Directors and the dedication of our team, we're shaping a future that's full of possibility.

Thank you for being part of this journey — for showing up, speaking up, and believing in what's possible when we work together. Here's to another year of progress, partnership, and pride in the place we call home.



Ruth McBride
Event & Membership
Coordinator



Veranna Schindele
Marketing & Sales Coordinator



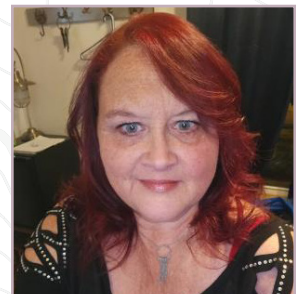
Ann Pollert
Regional Workforce Impact
Program



Kaylee Lang
Accountant



Sydney Engel
Motor Vehicle



Billie Rauser
Motor Vehicle

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



291
Members
274 in 2024



27
New Members
16 in 2024



264
Renewals
258 in 2024



93.8%
Retention Rate
95% in 2024



15
Milestone Moments
9 in 2024

CHAMBER PERKS



115,651
Membership
Listing Views



157
Community Events
Listed on Website



\$26,795
Devils Lake Chamber
Bucks Purchased



13
Community Events
Hosted by the Chamber
14 in 2024



9
Hosted
Educational
Events
7 in 2024



5
Hosted
Networking
Events
6 in 2024



2
Hosted
Workforce
Events
2 in 2024

COMMUNICATION & EXPOSURE



23,000
Visitor Guides
Distributed



4,142
Visitor Guides
Downloaded at
deviislakend.com
3,124 in 2024



359,443
deviislakend.com
Pageviews
334,000 in 2024



3,683
Facebook
Followers
3,433 in 2024



811K
Facebook
Views
213.7K in 2024

94.8K
Reach
78.3 in 2024



10
Statewide & Community
Committees for Chamber
Staff



2025 Key Accomplishments

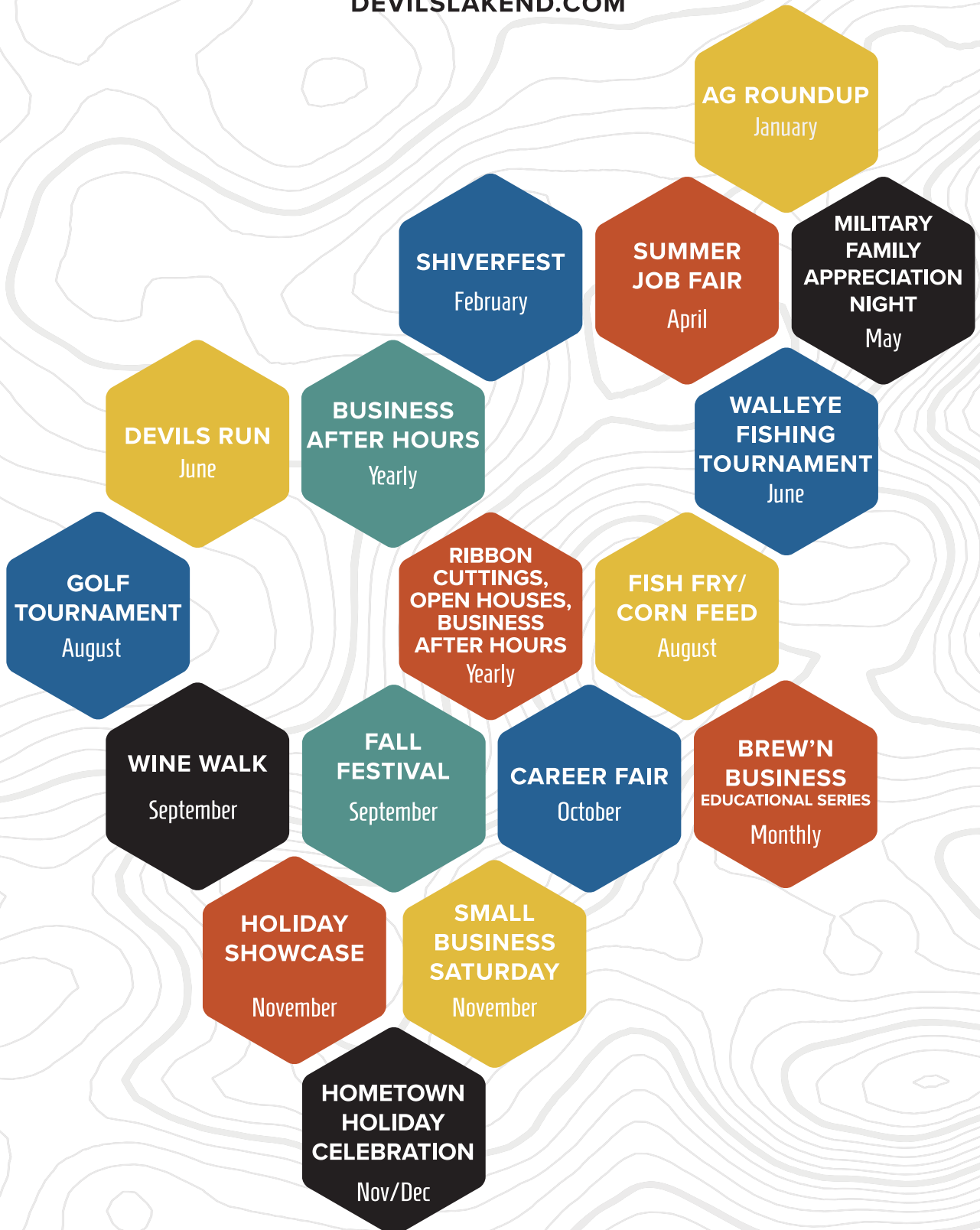
\$490,000 in Regional Workforce Impact Grants for new programs and talent attraction marketing
Major website enhancements to deviislakend.com



