



# ERIE COUNTY CHAMBER of COMMERCE

604 W. WASHINGTON STREET, SANDUSKY, OH 44870  
(419) 625-6421 [ERIECOUNTYCHAMBER.COM](http://ERIECOUNTYCHAMBER.COM)



## Announcement from: January 13, 2022

Good afternoon,

As you know, we have been working here at the Erie County Chamber of Commerce over the past six months to become more impactful for you as members and for the community at large. Accordingly, the ECCOC Board of Directors just approved both a name change of our parent company, to the Greater Sandusky Partnership (GSP), and embraced the Erie County Chamber as our first strategic affiliate.

A new board of GSP is being formed with Duff Milkie, formerly of Cedar Fair, as its Chair and CEOs from many of our leading employers in the region as trustees. I, as ECCOC Chair will sit on the new GSP board and begin a process to enlarge the ECCOC Board to ensure that the many members of the chamber, small to mid-size, are adequately represented and driving the outcomes of the Chamber.

In addition to serving you with product access and networking, we strive to become a dominant advocacy organization for local, state and federal policy that impacts the business community and growth potential. We strive to play that role as private sector leaders in support of the emerging new GSP economic strategy that will be released in the first quarter of 2022. Our recent leadership role to defeat Issue 2 with many partners was a symbol of our intent and capacity.

The city of Sandusky and the Erie County region have been building momentum in our physical spaces but there is much more to do to realize a growing economy in both the people who live and move here and the investment climate. The chamber is now positioned to play an instrumental role in driving new and sustained approaches to economic development in an efficient and strategic way.

Please let me or Joe Roman, our interim Executive Director and GSP staff leader know if you have an interest in serving on the new Chamber Board of Directors.

Thank you,

Matt Maschari, Chairman  
Erie County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

## UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS:

### *RIBBON CUTTING WITH SPERO HEALTH*

**When:** Wed., January 26

**Time:** 12:00pm to 5:00pm

**Where:** 1725 Columbus Ave., Suite F, Sandusky, OH

**[Click here to learn more](#)**



**"SUCCESS ISN'T ALWAYS ABOUT GREATNESS. IT'S ABOUT CONSISTENCY. CONSISTENT HARD WORK LEADS TO SUCCESS. GREATNESS WILL COME."  
-DWAYNE JOHNSON**

# UPCOMING EVENTS

1725 Columbus Ave. Suite F, Sandusky, Ohio 44870 • 419-273-0449

# CELEBRATE

## With Spero Health



*Spero Health exists to save lives, instill hope, and restore relationships.*

*We offer a proven path to recovery from addiction in Sandusky.*

Please join us for our Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on 1-26-2022 at 12:00 PM followed by an open house till 5:00 PM



 FIRELANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## HOPE FOR A NEW WORLD

*Offerings of Light & Love*



Orchestra Concert with Guest Artist Sterling Elliot, cello

**SATURDAY | FEB. 19 | 7:30 P.M.**  
Sandusky High School Auditorium (Sandusky, OH)

 FIRELANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CHORALE

## THE ESSENCE OF BEETHOVEN

*In honor of Beethoven's 250th Anniversary*



Chorale Concert with Guest Soloists from Baldwin Wallace

**SUNDAY | MARCH 13 | 4 P.M.**  
Saint Mary's Catholic Church (Sandusky, OH)

 FIRELANDS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## MELODIC LANGUAGES OF LOVE

*From Russia to Spain*



Orchestra Concert with Guest Artists Ilya & Olga Kaler, violins

**SATURDAY MARCH 26 7:30 P.M.**  
Sandusky High School Auditorium (Sandusky, OH)





## JOIN OUR COMMITTEE!

The Chamber of Commerce is looking for individuals who would like to be a part of our Ambassador Committee.

This role meets monthly at the Chamber, attends Business After Hours and other events when they can, helps to plan future events and volunteers to help organize and attend the event(s), and just have overall good ideas and can be a team member.

