

**2020 ANNUAL MEETING
SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES**
(In order of appearance on the agenda)



Desirée M. Bennyhoff, IOM, ACE
President and Chief Executive Officer
Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce
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Desirée M. Bennyhoff is president and chief executive officer of the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce. She was appointed CEO in January 2013 after serving five months in an interim capacity.

Bennyhoff oversees the strategic direction of the St. Louis MSA-based, business association – one of the largest pro-business organizations in the Illinois Metro East region – which is dedicated to a strong, private sector regional economy.

Under Bennyhoff's leadership, the Ed/Glen Chamber in 2019 earned its first national accreditation from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in the chamber's 95 years of existence. This accreditation with five-star distinction places the Ed/Glen Chamber in the top 1.7% of chambers of commerce nationwide, recognizing adherence to industry best practices and organizational excellence.

Bennyhoff is past chairman of the board for the Illinois Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (IACCE), serves on the Illinois Chamber of Commerce board of directors, and is active with ACCE's government affairs division.

In 2016 Bennyhoff graduated from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Institute for Organization Management program at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and earned the Accredited Chamber Executive designation from IACCE. She is now a candidate for the Certified Association Executive credential from the American Society of Association Executives, which is designed to elevate professional standards, enhance individual performance, and identify association professionals who demonstrate the knowledge essential to the practice of association management.

Bennyhoff serves on the Illinois Chamber of Commerce education task force, along with Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois' public policy and economic development committees. In addition, she counsels entrepreneurs through the Illinois Metro East Small Business Development Center and mentors at-risk high school students as part of the Regional Office of Education #41's 'Give 30' program. She was honored to be selected by peers as a class advisor for first-year students at Midwest Institute in both 2017 and 2018, and was recently appointed to serve on Institute's curriculum committee – which governs course requirements and faculty at the national level for all five IOM sites across the country – and the Midwest IOM board of regents. In 2019 Bennyhoff was selected to participate in the U.S. Chamber's Business Leads Fellowship program's third cohort.

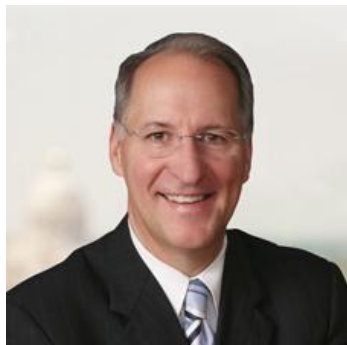


Lauren Doroghazi

Policy Directory, Council of State Chambers
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Lauren Doroghazi is Policy Director for the Council of State Chambers, where she tracks legislation, analyzes policy issues, and identifies emerging trends important to state chambers of commerce across the 50 states. Since joining COSC in 2015, Lauren has played an integral part in building and expanding the COSC Policy Center and serves as staff chair on several State Chamber Policy Committees, including employment and labor.

Her prior experience includes serving as an editor for ProQuest, where she researched legislative histories of federal laws and time on Capitol Hill and in Canadian Parliament. Lauren graduated with a Master in Public Administration from The George Washington University in 2016 and holds undergraduate degrees in political science and history and from the University of Michigan.



Doug Loon

President, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
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Douglas B. Loon is president of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, a position he has held since September 8, 2015. The Minnesota Chamber represents more than 2,300 Minnesota companies, 130 local chambers and 65 business trade associations at the Minnesota Legislature on a variety of issues that impact Minnesota's economy.

Prior to assuming leadership of the Minnesota Chamber, he spent 20 years at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 17 of those in Minnesota. As the vice president for regional affairs and advocacy, he managed the seven regional offices that provide political and grassroots outreach across the nation. He also managed the U.S. Chamber's Midwest Region that includes Minnesota. He was intimately involved in supporting state and local chambers and businesses to move public policy in a direction that helps them be successful.

Previously, Loon served as director of congressional and public affairs at U.S. Chamber headquarters in Washington, D.C. There, he served as one of the organization's chief lobbyists before Congress on issues critical to the American business community.

Before joining the U.S. Chamber staff in 1995, Loon was legislative director to Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania. In his 10 years on Capitol Hill, Loon also served as acting staff director for the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and on the Senate Commerce Committee. In addition, he worked for Senator Larry Pressler of South Dakota.

Loon received his bachelor's degree in government and international affairs from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D. He is a graduate of the Congressional Research Service's Institute for Legislative Staff as well as the Federal Election Commission's program on campaign finance laws for incorporated trade associations and membership organizations. He also graduated from Leadership Minnesota, an exclusive program of the Minnesota Chamber addressing the economic and public policy issues of Minnesota businesses. He is past chair of the Eden Prairie Foundation Board of Directors.



