

Our Community is  
Our Business

The **ECHAMBER**  
Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce

**2019-2022**  
**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2019-2020**  
**BUSINESS PLAN**



# A Letter from the Board Chair

**Terry McHugh**  
*WEAU 13 News*

There has never been a better time to “Think Eau Claire” and your Chamber is a leader in the progressive development of the Chippewa Valley. We have created a roadmap for future success and growth through our strategic and business plans and are proud share that vision with you.

Our focus for the next three years will be on three key areas, we call pillars:

- The first is to champion a strong local and regional economy
- The second is to enhance the region’s economic prosperity through thoughtful public policy
- And the third is through organizational excellence and bold leadership, we will deliver on our promise to be a mission-driven organization

Chamber programs, events, communications, and activities will be tied to these pillars and were chosen to cultivate the growth and vibrancy of our community. We have clearly defined the strategies and tactics we will use to implement the plan and infuse the concepts within the Chamber’s core. Highlights include a focus on workforce development, influencing public policy and growing our young professionals network.

Our dynamic Chamber staff and committed board of directors have rolled up their sleeves and have gotten to work. Will you help us? We need all hands on deck to accomplish our lofty goals and I have no doubt we will achieve success. There has never been a better time for you to join the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce or step up your involvement. Together our voices will amplify as we champion a strong local and regional economy and make a positive impact in our community for generations to come.

Terry McHugh  
Board Chair



## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### **We will be the champion of a strong local and regional economy.**

*The Chamber's top priority is to cultivate economic growth and dynamism for its members and the community as a whole. This requires the chamber to lead efficiently and boldly on select initiatives, while partnering with other organizations on additional efforts.*

- We will lead on talent attraction and workforce development initiatives.
- We will lead and support partners in developing key community infrastructure that augments the marketplace and cements it as a regional center.
- We will collaborate and lead with any and all partners to build, enhance and embrace the Eau Claire brand, particularly as it relates to economic development.
- We will provide thoughtful leadership for key community challenges affecting economic prosperity.
- We will be the first stop for new and expanding companies for business development information.

### **We will enhance the region's economic prosperity and represent the interests of the business community through thoughtful public policy.**

*Creating an environment conducive to growth is necessary to achieve economic prosperity for the region. As the voice of the business community, the Chamber will advocate for policies that promote a pro-business/pro-job environment.*

- We will develop a thorough and thoughtful public policy agenda focused on a pro-business/pro-job environment.
- We will establish credible research relating to public policy and economic development.
- We will establish a political education program to communicate evidence-based information to the membership and the community about ballot questions and local/regional policymaking.
- We will instigate dialogue with local public policy-makers about key issues.
- We will collaborate with public and private institutions to shape a stronger brand for business and development.

### **Through organizational excellence and bold leadership, the Chamber will deliver on its promise to be a mission-driven organization.**

- We will develop an overall communication strategy supporting its strategic direction.
- We will continue to provide board development to ensure superior board performance.
- We will enhance our value propositions utilizing pricing model focusing on tiered investment.
- We will consistently measure programs and activities against organizational mission.
- We will "right size" the organization and its programs and events, allocating resources to strategic priorities.



*The Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce is proud to be a part of the community for more than 100 years.*

### **Mission Statement**

The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce is the advocate of business.

### **Vision Statement**

The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce will be the leader in the progressive development of the Chippewa Valley.

## **COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES**

### **Ambassadors**

*Chair: Zach Lehmann, Northwestern Mutual*

*Staff Liaison: Phillip Swiler*

*Goal: To represent and promote the Chamber and retain Chamber members.*

- Assist the Chamber in a retention rate that exceeds 90 percent over three years.
- Assist in communicating the distinctions, services and achievements of the Chamber to the business community.
- Host and maintain participation at 11 Business After Hours to an average attendance of 180 people each month.
- Host ribbon cutting and ground breaking ceremonies, open houses and special Chamber events.



