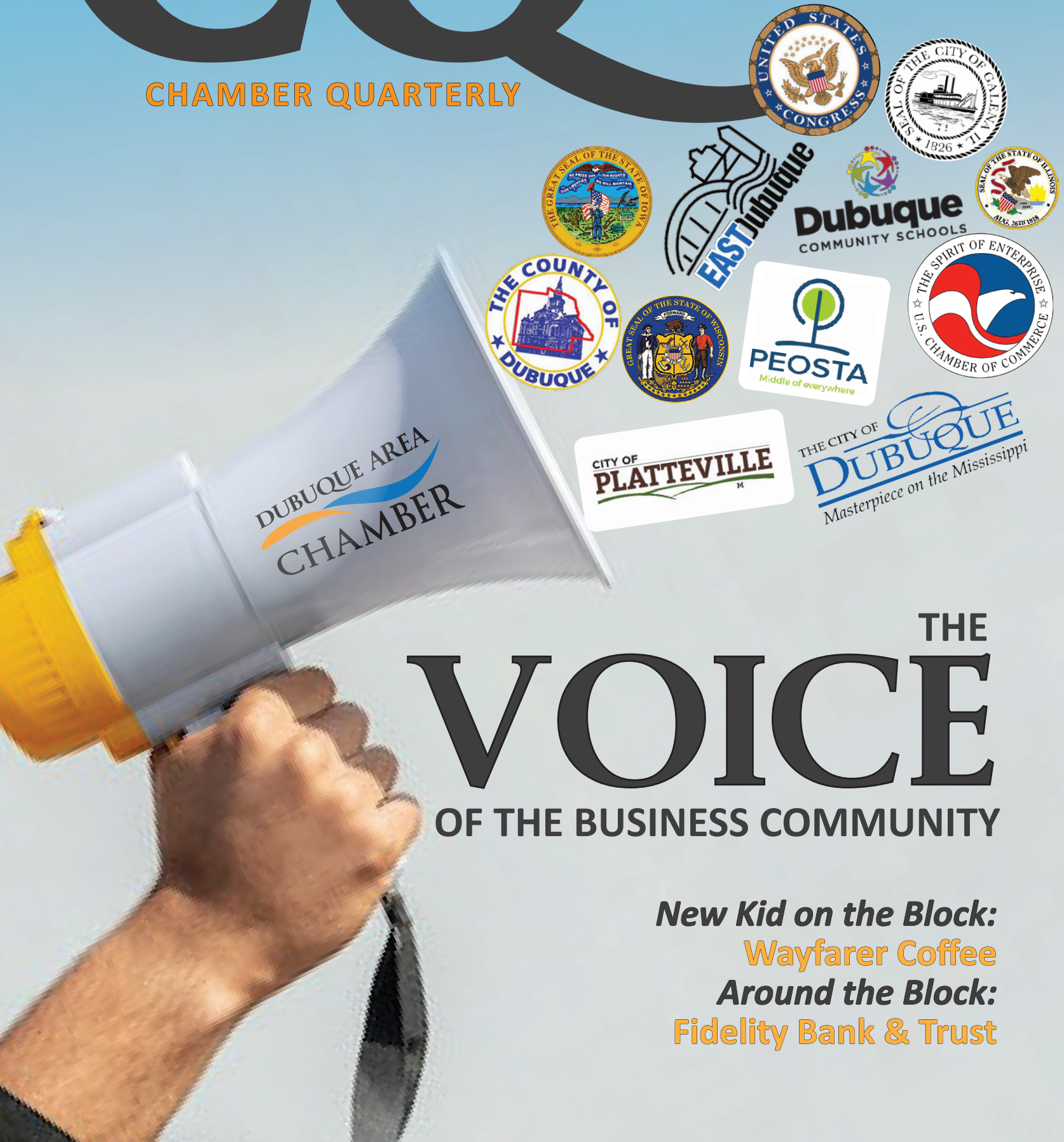


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On the cover

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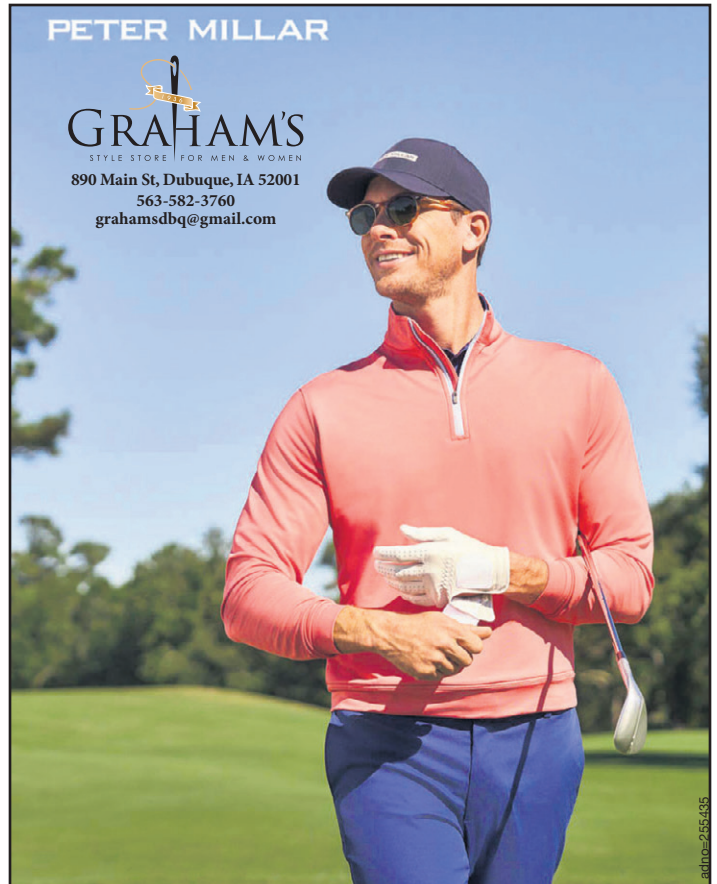
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WELCOME

FROM THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT /CEO



Your Chamber, your business voice of the Dubuque area! The Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce is the largest federation of businesses and organizations in the region. We are your business voice of the tri-states. From small to large businesses, mom-and-pops, corporate entities, nonprofits and various organizations, the Chamber's primary purpose is to serve our members as the voice of the business community and representing business' interests at the local, state and federal level. The larger we are, the louder our voice is heard by those who make decisions that impact your business and our local economy. Additionally, the larger we are, the greater the opportunities for members doing business with one another and growing their companies.

Your Chamber is always there, always aware. We understand running your business requires your full attention on the big picture and the small details. We know the constant flood of new laws, rules and regulations that impact your business can be overwhelming. You do not always have the time to stay on top of these ever-changing discussions, proposals and policies. But we do. The Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce has a robust governmental affairs program which includes monitoring legislation, lobbying for pro-growth/pro-business legislation and activities which directly connect you to our elected officials at the local, state and federal levels. The Chamber's Business Advocacy Council represents all the sectors of our membership and meets monthly to ensure we are on the front lines for all policy matters regarding our business community. We keep you updated and informed with the weekly Inside the Chamber Lobby, Action Alerts and annual Legislative Agenda. We host events to provide opportunities to engage with legislators, face to face. Dubuque Night in Des Moines, the Tri-State Mayors Breakfast, the Annual DC Fly-In and various legislative forums give members great access to our legislators.

We are here to back up local businesses by keeping your needs front-and-center. Prioritizing and planning. Rigorous research and vigorous action. Listening before legislation. These are principals that guide our support of your business interests. This issue of CQ explores the Chamber's advocacy efforts and how we implement and execute our advocacy efforts, making sure you have a seat at the table and a well-versed voice in the conversations that matter most. Your Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce. Your voice of business for the Dubuque area.