Lisa Peterson

President, Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism
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Robin Anthony, IOM

Executive Director/President, Greater Stillwater Chamber of Commerce
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Robin Anthony is the Executive Director of the Greater Stillwater Chamber of Commerce since April of 2016. Prior to that, she worked 12 years in local and state government, 8 years in global consulting, and 6 years as a small business owner building a business from the ground up. In her prior life, she instructed marching band for 15 years across the State of Minnesota, hoping to make a difference in young adults.

Robin's focus is on collaboration, leadership, teambuilding, serving the public, and has a passion for social justice. She is proud to serve the St. Croix Valley and considers herself a life-long-learner to continue to improve, expand, and streamline processes and policy. Her expertise includes organizational management, project management, legislative affairs and elections, and business and community engagement.

She attended St. Cloud State University, *Communications Major 1986* and her continuing education includes multiple programs, certificates and courses from: Century College, University of St. Thomas, St. Charles Illinois, U of M, Auburn University, Capella University and just recently, a 2019 graduate of the Institute for Organizational Management, US Chamber of Commerce.

Robin has lived in the Stillwater Area for over 30 years and has two adult children who both attended the Stillwater Schools. Tyler a former Marine, and currently, Military Police for the Stillwater National Guard and an Officer for the City of Crystal Police Department. Her oldest daughter Nicole is a teacher for the Hudson, Wisconsin School District. She is passionate and proud of her family, community, region and country.



Lori Higgins

President, MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce
lori@metronorthchamber.org

Lori Higgins is President of the MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce, the largest local chamber of commerce in the north metro serving 770 businesses.

Higgins started at the MetroNorth Chamber in 2009 as Director of Operations and became President in 2010, becoming the chamber's first female chief executive officer. As President, she oversees the advocacy, programming, operations and strategic vision of the organization. Currently the MetroNorth Chamber is focused on several economic and workforce development initiatives, which continue to be the main issues for many area businesses.

Lori has a Master of Arts degree in Leadership from Augsburg University and a certificate in organizational management from the Institute for Organizational Management, US Chamber of Commerce. She is involved in various leadership roles outside of the chamber including Commissioner for the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission, Anoka County Workforce Development Board Member, and President of the Augsburg University Alumni Board of Directors.

**Brad Gruhot**

Chamber Director, Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce
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Brad started his Chamber career as the Membership Director for the newly formed SouthWest Metro Chamber in 2009. From there, he worked for the Bloomington Chamber in Membership from 2011-2014 before deciding to move his family back to his home town of Marshall to be closer to his mom who was having health issues. Brad was the Membership Director from July, 2014 until and then was named the Chamber director of the Marshall Area Chamber in January of 2016. Prior to Chamber work, Brad worked for the Southdale YMCA in Edina for 11 years.

Brad is very active in the community and serves on the Board of Directors for the Marshall Area YMCA, Holy Redeemer Church, MACE & MCCE and also sits on various committees at Southwest Minnesota State University.

Brad has been married to Karen for 18 years and has two children, Jonathan-14 and Alayna-11. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling, visiting friends and even through all of the heartbreak, he is an avid MN sports fan.

**Janelle Jones**

President/CEO, Lake County Chamber of Commerce
janelle@lakecounty-chamber.com

As President/CEO Lake County Chamber of Commerce for the past 6 years I feel blessed to be able to help promote and guide the community I grew up in and love. In recent years I have also formed two nonprofits "Lovin Lake County" a destination marketing organization for Lake County and the "National Civility Association", an organization hosting Civility Summits around the Country to high school students & business's, both of which I have the pleasure of being the Executive Director of. I live in Two Harbors with my husband and two children and I am CEO of North Shore Management, a property management company. My core values are Collaboration, Determination, & Kindness - I believe success will follow.

**Jennifer Harmening**

President, Burnsville Chamber of Commerce
jennifer@Burnsvillechamber.com

Jennifer Harmening and her husband Tom have lived in Burnsville since 1998 and have enjoyed raising their two kids here. Harmening started her chamber career with the St. Paul Chamber in 1992, followed by her role as Community Development Director of the Twin West Chamber of Commerce and President of the Northern Dakota County Chambers of Commerce (AKA Dakota County Regional Chamber). Jennifer received her IOM (Institute for Organizational Management) certification from the US Chamber of Commerce in 1998.

