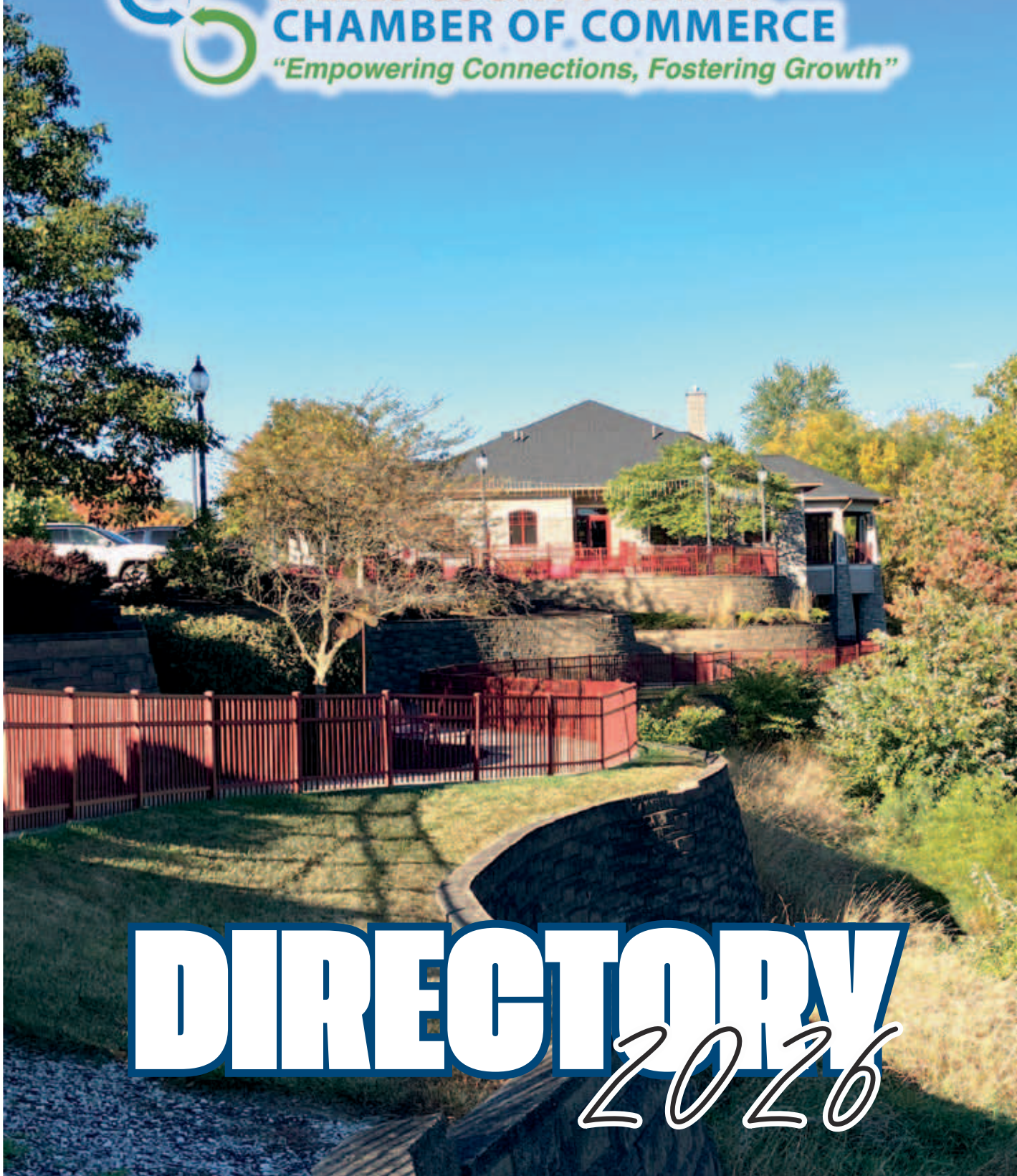




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Welcome to the **2026 Wells County Chamber of Commerce Directory!** Whether you are a resident, business owner, employee, or visitor, we warmly welcome you to our thriving community — a place where connections create lasting impact, and every interaction helps build something greater.

This directory is more than a listing of businesses; it is a guide to the people, ideas, and opportunities that make Wells County strong. Within these pages, you’ll find inspiring stories from local leaders, highlights from community events, celebrations of achievements, and a calendar of ways to connect. It’s your roadmap to the resources and relationships that help our community flourish.

With **500 member businesses**, the Chamber has been fostering connections and supporting local

growth since 1914. Each member brings a unique contribution, making Wells County a place where people feel welcome, businesses thrive, and collaboration creates shared success. Using this directory, you can discover the services you need, connect with professionals, and explore opportunities to engage with your community.

Supporting local businesses isn’t just an economic choice — it’s an investment in our future. Every time you shop, dine, or hire locally, you strengthen our economy, build relationships, and ensure Wells County continues to grow and prosper.

We encourage you to use this directory as a vital tool to connect, discover, and engage with our community. For even more information on upcoming events, job opportunities, and how to connect with Chamber members, visit [www.wellscoc.com](http://www.wellscoc.com).

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 Executive Director,  
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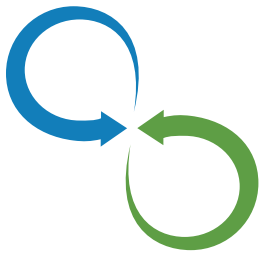
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## 2026 Board of Directors

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## The 2026 Wells County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

Seated, from left: Julie Quinn, Secretary, 1st Source Bank; Trent Bucher, Treasurer, Honegger, Ringger & Co.; Julie Thompson, President, Bluffton Regional Medical Center; Dean Vendal, Vice-President, AAM-Bluffton Manufacturing Facility; Patty Randall, Past-President, ProFed Credit Union; Erin Prible, executive director. Standing: Sarah MacNeill, Wells County Public Library; John Stauffer, Steffen Oil; Gina Eisenhut, Sprunger & Sprunger Attorneys; Sam Haflich, BKM Real Estate; Keith Muhlenkamp, First Merchants Bank; Mike Springer, Norwell Community Schools; Piercen Harnish, Shelton Financial Group; Larry Smith, Edward Jones; Eventt Norris, Ossian Hardware; and Angie Topp, Stockton Mortgage



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# 2026 Committees

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Doug Brown, The News-Banner  
Erin Daugherty, State Farm Insurance  
Jacob Duncan, Farm Bureau  
Insurance  
Chris Gerber, Edge Manufacturing  
Piercen Harnish, Shelton  
Financial Group  
Nick Huffman, Steffen Group Inc.  
Kody Kumfer, Forgotten  
Children Worldwide  
Kira Lee, Three Rivers  
Federal Credit Union  
Erica Lehman, Lehman Appraisals  
Heather Morgan, National Oil & Gas  
Keith Muhlenkamp, First  
Merchants Bank  
Kevin Pritchard, Ruoff Mortgage  
Olivia Reeves, Meyer Building  
Ben Rekenberger, United Way  
of Wells County  
Casey Robbins, F&M Bank  
Danielle Thompson, Flagstar Bank  
Kylie Tomlin, Helping Hands

## Special Events Committee

**Chairman: Kirsten Scheiman,**

**Stockton Mortgage**

Angie Arnold, HomeCourt Home Care  
Lannette Bickel, Metropolitan Title  
Doug Brown, The News-Banner  
Lori Brubaker, Meyer Building  
Angie Dial, Family Centered Services  
Danica Dunwiddie, The Wright  
Insurance Company  
Pam Gregory, Pages & Stuff, Inc.  
Steve Higgins, Scouting America  
Gina Hon, First Merchants Bank  
Sara Jones, F&M Bank

Kristi Lockwood, ProFed Credit Union  
Julie Quinn, 1st Source Bank  
Shari Tomac, Farmers Insurance  
Angie Topp, Stockton Mortgage  
Stephanie Wheeler, WEG  
Commercial Motors

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**Chairman: Isaac Stoller,  
Steffen Group**

Jessica Beste, Wells County  
Economic Development  
Lori Brubaker, Meyer Building  
Erin Daugherty, State Farm Insurance  
Don Fiechter, Don Fiechter Farms  
Nate Fowler, Phillips Financial  
Conor Jackson, James S Jackson  
Jason Johnloz, Halderman  
Farm Management  
Trout Moser, National Oil & Gas  
Michael Vanover, Clean Fuels National  
Dean Vendal, AAM

## Connect Group

**Klint Fiechter, Les Gerber  
Insurance**

Bryant Barger, Dale Huffman  
& Babcock  
Angie Comment, Metropolitan Title  
Collin Campbell, CampHouse  
Marketing  
Anita Correll, River Terrace Estates  
Joni Donaghy-Myers, Coldwell  
Banker-Holloway  
Becky Goshorn, Mary Kay Cosmetics  
Jan Herring, Environmental Solutions  
Rick Johnson, Habitat for Humanity  
Kristie Small, Honegger Ringger Co.  
Kylie Tomlin, Helping Hands  
Angie Topp, Stockton Mortgage  
Kylie Tomlin, Helping Hands  
Meagan VandelAar, Creative Arts  
Council of Wells County

## Connect Group2

Deva Betts, Game Day Photography  
John Cole, J Cole Tech LLC  
Spencer Fear, Edward Jones  
Brandi Hewson, Family Ford  
of Bluffton  
Geoff Horner, Genesis Pest Services  
Keith Muhlenkamp, First  
Merchants Bank  
Jim Sturgeon, Sturgeon Mechanical  
Mindy Thomas, Media Services  
Unlimited  
Shari Tomac, Farmers Insurance  
Robert Vanover, Premier Clock  
& Vacuum Service  
Christine Walker, Community Care  
of NE Ind.  
Donna Zorich, DJ Nails  
Todd Zorich, Body Magic Massage

## Women in Leadership:

Alyssa Brown, Archbold & Lewis  
Kim Gentis, Raymond James  
Molly Hoag, Purdue Extension  
Jayde Ketring, First Bank of Berne  
Beth McConnell, Caylor Nickel  
Foundation Family YMCA  
Erin Prible, Wells County Chamber  
of Commerce  
Olivia Reeves, Meyer Building  
Beth Singleton, State of Indiana  
Tammy Slater, Wells County  
Foundation  
Wendy Stout, Hott Family Dentistry  
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# Calendar Offers Many Opportunities for Involvement

The Chamber of Commerce organizes a number of events during the year that benefits members, the community and the Chamber itself.