*The Chamber Annual Meeting celebrates the accomplishments for the year.*



*More than 3,000 people attend Breakfast in the Valley every year.*

### **Annual Meeting**

*Chair: Marci Boyarski, Wipfli LLP*

*Staff Liaison: Chrystal Mills*

*Goal: To plan and execute the Chamber's 105th Annual Meeting.*

- Transfer the leadership of chair of the Board from Laura Talley, BMO Harris Bank to Terry McHugh, WEAU 13 News.
- Create a program to recognize volunteers, highlight the past year's accomplishments and set the tone for fiscal year 2019-2020.
- Recognize outstanding volunteers, committee chairs, Small Businesses of the Year, Ambassador of the Year, Community Development, Chamber Volunteer of the Year, Public Employee of the Year, Outstanding Young Professional and Woman of Achievement awards winners.
- Announce the inductees of the tenth class of the Business Hall of Fame.

### **Breakfast in the Valley**

*Chair: Mary Stabenow, Nohre & Company*

*Staff Liaison: Kaylynn Stahlbusch and Casey Schumacher*

*Goal: To recognize the vital role of agriculture in the local economy and promote positive relations between the business and farm communities.*

- Host the 23rd annual Breakfast in the Valley on June 14 to promote agriculture in the Chippewa Valley and educate the public.
- Serve more than 3,000 people.
- Present the Friend of Agriculture Award to a person or business who has contributed to agriculture, agri-business relations and the agricultural economy in the Chippewa Valley.
- Recognize the Eau Claire County Land Conservation award winners.
- Recognize an Eau Claire County Farm Family of the Year.
- Support agriculture through educational and financial efforts in the Chippewa Valley.

**Business Expo & Job Fair**

*Chair: Emily Thompson, Woods & Water Realty  
Staff Liaisons: Kaylynn Stahlbusch and Phillip Swiler*

*Goal: To plan and execute the 2019 Business Expo & Job Fair.*

- Along with sponsors, host the 2019 Business Expo and VIP Reception in fall of 2019. The Expo is an opportunity for exhibitors to expand their markets through a display of products and services while networking with other businesses and community members.
- Host a job fair during the public hours of the Business Expo.
- In conjunction with the Professional Education Committee, conduct a seminar series at the event.

**Business Salutes Eau Claire Golf Classic**

*Chair: Amy Wolfe, Trubilt Collision Center  
Staff Liaison: Phillip Swiler*

*Goal: Conduct an enjoyable golf outing that promotes networking for members.*

- Host the 34th annual Business Salutes Eau Claire Golf Classic for 230 people on May 20 at the Eau Claire Golf & Country Club.
- Structure the event as a source of non-dues revenue for the Chamber.



*The Business Expo & Job Fair provides an opportunity for Chamber members to showcase their products and services and recruit employees.*



*Attendees at Business Salutes Eau Claire enjoy golf, door prizes, great meals and a day of networking.*

**Business & Workforce Development**

*Chair: Monica Obrycki, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative  
Staff Liaisons: Scott Rogers and Kaylynn Stahlbusch*

*Goal: To be a champion for employers in the Chippewa Valley as they work to solve their immediate and long-term talent and workforce challenges. Implement the Employers Workforce Initiative.*

- Approach workforce as a critical supply chain issue. Identify area workforce-related activities among education, government, non-profits, business and industry groups, and the private sector and assess their value as part of the talent pipeline.
- Serve as a clearinghouse for Chamber members on workforce-related information and programs. Implement the workforce playbook online calendar and resource guide.
- Communicate regularly with Chamber members to identify the most critical issues specific to our region and its employers and promote opportunities for direct action by those Chamber members.
- Participate and collaborate with other entities where the Chamber's knowledge and resources can provide value to achieving important goals.
- Maximize our area's unique assets and value in attracting and retaining talent through the ThinkEauClaire.com initiative.
- Conduct the 2nd annual Workforce Solutions Summit.
- Serve as a catalyst to help assure cooperation, collaboration, communication, timeliness and accountability across regional workforce efforts. Convene leaders as needed to tackle specific opportunities and challenges. Support local, regional and state workforce initiatives that have a direct impact on employers.



*The first ever Workforce Summit was held at the Pablo Center at the Confluence.*

## Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance

*[Limited to members of the Chamber Executive Committees]*

*Chair: Terry McHugh, WEAU 13 News*

*Staff Liaison: David Minor*

*Goal: To keep open lines of communication on regional issues between chambers in Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Menomonie.*

- Meet annually with the executive committees of the three chambers in the Alliance.
- Facilitate the 26th annual Chippewa Valley Rally trip to Madison in February 2020 to present issues that are important to the Chippewa Valley.
- Explore opportunities to deal with emerging business issues using the combined resources in the Chippewa Valley.
- Host Business at the Airport on August 2.