EVENTS

The Devils Lake Area Chamber of Commerce is the host of the community events calendar.

DEVILSLAKEND.COM



OUR SERVICE TO COMMUNITY & STATE

ND MILITARY COMMISSION

Supports the state's military missions and strengthens relationships between military and civilian communities.

RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY

Review & recommend approval/disapproval of applications for Renaissance Zone Projects.

ND TRAVEL INDUSTRY ALLIANCE

To champion the experiences, places & people that make our great state special. Legislative engagement and advocacy.

PUBLIC ACCESS COMMITTEE

Providing & maintaining access to the lake as well as communicating with North Dakota Game & Fish.

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Foster a strong relationship between Camp Grafton, the ND National Guard, & our community to provide support.

GREATER NORTH DAKOTA CHAMBER

To be a part of business advocacy & to promote & defend the free enterprise system on behalf of businesses of every size.

FORWARD DEVILS LAKE

Forward Devils Lake drives economic development and growth initiatives for our community.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA

Championing the growth & diversification of ND's economy through professional development, networking, & advocacy

COMMUNITY NON-PROFITS

Belong to organizations in our community such as; Rotary, Kiwanis, Lake Region Anglers, LRHC

MAIN STREET INITIATIVE

Help create vibrant communities that attract & retain the 21st-century workforce ND needs to compete & succeed in a global economy.

LRSC COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION

LOCAL/STATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Sit on committees in the region & state to be the voice; such as - workforce development & home rule

LAKE REGION AREA FOUNDATION

devils lake
Chamber of Commerce

devislakend.com

PAST CHAMBER MEMBERS OF THE YEAR

2024 - Terry Wallace
2023 - LR Radioworks
2022 - Heidi Becker, Gate City Bank
2021 - Lisa Crosby
2020 - Dan Johnson
2019 - Tom Haahr
2018 - City of Devils Lake
2017 - Leever Foods
2016 - Amber Sander
2015 - Kale Stromme
2014 - Tom LaMotte

2013 - Johnnie Candle
2012 - Randy Anfinson
2011 - Lake Region Angler Association
2010 - Todd Thompson
2009 - Guy DeSautel
2008 - Jay Klemetsrud
2007 - Sharon Etemad
2006 - Terry Jorde
2005 - Stan Orness
2004 - Roger Haugen
2003 - Joel Elvrum

Women-Owned Business Achievement Award

2024 - Total Skin Dermatology & Aesthetics - Devils Lake
2023 - Gilbertson Funeral Home - Stephanie Armstrong
2022 - Crossroads Coffee & Espresso - Marlena Thorson

Excellence in Small Business Award

2024 - Jerome Wholesale
2023 - Xtreme Signs & Graphix
2022 - Slumberland Furniture - Gary & Nancy Conkins