## Business Before, During and After Hours

These events serve two purposes: an opportunity for a member company to showcase their business; and an opportunity for members to “meet-and-greet” — to be better acquainted with their community colleagues.

## Small Business Assistance

The Chamber partners with the Small Business Development Center who comes on an as-needed basis to provide business assistance to not only new companies, but also companies already in business. This assistance is *free* and confidential.

## Quarterly Membership Luncheons

Chamber members hear important speakers throughout the year. These



include an economic forecast, “state of the city” and “state of the county” addresses, turnaround awards and other important topics.

In addition, the Chamber hosts breakfast meetings and seminars throughout the year with helpful, timely topics and speakers.

## Member Connections

In order to keep dues to a minimum, the Chamber has two major fund raising events this year.

The second annual Chamber Bro Bingo — a bingo night for guys — will be held April 10. Mark your calendar and

## 2026 Chamber Dates

- Annual Dinner – Feb. 23
- Chamber Bro Bingo — April 10
- Quarterly Membership Luncheons – Winter, Spring, Fall and Christmas
- Golf Expo – August 6


watch for all the fun details.


The popular annual Chamber Golf Expo is held the first Thursday in August.

## Third House Meetings

Legislative representatives from the state and national levels have spoken at Third House Meetings throughout the years. These are traditional “town hall meetings” at which the public is invited.

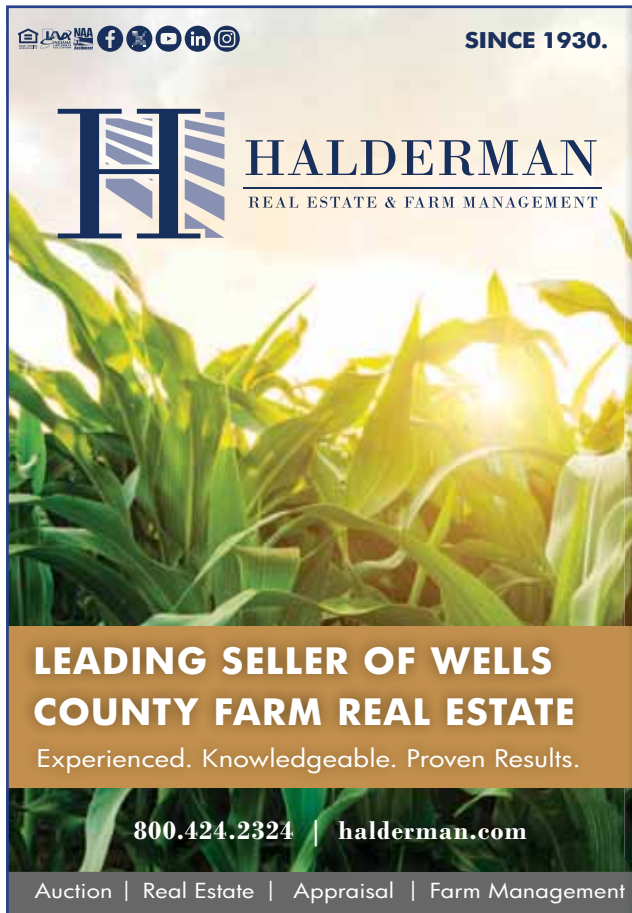
There will be at least one Third House Meeting during the 2026 Indiana Legislative session. Watch for further announcements about specific dates.


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# Chamber Recognizes Three County Teachers

## Isaac Collins Southern Wells Community Schools

Southern Wells' Educator of the Year had not even thought of being a teacher when he graduated from high school.

Isaac Collins became a technician in the heating and cooling business, commonly referred to as HVAC. One of his former teachers at Jay County High School however, changed that. Brittany Kloer had become the Area 18 vocational education director and told Collins about an opportunity at Southern Wells High school.

He was hesitant at first, he said. He enjoyed what he was doing, but "I knew I wanted to try it," he said. "It's definitely been rewarding and I really like placing students in HVAC careers just as much as I liked actually being in the HVAC field."

Principal Kim Connor, who nominated Collins for the annual award,



Isaac Collins

says that "The students have a profound respect for Mr. Collins. They know he knows what he's talking about when it comes to construction and HVAC."

Collins had worked in the field for seven years before joining the Southern Wells faculty in 2021. Through his role, Collins has strived to introduce HVAC as a viable career to students while also providing immersive learning opportunities.

"I just really love the field and I love showing kids that it is a rewarding career and a career that they can do," he said.

In a subject where other schools are struggling to meet minimum student numbers, SWCS' HVAC class has needed to cap their class size. Through the Area 18 cooperative, students from other schools also have been attracted to Collins' classes.

In his class, he pushes students to absorb real world experiences whether it be through building houses or by installing fully operating HVAC systems, Conner explained. "One of his favorite

parts of his work is connecting those same students with potential future employers," she said.

"That creates a great teacher — when they're passionate about their content area and they're passionate about kids," Superintendent Trent Lehman said.

His willingness to take risks and his ability to network, Lehman continued, opened doors for HVAC students to do maintenance for the SWCS building, simultaneously helping the school and teaching the students.

Conner added that Collins has also helped students get into college by taking them on visits. He also has set up meetings with local potential employers.

"He goes above and beyond helping students become successful in their future," she said.

Collins has become a certified Agility trainer, a dual-credit instructor and a career coach in his new role in education. Additionally, he teaches an 8th-grade Introduction to Construction Trades course that results in new students in his high school classes.

## Bria Eversole Norwell Community Schools

Bria Eversole is proud to be a "home grown" gal. A 2009 Norwell High School graduate, she was in marching band and grew up in what was then the Zanesville United Methodist Church. That she is teaching at the middle school she attended and "serving the school and the community that helped raise me is an honor," she says.

Her selection as Norwell's Educator of the Year came as no surprise to her colleagues.

"I see her at school and on an extracurricular basis and students love her," fellow sixth grade math teacher McKenzie Denney says. "If she's not in the hallway they are asking for her. She's a relational piece that they seek out every morning. Kids have come back to her and explained that 'math doesn't feel



Bria Eversole

scary because you were my teacher."

"As a grade-level leader and department head, she fosters a culture of teamwork and shared purpose, guiding her colleagues in collaborative planning, data analysis, and problem-solving," Norwell Middle School principal Andrew Enderle wrote in his nomination letter. "Her leadership within the math department has been particularly impactful — she uses data-driven decision-making to identify learning gaps, refine instruction, and implement strategies that improve student outcomes across all levels."

"While I am honored to have been named educator of the year, I can't pass up the opportunity to recognize the hard work of every single staff member here at NMS," Eversole says. "Every day, I am inspired by their passion, creativity, and dedication. Working alongside such talented and caring colleagues' makes this journey so rewarding."

After her high school graduation, Eversole enrolled at the University of

Saint Francis in Fort Wayne.

"I started out not knowing what I wanted to do," she explains. "I actually had four different majors in my first couple of years at USF. Finally, I landed on teaching and fell in love with the profession."

After earning her degree and qualifications in elementary education and special education, her "first and only" interview was at Norwell Middle School. She married her high school sweetheart, Lee Eversole, in 2015 and the couple are parents to two sons, Hudson and Liam, who attend Lancaster Elementary School.

"Mrs. Eversole brings learning to life through creative, inclusive, and engaging teaching strategies that inspire every student to participate and succeed," Enderle wrote of Eversole. "She regularly incorporates differentiated games, hands-on math projects, and real-life connections that make complex concepts both accessible and enjoyable."

"I truly love working here and being a part of this amazing family," Eversole concludes.

## Alyssa Moser Bluffton-Harrison M.S.D.

Since joining the staff at Bluffton Harrison Metropolitan School District in 2010, Alyssa Moser has had several titles, including instructional assistant, first-grade teacher and assistant principal. She is currently serving as the Literacy Coach at Bluffton Elementary School but she can also add yet another moniker: Educator of the Year.

"Mrs. Moser has been a valued member of the district team for 15 years," district superintendent Dr. Brad Yates said in making the announcement of her selection.

"In each of her roles, she has consistently made an extraordinary impact on both student achievement and teacher development."

For as long as she can remember — and maybe even a little bit before — she wanted to be a teacher.

"My kindergarten teacher even came

up to me when I graduated and said (that) when I was a kindergartener, I told her I was going to be a teacher," she said. "There was never anything else — it's always been teaching. I've never wavered from that, and I'm so thankful because it's truly my life's passion and my life's work."



Alyssa Moser

"I know that she's hating all this attention, and I love that," joked kindergarten teacher Lindsey Fry when the announcement was made at the school in early December. "Because it (the attention) is so well deserved. She's the last person that would want this recognition, but (she) deserves it."

Now in her second year as a literacy coach for the district, Moser's priority is finding ways to support students' growth in the area of reading and writing. She also works alongside teachers to research and implement best practices in teaching, engage students and reach new goals.

But in all her various capacities at the school, the indelible throughline has been

her kindness and service, said elementary principal Schlauro Linderwell.

"Mrs. Moser does an amazing job, but more importantly, she is 100% all about helping kids be the best that they can be (and) helping our teachers," she added.

Moser grew up in Berne, the daughter of Matt and Beth Miller. She and her husband, Grant, are the parents of two daughters, Harper and Olivia. After graduating from South Adams High School in 2006, she earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education at Ball State University, where she also has received her masters degree in educational leadership and supervision.

She admits not enjoying the attention the award brings.

"There's nothing I hate more than having the spotlight on me," she laughed afterward. "I'd love nothing more than to support others until kingdom come." She added that she finds her reward in everyday successes and the relationships built at BHMSD. Among students and teachers alike, "these are things that keep me going every morning," Moser said.

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# A lasting legacy

Bluffton is not Roger Thornton's hometown. He's not a native son. In fact, he and his wife Marge only moved to Bluffton in 2012 in order to be close to two of their three sons and most of their grandchildren. So why did he dive headfirst into a number of community activities and roles? Why did he come to focus on parks, trails and a swimming pool, making a big enough impact to be nominated and then selected as the 2026 Wells County Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year?