Molly Grover

President & CEO, CCE, IOM
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DUBUQUE CHAMBER ADVO



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BY KARI WILLIAMS

The Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce is the “eyes and ears” of the business community.

“Advocacy is a foundational pillar of Chamber’s of Commerce and this year we leaned in heavily to promote issues that would deliver results for our members,” said Ryan Sempf the Chamber’s vice president of government and external affairs.

“This year that included, working to improve the workforce participation crisis impacting Iowa — promoting child care solutions for business and more funding for education programs,” said Sempf. We also were very supportive of the tax-reform legislation that passed the legislature this year. Reducing corporate taxes was contained in our legislative agenda and we advocated strongly for the governor’s approach to corporate tax reform, which was the most efficient and brought us down to the most competitive level.”

Scott DeSousa, president of the Friedman Group, said during the course of his company’s 50-plus year involvement with the chamber, they have shared its goals.

“(We’ve) been very involved with our political advocacy council as a chamber member,” DeSousa said. “That includes meeting with them, letting them know our thoughts and concerns on the pressing issues that face business.”

Chad Wolbers, UnityPoint Health president/CEO and advocacy chair for the chamber’s executive committee, said the chamber engages in advocacy work on an ongoing

basis, largely through the Business Advisory Council. UnityPoint itself has benefitted from the advocacy efforts, particularly in its support of efforts to address medical malpractice reform, child care and education-program funding.

As the political landscape has changed in the past 10 to 15 years, according to DeSousa, members want the chamber to be involved on their behalf.

“If we can have one concentrat-

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Iowa Rep. Chuck Isenhart (left), D-Dubuque, and other local legislators listen to presenters during the City of Dubuque’s annual legislative dinner at Grand River Center in 2019.



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An aircraft takes off from the Dubuque Regional Airport.

ed voice of hundreds of members it obviously carries more weight than just one voice, one member,” he said. “And we see that, frankly, we’re effective with it.”

As part of those efforts, the chamber will continue reaching out to underserved business communities to give them a voice, DeSousa said. And that advocacy, according to Chamber President and CEO Molly Grover, “speaks to the heart and core” of the chamber mission.

“Our primary purpose is to serve as the voice of the business community,” she said.

Being that voice now is more important than ever, according to Grover. So, in addition to leveraging relationships at the local, state

and federal levels, Grover said the chamber continues to seek ways to host events that provide members the opportunity to engage with officials.

AIR SERVICE

Air service – what Grover called an “economic asset” – has been a chamber priority for years. She said the ability to move human talent in and out efficiently is a boon for businesses looking to invest in the community. And as COVID-19 mitigation protocols ease not only in Dubuque but nationwide, retention is the message the chamber wants to send where air



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service is concerned.

“(The Dubuque Regional Airport is) competing with over 235 regional airports just like us who are working, fighting and advocating to retain local service,” she said.

Dubuque Regional Airport Director Todd Dalsing said the airport should be looked at as two entities – general aviation/corporate traffic and commercial air service.

The general aviation/corporate traffic side, which

includes local tenants and the University of Dubuque flight school, has recovered well since the pandemic, Dalsing said.

In 2020, commercial air service went from a suspension of service to reduction. Prior to the pandemic, the airport had three flights per day and now has two per day. Advocacy, according to Dalsing, always has been critical from a partner like the chamber.

“It reflects the importance of air service from the board and the membership,” he said.



Passengers arrive at the Dubuque Regional Airport.

“(The Dubuque Regional Airport is) competing with over 235 regional airports just like us who are working, fighting and advocating to retain local service.”

**Molly Grover, Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce
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On the state level, the business advocacy committee supported an aircraft labor and parts tax that the airport was lobbying for, Dalsing said. Because of the chamber's advocacy, the measure passed the House and Senate and is awaiting the governor's signature.