Harmening went on to be an independent consultant for 15 years. She served as a consultant to chambers, non-profits and government agencies and eventually became certified in Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Life Keys and Intentional Leadership and expanded her efforts in organizational team building and coaching.

Jennifer was hired as President of the Burnsville Chamber of Commerce in January of 2016 and is charged with overseeing the day to day operations of the Chamber and working with the Board of Directors to continually innovate and set a vision for the organization. Jennifer manages the public policy, workforce, economic development and business education partnership efforts for the Chamber. Jennifer also works with chamber staff on events, communications, membership and business connections.

**Nort Johnson**

President and CEO, Faribault Chamber of Commerce & Tourism
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Nort Johnson is a native of Faribault, Minnesota and currently serves as President and CEO of the Faribault Chamber of Commerce & Tourism.

Johnson attended two Minnesota colleges and began a career in publishing management and marketing in southern Minnesota, spending eleven of those years at the Schwan Food Company. There he managed the Print and Fulfillment Services department directing in-house and outsourced production of marketing material as well as planning and execution of cutting-edge variable data campaigns. During that time, he also held a city council seat, sat on numerous volunteer boards and became involved in economic development at many levels.

Nort took those “extra-curricular” experiences to a professional level and left Schwan’s to work in economic development in both Minnesota and South Dakota. While in the Black Hills he was recruited by Black Hills and Badlands Tourism. As President/CEO he orchestrated successful and sustained membership growth and introduced new marketing campaigns earning four ADDY Awards including a *Tommy* for Best Integrated campaign in 2014. Johnson also worked on successful lobbying efforts at both the state and federal levels on behalf of the tourism industry earning recognition from the US Department of Agriculture in 2011 for leading efforts to relieve the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic. During his tenure Johnson and his team built many strategic partnerships at all levels. Some of his favorites include Polaris, Minnesota Twins, Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, Washington Nationals, Deadwood Chamber/CVB, American Park Network and South Dakota Department of Tourism.

After 25 years Nort found his way back to Faribault and says he’s “blessed” to use his experiences to help grow and promote his hometown. In 2016 a strategic marketing partnership with Northfield and Owatonna won a marketing excellence award from Explore Minnesota for the Minne-Roadtrip™ brand. He and Shelly’s blended family includes 7 grown children and 9 grandchildren.

**Steve Grove**

Commissioner Steve Grove, Department of Employment and Economic Development

As commissioner of the state’s principal workforce and economic development agency, Commissioner Grove brings a wealth of private sector and civic experience to the Department of Employment and Economic Development. Originally from Northfield, Minnesota, Commissioner Grove is focused on growing the state’s workforce, closing the opportunity gap and providing businesses with the help they need to grow, stay and thrive.

Commissioner Grove was previously an executive at Google for 12 years, most recently serving as the founding director of Google’s News Lab, a global division of the company that partners with media companies and startups to drive innovation in the news industry. He has built teams in over a dozen countries and launched partnerships in over 50 countries, including a global technology training effort that trained over 500,000 people every year. Grove also led Google’s civic engagement work, including the company’s non-partisan voter information and get-out-the-vote outreach efforts. He previously led YouTube’s first news and politics team, building a global partnership effort for political candidates, news organizations, nonprofits, and citizen journalists. The divisions of Google that Grove led during his career addressed a wide range of public challenges with new solutions: from fighting online disinformation campaigns, to growing social media citizen engagement with world leaders, to a developing a broad range of voter turnout initiatives.

Grove wrote for The Boston Globe and ABC News prior to joining Google. He has served as an advisor to the White House and State Department on counter-terrorism strategy. He holds a master's in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School and a B.A. in philosophy, politics, and economics from Claremont McKenna College. Along with his wife Mary, Grove co-founded a nonprofit in 2014 called Silicon North Stars, which helps youth from underserved communities in Minnesota pursue careers in technology.

In 2018, the Groves moved from Silicon Valley to Minneapolis, Minnesota with their two-year-old twins.



Shannon Full

President/CEO, TwinWest Chamber of Commerce
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763-450-2222

Shannon Full has almost 20 years of industry experience, with expertise in chamber of commerce leadership, economic development, talent solutions and organizational management. She prides herself on strong relationship and communication skills, leading with passion and purpose, and strives to balance an active, dynamic career with a high quality family life.