He will pause when you ask him that. It has nothing to do with whether he grew up here, he will tell you.

"There are two Bible verses that have been a core part of my life," he says. He mentions John 10:10, in which Jesus talks about living an abundant life, and Matthew 25, "where Jesus tells us that what we do for the least of these — His people — we do for Him."

Thornton then refers to a college professor who made a profound impression on him. It was during his work towards a Doctor of Education degree at Indiana University, which he earned in 1976.

"His name was Dean Berkley. He had earned a number of awards as a speaker in the Toastmasters International organization. He has to be the funniest guy and the deepest thinker I've ever known," he recalls.

Berkley's students were either practicing or future school superintendents. "One of his mantras was 'Make sure you leave a community better than you found it,'" Thornton recalls. "That was a driving force for me as a school superintendent. Particularly for the families who were very dependent on what the community could offer them. The school is a major part of that. But you don't just forget that when you retire."

Like many of his generation, Thornton grew up on a farm. The lessons he learned were typical for that situation — specifically the daily chores and responsibilities, which included milking the cows each morning. That particular chore prevented him from playing on his high school's basketball team. There is a certain amount of wistful regret in sharing that detail.

Graduating from Lapaz High School in 1962 and dealing with a perceived call to ministry, he enrolled in Bethel College to study Biblical literature and history. He married his high school sweetheart — a side story worth asking about sometime — and began serving as a youth pastor before graduating in 1967. He took a full time job as an elementary teacher in nearby Lakeville while still serving as a part time youth and associate pastor at his church, and then pursued a masters degree at St. Francis in Fort Wayne in guidance and counseling as he determined that his calling was in education rather than pastoring.

Thornton's career in education took him to posts in South Bend, Rochester, and then as a superintendent in Churu-

busco, Syracuse, and Kokomo before accepting the post as the executive director of the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents. It was in this capacity, during which he dealt with the Indiana Legislature, its leaders, the governor's office and the superintendent of public instruction, he found both challenging and rewarding. As he left that post in 2004, then-Gov. Joe Kernan awarded him a Sagamore of the Wabash.

"We had worked pretty hard together, along with then-superintendent of public instruction Sue Ellen Reed, to establish full-day Kindergarten," Thornton shares. "I had always seen this as particularly helpful for low-income families."

It was also during this period that he found time to serve as an adjunct graduate instructor at Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne, IU-Kokomo, Ball State University and IUPUI, teaching classes primarily about public school financing. He has also served terms on the boards of Churubusco State Bank and Teachers Federal Credit Union.

After serving a four-year term as superintendent of one of Illinois' largest

## Past Citizen of the Year Honorees:

- 1980 — Dr. Harold Caylor and Cecil Lockwood Sr.
- 1981 — Fred Park
- 1982 — Amos Gerber
- 1983 — Edward J. Schaefer
- 1984 — John T. Flaningam and Dr. William Gitlin
- 1985 — Frank Monroe
- 1986 — Charles W. Decker Jr.
- 1987 — James Stogdill and William Fitzpatrick
- 1988 — Dr. Truman Caylor
- 1989 — Don V. Harris
- 1990 — Harold Bowman
- 1991 — Howard Rich
- 1992 — Mr. and Mrs. Claude Decker and Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Moser
- 1993 — Edward Hanrahan and Alfred J. Norris
- 1994 — Dick Wilkey
- 1995 — Paul Bender
- 1996 — Jim Barbieri and Everett "Tuck" Faulkner
- 1997 — David Park
- 1998 — Loren Barkley
- 1999 — Connie Cupp
- 2000 — David Dale
- 2001 — Gene Meyer
- 2002 — Ted Smith
- 2003 — Keith Huffman
- 2004 — Dr. Michael Sallsbery
- 2005 — Ralph Nowak
- 2006 — Bette Erleben
- 2007 — John Whicker
- 2008 — Diane Humphrey
- 2009 — Judi Merkel
- 2010 — Ed Goetz
- 2011 — Ken Honegger
- 2012 — Ted Ellis
- 2013 — Jeff Espich
- 2014 — Dr. George Babcock
- 2015 — Tony Garton
- 2016 — Paul and Lu Reiff
- 2017 — Dr. Jim VanWinkle
- 2018 — Steve Stauffer
- 2019 — Dr. Marcelo Gavilanez
- 2020 — John Reinhard
- 2021 — Mark Miller
- 2022 — Todd Riemschisel
- 2023 — Kody Kumfer
- 2024 — Jeff and Jamie Lemler
- 2025 — Roger Sherer

school districts in suburban Chicago, the Thorntons returned to Indiana in retirement in 2008. That initially meant a stint as an educational consultant with two different firms before moving to Bluffton.

“So you were named Citizen of the Year for asking people for money?” a friend asked Thornton in the wake of the announcement in early December. He chuckles about that. “Well, I guess so,” he replied.

There are several who say it’s a bit more than that.

“Roger has devoted his time, talents and heart to Wells County, leaving a lasting impact that will be felt for generations,” wrote Brandy Fiechter in her nomination letter. There were letters of support from former Bluffton Mayor John Whicker, current Mayor Scott Mentzer, Trout Moser, Mark Miller and Olivia Reynolds.

The letters detail his initial vision of a park and baseball complex on the 17.5-acre former site of Lancaster School on Bluffton’s north edge. “But community interest leaned toward an alternative plan,” wrote Whicker, “but rather than stepping back, he embraced the new vision,” was instrumental in getting the land transferred from Norwell schools to the city, “and lead efforts to secure funding and engage donors.” That work included extending the Interurban Trail to the park. Fiechter wrote about “his persistence and ability to unite people to move the trail forward in meaningful ways.”

Thornton had decided to run for city council, feeling he could have more impact not just for Lancaster Park but in other areas as well. Elected to represent District 1, he served on the Board of Works and chaired a Public Safety Task Force. Mentzer ran with and then served on the council with Thornton.

“He brought a perspective that none of the other council members had, including myself,” Mentzer wrote. “While there were times of disagreement, I grew to respect his opinions and insight. His questions made me a better councilman, they caused me to conduct more due diligence. We made better and more informed decisions.”

Perhaps, the letters suggest, Thornton’s most lasting impact will be in his role regarding the new Bluffton Aquatic Center, now under construction in large part due to his efforts.

“City officials turned to Roger once



Marge and Roger Thornton

again to help raise funds,” Whicker wrote. Fiechter challenged him to raise \$1 million in private donations. Thornton assembled a fundraising team — Chip Mann, Blake Fiechter, Josh Hunt and Miller — that surpassed that, raised their goal to \$2 million and then surpassed that.

“It was his leadership and vision that made it successful,” Miller wrote. “He was relentless and unapologetic in asking for financial support from any and all possible sources.”

“The generosity was amazing,” Thornton says today. “The people of

Wells County are a treasure. So many who have experienced life’s blessings stepped up and said, ‘it’s time to share.’ Lancaster Park and the new pool will serve as a lasting legacy of this community’s generosity.”

Perhaps the most important part of the pool’s purpose and role dates to the original community pool built more than 50 years ago, he continues.

“The people who built that pool and contributed to that pool made it clear that it must be ‘open to all at a charge that all can afford,’” he shares. “We must remember that going forward. It’s very important.

“It’s also important to say that this award is very nice,” he continues, “but it really goes to all those who donated.”

“His commitment reflects the best of community service,” Fiechter concluded her letter. “He is a man of his word.”

Whicker concluded his letter describing Thornton with the words “vision, persistence and hands-on leadership.” Mentzer, who admitted that Thornton’s “drive, that is literally unmatched ... sometimes got the better of me. However,” he concluded. “this energy is always pure of heart and it always has the best interests of the community.”



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# A.A.M. Bluffton earns '26 Chamber honor

When American Axle and Manufacturing purchased Metaldyne in 2017, the Bluffton Manufacturing Facility was apparently not a good place to work.

“Essentially, we experienced a whole new group of employees every year,” current plant manager Dean Vendal related. “There was the core group, mostly leaders and managers, but there was constant turnover in the production area.”

The official statistic shared was an annual turnover rate of 90%. Today, they experience about 1% per month. Both how that happened and the result of the company’s new culture are a large part of why AAM was named as the 2026 Wells County Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year.

“People are our biggest and most important asset,” Vendal said. “All the other things will take care of themselves if you focus on your employees as people. If you take care of your people and invest in them, they will invest in you.”

The transformation took some time, of course. It included more than \$1 million of investment in the facility, none of which was related to machinery.

“When I first walked in here, the mist in the production area (a result of the manufacturing process) was so thick you could barely see from one end of the building to the other,” Vendal recalled. “We updated the restrooms, the break room, and of course the mist collectors have made a huge difference.”

Meanwhile, a strategy was implemented in which employee focus groups were created, surveys and purposeful interviews were completed.

“Transparency, collaboration and communication,” Vendal continued. “We were focused on creating a culture. We had no systems in place and we needed to launch some new product lines.”

“It took a while for people to buy into it,” human resources manager Stephanie Penrod said.

Today, she feels there is a new pride instilled in the plant. “Pride in AAM, in our customers, our products and our



AAM's Bluffton Manufacturing Facility leadership team meets every morning in an area adjacent to the shop floor to go over their daily metrics that measure, in order of importance, safety, quality and production schedules and issues. From left: Stephanie Penrod, Human Resources Manager; Brandi Norris, Manager of Quality and Launch/Business Planning; Craig Cantwell, EHS Coordinator; Mike Christal, SCM Manager; Jeff DeHoff, Maintenance Manager; Tony Busse, Finance Manager; Marco Aguirre, Manager of IT and Controls; Austin Cincotta, Operations Manger; and Dean Vendal, Plant Manager

community,” she said. “And you know, you hear the term ‘family atmosphere,’ it can be a cliché, but it really is a core part of our identity.”

The company’s administrative office area was heavily decorated for Christmas in mid-December.

“This is from our ‘Evening with Santa’ just the other night,” she told a visitor. “We opened it up to the community in addition to our employees and their families. It was a fun time.”