## Diversity and Inclusion Task Force

*Chair: Wesley Escondo, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Wisconsin*

*Staff Liaison: Kaylynn Stahlbusch*

*Goal: To share information and learn best practices about diversity, inclusion and minority business.*

- Leverage members' combined experience and knowledge to advance diversity and inclusion programs and practices throughout professions.
- Provide business members with access to information, individuals and ideas that will help them build more economically and socially inclusive organizations.
- Become a forum to discuss new diversity and inclusion ideas and initiatives.



*Chippewa Valley Rally brings important economic issues to policy makers in Madison.*

## Good Government Council (GGC)

*Chair: Scott Biederman, Musky Tank, LLC*

*Staff Liaison: Scott Rogers*

*Goal: To inform and educate members on business issues and candidates' stand on these issues. The GGC is independent of any political party, candidates or organization except the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce.*

- Send out questionnaires to candidates for spring and fall elections for city, county and state races and share the results with members.



*Chippewa Valley Rally attendees meet with legislators to discuss issues that pertain to the Chippewa Valley.*



*Eggs & Issues policy breakfasts facilitate communication between government and the business community.*

**Governmental Affairs**

*Chair: Jennifer McHugh, Royal Credit Union*  
*Staff Liaison: Scott Rogers*

*Goal: Be a strong voice and take action on public policy and community initiatives that impact economic prosperity.*

- Implement an enhanced governmental affairs program focused upon advocacy, accountability and action. The focus includes:
  - Advocacy on business-related issues at the local, state and federal levels
  - Connections and relationships with policy makers
  - Timely information and education for Chamber members
  - Equipping members for effective involvement and influence
- Key governmental affairs activities include:
  - A robust schedule of events connecting Chamber members with policy makers: Monthly Eggs & Issues breakfasts, Lawmaker Luncheons, Candidate Forums and questionnaires, the annual Chippewa Valley Rally at the State Capitol, and education to equip Chamber members for effective involvement, and opportunities to participate in other local, regional, state and national programs.
  - Maintain relationships with governmental officials, monitor issues and recommend action when needed.
  - Publish the Business Issues Agenda affirming the Chamber’s positions on key economic issues including taxes, governmental accountability, health care, education, workforce, economic development, infrastructure and transportation, energy and the environment.
  - Publish the weekly Business Advocate e-newsletter.

**Green Business Initiative**

*Chair: Gordon Howie, Mayo Clinic Health System*  
*Staff Liaison: David Minor*

*Goal: To promote the interest of businesses that are committed and engaged in environmentally responsible operations and practices, also known as green business practices.*

- Give recognition through the Chamber’s website and other marketing materials to the members who have been designated as green businesses.
- Encourage members to submit Green Business applications. Seventy businesses have been recognized, with a goal of increasing the recognized businesses to 100.
- Conduct renewal process for those businesses completing their first two years.
- Conduct educational programs and identify best practices on sustainability.
- Promote the City’s sustainability awards program.

**Health & Wellness Committee**

*Chair: Shari Tieman, HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital*  
*Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher*

*Goal: To promote the benefits of workplace wellness as an effective strategy to improve employee well-being and productivity and as a healthcare cost containment measure, and recognize businesses that implement wellness best practices.*

- Continue the Workplace Wellness Initiative for Chamber members with a goal of increasing the total number of award holders to 30.
- Develop and maintain a Workplace Wellness Network to provide opportunities for education and interaction among businesses interested in workplace wellness.
- Collaborate with Healthy Communities and other complementary efforts to advance common goals, including a healthier, more productive workforce.
- Monitor healthcare and wellness-related policy that would affect the business community.
- Promote the benefits of a healthy workforce and recognize businesses that implement wellness best practices.
- Host the annual Downtown Business Community Wellness Walk and other health and wellness-related educational seminars and events.

