

# A YEAR IN THE PANDEMIC

THE GREATER WATERTOWN-NORTH COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



THE GREATER  
WATERTOWN  
NORTH COUNTRY  
**G·W·N·C**  
CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE

# Our Mission

We are a membership organization which promotes and supports business and industry to enhance the community in which we live, work and do business.

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# Our Team

Here at the Greater Watertown - North Country Chamber of Commerce, our talented staff is dedicated to propelling our Mission forward. Our specialized team is here to support our local business community.



**President & CEO**  
Kylie S. Peck



**Director of Membership  
Development**  
Karl Ahlheim



**Director of Marketing**  
Jessica Piatt Walczyk



**North Country PTAC  
Program Director**  
Kayla Perry

## MARCH

Coffee Talk Launches

2,050+ participants



## MAY

Watertown Farm & Craft Market Opens, adhering to New York State guidelines



## JULY

Together our June and July distributions aided over 600 businesses.



932 gallons of hand sanitizer



2,000 face masks



4,660 spray bottles

## APRIL

We shift our Jefferson Leadership program from an in person format to a virtual curriculum and begin looking at additional virtual opportunities for our members to stay connected

## JUNE



A collaborative initiative between 11 chambers of commerce and marketing organizations

We successfully held the first of two New York State Hand Sanitizer distributions, helping businesses across the county in the earlier months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## AUGUST



The Jefferson Leadership Institute class of 2020 graduates at an outdoor, socially distanced, event

## OCTOBER

Launched Nature & Networking events to provide a safe, in-person experience for our members to connect!



## DECEMBER

The Tri-State PTAC Mega-Matchmaker is held virtually

90+ Government Buyers and Resource Partners

520+ Government Suppliers (PTAC Clients)

1,500+ New Connections Made

## FEBRUARY

The Small Communities. Big Opportunities Virtual Conference takes place

Our partnership with the Center for Businesses in Transition, and many other regional organizations, worked to empower those who live here and those who want to live here.

## SEPTEMBER

The North Country PTAC celebrates 12 years of service



## NOVEMBER

We launched Virtual Coffee & Connections: A Speed Networking event



## JANUARY

Expanded our annual Economic Forecast to a five day virtual Economic Forum

5 days

General Economy

Healthcare

Tourism

Nonprofit

Small business



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

As we reflect on the past twelve months, it seems impossible to imagine the year we have endured. Although the entire business community was impacted in different ways, I am proud of our community for working together, supporting each other in business and through the personal struggles we have faced. For over 100 years, the Greater Watertown-North Country Chamber of Commerce has served our business community and through this crisis we made a vow to remain committed to being a champion for business and an advocate for our region. Like so many of our members, our organization faced extreme challenges but forged ahead to serve our community and support our businesses.

During the early days of the pandemic, we were required to close our office and institute a work from home plan, and as you know, we were forced to postpone or cancel all of our in-person events. With these difficult requirements, we quickly identified a need for our business community to remain connected. We launched a COVID-19 resource page on our website to help businesses stay informed on shifting guidance, new executive orders, and financial relief opportunities. We initiated our popular virtual Coffee Talk program which offered members and nonmembers alike the opportunity to gather virtually. The initiative served our community in two vital ways, offering a platform for people to network amid stay-at-home orders as well as providing vital information about Covid-19 and the impacts on our community and ways to continue operating a business through a global pandemic. Through each reopening phase, we provided a platform to share information, understand the guidance and answer hundreds of questions from concerned business owners.

I would like to give a special thank you to our guest speakers that joined us each week to shared relevant and critical information to our business community. Our Coffee Talk program has proven to be a success that we continue to bring to our business community over a year after its inception.

Through uncertainty in the early months of the pandemic, we continued to pivot our everyday actions to meet the needs of our business community. We offered virtual networking opportunities through our casual Coffee Talk conversations, shared information through our educational Coffee Talk segments, strengthened relationships with local representatives, and established new relationships with local and regional partners. In April we hosted a federal update with Congresswomen Elise Stefanik, providing an opportunity for our business community to hear directly from the federal government on efforts taken to mitigate Covid disruptions and support our small business community.



Bringing some normalcy to our community while adhering to the strict New York State guidelines, we were able to successfully move ahead with our annual Watertown Farm & Craft Market. Given that our market directly

connects commerce with community, we considered this a huge success. While the market looked different from previous years, vendors who provided essential goods were permitted to participate. Patrons were required to wear masks, and both vendors and visitors alike adhered to social distancing practices wherever possible. We were so excited that our crafters were able to join the market after an update in guidance to truly offer the market experience to our community.