With the stabilization of the production workforce, production efficiency and quality have

greatly improved. Vendal said that in 2017, the plant had 140 of what are labeled “certified critical quality issues.”

“We’ve had two this year,” he shared.

The plant was also awarded the Ford Motor Company Q1 Preferred Quality Status award this year.

“Ford is our biggest customer,” Vendal continued. The Bluffton Metal Forming facility makes transmission components for Ford, in addition to shock stabilizers for Harley-Davidson motorcycles and brake components for a number of Toyota vehicles.

“Every Ford car, SUV and heavy duty truck from 2019 on has components made in Bluffton,” he said.

The new culture is an ongoing process. Every workday begins with a meeting of about two dozen salaried employees in a special area on the production floor, where daily metrics are reviewed, along with challenges and problems that need solved.

“We focus on safety first, then quality,” Penrod explained. “Then we look



at production efficiencies.”

Currently, AAM employs “just over 300 people,” Vendal said, working on three shifts.

The company was nominated for the award by Olivia Kumfer of Leaders Staffing who works with the Bluffton plant’s leadership team.

“Their team has been cultivating change in the Wells County community,” she noted in her nomination letter. “It has been beautiful to see efforts unfold to be an inclusive organization internally with their staff and externally within the Bluffton community.”

While Vendal and his leadership team focused on changing the culture inside the plant, “we also wanted to strengthen the community,” he explained. Not only were employees encouraged to get involved and volunteer their time, “but they also brought us ideas and projects to take on.”

For example, AAM became a supporter of the Knights 14u travel baseball team, have provided school supplies for the Wells County Boys & Girls Club and have organized several drives for the Wells County Food Bank this past year.

“For the past three years, AAM has been a loyal supporter of our local youth baseball team,” Morgan Meriwether wrote in a letter of support on

behalf of the baseball team. “They’ve made it possible for young athletes to participate and grow — both on and off the field. This act of generosity reflects their commitment to our community and their belief in support for the next generation.”

AAM is also part of the Adams Wells Manufacturing Alliance, which promotes technical and manufacturing skilled career opportunities locally, supports Bluffton NOW!, works with the backpack program, Junior Achievement and also supports the Karing for Kids Blessing Tree as well as the Elks Club’s annual golf outing that raises money for several community projects. The company regularly hosts Red Cross blood drives.

“Many of these projects were brought to us by our employees,” Vendal noted. “Where our associates are involved, we get involved.”

“This award truly recognizes the spirit of AAM and, more specifically, this facility and everyone who works here,” he concluded.

“They are a wonderful example of how businesses can change their communities,” Kumfer concluded her nomination letter.



A poster in plant manager Dean Vendal's office displays the transmission components the Bluffton plant produces for the Ford Motor Company, which presented the plant with their highest quality award this year. The 300-plus employees also produce parts for Harley-Davidson and Toyota.

#### Past Wells County Business of the Year Honorees:

- 1996 — Almco Steel Company
- 1997 — James S. Jackson Co.
- 1998 — Franklin Electric Company
- 1999 — Pretzels, Inc.
- 2000 — Honegger, Ringger & Co.
- 2001 — Ossian State Bank
- 2002 — Dale & Huffman
- 2003 — Thoma-Rich, Hewitt & Chaney Funeral Home
- 2004 — Christian Care Retirement Community and Ossian Health & Rehabilitation Center
- 2005 — Roembke Mfg. & Design
- 2006 — Bluffton News-Banner
- 2007 — Bluffton Reg. Medical Center
- 2008 — General Manufacturing
- 2009 — Hiday Automotive Group
- 2010 — Heyerly's Meat Market
- 2011 — AdamsWells Internet Telecom TV
- 2012 — Troxel Equipment Co.
- 2013 — National Oil and Gas
- 2014 — Peyton's Northern
- 2015 — Edge Manufacturing
- 2016 — United Way of Wells County
- 2017 — First Bank of Berne
- 2018 — Alexin LLC
- 2019 — Ossian Deli
- 2020 — Outdoor Concepts
- 2021 — Daniel's Jewelers
- 2022 — Wells Co. Automotive (NAPA)
- 2023 — Trusted Solutions Group
- 2024 — Valero Renewables
- 2025 — Meyer Building

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# Chamber Gets Another Innovation Award

For the second consecutive year, the Wells County Chamber of Commerce was honored with the Excellence in Innovation Award by the Indiana Chamber Executives Association (ICEA).

The Gold Member Video Recognition, launched in early 2024, has quickly become one of the Chamber's most engaging and talked-about initiatives. The concept is simple yet powerful: the Chamber's Executive Director visits Gold-level members' businesses — donning a sparkly gold sequin jacket — and films lighthearted, high-energy videos that showcase each business in a fun and approachable way. These videos are then shared on social media, tagging the featured businesses to maximize exposure and interaction.

"We find engagement to promote business can be creative, meaningful, and even a little fun," said Erin Prible, Executive Director of the Wells County Chamber. "These videos give our members a chance to shine — literally — and allow the community to connect with the people behind the business in a

memorable, meaningful way."

Since the program's launch:

- Social media reach has soared from 1,200 to over 152,000, an 82% increase.
- Content views have jumped to 1.4 million, with content interactions rising from just 36 to over 29,000.
- Website visits have climbed from 138 to nearly 59,000, a 94% increase.

More than just numbers, the feedback from members and the community has been overwhelmingly positive. Residents regularly comment on the videos, businesses are seeing more traffic and recognition, and Chamber membership has grown to represent 70% of the local business community.

"The Gold Member Video Recognition program demonstrates how creativity and relationship-building can transform how we support and promote local businesses," Prible added. "We are thrilled to receive this recognition from ICEA and even more excited about what's ahead."

This award not only reflects the Chamber's innovation but also rein-



Chamber staff, from left, Samantha Creager, Hattie Wondercheck, Erin Prible, and Rachel Reinhard at the ICEA banquet in June.

forces its role as a trusted advocate and partner for local businesses in Wells County.



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## 2026 Special Events Committee

Dedicated to offering members of the Chamber valuable promotional and networking prospects that directly contribute to their ongoing growth and success, these Chamber volunteers play a crucial role in coordinating, planning, and engaging in various special events, including the Chamber Golf Expo, Chamber Annual Awards Dinner, the Annual Appreciation Luncheon, and other fundraising initiatives.

Front Row, from left: Stephanie Wheeler, WEG Commercial Motors; Erin Prible, Wells County Chamber of Commerce; Lannette Bickel, Metropolitan Title; Gina Hon, First Bank of Berne; Doug Brown, News-Banner Publications; Kirsten Scheiman, Stockton Mortgage. Back row: Pamela Gregory, Pages & Stuff; Hattie Wondercheck, Chamber of Commerce; Steve Higgins, Scouting America; Kristi Lockwood, ProFed Credit Union; Angie Topp, Stockton Mortgage; Angie Dial, Family Centered Services. Not pictured: Angie Arnold, HomeCourt Home Care, Lori Brubaker, Meyer Building; Danica Dunwiddie, The Wright Insurance Company; Sara Jones, F&M Bank; Julie Quinn, 1st Source Bank; Shari Tomac, Farmers Insurance

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# Empowering Women to Learn, Lead and Leave a Legacy

Since its inception in 2022, the Wells County Women in Leadership organization has grown into a vibrant force for connection, personal growth, and empowerment within our community. What began as a simple idea — creating space for women to learn from and uplift one another — has evolved into a movement guided by the mission: *Learn, Lead & Leave a Legacy*. This mission has shaped every event, initiative, and conversation, touching the lives of women from all walks of life.

In just a few short years, Women in Leadership has created meaningful programming that addresses real challenges women face. This past year alone, the organization hosted a powerful series of events focused on topics that resonate across ages and life stages. Sessions on Imposter Syndrome, Creating a Sisterhood, and Beyond the Mask: The Truth About Depression provided attendees with practical tools, compassionate insights, and the reassurance that they are not alone. These gatherings created opportunities for women to pause, reflect, and prioritize their own well-being — something many find difficult while balancing careers, families, and community commitments.

The year culminated in the highly anticipated all-day EmpowerHer Conference, drawing women from across Wells County and surrounding areas. This signature event featured four dynamic speakers who challenged, encouraged, and inspired attendees.

- Lindsay Boccardo – Every Generation Wins explored how generational strengths can be leveraged to build stronger teams and relationships.
- Barry Schrock – Build Your Growth Squad highlighted the importance of cultivating a supportive network that pushes women toward personal and professional success.
- Elizabeth MacDonald – Ask Fascinating Questions encouraged curiosity, improved communication, and deeper connection.
- Tara Cocanower – Rooted to Rise in Leadership delivered a heartfelt message about grounding oneself in pur-



pose in order to grow into effective and confident leadership.

These sessions provided strategies that women could apply immediately — whether in the workplace, at home, or in their communities.

“The topics we explore are relevant to any woman at any stage in life,” says committee member Erin Prible. “Our goal is to offer practical and transformative strategies so women can stay healthy, feel connected, and embrace their roles with confidence.”

Since its founding, more than 500 women have participated in Women in Leadership events. One of the most remarkable aspects of the program is the diversity it brings together. Entrepreneurs, stay-at-home moms, young professionals, retirees, executives, students, and community volunteers all gather in the same room — each bringing unique stories, experiences, and strengths. This blend of perspectives creates a rich environment where women can support one another, celebrate achievements, and navigate challenges together. In many ways, Women

in Leadership has become a reflection of Wells County itself: interconnected, compassionate, and committed to growing stronger.

To continue building on this momentum, women are encouraged to join the Wells County Women in Leadership Facebook page, where they can access inspiring stories, event updates, and highlights of local women making an impact.

With ongoing dedication to personal and professional development, the Wells County Women in Leadership organization remains committed to helping women thrive, lead boldly, and create a lasting legacy for generations to come.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Women in Leadership Committee members: Jessica Beste, Alyssa Brown, Kim Gentis, Alicia Hill, Molly Hoag, Jayde Ketring, Beth McConnell, Erin Prible, Beth Singleton, Tammy Slater, Julie Thompson, Kylie Tomlin, and Hattie Wondercheck, whose passion, creativity, and leadership continue to elevate this meaningful work.

