

BUSINESS BRIEF

MARCH/APRIL 2026



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Driving Growth: New Events & Conferences in 2026

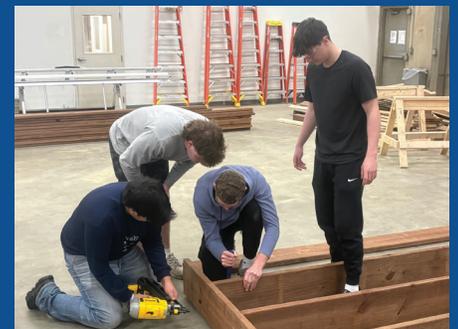
Attracting new groups and events are part of the tourism strategy for growth. The following new additions will boost activity this year:

- FBI Leeda is a specialized, multi-day training event being held in *February & March*
 - Minnesota Association of Student Leaders State Convention, *April 11-13*
 - Lakes & Prairies Exchange District Conference attendees from Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska, *May 15-17*
 - Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Executives 'Summer Refresh Conference, *May 27-28*
 - North Central Highland Cattle Association's Annual Show and Sale, *September 10-13*
 - Owatonna Soccer Association is organizing and hosting a new Soccer Tournament this year, *June 26-28*
- Owatonna leverages these opportunities to to welcome these visitors to our community.



Community Partnerships Launch The Shops at Rose Street

The Shops at Rose Street began as a conversation in August 2024 about filling a vacant downtown storefront and quickly evolved into an exciting new project. Opening this spring at 115 E. Rose St., the concept is a retail incubator featuring small shop spaces where entrepreneurs can test business ideas, share costs, and build a customer base. The initiative is the result of strong partnerships among Owatonna Main Street, the Owatonna Area Business Development Center, the Owatonna Chamber, the City of Owatonna, the Economic Development Authority, ISD #761, and Owatonna Public Utilities.



The building will also house the Owatonna Maker Space, OABDC consulting and co-working services, The Craft Apothecary, and a Welcome Center, creating a vibrant hub designed to increase activity in the Rose Street corridor and throughout downtown.



Culligan Expanding in Owatonna

The Culligan Ultrapure Owatonna branch is currently undertaking a warehouse expansion project. Work is well underway to provide much needed space (3600 sq ft.) to accommodate the business.

The Owatonna Branch is home to the Deionization Plant that supports Minnesota business. The extra warehouse will provide a separate space to move and store delivery products, adding much needed space to expand DI plant capabilities and support the growing need for ultrapure water and its applications.

Quick Wins for Your Business—Simple actions you can implement this month

Big growth doesn't always require big changes. A few focused improvements can increase visibility, strengthen customer relationships, and generate momentum quickly.

1. Refresh Your Online Presence

- Update your homepage with a current promotion or seasonal message
- Add new photos to your Google Business profile
- Confirm hours, contact info, and services are accurate

A current, active presence builds trust and improves search visibility.

2. Reconnect With Existing Customers

Retention is often your fastest growth strategy.

- Send a brief appreciation email with a limited-time offer
- Personally reach out to five past customers
- Add handwritten thank-you notes to upcoming orders

3. Build One Strategic Partnership

Collaborate with another Chamber member.

- Cross-promote services
- Offer bundled discounts
- Co-host a small event

Partnerships expand your reach without increasing marketing costs.

4. Track One Key Metric

Choose one metric to improve by 5–10% this month:

- Weekly sales
- New leads
- Website traffic
- Customer retention

What gets measured gets improved.

Make the Most of Your Chamber Membership

- Attend one networking event this month
- Submit a promotion for Chamber communications
- Connect with a new member

Visibility creates opportunity.



A Note from Brad Meier

Growth doesn't always come from major investments. More often, it comes from consistent small improvements and stronger relationships.

If you're looking for introductions, partnerships, or resources to help move your business forward, our Chamber team is here to support you. Don't hesitate to reach out—we're committed to helping our members succeed.