Please email  
[kimberlym@eriecountychamber.com](mailto:kimberlym@eriecountychamber.com)  
if you are interested. Thank you!



**“ALMOST EVERYTHING WORTHWHILE CARRIES WITH IT SOME SORT OF RISK, WHETHER IT’S STARTING A NEW BUSINESS, WHETHER IT’S LEAVING HOME, WHETHER IT’S GETTING MARRIED, OR WHETHER IT’S FLYING INTO SPACE.”**

**– CHRIS HADFIELD**



**FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE:**

## **HURON COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

### **Payne, Nickles & Company Accounting Scholarship**

Payne, Nickles & Company, CPAs, through the Huron County Community Foundation, is proud to announce it is again offering up to two (2) \$2,000 scholarships for the 2022-2023 academic year. The scholarship is open to second, third, fourth, and fifth year students with accounting majors, and is intended to assist the student in meeting the 150-hour requirement to take the CPA exam.

Eligibility Criteria:

- **Erie/Huron, or contiguous counties**, Ohio resident
- Minimum 2.8 grade point average
- Completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

This scholarship is based on field of study, merit, financial need and community involvement. The decision is final and will be announced after Huron County Community Foundation Board approval in July. The scholarship will be paid to the institution (not to an individual or bookstore) in one installment.

Scholarship applications can be printed from the Payne, Nickles & Company website at [www.pncpa.biz](http://www.pncpa.biz) or the Huron County Community Foundation website at [www.huronccf.org](http://www.huronccf.org).

The application must be postmarked no later than June 1.

**Completed applications should be mailed to:**

Huron County Community Foundation  
12 Benedict Ave.  
Norwalk, Ohio 44857



## What is a Chamber of Commerce?

### Definition

A **chamber of commerce** is an organization of businesses seeking to further their collective interests, while advancing their community, region, state or nation. Business owners in towns, cities and other territories voluntarily form these local societies/networks to advocate on behalf of the community at large, economic prosperity and business interests. Chambers have existed in the US for more than two centuries, with many having been established before the jurisdictions they represent. A business-led civic and economic advancement entity operating in a specific space may call itself any number of things – board of trade, business council, etc. – but for the purposes of this primer, they are all chambers of commerce.

Chamber missions vary, but they all tend to focus to some degree on five primary goals: Building communities (regions/states/nations) to which residents, visitors and investors are attracted; Promoting those communities; Striving to ensure future prosperity via a pro-business climate; Representing the unified voice of the employer community; and Reducing transactional friction through well-functioning networks. Chambers have other features in common. Most are led by private-sector employers, self-funded, organized around boards/committees of volunteers and independent. They share a common ambition for sustained prosperity of their community/region, built on thriving employers. Most are ardent proponents of the free market system, resisting attempts to overly burden private sector enterprise and investment.

Local businesses are voluntary paying members of a chamber (non-profits, quasi-public and even public sector employers also sometimes pay dues to belong). The membership, acting collectively, elects a board of directors and/or executive council to set policy for, and guide the workings of, the chamber. The board or executive committee then hires a chief executive (various titles), plus an appropriate and affordable number of staff to run the organization.

In the majority of countries, the use of the term "chamber of commerce" is regulated by statute, though this is not the case in the US. Only trademark, copyright and domain name rules protect a chamber's identity – only state corporation law defines their existence and reason for being. While most chambers work closely with government, they are not part of government although many consider the process of appropriately influencing elected/appointed officials to be one of their most important functions.

Currently, there are about 13,000 chambers registered in the official World chambers Network registry. There are roughly 4,000 chambers of commerce in the US with at least one full-time staff person and thousands more established as strictly volunteer entities.



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## Membership

Under the private, volunteer membership model, which exists in the USA and many other nations, companies are not obligated to become chamber members. Membership rolls in a given North American chamber can range from a few dozen firms to more than 20,000, so there is no real “average” or typical chamber of commerce.