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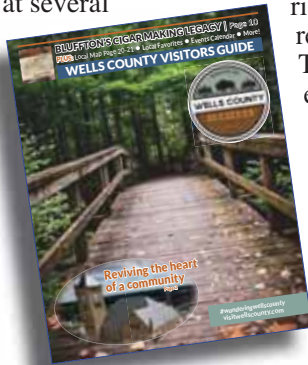
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# Tourism Commission Exploring New Events and Opportunities

It was a year full of learning for the Wells County Convention and Visitors Commission in 2025 as they continued the yearlong campaigning efforts with Britton Marketing through September. Now in its fourth year, the Commission's campaign helped to pinpoint audiences that are receptive and seeking a destination like Wells County. Three separate campaigns were advertised in separate quarters of the year with varying creative sets, utilizing primarily visual and video media. The campaign results help to set a framework and a starting benchmark for the commission to work from as marketing plans are set for 2026. Paid marketing campaigns are a significant step toward strengthening tourism infrastructure and measuring impact more effectively.

Throughout the year the Commission provided Visitor Guides and County Map Brochures to visitors throughout Wells County. They were also provided to residents and individuals relocating to the area and surrounding counties on request. A table of information and resources was also set up at several large events including summer concerts in Markle, Bluffton, and Ossian, the Bluffton Free Street Fair, Stauffer Farms Fall Fest, and The Parlor City Christmas.

Continuous membership with the Indiana Tourism Association (ITA) has provided opportunities for networking and marketing Wells County throughout the state. The annual ITA conference was held in Fort Wayne



Tourism Commissioner members for 2026 include, seated from left, Audry Dudley (Tourism Coordinator), Steve Higgins (Vice-President), Scott Elzey (President), and Jon Winne (Secretary). Standing: Michelle Blount, Brandy Fiechter, Zane Herr, and Preston Wright. Not pictured: Rod Fetters and Richard Heckner

in March 2025 for networking with destination marketing organizations throughout the state along with a variety of vendors that supplied resources and breakout sessions. The commission continued to engage in roundtables, educational sessions, and public-relations opportunities throughout the year provided by the ITA and their partners.

Funding was provided to market Wells County events throughout the year on Meta (Facebook and Instagram social media platforms) to the following organizations: Bluffton Parks Department; Ossian Concert Series; Markle Summer Sounds; Wells County 4H Fair; Wells County Trails; Wells

County Creative Arts Council; and Bluffton NOW! Music on The Plaza.

The commission is welcoming a full calendar of events coming in 2026 along with a new event, Iris Day, a nod to our cultural heritage of the iris farms in Bluffton. While plans are still in early stages, it is hoped to launch in May 2026.

We look forward to the unveiling and use of the new Wells Community Pool, an exciting new venue for both residents and visitors to Wells County.

A 2026 goal for the commission is to further pursue "Wayfinding" signage to welcome visitors to our county and to help them find our visitor assets, thus making for an improved visitor experience. It is part of the Commission's role in providing true Hoosier Hospitality.

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# They're always looking to the future

As the Bluffton NOW! group of community volunteers enters 2026, they can check off a number of accomplishments. Meanwhile, they continue to look to the future in their devotion to the revitalization and long-term growth of Bluffton's downtown.

While three of the targeted alleyways in the Downtown Pathways Project have been completed, fundraising to convert the two remaining alleyways into pedestrian-friendly areas that will enhance access to and the experience of downtown Bluffton continues.

"We hope to get at least one of the two into a construction mode this year," shared the group's leader, Mike Lautzenheiser.

Another long-term goal — getting a DORA District established in the downtown area — was implemented in time for the last of the four summer downtown concerts in 2025. The Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area was seen as a key component of enhancing the concerts and other downtown events. Lautzenheiser said the group witnessed the positive impact during that concert, during Street Fair and the Chili Walk.

Additionally, two more projects utilizing the Community Reinvestment Program were completed.

"Our main focus this year will be working with the city on a new Wells County Master Plan," he continued. "This will formulate the vision principles in a 5-to-10 year plan for downtown."

The group's focus will remain centered on gaining new retail, service-oriented and food businesses in the downtown area, noting the addition of a new "destination business" of The Bourbon MD that opened on West Market Street in 2025.

"One of our goals is a concept of '100% downtown occupancy' and what it will take to achieve that," he said.

Bluffton NOW! will continue to organize and host the four concerts on the stage at the Courthouse Plaza as well as the other programs such as the Parlor City Christmas, Chili Walk and the Brifest, which, Lautzenheiser added, "will be downtown this year."

"We want to maximize those peak summer months as well as establish more

'off-season' events to help make the downtown area fulfill its role as the 'city center,'" he concluded.

Since the Ossian Revitalization Committee completed the amphitheater at Archold-Wilson Park in 2022, the group, led by Kody Kumfer, has been focused on improving access to that area.

"We finally got that finished," he reported in December. The project construction began in late 2024 and was completed in time for July 4th festivities.

"That wouldn't have happened without a great partnership with the Wells County Foundation and the Town of Ossian," he noted. "It's really made a difference in how the park can be utilized."

The group's annual events continue to be popular attractions. Ossian's Home-town Christmas in early December highlights the town's retail businesses in addition to other activities. It also featured a horse-drawn carriage providing rides throughout the downtown area.

The chicken BBQ in May and the pork-chop dinner in September during Ossian

Days are important fund raisers for the group in addition to being great opportunities for the community to socialize and connect.

Helen Witte's annual pie auction set yet another record, raising \$11,900 for revitalization efforts.

"It seems like it's new record every year," Kumfer said, "which is great." Witte has been baking her pies for the community event now for 17 years, raising a total of more than \$80,000.

Looking forward to 2026, Kumfer said the joint downtown project with the county's Economic Development Council is nearing fruition.

"It's been a process," he acknowledged, "but we hope to have an announcement as early as January."

The group is also looking for new members.

"Frankly, we're starting to age out and would be excited to welcome some new blood," he said. "We're focused on creating opportunities for the people of Ossian to enjoy their community and we're always looking for ways to encourage new businesses and groups with the same thing in mind."



Michael Lautzenheiser



Kody Kumfer



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# Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

For nearly two decades, the Wells County Leadership Academy has played a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of community and industry leaders. Established in 2008, the program continues to grow each year — empowering individuals, strengthening workplaces, and enriching the overall vitality of Wells County. With the May 2025 graduation, the Academy proudly celebrated 33 new graduates, bringing its alumni network to more than 330 strong.



The Leadership Academy is designed to inspire personal and professional transformation. Participants gain essential leadership skills, deepen their self-awareness, and learn how to make meaningful contributions in their workplaces, organizations, and the broader community. Many graduates go on to serve on boards, take on leadership roles, and advance initiatives that improve life throughout Wells County.

Feedback from participants continues to highlight the program's impact. "Never in a million years would I have expected something like this to be as fun and informative as it was," said Kramer Feasel of Velocity Motors, a Level 1 graduate. "Erin always brings positive energy, and it's infectious to everyone in the room. I watched multiple people gain confidence and learn new things about themselves—not just business-related, but socially and within their families. The course truly improves all aspects of life. I highly recommend it to anyone looking to grow personally and professionally."

The Academy is structured in two progressive levels.

Level 1 builds a foundation of leader-

ship through self-awareness, communication styles, and peer-to-peer engagement. Participants explore the impact they can make in the community and learn how their strengths shape their leadership approach.

Level 2 advances these skills, focusing on team development, strategic leadership, and expanding influence within organizations and the community.

"Participating in the Leadership Academy has been a transformative experience,"

said Betty Lough of Christian Care, a Level 2 graduate. "The program gave me the tools, knowledge, and confidence to grow as a leader... It also helped me connect with like-minded professionals and make a lasting impact in my organization."

A defining strength of the Academy is the commitment of its facilitators — many of whom are alumni who return to mentor, guide, and inspire new participants. Their dedication fosters a strong culture of leadership that extends well beyond the classroom.

At the heart of the curriculum is **Habitudes**, a leadership framework developed by Dr. Tim Elmore. Through powerful images, stories, and practical principles, Habitudes has influenced thousands of leaders worldwide and continues to serve as the backbone of the Academy's approach.

The Wells County Leadership Academy remains a cornerstone program of the Chamber of Commerce, helping fulfill its mission of developing strong, engaged leaders who elevate the community for years to come.



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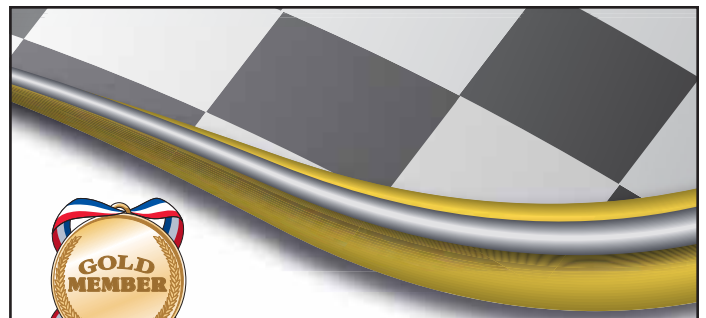
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# Dr. Tim Elmore Inspires Wells County with ‘Building Resilient Teams’

The Wells County Leadership Academy was honored to welcome nationally recognized author, speaker, and leadership expert Dr. Tim Elmore to our community for a powerful session on Building Resilient Teams. This special event on Oct. 29, with more than 150 attendees from businesses, schools, and community organizations, was a tremendous success and an energizing experience for all who participated.

Dr. Elmore’s presentation was everything we hoped it would be—authentic, relevant, and deeply impactful. His ability to connect real-world stories, humor, and practical leadership strategies kept the audience fully engaged from start to finish. Participants walked away with insights they could immediately apply within their teams, workplaces, and daily interactions.

What made this visit especially meaningful is the long-standing relationship Wells County has with Dr. Elmore’s work. His “Habitudes” curriculum has been the foundation of the Wells County Leadership Academy since the program began in 2008. For nearly two decades, his lessons on character, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, teamwork, and personal growth have shaped hundreds of emerging leaders in our community. To finally bring Dr. Elmore here—to meet our leaders, experience our community, and pour into our people—was truly remarkable.