**Make Eau Claire**

*Staff Liaison: David Minor*

*Goal: Support growth in the market place and entrepreneurial spirit.*

- Facilitate a quarterly meeting with organizations that work with entrepreneurs to foster communication and collaboration.
- Celebrate and encourage entrepreneurship.
- Support events to help entrepreneurs know how to be successful and find necessary resources.
- Develop partnerships where appropriate.

## Professional Education Committee

Chair: Deb Marshall, Wipfli LLP  
Staff Liaison: Kaylynn Stahlbusch

Goal: To implement educational seminars and programs that will meet the needs of Chamber members.

- Develop and promote seminars to increase total participation, membership penetration and unique attendees.
- Facilitate the Chamber's Leadership Success Series, which offers a platform for executives of high profile companies to share their story of success as well as their vision and thoughts facing business today and in the future.
- Facilitate the Lunch and Learn seminar series featuring a variety of topics presented by Chamber members during the noon hour.
- In partnership with the Chippewa Valley Society of Human Resource Management, conduct the seventh annual Human Resource Conference on April 7 to educate members on important human resource issues.
- Present the tenth annual Marketing and Social Media Conference on September 25 to educate members on social media and new technologies that can enhance their business.
- In conjunction with the Business Expo & Job Fair Committee, conduct seminars at the Expo.
- Conduct a Women's Leadership Summit to serve as a catalyst to empower women in and out of the workplace.
- Promote the Speakers Bureau, which features local speakers on business topics, to the community.

## SOHO (Small Office/Home Office)

Chair: Stephanie Shreve, CJC Company  
Staff Liaison: Phillip Swiler

Goal: Empower small business members by providing specialized programs and services.

- Promote and facilitate round-table discussions for small business owners.
- Provide educational resources to assist in addressing issues of small business owners.
- Promote and create awareness of the impact of buying local.
- Encourage networking among members.

## Young Professionals of the Chippewa Valley

Chair: Luke Benedict, Benedict Refrigeration  
Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher

Goal: Engage and empower young professionals by providing relevant educational, networking and community events.

- Provide opportunities for young professionals to enhance their professional and personal lives.
- Encourage young professionals to become committed to the Chippewa Valley by providing volunteer and community service opportunities.
- Continue strong partnerships with educational institutions to help retain young professionals in the community.
- Maintain an online presence to encourage networking among members and reach additional young professionals in the area.
- Educate young professionals on Chamber and community leadership opportunities.



Young Professionals volunteer at a variety of non-profit organizations throughout the year.



SOHO members participate in a variety of events to connect and exchange ideas.



## OTHER PROGRAMS

### Business Hall of Fame Inductee Luncheon

An annual luncheon to recognize the tenth class of inductees into the Chamber's Business Hall of Fame in August.

### Chamber/University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Business Breakfast

Held in March or April to bring the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and business community members together for a better understanding of what each other is doing.

### Chamber/Chippewa Valley Technical College Business Breakfast

Held in October to bring the Chippewa Valley Technical College and business community members together for a better understanding of what each other is doing.

### Chamber Buy Local Bucks Program

A program owned and operated solely by the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce using a local financial institution. The Chamber Bucks are redeemable only at Chamber member businesses as a "Buy Local" program.

### Western & Central Wisconsin Wage Survey

An annual survey reporting on wages for commonly recognized non-executive jobs in the area. Businesses from Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Marshfield, Menomonie, Rice Lake, Stevens Point, Wausau, Winona and Wisconsin Rapids participate in the survey. Survey data collection begins in March and is available for purchase in July. The name of our survey changed to reflect regions that joined our 2019 survey.

### Member Roundtables

Member roundtables are conducted six to eight times per year with invited Eau Claire Chamber members to discuss what is impacting their business and the community.

### Receptions

The Chamber Board of Directors meet with members of the Eau Claire and Altoona City Councils, Eau Claire County Board and Eau Claire School Board to keep open lines of communication.

### Referral Program

The Membership Referral Program allows current members to refer new businesses to the Chamber. A referral is a business or prior member (who hasn't been a member for more than a year) that joins the Chamber during a given calendar year as a direct result of a current member's efforts to solicit their membership.

### Small Business Breakfast

Held in May during Small Business Month to recognize two Small Businesses of the Year members that were named at the Chamber's Annual Meeting.