Shannon joined the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce in Plymouth, MN as the President/CEO in February 2017. Prior to coming to TwinWest, she was most recently the President/CEO of the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Regional Partnership in Appleton, WI. She began her Chamber career at the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce in Mounds View, MN and subsequently led Chambers in Melbourne, FL and Cedar Rapids, IA. An experienced and accomplished professional, Shannon has received numerous awards for her work including the Wisconsin Economic Development Association's *Governors Young Professional of the Year* in 2016, and the *Best in Show Winner for Talent Upload Program* from the International Economic Development Council in 2015. She was a *40 Under 40* winner in Iowa in 2009 and a *4 Under 40* winner in Florida in 2008.

Shannon has two children – Beckett, age 2, and Finley, age 5. She is married to her husband, Travis and resides in Blaine, MN.



Jennifer Gale

President, River Heights Chamber of Commerce
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651-451-2266

Jennifer L. Gale is has been leading the River Heights Chamber of Commerce in Inver Grove Heights as its President since 2004. She works relentlessly to achieve the Chamber's mission to drive South Metro business success by advocating for business, creating partnerships and leading a team to develop valuable services and networking events which benefit its members and partners.

Jennifer attended St. Cloud State University majoring in Organizational Communications and minoring in Political Science. Upon completing a post graduate internship at CHS Inc., Jennifer was hired to manage their Crop Production Specialist program. After transitioning to a membership position at the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, she was soon promoted to be the Director of Small Business. Following her work at SPACC, Jennifer became a Project Manager for John Ryan Company, managing the Point of Sale marketing products for Bank of America. Prior to taking on the role of President of the River Heights Chamber, Jennifer's work as President at Northern Dakota County Chamber of Commerce - now known as DCR Chamber - was instrumental in leading the organization to a successful future. With over 20 years of non-profit organizational management in the chamber of commerce industry, Jennifer is a well-regarded leader who values a collaborative approach that builds upon individual assets to create stronger outcomes for everyone involved.

Jennifer's passion for collaboration has led her to serve the community by participating on many non-profit and educationally-focused boards including the General Board of the Greater Twin Cities YMCA, YMCA West St. Paul, YMCA Midway, Inver Hills Community College, South St. Paul – Inver Grove Heights Rotary, Tri District Pathway Program, Dakota Scott County Workforce Investment Board and others.

Jennifer resides at Shermik Tree Farm in Stacy, MN with her family and youngest daughter Avary, who is a senior at North Branch High School. Her oldest daughter, Haley, is an Aveda graduate, employed at Cole's Salon in Eagan, and her middle daughter, Abbey, is a senior at St. Thomas University pursuing a degree in Math. Jennifer enjoys boating at their cabin and recently started a healthy living company, Grass Fed Ideas LLC, with her daughters, which hosts goat yoga classes on the weekends at their tree farm.



Barry Wilfahrt

President and CEO, The Chamber Grand Forks, ND/East Grand Forks, MN
barry@gochamber.org

Barry was named President and CEO of The Chamber Grand Forks, ND/East Grand Forks, MN in January of 2008. The Chamber focusses on relevance, advocacy for business and providing tangible value to its 1,100 Chamber members. During his time, The Chamber has also achieved financial strength and plays a lead role in key community issues at local, state and national levels. The Chamber has been part of a highly successful collaborative effort to maintain GFACB, create an emerging UAS sector, workforce development effort, and extensive community engagement in a community visioning process focused on social offerings, openness and aesthetics and implementation of its action plan.

Barry also owns a billboard company, and has a lobbying/consulting firm. Wilfahrt continues to be the registered lobbyist for the ND and SD Professional Appraisers Associations.

Barry has served on more than 130 national, state and local boards over his career including the prestigious US Chamber's "Committee of 100" and is an ACC Civic Leader.

Barry has a BS degree in Government from Saint John's University in Collegeville, MN and his MA degree in Urban Studies from Minnesota State University where he was the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fellow. Barry is also a graduate of the Chamber Institute for Organizational Management Program (IOM), US Chamber Academy Program and is a Certified Chamber Executive (CCE).



Erik Therwanger

Founder, Author, Speaker, Think GREAT
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Erik is the founder of Think GREAT and draws from his experiences as a U.S. Marine, executive business leader, sales professional, and entrepreneur to help organizations achieve new levels of success. He uniquely combines leadership development, team building, sales training, and goal-setting into strategies and techniques that empower team members and leaders to exceed expectations.

Erik has inspired audiences at companies such as US Bank, Sam's Club, Shutterfly, RE/MAX, Hubbard Broadcasting, Thomson Reuters, U.S. Foods, armed services commands ranging from the Air National Guard to the U.S. Marine Corps, charities like The American Cancer Society, law enforcement and government agencies, and organizations in the health care and education industries.