Dr. Tim Elmore

Throughout his session, Dr. Elmore emphasized the importance of cultivating resilience within teams, especially during times of change and uncertainty. He encouraged attendees to embrace teachability, build trust, understand generational perspectives, and lead with both grace and strength. His message resonated deeply, offering clarity and encouragement to those seeking to grow stronger teams and healthier workplace cultures.

This event would not have been possible without the generous support of the Wells County Foundation and the Don Wood Foundation, whose sponsorships ensured that leaders across the



county had access to this high-quality learning experience. Their investment in leadership development continues to strengthen Wells County’s workforce and community impact.

Dr. Elmore’s visit served not only as a training opportunity but also as a celebration of the progress and potential of leadership in Wells County. As the Leadership Academy continues its mis-

sion to equip individuals with the skills to lead with character and confidence, the influence of Dr. Elmore’s teachings remains at the heart of the program.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Tim Elmore for sharing his wisdom and passion with us—and to our sponsors for making this unforgettable experience possible. Wells County is stronger because of leaders like these.



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# Chamber Ambassadors Recognize



The Chamber Ambassadors, chaired by Rory Antrim in 2026, welcome new businesses with Ribbon Cuttings and mentor other Chamber Members. The group also recognizes one local business or organization as the Chamber Member of the Month. Chamber Ambassadors make sure each company or organization knows that their contributions to the local economy and the community are greatly appreciated.

Seated from left: Erin Prible, Chamber of Commerce; Erin Daugherty, State Farm Insurance; Danielle Thompson, Flagstar Bank. Standing: Nick Huffman, Steffen Group; Erica Lehman, Lehman Appraisals; Jacob Duncan, Farm Bureau Insurance; Ben Renkenberger, United Way; Ted Brinneman, Midwest America Federal Credit Union; Heather Morgan, National Oil and Gas; Keith Muhlenkamp, First Merchants Bank; Doug Brown, News-Banner Publications; Kevin Pritchard, Ruoff Mortgage; Kira Lee, Three Rivers Federal Credit Union; Rory Antrim, First Bank of Berne; Kylie Tomlin, Helping Hands; Olivia Reeves, Meyer Building. Not pictured: Chris Gerber, Edge Manufacturing; Piercen Harnish, Shelton Financial Group; Kody Kumfer, Forgotten Children Worldwide; Casey Robbins, F&M Bank; and Hattie Wondercheck, Wells County Chamber of Commerce.



January:

**1st Source Bank**



May:

**Bluffton Family Eye Care**



September:

**Parlor City Oil Shop**

## 2024 Ambassador of the Year



Cyndee Fiechter

The 2025 Ambassador of the Year will be announced at the 2026 Annual Dinner

## 2024 Ambassadors of the Quarter

Each quarter, an ambassador is recognized for their level of participation and support of the program.

- First:** Nick Huffman  
Steffen Group
- Second:** Rory Antrim  
First Bank of Berne
- Third:** Rory Antrim  
First Bank of Berne
- Fourth:** Erica Lehman  
Lehman Appraisals



Nick Huffman



Rory Antrim



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# 2025 'Members of the Month'



February:  
**Pizza King**



March:  
**Premier Signs**



April:  
**The Mattress + Furniture Store**



June:  
**Foundations of Truth**



July:  
**Collier's Comfort Services**



August:  
**L S Construction**



October:  
**Crimson House**



November:  
**Anthony Wayne Council,  
Scouting America**



December:  
**Grand Sweet Shop**

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## Member Listings - Alphabetical

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A Perfect Blend.....824-2695  
A T Ferrell.....824-3400  
A1 U-Stor.....824-1846  
ABC Studio & Activity Center.....433-3417  
Above & Beyond Vehicle  
Reconditioning .....525-1441  
Achieva Salon.....824-0726  
Action Chiropractic .....273-3495  
Action Coach .....450-9163  
Action Micro Technologies.. (317) 216-7988  
Adams Wells Crisis Center.....728-9800  
AdamsWells Internet-Telecom.....565-3131  
Adobe Acrobat..... (408) 753-5826  
Affolder Equipment Sales .....589-2964  
Age In Place Home Services.....824-5602  
Airplane Express Bluffton .....824-2136  
Alive & Well .....227-0246  
All-American #8 Ossian  
Deli Marathon.....622-7499  
Allen Business Machines.....744-4259  
Almco Steel Products .....824-1118  
American Axle & Manufacturing ...824-6800  
American Legion Post 111.....824-3815  
American Marketing &  
Publishing ..... (815) 756-2840  
American Pest Professionals . (800) 347-2115  
American Salvage .....353-1170  
Amstutz Insurance Agency.....622-4169  
Anthony Wayne Area Council,  
Scouting America.....432-9593

Antique Engine Rebuilding .....824-4649  
Anytime Fitness .....353-1321  
Apache Propane.....824-2722  
Aqua Blast Corporation .....728-4433  
Archbold & Lewis Insurance .....622-4866  
Arrow Insurance Group .....355-5201  
Ashley Stalter - 1st Choice Realty .341-5548  
AuctionIT, LLP .....273-1892  
Auto Doctor.....824-5344



B&D Appliance Repair .....437-0022  
Baller Signs .....824-1987  
Barkley Builders.....622-7674  
BCG Capital.....273-2786  
Beauty & Beyond.....525-0461  
Beauty from Ashes Studio .....353-1622  
Becky Goshorn-  
Mary Kay Cosmetics .....824-0187  
Beers Mallers, LLP .....426-9706  
Berne Apparel.....622-1500  
Bi-County Services.....824-1253  
Big Brothers Big Sisters NEI .....456-1600  
Biggs Property Management .....724-9131  
Bill's Roofing & Siding .....622-0178  
Billy Ann's .....824-8060  
BKM Real Estate .....824-3982  
Bluffton Animal Clinic.....824-0924  
Bluffton CPA Group .....824-1040  
Bluffton Dental Clinic .....824-5940  
Bluffton Ducks Unlimited .....273-1036  
Bluffton Family Eye Care .....824-3424  
Bluffton Free Street Fair Assoc.....824-4351  
Bluffton KOA.....824-0127

Bluffton Masonic Lodge 145.....824-2524  
Bluffton Moose 242.....824-0660  
Bluffton Pizza King .....824-4956  
Bluffton Regional Medical Center .824-3210  
Bluffton Rentco .....824-4000  
Bluffton Roofing.....824-3564  
Bluffton Rotary Club .....609-6820  
Bluffton Super Wash.....824-9822  
Bluffton Tire .....824-0418  
Bluffton U-Stor .....827-7679  
Bluffton-Harrison MSD.....824-2620  
Bluffton-Southern Wells  
Dollars for Scholars.....273-2129  
Bluffton, City of .....824-1520  
Bobcat of Fort Wayne.....489-5511  
Body Magic Massage &  
Reflexology .....353-9410  
Bordner, Jean Ann .....273-0642  
Bott Radio Network.....423-2337  
Bowen Health ..... (800) 342-5653  
BoxDrop Fort Wayne.....227-2145  
BrickHouse Country Market.....271-2901  
Brickley, Dr. Harry,  
Farm Foundation.....824-3130  
Brightpoint .....415-4176  
Briner Building .....824-0120  
Brown Electric.....273-0809  
BT Pro Solutions.....299-7600  
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BT Pro Solutions  
Compass Financial Advisors  
CrossYoga By Janelle  
Crown & Chain Collective  
Domestic Violence Task Force  
Dudley Home Solutions  
Edward Jones Financial  
Advisor: Spencer Fear  
Engineering Resources, Inc  
Fabric Care Center  
Fast Eddie's Cones & Cones  
Faze Construction  
FixProServices  
Game Day Photography  
GenSolar Power  
Goodwin RV  
Golden Horizon Ag  
Hart Log Homes  
Have Heart Barber-Salon  
Healthcare Solutions  
High Street Bar & Grill  
Holmes Mowing & Trimming  
Hoosier Fencing Solutions  
Hot Head Burritos

Huffman Property  
Maintenance  
Hylant  
Ifer Construction  
ITOWN Church  
Jewelry by Matt Breunig  
Leander Schwartz Properties  
Lemler Long Ears  
Lux Living  
Midwest Concussion Clinic  
MK Super Scoopers  
Mr. John Whicker  
Mr. Phil Swain  
Next Pest Control  
NextHome Impact Realty  
On The Spectrum Advocate  
Palmer-Donavin  
Perfect Harmony  
Right to Life of NE Indiana  
Rochitas  
Southern Wells Community Church  
Summit Pain Management  
The Barber Shop  
The Resilient House  
The Rustic Trunk  
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Capri Meadows Apartments.....	824-4626
Caylor-Nickel Foundation Family YMCA.....	565-9622
Central House.....	417-6479
Cereset Bluffton.....	353-1598
Christian Care Retirement Community.....	565-3000
Cintas.....	609-8872
Citizens Advocating for Drug Awareness (CADA).....	824-8574
Clean Fuels National.....	346-2500
Cleaning One.....	273-7192
Clear Choice Chiropractic.....	353-1400
Coblentz Family Enterprises Commercial Roofing.....	223-3327
Coldwell Banker Holloway.....	824-7653
Collier's Comfort Services.....	622-6622
Comfort Inn.....	824-4455
Community Care of Northeast Indiana.....	353-3333
Community Harvest Food Bank of NE Indiana.....	447-3696
Compass Financial Advisors.....	490-7878
Cornerstone Ag Solutions.....	307-7901
Covington Financial Services.....	760-7080
Craigville Appliance Store.....	565-3166
Creative Arts Council of Wells County.....	824-5222
Creative Cabinet and Countertops ...	414-7677
Crell Law.....	824-4049
Crimson House Cafe.....	622-0167
Crop Performance.....(765)	894-0695
CrossYoga By Janelle.....	460-7009
Crown & Chain Collective.....	273-1153
Cupp Real Estate.....	824-1588
Custom Truck One Source...(800)	252-0043