### University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Welcome Bags

Assemble 2,600 welcome bags for new University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire freshmen and transfer students to acquaint them with the Eau Claire community and businesses.

### Working Mothers Luncheon

Host the fifth annual Working Mothers Luncheon on May 23 to provide an educational and networking opportunity for working mothers.

### Reception for Non-Profit Organizations

The Chamber will host a casual reception for two to three representatives from each non-profit Chamber member to show appreciation for what they do for the community.

## NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

### AM Exchange

Quarterly morning networking event held at a Chamber member business that includes a speed networking opportunity.

### Business After Hours

Monthly networking opportunity on the second Monday evening at a host business with hors d'oeuvres and prizes.

### Business at the Airport

Hosted by the Chippewa Valley Chamber Alliance, this event is held on August 1 at the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport with 30 business exhibitors, hors d'oeuvres and prizes.

### Holiday Open House

Held December 5 at the Chamber office to allow members a time to network and celebrate the holidays while showcasing Chamber member restaurants and beverage distributors.

### Your Chamber Orientation

Held monthly at the Chamber office for new and existing members to gain an in-depth knowledge about Chamber programs, activities and involvement.



*One of our biggest networking events, Business After Hours is held on the second Monday of each month.*

## EAU CLAIRE CHAMBER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

*Goal: To provide a vehicle for members to contribute charitable support to Chamber educational programs and projects including Leadership Eau Claire™, Real Life Academy and Youth Leadership Eau Claire.*

The Foundation has established an Endowment Fund, which has raised \$136,800 towards the goal of \$400,000, for youth leadership programs. Additionally, sponsorships from area businesses and further support from the Foundation provide funding for students to take part in Youth Leadership Eau Claire™. The Foundation also awards a fully-paid scholarship each year from the Chamber 100th Year Scholarship Fund to an individual from a small business or non-profit organization to participate in the Leadership Eau Claire™ program.

### **President**

Mark Faanes  
*Wipfli LLP*

### **Vice President**

Tim Olson  
*Royal Construction, Inc.*

### **Secretary**

David Minor  
*Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce*

### **Treasurer**

Paul Kohler  
*Charter Bank*

### **Board of Directors**

Tim Benedict  
*Benedict Refrigeration*

Bill Eklund  
*Sharp Photo and Portrait*

Bob Forsberg  
*Walmart*

Dr. Jeff Jones

Marianne Klinkhammer  
*Gator Garb Promotions*

Bob McCoy  
*Charter Bank*

Darin McFadden

John Mickelson  
*RB Scott Company, Inc.*

Honorable Lisa Stark

Terry McHugh  
*WEAU 13 News*

Sue Tietz  
*McDonough Manufacturing Company*

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### **Leadership Eau Claire™**

*Chair: Kristin Schmidt, M3 Insurance*

*Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher*

*Goal: To increase participants' community knowledge through skill building exercises and educational days that stimulate them to take an active leadership role in shaping our community.*

- Conduct the 38th annual Leadership Eau Claire™ program for 45 participants from a cross section of the community and graduate them prepared to volunteer their services to the community.
- Instill in participants an understanding of volunteerism, citizenship and community trusteeship in an effort to build on Eau Claire's quality of life.

### **Leadership Eau Claire™ Alumni**

*Chair: Jeff Stevens, Chestnut Technology Consulting*

*Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher*

*Goal: To provide ongoing leadership programs and networking opportunities for Leadership Eau Claire™ alumni.*

- Host the annual Alumni Luncheon as a networking opportunity for alumni and to recognize the newest program graduates as well as announce the new class members.
- Encourage Leadership Eau Claire™ alumni to participate in the Curriculum, Executive and Alumni committees to create a well-rounded program.
- Recruit new members for the Leadership Eau Claire™ program.
- Coordinate a community service volunteer activity to engage LEC alumni.
- Organize a LEC Alumni Day to refresh alumni on new community issues.



*The Leadership Eau Claire™ class begins the program each year with an opening retreat.*

**Real Life Academy**

Chair: TBD

Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher

Goal: To plan and execute the Real Life Academy, an event for area high school students and business volunteers to bring the two groups together. The Academy is designed to provide “real life scenarios” with experienced volunteers that have met the day-to-day challenges of money management and built them into their lives successfully.