CHILD CARE

Child care also is a business issue the chamber has worked to address, according to Sempf. One of the biggest employment issues coming from the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, is an "overall reduction in the labor force." Data from February 2019 and February 2022 (the most accurate data available as of this printing) show that the Dubuque area is down about 2,000 employees, according to Sempf. That reduction in labor force can be split roughly into two groups — those who retired, and working age parents.

In order to get people back into the labor force, Sempf said child care must be more affordable and accessible for families, while employees in these facilities need a competitive wage to keep them in the field.

Tara Roddick, of Child Care Resource & Referral, said low wages, staff shortages and high supply costs are the main issues providers currently face.

Child care assistance (CCA) is not meeting the needs of providers, according to Roddick.

"The amount that providers are reimbursed is not equal to what they can charge private pay, which causes providers



Young-Uns Child Care teacher Mariah McNamara plays with the 3-year-olds at the center.

"The amount that providers are reimbursed is not equal to what they can charge. There is a new bill (that may be on the governor's desk) that would allow providers to help families. Sometimes families cannot afford it."

Tara Roddick, Child Care

to take less CCA families or none at all,” she said. “There is a new bill (that may be on the governor’s desk) that would allow providers to charge families the difference of CCA and private pay. This would not help families. Sometimes families cannot even afford their copayment for CCA.”

During Iowa’s most recent legislation session, the chamber supported legislation that would reduce regulations on child care providers. One would increase the ratio of children per staff member for 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds in Iowa. The other would have reduced the age requirement for full time employees at a child care facility to serve unsupervised. In a separate bill, employers would be eligible to receive a tax credit for helping to provide child care for employees. Both are awaiting the governor’s signature.

Dave Lyons, of the Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, said a comprehensive survey of providers and employers was conducted to see where the needs were the greatest, and greater child care capacity was at the top.

Employers wanted to see additional capacity or options including early shifts and the ability to have flexible hours.

Lyons said that in the Dubuque area “child care capacity is quite limited,” and expecting parents are told they will have to put their child on a waiting list for child care.

Lyons said potential solutions include making sure that those at the state and federal level know they need to increase the “historically low” child care reimbursement rates.

The industry itself also needs support for recruiting and retention, which Lyons said has been implemented through the Opportunity Dubuque Program at Northeast Iowa Community College.

A state program also allows for child care centers that are increasing capacity to receive grants to offset capital costs. Six local providers have taken advantage, according to Lyons.

The chamber, according to Lyons, has been helpful on child care issues through “aligning the interests in the community through conversations” to ensure that they are aware of pending federal legislation.

Dubuque Economic Development Director Jill Connors said child care is important for economic development because it supports the workforce.

“Good child care is two-fold,” Connors said. “It helps with today’s workforce and it helps with tomorrow’s



Boden Massena (from left), De’Ani Moore, Graham Joy and Palmer Frederick play with musical instruments at Hills & Dales’ Stoneman Road location in Dubuque.

charge private pay, which causes providers to take less CCA families or none at all. Providers to charge families the difference of CCA and private pay. This would not not even afford their copayment for CCA.”

Care Resource & Referral



Patrons enjoy lunch at 1st and Main restaurant and bar.



Iowa Rep. Shannon Lundgren (left), R-Peosta, talks with people at Trackside Bar & Grill.

workforce.”

In addition to helping working parents go to their jobs with “peace of mind” that their child is in a quality, affordable child care facility, those types of facilities – with a “quality stimulating, appropriate developmental environment” – lead to school readiness.

RESTAURANTS

Jessica Dunker, of the Iowa Restaurant Association, said the restaurant industry has been “a bit of a mixed bag” since COVID-19 safety protocols began being lifted.

“Customer demand is back, but while

we have been allowed to operate without restrictions, it has been difficult to find our way back to pre-COVID revenues and profits,” Dunker said.

More than one-third of restaurant operators in the state are at two-thirds of the staffing levels they need to recover from the pandemic, according to Dunker.



