



*Celebrating 150 years*



# Q1 2024 Economic Development Report



# Fox Cities Chamber 150th Anniversary

## We're proud to connect, grow and lead for 150 years

We officially kicked off the Fox Cities Chamber 150th anniversary in January and are proud to celebrate our sesquicentennial all year long. While much has changed through the years, we are proud to say that the mission of your Chamber has not. We were founded in 1874 to unite the business community for greater economic impact, and that's still a focus we share today. We serve as a collective voice for our members, to convene the programs and services that help the community thrive.



We'd like to thank you each of you for being an investor, member, friend, and supporter of the Fox Cities Chamber. We are honored to be able to celebrate our past as we look to the future. We pledge to continue to coalesce the voice of business and community, as well as play a key role in the Fox Cities' economic development! The chart below highlights some areas where we've had a key impact on the Fox Cities, You can also scan the QR code to visit our 150th web page and learn more about our history.

### Advocating for the Fox Cities since 1874



On the cover: Top left, Bergstrom Stove Company in Neenah; Top right, Hotel Lenz in Menasha; Bottom, Appleton's College Ave. in 1920

# Program Updates

## Q1 Events celebrate and inform

**Celebrate: A Toast to 150** - Five leaders in the Fox Valley were recognized for their achievements at the Fox Cities Chamber's recent "Celebrate: A Toast to 150," in January, which also kicked off the Chamber's 150th anniversary. Congratulations to:

- Gus A. Zuehlke Distinguished Service Award – **David G. Voss, Jr. – President and CEO, Miron Construction**
- Joyce Bytof Exceptional Mentor Award - **Mary Beth Nienhaus – philanthropist and retired physical education teacher, coach and LPGA golf pro**
- ATHENA Leadership Award - **Maiyoua Khang Thao – entrepreneur and small business owner.**
- Business Leader Hall of Fame - **Bob DeKoch, Past President & COO, The Boldt Company** and **Mike Weller, CEO of Mike Weller & Associates**

**Economic Outlook Lunch** - Over 350 attended our annual Economic Outlook Lunch to hear "Bow-Tie Economist" Elliot Eisenberg deliver macro and microeconomic insights. Results of our economic outlook survey were also released and are available to view on our web site: [www.foxcitiesregion.com](http://www.foxcitiesregion.com).

**Q1 grow seminar held on how to "Bootstrap your digital marketing,"** Nearly 90 individuals attended the program. Special thanks to our host sponsor, **Community First Credit Union!**

**Excellence in Education awards** - Fox Cities educators play a key role in inspiring students at all levels to prepare our future workforce and the next generation of leaders in our community. We recognized 10 local educators for their contributions at our Excellence in Education Shining Star Awards. Congratulations to:

- Karen Hoffman, Business & Marketing, **Kimberly High School**
- Lisa Jelenic, 8th Grade, **Seymour Middle School**
- Chris Jones, Science, **Neenah Middle School**
- Sara Lawman, 2nd Grade, **Chilton Area Catholic School**
- Elyse Lucas, Art, **Appleton North High School**
- Paul Maronek, 4th Grade, **Freedom Elementary School**
- Michelle Mees, 5th Grade Math, **Riverview Middle School**
- Leila Ramagopal Pertl, Music, **Edison Elementary School; Lawrence University**
- Dan Van Boxtel, Technology Education, **Kaukauna High School**
- Dan Van Eperen, English/Social Studies, **Little Chute Career Pathways Academy**

## Two Chamber staff certified in workforce development

Eric Broten, VP – Business Growth and Development, and Aimee Herrick, Director – Events and Emerging Talent, earned a Certificate in Workforce Development Fundamentals from the **Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives**. This certificate empowers professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the intersection of economic and workforce development while closing education gaps. Each certificate recipient completed an intensive and comprehensive 6-week curriculum, featuring expert-led sessions, hands-on learning experiences, practical applications of economic and workforce development principles and an online exam.

## Chamber-endorsed UW engineering building gets approved

Governor Evers signed off on funding for the **UW-Madison** engineering building, an initiative that the Fox Cities Chamber advocated for as it helps attract more engineering students to Wisconsin and ultimately helps Fox Cities employers fill their talent pipelines. The new building will offer increased space to admit and educate more students and attract exceptional faculty.

# Business Attraction and Retention

## FCCRP by the Numbers

### Business Attraction Projects

In Q1 the Fox Cities Chamber Regional Partnership responded to 9 requests for economic data.

### Connect Free Memberships continue to grow; YMCA membership perk added

The Fox Cities Chamber added 91 Connect Free members in Q1, bringing the total at this membership level to 581. Connect Free offers no cost membership to local small businesses who qualify. We also announced a partnership with the **YMCA of the Fox Cities** that offers significant discounts for Connect Free members! We're proud to offer the resources small businesses need to grow and thrive, and they appreciate us as well:

*I appreciate that the Fox Cities Chamber provides a free membership opportunity for what I call "Mini-Micro Businesses" with only 1-3 people, like our business Artistic Event Rentals, LLC. This is especially beneficial when you are a new business just starting out. The time, effort, and money invested in the months prior to your initial launch can be overwhelming so having a resource to immediately begin networking in order to grow your business and ultimately begin making money is a very valuable asset for us.*

*This business attitude is just one more reason why Dawn and I want to make the Fox Valley area our permanent home! Having this opportunity for micro-start-ups like us and allowing us to indulge in the help and resources the Chamber provides, will be a big part of our future success. Networking, becoming known, participating as often as we can, doing commerce, growing into a bigger business, and being in a position to "give back" to our community are all important to being successful. -- Del Shearrow - Metal Artist & Owner, Artistic Event Rentals, LLC*

### Q1 PULSE Memberships

Membership in our PULSE Young Professionals continues to expand. In Q1 we added 70 young professionals, bringing total memberships in the group to 681.

### Local employers certified as employee friendly

Three Fox Cities employers were certified as an Employee Friendly Workplace in Q1. Congratulations to **AIA Corporation**, **Jewelers Mutual**, and **RGL Logistics**.

### Economic partnerships and collaborations

- Eric Broten, VP of Growth & Business Development, is serving as a Community Ambassador for **WEDC's** "Look Forward Wisconsin" talent attraction campaign.
- Eric is also serving on the **City of Appleton's** Mayor's Housing Taskforce, and participated in the **City of Menasha** Housing Study.
- Eric represented the Chamber at the **WEDA** Governors Conference in January.
- The Chamber is partnering with the **Wisconsin Veteran's Chamber of Commerce** as a workforce initiative, to help connect Fox Valley employers with this demographic and to also increase community awareness.



**Questions or interested in setting up a free Business Retention & Expansion consultation?**

Contact Eric Broten, VP of Growth & Business Development, Fox Cities Chamber Regional Partnership  
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**Find us online**

FoxCitiesRegion.com