- Coordinate the Real Life Academy in the fall and spring for students at Altoona, Augusta, Fall Creek, Memorial, North and Regis high schools. Current and long-term goal is to have 100 percent of all graduating seniors at the participating high schools attend the Academy before graduation.
- Recruit Chamber members to sponsor and volunteer at the two academies and maintain the partnership between the business and educational communities.



Approximately 100 Chamber members volunteer their time at the Real Life Academy.



Approximately 600 area high school students complete Real Life Academy each year.

**Youth Leadership Eau Claire**

Chair: Tracey Smiskey, Northwestern Bank

Staff Liaison: Casey Schumacher

Goal: To provide an opportunity for area high school juniors to enhance their knowledge and develop leadership skills that will empower and motivate them to become involved and committed to their community.

- Conduct the 16th annual Youth Leadership Eau Claire program for up to 36 students from Altoona, Augusta, Fall Creek, Memorial, North and Regis high schools.
- Nurture young leaders and encourage them to remain in or return to Eau Claire's workforce.



Youth Leadership Eau Claire students complete community service projects to help non-profit organizations.



Members of Youth Leadership Eau Claire tour area businesses in Eau Claire.

# BOARD AND STAFF

## Chamber Board of Directors

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**Board Chair**

Terry McHugh  
WEAU 13 News

**Chair Elect**

Scott Biederman  
Musky Tank, LLC

**Past Board Chair**

Laura Talley  
BMO Harris Bank

**Vice Chair**

Scott Hoffmann  
WIN

**Vice-Chair**

Mark Faanes  
Wipfli LLP

**Vice-Chair**

Andy Neborak  
Eau Claire Express Baseball

**Vice-Chair**

Margo Keys  
Chippewa Valley Technical College

**Vice-Chair**

Tim Benedict  
Benedict Refrigeration

## Directors

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Steve Anderson  
Ruder Ware, L.L.S.C.

Andy Bagnall  
HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital

Luke Benedict  
Benedict Refrigeration

Jason Craig  
Mayo Clinic Health System

Ned Donnellan  
Donnellan Real Estate

Anne Hargrave-Thomas  
OakLeaf Surgical Hospital

Dave Johnson  
EO Johnson Business Technologies

Paul Kohler  
Charter Bank

Nicole Lasker  
Lasker Jewelers

Zach Lehmann  
Northwestern Mutual

Paul Madsen  
RainMaster Lawn Systems

Nick Meyer  
Volume One

Therese Pershall-Birmingham  
Pablo Properties

Dale Poynter  
SDS Architects

Brandon Riechers  
Royal Credit Union

Chancellor Jim Schmidt  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Jerry Shea  
Market & Johnson, Inc.

Tracey Smiskey  
Northwestern Bank

Lynn Thompson  
Eau Claire Energy Cooperative

Jason Vance  
Ken Vance Motors

Amy Wolfe  
Trubilt Collision Center

MaiVue Xiong  
Weld Riley, S.C.

## Chamber Staff

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**President and CEO**

David Minor  
minor@eauclairechamber.org

**Workforce and Program Director**

Kaylynn Stahlbusch  
stahlbusch@eauclairechamber.org

**Finance Director**

Danielle Kummer  
kummer@eauclairechamber.org

**Communications and Operations Director**

Chrystal Mills  
mills@eauclairechamber.org

**Membership Development Director**

Phillip Swiler  
swiler@eauclairechamber.org

**Creative Director**

Chelsea Seckora  
seckora@eauclairechamber.org

**Governmental Affairs and Workforce Director**

Scott Rogers  
rogers@eauclairechamber.org

**Young Professionals and Educational Director**

Casey Schumacher  
schumacher@eauclairechamber.org

**Director of First Impressions**

Sarah Hughes  
hughes@eauclairechamber.org

## Contact Us

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**Mailing Address:**

Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce  
101 N. Farwell Street, Suite 101, Eau Claire, WI 54703

**Phone:** 715-834-1204, **Fax:** 715-834-1956

**Email:** [information@eauclairechamber.org](mailto:information@eauclairechamber.org)

**Website:** [www.eauclairechamber.org](http://www.eauclairechamber.org)