### D

D&D Fish and Tenderloin Food Truck.....	273-8821
Dale, Huffman & Babcock.....	824-5566
Dash 90 Wines.....(765)	727-1027
Dazey's Bluffton.....	824-9003
Dedrick Tool & Die.....	824-3334
DeHoff Insulation.....	565-3679
Dicky's Express Car Wash.....	296-9700
Divine K9s.....	353-3040
DJ's Nails.....	353-9433
Domestic Violence Task Force.....	824-4102
Don Fiechter Farms.....	346-2157
Donaghy, Mr. Gene.....	437-9823
Dudley Home Solutions.....	273-9121
Dunwiddie Heating & Plumbing....	824-1999

### E

E-Z Bowl.....	824-9966
Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana.....	456-4534
Edge Manufacturing.....	827-0482
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Doug Fear.....	565-4134
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Jeremy Penrod.....	824-2354
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Jeremy Todd.....	824-0686
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Larry Smith.....	622-7952
Edward Jones Financial Advisor: Spencer Fear.....	565-4134
Edward Jones Financial Advisor: Trent Moore.....	622-7952

Eiro Wellness.....	227-8300
El Camino Real.....	565-3300
Elks Lodge.....	824-2824
Emshwiller & Emshwiller.....	824-1826
Engineering Resources.....	273-2891
Environmental Solutions.....	273-9014
Envive Healthcare of Berne.....	589-2127
Espich, Mr. Jeff.....	543-2546
Ethan's Outdoor Services.....	827-7945
Excel Homes.....	827-8255
Experience Audiology.....	706-2558
Expert Transmission.....	824-4929
Extreme Automotive Detailing.....	273-1145
Eyecare Associates of Bluffton.....	824-2020

### F

F&M Bank.....	622-4141
Fabric Care Center.....(317)	224-3212
Fairway Floor Covering.....	824-3049
Family Centered Services.....	824-8574
Family Farm and Home.....	827-0377
Family Ford of Bluffton.....	824-2300
Farm Bureau Insurance.....	824-2234
Farm Credit of Mid-America.....	824-3630
Farmers Insurance - Shari Tomac Agency.....	824-4400
Faze Construction.....(804)	336-3096
Felger Hart.....	489-2134
Felger Hart Residential Services..	244-6328
First Bank of Berne.....	824-9982
First Merchants Bank.....	758-3111
1st Source Bank.....	824-4800
5S Building Co.....	437-1643
FixProServices.....	409-0392
Flagstar Bank.....	824-0910

Flight Financial Advisors.....	824-5000
Forgiven Church.....	824-2000
Forgotten Children Worldwide.....	353-1580
Fort Wayne Technology Group.....	824-9160
Fortitude Fund.....	359-3720
Foundations of Truth.....	273-8154
Four Star Services.....	824-5384
Fraction Apparel & Home.....	353-1344
Freedom Academy.....(800)	200-6499
Freedom Chevrolet Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram.....	824-0900
Friends of Ouabache State Park...	824-0926
Friends of the Wells County Library..	622-7120
Friends Who Care Foundation.....	307-1074
Funkee Monkee Creations.....	849-3360

### G

G6: Military Grade IT.....(800)	560-3359
Game Day Photography.....	760-3658
General Manufacturing.....	824-3440
Genesis Pest Services.....	227-0742
GenSolar Power.....	226-8833
Gerber Furniture, Mattress & Window Treatments.....	824-1200
Golden Horizon Ag.....	815-0302
Goodwin-Harnish Funeral Home & Cremation Services.....	824-3852
Goodwin RV.....	273-8007
Gordon, Adler, Hayes & Washburn PC.....	824-9377
Grand Sweet Shop.....	433-7465
Grants Catering & Smokin' Wheels BBQ.....(419)	258-2233
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Habitat for Humanity of Greater Fort Wayne.....	600-8819
Halderman Farm Management & Real Estate.....	824-3130
Haldrup USA.....	(844) 694-6205
Harris Human Resources Group.....	492-6060
Hart Log Homes.....	414-4795
Have Heart Barber-Salon.....	228-2982
Healthcare Solutions.....	353-3315
Heartland Home Care and Hospice-Fort Wayne.....	484-7622
Heartland REMC.....	758-3155
Heartwood Planning Group- Matthew Henry.....	849-2814
Helping Hands.....	824-4263
Heritage Pointe.....	375-2201
High Street Bar & Grill.....	(765) 499-6972
Holmes Mowing & Trimming.....	307-1928
HomeCourt Home Care.....	333-1114
Honegger, Ringger & Co.....	824-4107
Hoosier Creek Farms.....	824-3255
Hoosier Fencing Solutions.....	273-4684
Hoosier House Family Restaurant.....	353-1415
Hope Missionary Church.....	824-1844
Horizon Events Corporation.....	422-9070
Hot Head Burritos.....	919-4411
Hott Family Dentistry.....	824-2442
Huffman Group Real Estate.....	827-8255
Huffman Property Maintenance.....	227-3076
Hugh's Bakery & Coffeehouse.....	353-1477
Huntington University.....	359-4153
Hylant.....	969-3925

### I

Ifer Construction.....	820-7855
Imagine Early.....	353-3009
In2Great, LLC.....	413-9027
Indiana Michigan Power.....	408-3498
Indiana Pancake House.....	353-1414
Indiana Physical Therapy.....	824-0522
Indiana Wesleyan University.....	450-0650
Integrity Inspections & Testing.....	437-1585
Inteva Products.....	(248) 861-9266
Irving Materials.....	824-3428
ITOWN Church.....	(616) 902-9395
Ivy Tech Community College.....	480-4134

### J

J Cole Tech LLC.....	846-1899
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Junior Achievement serving Wells County.....	484-2543

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Kukelhan, Laura, D.D.S.....	824-3100

### L

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Leas Seamless Guttering.....	820-1647

Lehman Appraisals.....	273-3615
Lemler Long Ears.....	565-3213
Les Gerber Insurance.....	824-1237
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     Society & Museum..... 824-9956  
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# Supporting Wells County One Purchase at a Time

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce once again partnered with First Bank of Berne to champion the Shop Local movement in Wells County. With their support, the initiative reached the community through billboards, newspaper features, and radio ads—all encouraging residents to support the small businesses that keep our local economy thriving.



To add excitement during the holiday season, the Chamber launched the Shop Local Passport program, a fun way to remind shoppers to explore and invest in local business-

es. Many businesses contributed prizes, and one lucky participant walked away with the Grand Prize: \$100 in Chamber Bucks. Together, these efforts continue to strengthen local commerce and celebrate the businesses that make Wells County unique.

# Support Local, Shop Local with ...



Click on the "Chamber Bucks" link on the Chamber's website for a current list of participating members!

Buying local means more money stays in the community and those businesses often donate to local causes and serve in leadership roles.

One very simple way to keep those dollars in our community and "Support Local" is to purchase *Chamber Bucks* ...

redeemable only at participating Chamber member businesses. The program is designed to promote our members and keep dollars in our community.

There are over 200 businesses that accept *Chamber Bucks* in Wells County. *Chamber Bucks* are offered

through the Wells County Chamber of Commerce in increments of \$5 and \$10 and can be purchased for any reason because it is the perfect gift for anyone ... holiday gifts, anniversaries, birthdays, perfect attendance, or just to say thank you.

*Chamber Bucks* can be purchased at the **Wells County Chamber of Commerce**, 211 Water Street in Bluffton, call 824-0510. They can also be purchased at the following:

- F&M Bank
- 1st Source Bank
- First Bank of Berne
- Flagstar Bank
- First Merchants Bank
- PNC Bank

# Cultivating Entrepreneurial Momentum in Wells County

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce continues to champion local innovation through its ongoing series of “Entrepreneurial Meet & Greet” events.

Hosted directly at the workplaces of participating business owners, each gathering highlights two entrepreneurs who share their journeys—from early ideas and obstacles to growth, resilience, and success.

These events create meaningful space for open conversation, mentorship, and connection. Aspiring entrepreneurs, new business owners, and seasoned professionals come together to exchange insights, ask questions, and learn from real-life experiences within the Wells County community.

In addition to powerful storytelling, each Meet & Greet includes access to resources designed to support small business development, providing practical tools and guidance to help launch, strengthen, or expand local enterprises.

Over the past year, attendees heard impactful stories from HomeCourt Home Care, Parlor City Oil, Par & Below, and Ossian Hardware—each offering unique perspectives on leadership, perseverance, and community commitment.

Entrepreneurial Meet & Greets are open to all community members. To be added to the invitation list or to learn more, contact Erin Prible at the Chamber office.



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At the core of Real Colors is a **user-friendly personality assessment** that identifies four primary personality types found in all people: **Gold, Green, Blue, and Orange**. Each color represents distinct motivators, communication styles, and approaches to work and relationships. By understanding these differences, participants gain valuable insight into human behavior and learn how to adapt their communication to connect more effectively with others.

The Real Colors workshop is a fun, interactive two-hour experience where participants:

- Gain an understanding of the four Real Colors personality types
- Discover where they personally fall on the Real Colors spectrum
- Learn to recognize and appreciate the strengths of each color
- Discuss, reflect, and engage with others to better understand different perspectives

This shared learning experience helps teams uncover what motivates each personality type, what individuals need to feel successful, and how to reduce mis-



communication—both in and out of the workplace.

As Erin Prible, Leadership Academy Coordinator, shares:

*“Real Colors is a great team-building exercise for any organization. You gain a deeper understanding of how team members communicate with one another, why people react the way they do, and how different work styles come into play. It helps teams better understand the people they work with every day. The workshop is two hours in length with a nominal per-person fee to cover materials, and we have trained hundreds of individuals in our community. It is one of the most*

*interactive and applicable team-building experiences you can offer your team.”*

Real Colors has been widely embraced throughout the community because of its immediate, practical application. Participants leave with tools they can use right away—whether improving workplace collaboration, navigating conflict, enhancing leadership skills, or building stronger relationships.

Businesses and organizations interested in offering a Real Colors workshop for their team are encouraged to connect with the Wells County Leadership Academy. To learn more and schedule a session, contact Prible at the Chamber office.