As we continued to identify the need to support our local business community, the SupportLocal.ly campaign was launched. This campaign was a collaborative initiative supported by 11 chambers of commerce and marketing organizations throughout Jefferson County. SupportLocal.ly is an initiative designed to promote supporting local business throughout the county. We were proud to partner with the following organizations on this effort: Alexandria Bay Chamber of Commerce, Cape Vincent Chamber of Commerce, Chaumont/Three Mile Bay Chamber of Commerce, Clayton Area Chamber of Commerce, Sackets Harbor Chamber of Commerce, Six Town Chamber of Commerce, 1000 Islands International Tourism Council, Jefferson County Economic Development, Carthage Area Chamber of Commerce, and Henderson Business & Community Council.

With Summer, things began to look brighter. I personally participated in a Round Table with New York State Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul to discuss the impacts of Covid-19 on North Country businesses, representing our members and the Greater Watertown business community. This provided an opportunity to discuss the hardships our local businesses were facing and share concerns with Albany regarding reopening strategies and business assistance. Additionally, those in attendance shared victories that our resilient business community had experienced and gave a platform to share stories of partnership, comradery and flexibility we have grown to appreciate across the North Country.

It is instances such as these that give our organization the chance to meet directly on our members behalf to

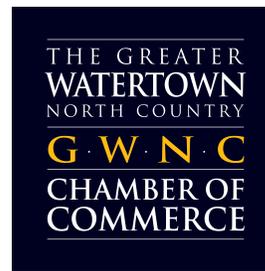
share concerns that our business community brings to light.

We have continued to adjust our programming to fit our members needs and proudly launched a safe in-person networking opportunity, Nature & Networking. This initiative allowed for small groups of individuals to get together outdoors and make meaningful connections while practicing appropriate social distancing. Not only did this new program offer participants the opportunity to develop their network, but it also highlighted the natural beauty of our region. Locations such as the Minna Anthony Nature Center, Zoo New York and the Black River Trail were featured in our 2020 Nature & Networking gatherings. We are happy to say the success of this networking format has led us to continue offering this program in 2021, with our first outing of the season starting in April 2021. In order to offer networking options, we launched our first virtual installment of Coffee & Connections. Originally an in-person speed networking event, Virtual Coffee & Connections provided a digital platform in response to gathering restrictions and provided much needed connections for our community.



Not only did the Chamber recognize the need to go virtual in so many ways. Our North Country PTAC program was a proud collaborator of the first ever Tri-State PTAC Mega-Matchmaker including New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The two-day event hosted over 90 Government Buyers and Resource Partners, over 520 Government Suppliers (PTAC Clients) and yielded over 1,5000 new connections. It is through creative partnerships such as this that we have adapted to new ways of conducting business and brought opportunity to businesses across the region.

Like you, we were happy to see 2020 fade away as we kicked-off a new year with new hope and vigor. Our annual Economic Forecast was converted into a five-day virtual Economic Forum with experts providing insight on topics including the General Economy, Healthcare, Tourism, Nonprofit, and Small business.



WATERTOWN  
**Farm and Craft Market**  
 EST 1977

We are proud to have hosted seventeen guest speakers throughout the five-day series that provided relevant information on the future of our local economy and the impact Covid-19 had on our major industries. As we navigate through a new year, we will continue offering programs and events to our members that offer business support and provide opportunities to connect.

Throughout the past year, we have never lost sight of our primary mission of promoting and supporting business and industry to enhance the community in which we live, work and do business. It is our duty to provide support to our members and we will continue to serve the Greater Watertown business community well into the future. We have worked diligently to research new member benefits to add to our menu of offerings and strengthen relationships with North Country partners to provide the best support system we can for our businesses. Though we are not in the clear just yet, the finish line is within sight. We are so proud of each of you for forging ahead, adjusting your techniques and meeting your customer's needs during some of the most challenging months any of us have ever faced. Thinking back twelve months ago, an end seemed impossible, but now we are stronger in so many ways. We have adopted new technology, implemented new habits and defined new ways of conducting business. Please know the Greater Watertown-North Country Chamber of Commerce will continue to be here for your business. We will work to provide opportunities to help you succeed in this new normal we all face together. After all, it takes a community.

