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On the cover

DUBUQUE AREA
CHAMBER

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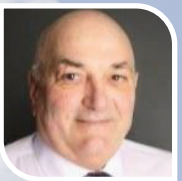
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WELCOME

FROM THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT /CEO



Welcome to the Winter edition of Chamber Quarterly! As the weather cools and our community sparkles with holiday lights, it's the perfect time to reflect on the joy and generosity that make Dubuque such a special place to live, work and celebrate. The season brings a wonderful reminder of the magic that happens when we come together — families gathering, friends reconnecting, and local businesses thriving thanks to your support.

Our shops, restaurants and service providers continue to impress with their dedication and personal touch. From handmade gifts to holiday meals and unique local experiences, there's something truly special about finding what you need right here at home.

This season, we invite you to "Keep it Home for the Holidays" — shop local, dine local and give local. Every purchase made at a neighborhood business strengthens our economy, supports local jobs and reinvests in the community we all love.

At the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce, we remain committed to advocating, connecting and educating our members and community — because when we lift up our local businesses, we all grow stronger together.

From all of us at the Chamber, thank you for your continued support and partnership. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a prosperous new year!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly Grover".

President & CEO
Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce



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7/16/2025



7/22/2025



8/6/2025

Welcome New Members



8/6/2025



8/7/2025

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8/8/2025



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8/12/2025

Welcome New Members



8/14/2025



8/15/2025

A festive poster for 'Katie's Garden Winter Wonderland 2025'. The title is in large, stylized blue letters with snowflakes. Below it, the dates 'December 5th - 6th and 13th' and time '5 - 8 pm each night' are listed. The poster includes a list of activities: 'Visit with Santa and Mrs Claus', 'Explore the animated lights and displays', and 'Enjoy hot cocoa and other holiday treats'. A snowman character is featured on the left. The bottom right corner says 'See the animated display all month!' and 'Brought to You By: Building Platteville' with a logo for the Platteville Regional Chamber. The bottom of the poster is decorated with a string of colorful lights.

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Winter Wonderland
2025

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5 - 8 pm each night

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Platteville Regional Chamber

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8/15/2025



9/2/2025



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Welcome New Members



9/12/2025



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THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

CELEBRATING SMALL BUSINESSES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

BY DAN RUSSO

By choosing to shop local this holiday season, residents across the Dubuque area can experience the joy that comes from supporting the businesses that make our community unique. Each purchase made close to home carries a story — a friendly face behind the counter, a thoughtful recommendation, and a personal touch that turns every gift into something truly meaningful.



The aromas of caramels and cheeses greet visitors to Freddie's Popcorn. Founders Glen and Carol Stillmunkes sold their fresh kettle corn and homemade caramel corn at the Dubuque Farmers Market for several years before opening the storefront operation in 2010. The founders passed the scoops to their daughter and son-in-law, Tami and Jason Staner, who continue the family tradition today.

"Our mission is to bring families together through delightful snacking experiences," the Staners said.

For those looking for something tasteful to give to friends or family, the full menu of niche popcorns includes Freddie's OG Sampler, an offering of small samples of each of the original flavors that has made Freddie's brand popular in the tristate area.

The family took time to express gratitude to their supporters.



Jason Staner bags kettle corn at the Freddie's Popcorn booth during Taste of Dubuque.

A photograph of the Dubuque Star Brewery, a large red brick building with multiple stories and arched windows. In the foreground, there are vibrant pink and orange flowers. A white text box is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

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“We believe shopping local means more than making a purchase — it’s investing in neighbors, families and the community that makes Dubuque special,” the Staners said. “Every bag sold helps keep our small-town spirit alive and supports the local connections that make this place feel like home.”

Be prepared to have a few rogue popcorn kernels stuck to your shoes as you mosey across Main Street to nearby Las Margarita’s Restaurant for a signature drink. There you’ll see art from local creators on the walls along with a sign toward the back that reads: “Taco ‘Bout and Party.” This is a not so subtle reference to another specialty on the menu — Birria Tacos. Christian Hernandez, the owner, started the business about two years ago. He worked for the owner of a previous restaurant at that location, Salsas, for 20 years before starting his operation.

“It feels good to be able to make decisions about the menu and add the flavors you want,” he said about his journey to become an entrepreneur, which started after he immigrated to the United States from Guatemala.

A soccer game teams from Mexico and the United States played on screens above the bar as Hernandez



Las Margarita’s Mexican Restaurant on Main Street in Dubuque.



Christian Hernandez stands inside Las Margarita’s Mexican Restaurant.



Angela and Alex Lee own The Spot Nutrition in Dubuque.



The Spot Nutrition on Main Street in Dubuque.

spoke recently. He paused for a second to seat new customers before continuing. Las Margarita's is offering a 10% discount on gift cards during the holiday season.