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# Building Business Connections on the Course

The Annual Chamber Golf Expo, held August 7, 2025, at Brookwood Golf Club, set a new milestone for community engagement and business networking. With 40 teams and more than 230 total participants—including golfers, volunteers, and sponsors—the event achieved its largest turnout yet, further solidifying its reputation as one of the Chamber’s most anticipated events.

“Our annual Golf Expo continues to grow because it blends everything our members love—networking, fun, and genuine community spirit,” said Erin Prible, Chamber Executive Director. “It’s more than a day of golf; it’s a business expo on the course, where members connect with one another, show off their creativity at tee stations, and come together to support the Chamber. This event succeeds because our business community shows up in full force year after year, and we’re incredibly grateful for every participant, sponsor, and volunteer who makes it possible.”

Tee Station Sponsors brought high energy and creativity to the course through interactive games, delicious food, and one-on-one networking opportunities with golfers. Major sponsors also played a vital role in elevating the experience.

Special recognition goes to: Edge Manufacturing – Prize Sponsor; Heartland REMC – Mulligan Sponsor; American Axle & Manufacturing of Bluffton – Beverage Sponsor; Freedom Chevrolet Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram – Photo Sponsor.

An outstanding lineup of Golf Cart Sponsors helped



ensure a memorable day: Ruoff Mortgage, Trusted Solutions, Property Rx, HomeCourt Home Care, SYM Financial Advisors, D.R. Horton, Lowe’s, IMI, and James S. Jackson & Co.

“Every year, I’m amazed by the creativity, generosity, and enthusiasm our members bring to this event,” Prible added. “The Golf Expo is a celebration of partnership,

community, and the business relationships that make Wells County thrive.”

The Chamber invites members and community partners to join the excitement next year at the 39th Annual Chamber Golf Expo on Thursday, August 6, 2026, once again at Brookwood Golf Club. Mark your calendars—this is an event you won’t want to miss!

Our new expansion was made available for occupancy in early October, 2024. This expansion brings our main fabrication, machining, warehouse, and office footprint to 146,000 sq ft which is joined by a 26,000 sq ft paint and assembly facility across the street. Visit our website to learn more about our business, capabilities, and our customers!

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# Scenes from the 2025 Annual Dinner

*A Winter Wonderland in Wells County!*



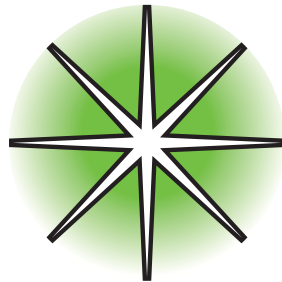
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# Member Appreciation Day

The Chamber's annual lunch on the patio enjoyed another day of perfect weather to help express gratitude to our valued members.



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# Strengthening Community Wellness

## Wells County Drug Taskforce Leads Outreach and Prevention Efforts

Since its launch in 2023, the Wells County Drug Taskforce Committee has made significant strides in raising awareness, expanding education, and building community-wide support around substance use prevention. What began as a grassroots effort has quickly grown into a collaborative network of more than 40 dedicated community members who meet monthly to develop and implement impactful programs for youth, families, and employers.

The Taskforce has introduced a variety of initiatives designed to promote education, resilience, and early intervention. Programs brought directly into schools have provided inspiration and awareness for students, while the Hidden in Plain Sight trailer—featured at school registrations and community events—has helped parents and caregivers better understand signs of potential substance misuse.

Momentum continues to build, thanks in part to highly visible events like Recovery on the River, held this past August. Committee members, several of whom are trained in the administration of Narcan, also conduct on-site education for employers, organizations, and community groups—equipping them with lifesaving knowledge and resources.

Following the overwhelming success of last year's event, **Recovery on the River will return on August 23, 2026, at Kehoe Park.** The community is invited to participate in a 5K run, enjoy live music, hear powerful testimonials and speakers, and connect with resource booths and food trucks. This free, family-friendly event celebrates hope, healing, and the power of community



Wells County Drug Task Force: Front row: Rachel Reinhard, Hattie Wondercheck, Stacy Morrison, Anna Murphy, Molly Hoag and Ashlee Cochrane. Back row: Erin Prible, Ben Renkenberger, Andy Yergler, Trent Lehman, Lane Sander, Brianna Myers and Valerie Runyon. Not pictured: Lisa Antrim, Wendy Bailey, Josh Barkley, Heather Baumgartner, Chad Bradley, Jinny Broderick, Garrett Bucher, Bethanie Burns, Carla Castro, Kim Conner, Angie Dial, Diss Aisha, Stephanie Eddy, Becky Ellis, Jen Frank, Sam Haiflich, John Johnson, Kent Kiracofe, Michael Lautzenheiser, Sarah MacNeill, Chastity McFarran, Holly Morgan, Tonya Roser, Jeff Stineburg, Janella Stroncsek, Adam Tussing, Christine Walker, Mark Wilson and Brad Yates.

support in recovery.

Free Narcan is available locally at the Wells County Chamber of Commerce and The Thrift Store in Bluffton, both serving as distribution sites committed to saving lives.


If you or someone you know needs

support, resources and assistance are available. Contact the Wells County Chamber of Commerce for help connecting with local programs and services.

Visit the website at [wellscountydrug-taskforce.com](http://wellscountydrug-taskforce.com)



Scenes from the 2025 inaugural Recovery on the River event.



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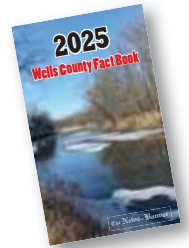


### Senior Living

Features stories about local seniors.

### Fact Book

Loaded with helpful information about Wells County.

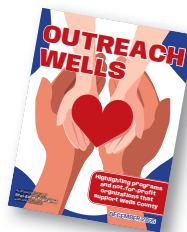
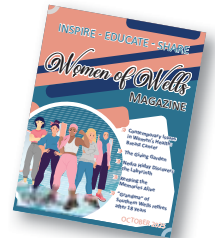


### Game Plan

Features photos and sports schedules for Wells & Adams County High Schools.

### Women of Wells

A celebration of the women of Wells County who inspire us.

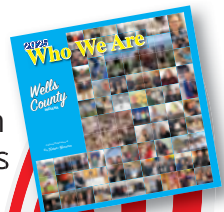


### Outreach Wells

A resource guide for Wells County residents in need.

### Who We Are

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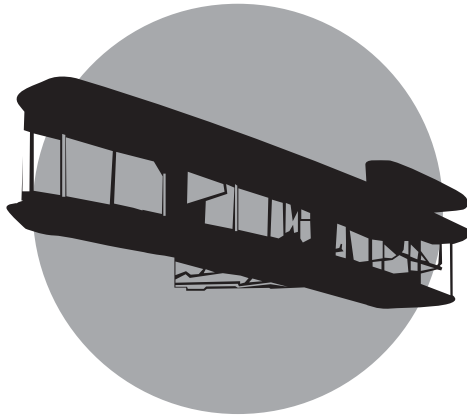
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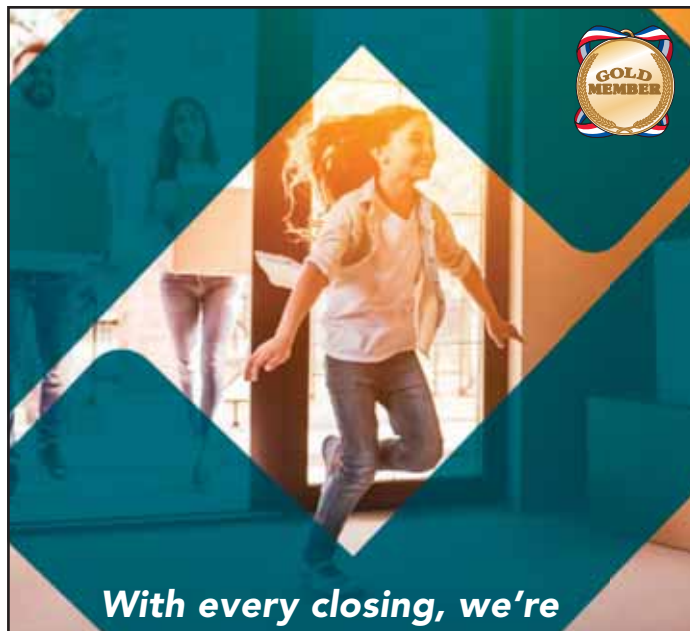
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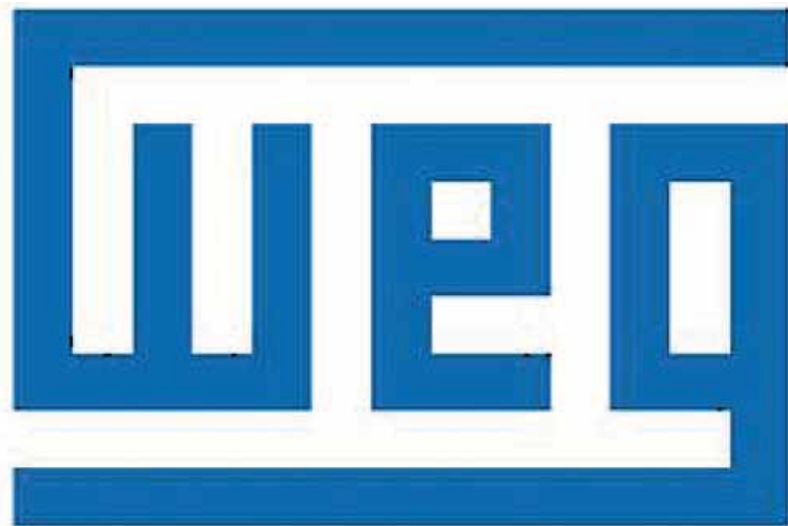
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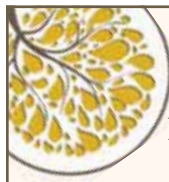
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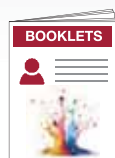
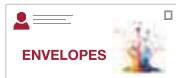
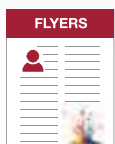
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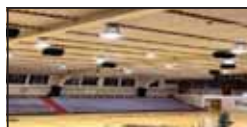
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