Longest Standing Chamber Member of the Year

2024 - Farmer's Union Oil - Tom Haahr
2023 - Leever Foods
2022 - Devils Lake Cars - Renard Bergstrom

New Chamber Business of the Year Award

2024 - 583 Therapy
2023 - Grand Harbor Meats
2022 - Black Paws Brewing Company - Jeb Oehlke

2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



2025-2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD

Ryan Yoder, President
Terra Eriksson, Past President
Brett Johnston, Secretary
Brian Tarang

2025-2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Erin Wood
Taska Foughty
Missy Abrahamson
Megan Lebrun
Felicia Greywater
Jordan Vannett, Student
Brady Ash, Ex-Officio
Jeff Frith, Ex-Officio



2026-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission Statement

Connecting business and community to grow stronger together.

Core Purpose

The Devils Lake Chamber is the driving force behind local business support—fueling innovation, strengthening partnerships, and building a thriving Lake Region.

Core Values

- Have Passion
- Work with Intention
- Be Curious
- Lead With Purpose

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Website & Communication
Collateral Material
Community Asset Banks
Presence in the Community
Membership Retention
Willingness to Expand into Areas of Need
ie: workforce
Our Own Company Workplace Culture
Support of Board of Directors & Community
Leaders
Willingness to Help with Community Projects

Weaknesses

Board & Membership Involvement
Engagement in our Communication Channels
Community Perception of Our Role
Driven more towards community than business
Membership Dues Structure
Showcasing our Value

Opportunities

Membership Dues Structure
Yearly Membership Drop Ins with Staff & Board
Expand into Contracted Services
Sponsorship Brochure to Minimize Sponsor Asks
Civic Engagement Promotion & Development
Continuing Workforce strategies
Young Professional Engagement
Promote Idea of Hip/Fun Community Space
E-Commerce Education
- removing technology barriers
501c3 Foundation (71% have them)

Threats

Sustainability of Local Business
E-commerce Online Sales
Staff Time & Resources
Families Relocating Out of the Community
Affordable Housing

Strategic Priorities

Priority #1 Build for Impact: Strengthening Systems, Staff & Strategy

Priority #2 Elevate the Experience: Strengthening Member Value & Connection

Priority #3 Invest in Talent Attraction & Retention: Growing People, Growing Devils Lake

Priority #4 Strengthen the Civic Thread: Connecting Business and Community

Priority #5 Amplify Our Voice: Branding, Storytelling & Strategic Reach

Priority #6 Pave the Way: Collaborating in Areas of Community Needs

Strategic Priorities & Objectives

1. Build for Impact: Strengthening Systems, Staff & Strategy

Goal: *Strengthen the financial health and operational resilience of the Chamber.*

Internal Strategic Vision: The Chamber thrives when we're constantly improving—not just what we do, but how we do it. This priority focuses on tightening up our internal systems, building an engaged and aligned board, and creating the kind of operational agility that lets staff do great work without burnout or bottlenecks.

External Strategic Vision: The Chamber's external strategy centers on long-term sustainability, smarter member value, and a more visible, engaged presence in the community. Through strategic funding models, streamlined sponsorships, and purpose-driven programming, we're redefining what membership means—making it easier for businesses to see the return on their investment, and for the Chamber to stay focused on impact.

Strategic Work Plan:

- Build a one sheet summary that Board members can use to promote successes to the community.
- Consider a modest, annual dues increase policy aligned with cost-of-living adjustments OR
- Launch a new tiered membership model to diversify dues and increase member investment.
- Establish a Chamber Foundation (501c3) to pursue grant funding, civic education, and workforce development initiatives.
- Evaluate all Chamber events with a “Profit, Purpose, or Profile (boost our image)” framework—keep only those that serve at least one of these goals.
- Introduce a multi-year sponsorship and visibility guide to streamline and boost sponsorship commitments and ease constant asks.
- Utilize CRM for membership database and communication & retention tracking.
- Increase membership revenue year over year.
- Increase member count year over year.
- Target member retention rate of 95%.

2. Elevate the Experience: Strengthening Member Value & Connection

Goal: *Build a stronger Chamber community by equipping members with tools for growth, expanding connection opportunities, and attracting new members.*

Strategic Vision: This priority is about delivering more than a membership—it's about building a relationship. We're mapping the member journey from the first handshake to long-term impact, streamlining services, spotlighting success stories, and making sure every member feels seen, supported, and proud to belong.