Think GREAT is a Certified Veteran-Owned Business and Erik is also author of The Think GREAT Collection. Erik shares the successful, proven concepts in his six books to give individuals and organizations the competitive edge needed for achieving new levels of success.

As a speaker and coach, Erik's training sessions provide the tools needed to achieve greater results. With a lasting message of inspiration, he also empowers audiences as he describes his life-changing experience of being his wife's caregiver, during her four bouts with cancer.

Erik's interactive and entertaining style engages audiences as he empowers them to open new possibilities in their personal and professional lives.

Erik's 3 Pillars of Business Greatness allows organizations to achieve greater results by providing dynamic programs and resources for the enhancement of leadership development, strategic planning, and sales excellence – building a stronger foundation.

As a trainer and speaker for the spouses of armed services personnel, Erik is deeply aware of their challenges and sacrifices. To help support their education and career goals, Erik founded the Think GREAT Foundation, which is dedicated to awarding scholarships to military spouses.



Joe Effertz

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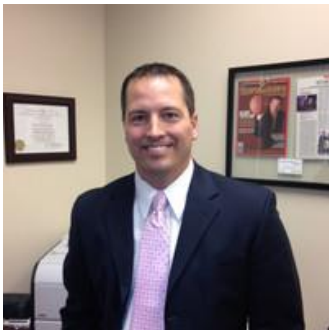
Joe Effertz – President of Black Forest Ltd since 2013. Black Forest is a leader in corporation recognition jewelry and promotional emblems. Prior to Black Forest, Effertz held a variety of sales leadership positions with Oldcastle BuildingEnvelope, Wenger and Viracon. He received his undergraduate degree in International Business from St. John's University, Collegeville. He also holds a M.B.A. from the University of St. Thomas. He is married with two daughters, Eleanore and Charlotte. He has been a proud member of the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce.



Michele Engdahl

Director of Government Affairs, Thomson Reuters

Michele Engdahl is the director of government affairs for Thomson Reuters Legal, the world's leading source of intelligent information for legal professionals. She works to educate federal, state and local officials about the issues important to Thomson Reuters and manages public policy concerns to ensure Thomson Reuters' markets remain open. She engages regularly in the workforce development arena, partnering with local school districts to prepare the next generation of technology talent. Engdahl has worked at Thomson Reuters for nine years. Previously, she worked at State Farm Insurance leading their public affairs and strategic communications efforts. She also has experience working on political campaigns and building grassroots coalitions and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Michele serves on the board of directors for the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Citizens League.



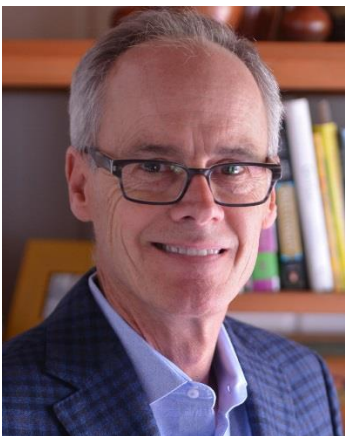
Bill Keegan

President, Dem-Con Companies

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Bill Keegan is a registered professional engineer and president of Dem-Con Companies, a third-generation family-owned solid waste management and recycling company. Bill is actively involved in the management of the Dem-Con facilities and operations which include a C&D Material Recovery Facility (MRF), Single Stream MRF, Shingle and metals Processing, and C&D and Industrial Waste disposal facilities and roll-off dumpster services throughout Minnesota. He has been in the solid waste industry for over 23 years and is active in several solid waste organizations including a current position as the chair of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA), board member of the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM), Minnesota Waste Wise Board Member; Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Board Member, SWANA MOLO Instructor, and an instructor for the Minnesota Landfill Operator Training program.



Rob Dalton

CEO and brand therapist, Dalton Brand Catalyst

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For 30 years, Rob built a reputation for creating award- and business-winning campaigns for leading brands including FedEx, Lee Jeans, Target, 3M, FICO, Boston Scientific, The Wall Street Journal, as well as challenger brands such as AmericInn Hotels, Dunn Bros Coffee, Timex, Super Clean and more. Today, Rob uses his creative chops to deliver custom branding and messaging platforms that give marketers a significant advantage over their competitors. His unique creative ability combined with marketing moxie and a collaborative demeanor result in marketing that stands out, delivers value and drives business.