Chambers do not operate in the same manner as a **Better Business Bureau** or trade association, which can bind its members under a formal operations doctrine (and, thus, can remove them). Businesses and other employers pay dues to belong and expect to receive the benefits of membership as long as they continue to invest in the organization. They usually accept any reputable business as a member, though dues investment schedules can sometimes result in intended or unintended exclusivity.

It is important to note that in most cases it is the company that is the member, not an individual. A member company is then encouraged to involve numerous senior level employees in the work of the chamber. While five, ten or more individuals from a given company will identify themselves as “members” of the chamber, only the organization they work for is counted when a chamber states its size. A company is free to join (pay dues to) multiple chambers and many mid-size to large firms do so (especially neighbors), in order to further advance their companies' market or policy interests.

Dues amounts are typically determined by the size of the member company (employee count or annual revenue), rather than by the number of people engaged in the chamber from that company. Some chambers have adopted pay-as-you-go or funding models based on specific categories or quantity of services provided to member companies.

Occasionally, chambers will “bundle” memberships, allowing a single dues investment in one organization to qualify a company for membership in a group of chambers. This is sometimes referred to as “federation” membership and it can even extend to the national level.

## Service Territory

The geography of any one chamber of commerce – often referred to as “service territory” – is seldom defined by any political or legal jurisdiction. More likely, the territory is defined by the catchment area of a chamber’s membership. The locations of the businesses that compose the membership tend to define the chamber’s footprint and “claim” to a territory. Adjoining organizations often establish formal or informal understandings about borders.

Like other businesses, chambers also dissolve and merge based on economic or other conditions. Both the economic recession and increased focus on regionalism appear to be driving increased examination of the benefits of mergers.



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## Relationships

The chambers in the US and Canada are **not** bound together under contracts or government regulations. There is no chapter or franchise arrangement between or among them. There can be very strong relationships between neighboring organizations, but those relationships are voluntary and informal rather than required or written. Chambers interact with each other across the nation and the globe – many even maintain formal memberships in other chambers – but the network is informal. In the chamber world, nobody is “in charge” of anybody; a local chamber does not answer to a state or national chamber.

Local chambers are often, but not always, paying members of their state and national chambers of commerce. This connection is one of voluntary membership and does not extend to control or governance. A significant number of chamber executives also choose to join professional associations of their peers, such as the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, the Western Association of Chamber Executives, State Chamber Executive Associations, or the World Chambers Federation. These memberships are for professional development purposes similar to those of any trade association and, once again, the relationships do not involve the abdication of self-determination.

## Policy Independence and Cooperation

The most difficult aspect for the general public, media, government officials and even some businesses to understand is that there is literally no inherent hierarchical structure in the chamber world. This can be extremely confusing to those who naturally assume that a few thousand entities sharing the same name must be related and that some ordered lineage must exist among them. That is simply not the case in the US. When business and economic policy priorities align, which is usually the case, chambers of all sizes attempt to work together and speak with a unified voice. Inevitably, conflicting positions will arise about some issues, or about strong positions (or lack thereof) of chambers at various levels.

To illustrate: The head of a community-based organization like a retired citizen group may wrongly assume that a position taken by a state chamber is shared and endorsed by their local chamber. Likewise, a large metropolitan chamber of commerce could take a strong position in favor of an infrastructure project or educational reform initiative, which will not be embraced or supported by suburban chambers operating within the same metro region.

Or, a coalition of chambers might unite under the leadership of the United States Chamber (the national business advocacy organization representing hundreds of thousands of member corporations) to advocate for/against a bill affecting border crossings, but the coalition may include only a few dozen of the thousands of chambers in the US. Any individual chamber may take a very visible, contradictory stand on that same international visitor policy. On certain issues at certain times, the US Chamber





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can organize thousands of its member chambers and associations into a unified grassroots lobbying force. Many chambers have also voluntarily entered into a “Federation” relationship with the United States Chamber, which involves more consistent engagement in federal policy activities by both the local chamber and its members.