Melissa Kotz prepares food for take-out orders at Rhody's Food & Spirits in Dubuque.

Additionally, market demands are increasing wages, while food-cost inflation has affected prices.

"In many ways, we've jumped out of the COVID frying pan to land in the flames of inflation and worker shortages," she said.

The Iowa Restaurant Association has focused on two key issues at the state level – regulation for third-part delivery apps like Uber Eats and Door Dash and alcohol distribution.

"The basic protections we've pushed for protect consumers by mandating basic food safety protocols are followed," Dunker said. "The proposed legislation also protects restaurant operators by ensuring mobile apps can't take their logo and menu and put it in their mobile app without a contract."

The alcohol distribution legislation would allow restaurants, bars and other businesses that sell and serve alcohol on-site to purchase up to five cases of canned cocktail or beer.

"This would help operators get through until their next truck delivery from a beer wholesaler," Dunker said.

The chamber, according to Dunker, has been a "solid partner" in advocating for legislation that helps the hospitality business.

"They have been instrumental in getting information out to businesses in Eastern

Iowa, as well as speaking to key legislators about the legislation," Dunker said.

One of those legislators is Rep. Shannon Lundgren, who owns Trakside Bar & Grill. She said that as a small business owner, she was frustrated that laws and regulations from the federal and state government seem "to exempt or create loopholes" to help big business owners.

"Our family decided if we didn't feel represented then other small businesses probably felt the same," she said. "It was time to get involved to give a voice to the mom-and-pop businesses like ours."

Lundgren, also a member of the Iowa Restaurant Association, said challenges of the rules and regulations in the restaurant industry were "exasperated during COVID."

"A lot of our laws are old and antiquated and needed revision," she said.

The chamber has helped ensure that its members are aware of legislation being worked on, according to Lundgren, and encouraged the membership to weigh and engage with elected officials.

"This is the most I have witnessed the chamber being engaged in more than 25 years of my involvement as a member," Lundgren said.

"Our family decided if we didn't feel represented then other small businesses probably felt the same. It was time to get involved to give a voice to the mom-and-pop businesses like ours."

Rep. Shannon Lundgren, owner of Trakside Bar & Grill



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NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Wayfarer Coffee



The inside of Wayfarer Coffee in Dubuque.

Wayfarer Coffee, 955 Washington Street, is first and foremost a coffee shop but also offers smoothies, boba tea and lunch/breakfast items.

“We really envision ourselves being the front porch of the Millwork District,” said owner Darin Shireman said.

He began working in coffee in 2003. Seven years later, he formed Wayfarer and opened a coffee shop at a commercial roasting operation in Platteville, Wis. In 2020, he sold that and built a warehouse and roasting facility in Dubuque. The following year, he purchased all of Inspire Cafe’s assets.

Shireman, who recently joined the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, said two decades of experience give his coffee

shop “a little bit of an advantage.” Plus, they travel and work directly with growers for most of their coffee.

The Dubuque chamber, according to Shireman, is “super active,” along with the city’s young professionals group.

“We have ambitious growth aspirations on both our cafe and on the wholesale,” he said. “We want to go multi-location and we want to expand the relationships that we’re building internationally.”



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BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK

Fidelity Bank & Trust



Attendees socialize during the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours, hosted by Fidelity Bank & Trust.

Fidelity Bank & Trust has more than a century of history in the tri-state area, and one of its vice presidents, Derek Olberding, is an ambassador for the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce.

The financial institution, which now has two offices in Dubuque, opened in 1910 under the name Luxemburg Savings Bank. It wasn't until 1964 that it underwent a name change along with a move to Dyersville.

In 2021, Fidelity acquired Farmers & Traders Savings Bank out of Bancroft, Iowa.

With more than 30 locations across Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin, Fidelity offers personal

and business banking services in addition to wealth management and mortgage lending. It also has three "clubs" for its customers – Five Star (for those who have a "\$5,000 relationship with the bank"), All Star Kids and Christmas.