"We're serving fresh, authentic food and we have friendly service," Hernandez said. "(Buying local) helps the city."

Further down Main Street, Alex and Angela Lee, a husband and wife team, work side by side at The Spot, making and serving drinks. The couple has built a following for what is nicknamed "Dubuque's Healthy Hangout." They took over the business in 2022.

"(When you shop locally), it supports our family directly," Angela said. "The money is also going to people in our community."

On a recent day this fall, The Spot donated a portion of sales from each drink to support a Thanksgiving dinner for students living in the area who won't be able to make it home for the holidays. They try to engage in charity like this as much as possible. The Spot's winter menu will include holiday themed drinks, including the "Jack Frost" and "Mrs. Claus."

The business offers gift certificates as potential holiday gifts. Alex Lee recommended pairing this with an off the



Sue Davis completes a sale at River Lights Bookstore.

shelf “tea kit” so people can have a drink “right away.” The Spot is open every day, even on holidays, according to the Lees. They also have installed an exercise space so people can work out with a local personal trainer. They take pride in providing excellent service to their clients.

“We offer free delivery,” Alex said. “We provide healthy drinks without extra fees.”

Strolling back up Main Street one finds River Lights Bookstore. The business, now an anchor in the neighborhood, was part of the original renaissance of the business district.

“Most of the 1000 block of Main Street was rehabbed some 20 plus years ago by John and Mary Gronen,” said owner Sue Davis. “I’m proud that River Lights Bookstore was one of the first to make the move back downtown.



The interior of River Lights Bookstore in Dubuque.

Most of the 1000 block of Main Street was rehabbed some 20 plus years ago by John and Mary Gronen. I’m proud that River Lights Bookstore was one of the first to make the move back downtown. Our current home at 1098 Main St. was once the location of Pusetari’s Vegetable Market — a place a few Dubuquers will remember fondly as a family-run market for more than 70 years.

Owner Sue Davis

Our current home at 1098 Main St. was once the location of Pusetari's Vegetable Market — a place a few Dubuquers will remember fondly as a family-run market for more than 70 years."

Davis was impressed by the rehab of her current building and now routinely finds creative ways to use the asset of the space.

"When I started looking for the next location for River Lights, I knew the connection to Main Street was unbeatable: a thoroughfare for visitors to downtown, a historic building with hardwood floors, tin ceilings, and beautiful windows for displaying books and gifts," she said.

Part of the store's mission is to put community first, according to Davis.

"We supply quality literature at competitive prices to the tristate region, offer tools and resources to schools and businesses, give back by donating to local nonprofits, and continue to bring people together through book groups, author discussions and signings and special seasonal events," she said.

Davis believes people who chose to shop locally during the holidays "get it."

"They understand the benefit of re-investing their dollars in our community," she said. "That they appreciate our hands-on approach to providing the best shopping experience, offering excellent recommendations and making sure we have the right inventory on hand. It means so much when people choose to support locally owned independent businesses, including River Lights. We work hard to continue to earn your trust."



An aerial view of Main Street in Dubuque.



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NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Card My Yard

BY DAN RUSSO

KIELER, Wis. – Whether it’s surprising a 7-year-old with a “Happy Birthday” sign first thing in the morning or recognizing a hardworking mother with a “You’re a Great Mom” message at the end of a long day, Jon and Steph Lewerke, of Card My Yard, run a business that specializes in creating great moments.



The couple bought the local franchise of the national company in June and have hit the ground running ever since. Based in Kieler, the Lewerkes have been decorating front yards across the tristate area with the help of their three children.

"We got the idea because we used their service in the past for our daughter," Steph Lewerke said. "She qualified for high school state gymnastics."

Card My Yard was founded in 2014 by Amy Arnold and Jessica Stanley, two mothers who met at a Bible Study in 2014. The firm now has more than 500 franchises across the country, according to the company's website. The idea is to bring happiness to people by celebrating accomplishments and milestones with creative displays on front lawns. The local branch was owned by a Dubuque for about four years before the Lewerkes took over. So far, the couple has kept other full time jobs while working to build the new family business.

"We're averaging a couple of yards a week," Jon said. "Our goal is to get to one yard per day."

Steph Lewerke is a native of Hazel



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Green. Jon grew up in Mason City, Iowa. Both of their fathers were entrepreneurs in their local communities, so starting their own business has been a dream come true. As part of the franchise fee, the Lewerkes gain access to an inventory of decorations and receive business coaching. They are also able to meet requests for custom graphics.

The business is officially known as Card My Yard Kieler, WI, but serves a wide area around the tri-states including Dubuque, Jo Daviess and Grant counties, and surrounding small towns. The Lewerke family has worked with paying customers to mark a range of special occasions. They also have donated their services to schools and individuals at times. The business has a “mom of the month” give away, which has prompted some “tears of joy” from the women being highlighted.