Since businesses are not required to join a chamber (penetration levels vary widely), and because territories overlap, it can be difficult for any one organization, regardless of size, to state that it “speaks for business,” but they do. They earn that privilege by attracting numerous and large heterogeneous employers to their membership and leadership, as well as by utilizing their collective voice on meaningful policy initiatives. In general, the smaller the chamber (and community it represents), the less active the organization will be on the policy/advocacy front. Even small organizations, however, take stands on regional issues ranging from school funding to road development.

The processes of choosing and articulating specific policy positions vary by organization and issue. For the most part, a vote (or expression of consensus) of a chamber board of directors determines the stand to be taken in the name of that chamber on any issue. In recent years, with the increased involvement of public sector and non-profit employers in chambers, consensus-building has become more difficult at all levels. Chamber boards are independent, but they usually take into account the recommendations of state and national organizations when larger issues are considered.

The US Chamber and state chambers provide local counterparts with extensive background and adaptable sample documents. Local chambers then debate, adopt, adapt or reject the larger entities’ recommendations. Likewise, local, regional and state chambers express their opinions about legislation specific to them, in hopes that their views will be shared, embraced and supported by others. The American Chamber of Commerce Executives provides access to a Policy Clearinghouse, which enables member chambers to share knowledge about state and local public policy issues and strategies being employed in various regions to deal with those issues.

Because the chamber world is not structured around an affiliate or chapter model, such disagreements cannot be solved by a controlling authority. Sometimes the disagreements cause destructive friction which results in bonds between chambers being broken. More often, chambers issue differing position statements and agree to disagree, knowing that the opportunity for cooperation on future issues will be critical for them all.

## **Structure**

Chambers of commerce in the US operate almost exclusively as non-profit entities known as 501(c)(6) corporations. Unlike charities, these 501(c)(6) non-profits have the authority under state and federal tax rules to represent their members in public policy debates. They may lobby and take positions on actual or proposed legislation, subject to local, state and federal laws. Chambers may legally endorse candidates for public





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can office and/or ballot propositions (but most do not). The use of general fund revenues for chamber political and lobbying purposes is strictly regulated. The chief executive or another member of the staff is sometimes a state-registered lobbyist. The portion of any member's dues investment allocated to direct lobbying is not deductible as a business expense.

Chamber business models and organizational missions vary significantly. Some chambers may offer services and products that appear to compete with businesses operating within their own territories. One group of chambers may affiliate with a service provider to offer discounts or other benefits to chamber members (from low-cost office products to health insurance), while another group aligns with a completely different vendor. As a rule, larger chambers tend to rely less on membership dues revenue than their smaller counterparts. About one-third of the chambers of commerce in the US also include economic development corporations and/or tourism and visitors bureaus. Virtually all chambers have revenue sources other than dues; event income is the most common.

Although a chamber is a non-profit entity under federal tax law, such a 501(c)(6) is free to undertake supporting business activities (referred to as "unrelated business income) – publishing, trade shows, insurance programs, etc. In many cases, these activities are subject to business income taxes.

Many chambers establish charitable/educational foundations, known as 501(c)(3) corporations, to support specific, eligible parts of the chamber's agenda. The allowable purposes and rules related to such supporting foundations are different than those that have been established for 501(c)(6) organizations.

(NOTE: In a few cases, for-profit chambers have been established in some communities. These business ventures are routinely shunned and fought by traditional non-profit chambers.)

The largest metro or state chambers may employ up to 100 people. The vast majority, however, have staffs numbering fewer than five and budgets under half a million dollars. Chamber professionals serve in jobs covering most of the disciplines found in other small businesses – communications, finance, marketing, customer service and event planning. Some chambers specialize in certain activities, such as economic development, tourism, research, and/or advocacy. Some provide staffing and management to development-related government agencies on a contract basis.

### **If You've Seen One...**

The term "chamber of commerce" is one of the oldest and most well-recognized brands in the world, but there is significant public misunderstanding of its meaning. There is an old adage in the chamber world: "If you've seen one chamber, you've seen one." In all cases, the whole of a chamber of commerce is greater than the sum of its parts, programs, people and participants.

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