— Brad Meier, President, Owatonna Chamber

Boomgarden is Ambassador of the Year

Congratulations and thank you to Kelly Boomgarden, Country Inn & Suites for her hard work in 2025 attending visits, meeting with members and being a leader in welcoming members to chamber events. Ambassadors receive points throughout the year and the one with the most points receives the 'Wayne Starman Ambassador of the Year award'. Kelly was recognized at the Chamber Annual Dinner with this recognition!



Kelly accepts the Ambassador of the Year award from Wayne Starman.

'Golden Opportunity' for Lucky Members

It's an event that spans over 40 years giving participants a fun night out and a chance to win \$1,000 in Chamber Dollars. The Ambassador Golden Opportunity Dinner awards prizes, provides a great meal and a fun night out.

This year's event raised close to \$4,000 to go to the Ted G Ringhofer scholarship and support Chamber programming. Highlights included a prize for every ticket sold, including the Sweetheart Raffle that had a \$1,000 gift card to Kottke Jewelers! Thanks to all that participated!



Lauren Kozelka (left) and Samantha Schuster (right) from Kottke Jewelers present the Sweetheart Package to Sara McKay, Owatonna Foundation.

Gillard Highlights 2025 Successes, Mazariego Looks to '26

The Chamber's leadership transition took place at the Annual Dinner as outgoing chair of the board, Deb Gillard (RE/MAX Venture) shared highlights from 2025 and then turned the chair role over to Oscar Mazariego (American Family Insurance). Gillard highlighted new members, important events, development successes, branding progress, and workforce initiatives.

Mazariego talked about his journey to Owatonna and how his family became advocates for the community. He highlighted the importance of the Rose Street retail incubator and Shops, the new developments coming, and the importance of workforce growth in the upcoming year.



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2026

Oscar Mazariego, Chair
American Family Insurance – Oscar Mazariego Agency

Deb Gillard, Past Chair
RE/MAX Venture

Shannon Cliff, Vice Chair
Mayo Clinic Health System-
Owatonna

Rylee Muhr, Treasurer
West Bank
(Young Professional Chair)

Kelly Boomgarden, At-Large
Country Inn & Suites–Owatonna

Bonnie Cole
Cole's Electric & Torey's
Restaurant & Bar

Brett Doreck
Culligan ULTRAPURE

Steve Glynn
Mohs Contracting, Inc.

Stacy Hanson
Grapeful Wine Bar

Matthew Hughes
Kowz & KRUE Radio

Cole Johnson
Haute & Company, LLC

Sara McKay
Owatonna Foundation, Inc.

Doug Meier
Christian Bros. Cabinets

Sammy Miranda
Lakeside Foods

Annie Priebe
Federated Insurance

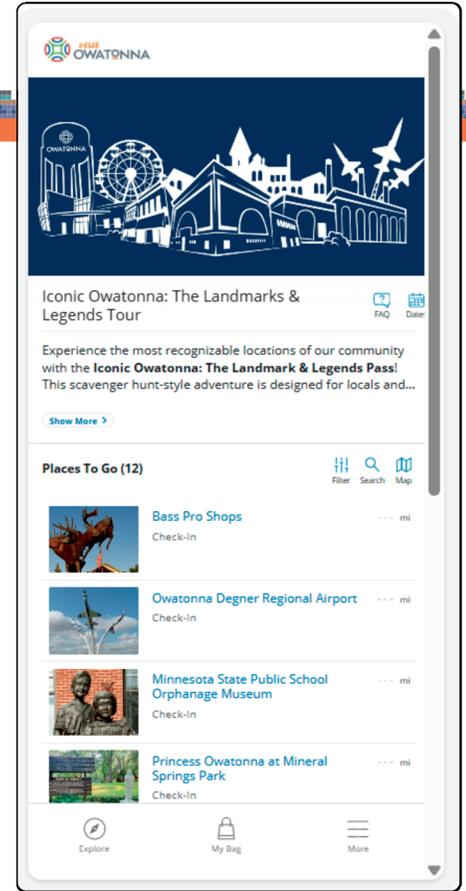
Christy Tryhus
Riverland Community College

Telling the stories that shape our community

This year, Owatonna is elevating exploration with brand-new experiences designed to showcase the city's dual identity as both a historic "time capsule" of landmarks and a vibrant, modern culinary destination.