Customer resources include everything from e-banking services and deposit rates to ID shield and credit cards.

Throughout the COVID-19

pandemic, Fidelity processed applications for the federal Payroll Protection Program due to its status as a Small Business Administration lender.

Their community involvement includes offering more than \$14,000 in scholarships to area high school seniors, volunteer work and raising thousands of dollars for charities. In the early days of the pandemic, employees volunteered at food pantries and school in the communities in which they live and work.



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THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Luncheons are an opportunity to hear from a great speaker as well as connect with other young professionals in our community.

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Read



The
Dubuque
Area
Chamber
staff
Melissa,
Molly, Ryan,
Sully, Justine
and Rick at
Dubuque
Night in Des
Moines.



THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



A tour of the community gardens at Convivium Urban Farmstead by their farm manager AJ, was an enlightening experience for the Leadership Dubuque class.



Jazz Q Band at Dubuque Night in Des Moines.



Jeff Disterhoft, President & CEO of GreenState Credit Union, shared "Nine Steps to Being an Effective Leader" with the YP crowd at our March luncheon.



The Leadership Dubuque class hears from Statera Integrated Health & Wellness Owner and CEO, Nicole Hutchison, about the many different services that Statera offers.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



Days of Caring Volunteers coming together to help out the community April 29.

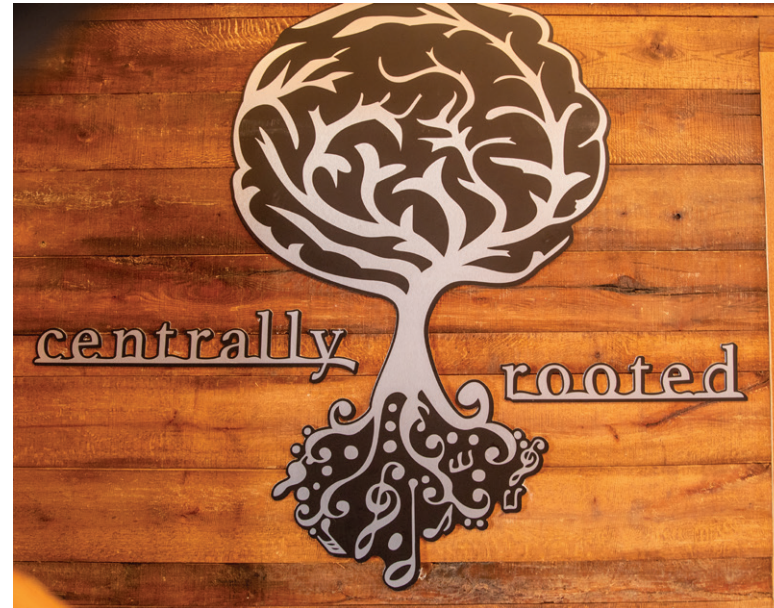


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Ray Bisbee, CEO & Michelle Zeal, Sales Manager

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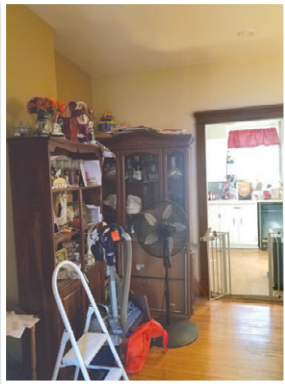
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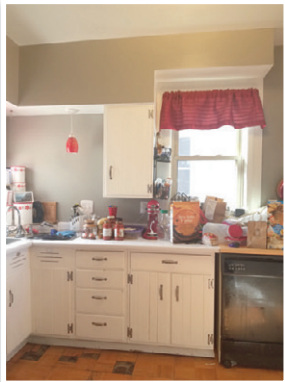
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In 2021, GreenState granted funding to over 700 charities across our region.



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