“We’re committed to giving back to our community,” Steph said.

The Lewerkes’ first Card My Yard job involved a sign for a high school graduate who had recently lost her mother to cancer.

“It was a pretty special moment,” Steph said.

Jon emphasized that the service is for “people of any age” and explained that the business also works with corporate clients looking for help with promotion. With the holidays approaching, the Lewerkes said they are looking forward to helping people.

“You’ll likely catch our kids part of the fun-filled action, too!” wrote the Lewerkes in their Card My Yard official profile. “It’s our way of giving back to the place we call home, spreading positivity, creating joy in the memory of our dads and celebrating with all of YOU.”

For more information on the business, visit Card My Yard Kieler at www.cardmyyard.com/kieler-wi.



We got the idea because we used their service in the past for our daughter. She qualified for high school state gymnastics.

Steph Lewerke



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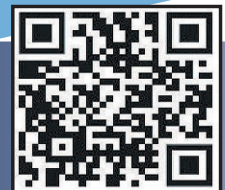
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BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK

Dubuque Main Street

BY DAN RUSSO

Unique shops, restaurants and other service providers occupy well-preserved historic buildings across Dubuque's downtown, making the local holiday shopping experience as close to a Hallmark channel movie scene as possible.

Dubuque Main Street, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the downtown area, is one of the key reasons why the heart of the city is still so vibrant at a time when commercial districts in other towns have faltered.



Dubuque Main Street's awards sit on a table during the organizations annual awards program at the Hotel Julien Dubuque.

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“We’re now in our 40th year,” said David Barba, Dubuque Main Street’s executive director. “We’re dedicated to economic growth, small business development and preserving historic buildings.”

Dubuque Main Street was founded in 1985 as part of the National Urban Main Street pilot program.

“Through events, grants, promotion and direct business support, we work every day to foster a downtown that feels alive, welcoming and connected,” reads the organization’s 2025 annual report.

Most local residents have visited or at least heard of the Dubuque Farmers Market. The Saturday event is one of the oldest of its kind in Iowa. Dubuque Main Street oversees the market and has helped it expand through the years. Currently, the market welcomes about 120 vendors and runs for 26 weeks per year. The market brings thousands downtown to support longstanding brick and mortar businesses as well as the entrepreneurs that have weekly booths.

Dubuque Main Street also raises funds through its Dubuque ... and All That Jazz concerts. The charity recently revitalized this by holding a show that welcomed 71 local performers. Puttzin’ Around Dubuque is another fundraiser that involves a mini golf business crawl through the downtown.

Dubque Main Street also organizes Food Festival Fridays, a regular event held every second Friday from May through September that brings food trucks and live music to Washington Square. During Architecture Days, the charity welcomes people to learn about the city’s history over five days by offering tours and educational presentations through Dubuque’s downtown historic buildings.

Funds garnered through these fundraisers and other money from donors goes to bolstering business and residential properties in the downtown area. Barba explained that Main Street has made an intense effort recently to be as fiscally efficient as possible.

“We’ve restricted our budget and reduced expenses by well over \$100,000 this year,” Barba said.

The money saved will be used to



Dubuque Main Street Director David Barba poses along Main Street in Dubuque.

further the charity’s mission. Some of the other efforts Main Street is involved with include The Space and Workplace Activation Program. “Swap Grants,” as they are known, finance renovations to the interior of housing and commercial spaces. In 2025, 40 businesses also benefited from Main Street’s digital media support program. An emphasis has been placed on helping local businesses with marketing and storytelling.

“Through one of the most accessible tools we have, the smartphone, a single 15-minute photo shoot for a local business can be the difference between a customer never hearing about them or taking the trip to downtown,” states Main Street’s latest annual report.

A new initiative in 2026 will involve a partnership with the City of Dubuque’s Neighborhood Support, and Planning Services Department, the University of Dubuque, and Dubuque Forward to engage in a data collection campaign. The goal is to create “a living inventory of downtown’s commercial and residential spaces to guide smarter investment.”

For the holidays, Main Street is collaborating with the Dubuque Chamber of



Dubuque Main Street hosts an annual fundraiser called Puttzin’ Around Downtown.

Commerce, Travel Dubuque and other organizations on a “Coming Home for the Holidays” campaign.

“We have a responsibility to take care of each other,” said Barba, who emphasized that shopping at downtown small businesses is one way to do that.

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RIBBON CUTTINGS



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Goodlife Integrative Veterinary Care
Ribbon cutting date: 8/26/25



Dubuque Forward
Ribbon cutting date: 8/7/25



Culbie's Event Center
Ribbon cutting date: 8/8/25

RIBBON CUTTINGS



McDonald Supply
Ribbon cutting date:
8/29/25

**Nutriva
Pelvic
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