*Kylie S. Peck*

Kylie S. Peck  
 President & CEO  
 Greater Watertown-North Country  
 Chamber of Commerce



WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT OUR AREA AND ALL OUR WORLDS WERE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, THE GREATER WATERTOWN NORTH COUNTRY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WAS AND CONTINUES TO BE AN EXCELLENT RESOURCE. THE CHAMBER ADDRESSED CONCERNS, HELPED ANSWER QUESTIONS, OFFERED GUIDANCE WITH THE USE OF HELPFUL WEBSITES, HOSTED COFFEE CHATS TO ENHANCE THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION, AND EXTENDED PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS WITH JEFFERSON COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES.

THE CHAMBER OFFERED A SENSE OF CALM IN KNOWING ALL INVOLVED WERE DEALING WITH THE SAME EFFECTS FROM THE PANDEMIC AND IT WAS HELPFUL TO SHARE IDEAS AND COPING MECHANISMS. GUEST SPEAKERS OFFERED INFORMATIVE ADVICE AND ALWAYS IN A TIMELY MANNER.

DIRECT INFORMATION IS MADE EASILY ACCESSIBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM STATE AND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS, AS WELL AS THE CDC. IN ADDITION, LOCAL COMPANIES OFFERED ASSISTANCE WITH PPP, PAYCHECK PROTECTION AND SAFETY SUPPLIES SUCH AS GLOVES, MASKS, ETC.

THE GWNC CHAMBER IS A TRUE ADVOCATE FOR BUSINESS' AS SHOWN THROUGH THEIR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE DURING A TIME WHEN IT WAS MOST NEEDED.

**STEPHANIE JOHNSTON**  
 GENERAL MANAGER  
 THOUSAND ISLAND PARK CORPORATION  
 MEMBER SINCE 2018





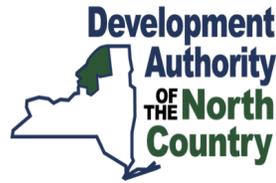
BEING A CHAMBER MEMBER IS ABOUT BEING A PART OF SOMETHING THAT UNITES US IN OUR GOAL TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY, OUR CUSTOMERS. THE CHAMBER PROVIDES US WITH INFORMATION THAT IS RELEVANT TO THIS MOMENT AND THE QUESTIONS WE HAVE TODAY TO HELP US PICK OUR BEST PATH FORWARD. THEY ARE ALSO OUR CHEERLEADERS; THEY CHEER US ON AND GIVE US A MECHANISM FOR CHEERING EACH OTHER ON. DURING THIS PAST SIX MONTHS, I CANNOT IMAGINE NOT BEING A CHAMBER MEMBER AND TRYING TO NAVIGATE THESE WATERS AS A LONE BUSINESS WITHOUT THEIR SUPPORT. I WOULD ENCOURAGE ALL BUSINESS TO BECOME CHAMBERS MEMBERS – IT MAY BE THE BEST MONEY YOU HAVE EVER SPENT.

**DENISE K. YOUNG**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
WATERTOWN FAMILY YMCA  
MEMBER SINCE 1995



# North Country Partners

We are proud to partner with these regional organizations to create a strong support system for our members and the Greater Watertown business community.



# Leadership Circle

We would like to acknowledge members of our Leadership Circle. These members are major investors in the GWNC Chamber of Commerce and demonstrate a commitment to job growth, community development, promoting business success and making the Greater Watertown-North Country area a great place to live, work and play!



Watertown Savings Bank



# Board of Directors

## Executive Committee

**Chairwoman of the Board**  
Laurie Podvin  
Bowers & Company, CPAs,  
PLLC.

**2nd Vice Chairwoman**  
Allison Crossman  
Roadside Warriors, LLC

**Immediate Past Chairman**  
David Males  
WWTI ABC 50 & North Country  
CW

**1st Vice Chairman**  
Bryon Perry  
Neenah

**Secretary/Treasurer**  
Jennifer Voss  
City of Watertown

## 2021 Board of Directors

**Steve Bradley**  
Abbey Carpet of Watertown

**Tom Carman**  
Samaritan Medical Center

**Max DeSignore**  
Northern New York Community  
Foundation

**Doug Dier**  
AT Matthews & Dier

**Sonja Draught**  
USAG Fort Drum

**McKenzie Fisk**  
GYMO Architecture, Engineering  
and Land Surveying, D.P.C.

**Brandon Noble**  
Jefferson Community  
College Athletics

**Eric Sharlow**  
Foy Benefits, Inc

**Megan Stadler**  
Jefferson Community College

**Mark Thompson**  
CNY Office Furniture

**Marshall Weir**  
Jefferson County Economic  
Development Corporation

**James Wright**  
Civic Member

**THE GREATER WATERTOWN-NORTH COUNTRY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

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