Strategic Work Plan:

- Offer workshops and information to members on effective practices to grow their business including AI and other targeted programs.
- Increase opportunities for members to market their businesses promoting the member-to-member, introductions, etc.
- Increase engagement with current and new members of the Chamber.
- Grow the Ambassador program with at least 7 highly motivated members.
- Grow the Community Captains program with at least 7 highly motivated members.

3. Invest in Talent Attraction and Retention: Growing People, Growing Devils Lake

Goal: *Play a lead role in navigating workforce challenges and connecting talent to opportunity.*

Strategic Vision: Workforce challenges won't fix themselves—and the Chamber is stepping in with strategy, not just concern. This priority focuses on connecting talent to opportunity by building career pathways, strengthening business-school partnerships, and launching meaningful programming for young professionals that helps them grow and stay. We're not filling gaps alone, but we're making sure they don't get ignored.

Strategic Work Plan:

- Build on the success of RWIP grants and expand youth engagement and job-shadow programs.
- Develop a long-term business-school liaison strategy, focusing on career exploration and work-based learning.
- Create a robust Young Professionals group or program that includes leadership development and community integration. (Such as InternGF or Leadership Programs)
- Explore and implement opportunities for young professionals and LRSC students within the community.

4. Strengthen the Civic Thread: Connecting Business and Community

Goal: *Become the leading convener of ideas and issues in the Devils Lake region.*

Strategic Vision: The Chamber is stepping into its role as the community's unifying thread —where business, government, and citizens come together to learn, listen, and lead. This priority is about building bridges without taking sides, educating tomorrow's civic leaders, and creating space for real conversations on the issues that shape Devils Lake. Whether its board members checking in with local businesses or hosting legislative roundtables, we're here to convene—not divide.

Strategic Work Plan:

- Position the Chamber as the “sensible middle” on key policy issues, maintaining nonpartisan, pro-community values.
- Develop a Civic Engagement Toolkit to educate employers and potential civic leaders on serving in local government.
- Host a Civic Engagement Roundtable Day and invite community into ask questions of city/county board members about serving the community.
- Host legislative sessions for the business community.
- Launch a “Board Ambassadors” program where board members conduct intentional, in-person check-ins with 10-15 businesses annually.

5. Amplify Our Voice: Branding, Storytelling & Strategic Reach

Goal: *Improve outreach, relevance, and perceived value of the Chamber to both members and the community.*

Strategic Vision: We're elevating how we communicate—not just louder, but clearer. This priority is about targeted outreach, refreshed branding, and a content strategy that reflects the full diversity of our membership and the impact of our work.

- Increase the Chamber's marketing program by first benchmarking metrics and then by increasing engagement via newsletters, website, socials and print
- Use the 100-year anniversary to aggressively promote the Chamber looking back and looking forward
- Launch storytelling campaigns using Chamber members' stories and testimonials via newsletters, website and social
- Promote the Lake Region as thriving, good for business and ready to grow

Strategic Work Plan:

- Redesign the Chamber's communication strategy to segment audiences and deliver high-impact, measurable content.
- Implement marketing cooperative opportunities with member partners
- Launch new member automation emails to welcome as new members and showcase partnership opportunities
- Increase video storytelling (member spotlights, impact snapshots, behind-the-scenes)
- Review and update the Chamber's website as needed.
- Create a communication's calendar to better engage members and internally stay on task.
- Launch a member feedback loop annually (via surveys or visits) to align programs with real business needs.
- Continue growing presence on LinkedIn to target professional audiences and employer engagement.
- Utilize the new Workforce brand and content to market the community as a great place to work.
- Partner with Forward Devils Lake to support the Lake Region as an opportunity to do business.

6. Pave the Way: Collaborating in Areas of Community Need

Goal: *Be a good partner in areas of community needs.*

Strategic Vision: Quality of life is economic development. This positions the Chamber as a collaborator in housing, infrastructure, and mobility solutions—connecting the dots between community needs and the partners who can meet them.

Strategic Work Plan:

- Encourage a housing solutions roundtable to align with upcoming state grant opportunities and advocate for mixed-use, affordable development.
- Support the creation of activities to enhance quality of life, talent retention and talent attraction.
- Help explore co-location of services (Chamber, Tourism, Forward DL) to maximize collaboration and community visibility.
- Advocate for public transportation solutions and ride-share infrastructure to support workforce mobility and community livability.

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