Find details here!



Iconic Owatonna: The Landmarks & Legends Tour

The Iconic Owatonna Tour is a 11 stop highlights reel for history buffs, architecture enthusiasts, and those seeking the most "Instagrammable" spots in Owatonna. This self-guided experience explores the grand legacy of the Louis Sullivan "Jewel Box" bank, the moving stories of the State School Orphanage, and the resilient spirit of early settlers at the Village of Yesteryear. It's an essential journey for both visitors and locals to discover the significant architectural achievements and pioneer foundations that put Owatonna on the map.

Tours utilizing Digital Pass technology

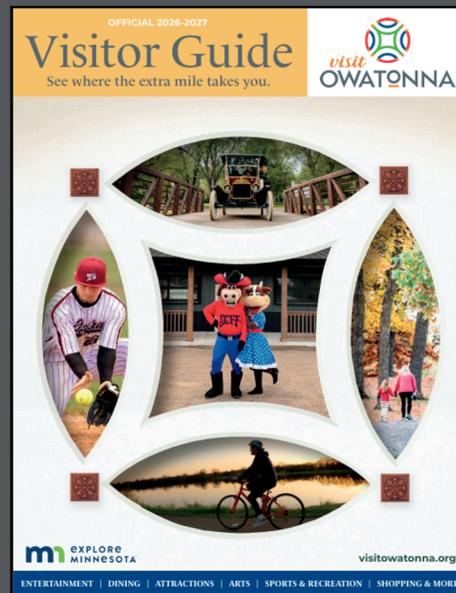
Passes offer a seamless experience for checking in, tracking progress, allowing residents and visitors to schedule at their convenience. Whether you choose the intellectual depth of the Iconic Owatonna Tour or the savory fun of the Food Tour, these experiences are designed to showcase the very best of our community.

These tours "go the extra mile," to build local pride and ensure every visitor walks away with an appreciation for Owatonna's history, as well the progress we continue to make.

New billboard on I-35 highlights Owatonna's Architecture & History



As you drive north from Albert Lea on I-35, watch for the new billboard that went up this month showcasing several historic Owatonna locations



Watch for the 2026-27 Visitor Guide!

Contact the chamber office if you are interested in having free guides available at your business.



Mayo Clinic Health System. Care Close to Home.

Mayo Clinic Health System. Care Close to Home. Your health care needs always come first at Mayo Clinic Health System in Owatonna, whether that means primary care or specialty care services.

Mayo Clinic Health System in Owatonna is part of an extensive network of community-based providers collaborating with Mayo Clinic to deliver the highest quality care daily to people in communities across Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

While physicians at Mayo Clinic Health System in Owatonna meet most patients' health care needs, a team of visiting Mayo Clinic consultants see patients locally or virtually, providing convenient consultation and care.

We provide care close to where you live. Every moment of every day, our team of providers are focused on doing one thing: what's in the best interest of our patients.

History

Doctors Albert J. Olson and Franklin C. Anderson founded Mayo Clinic Health System in Owatonna in 1948. They based their practice on the principle that the physician serves the community both in preserving and restoring good health. The original office was located at 113 West Main Street in downtown Owatonna.

Mayo Clinic Health System in Owatonna joined Mayo Clinic Health System in March 1997. Today, Mayo Clinic Health System in Owatonna is a comprehensive medical clinic offering outpatient services. The clinic emphasizes general and specialized health care services for the entire family.

Community Engagement in Owatonna

Mayo Clinic Health System is a nonprofit organization that strives to improve its communities' quality of life, health and well-being. We build and sustain relationships in the communities where we serve patients and where staff lives and work.

Key components of our commitment to the community are:

- Contribute to an enhanced quality of life and vibrancy
- Demonstrate and showcase our dedication to community health and well-being
- Engage employees in community outreach

We collaborate with community stakeholders, develop and implement programs, and participate in activities that improve community health and address the social determinants of health. This is demonstrated by giving to the community through financial and in-kind donations; providing volunteers at community events and medical experts for educational presentations; collaborating with community partners through coalitions, board service and special projects; and connecting the community with resources for general health and wellness.

New Models of Care

- *Nurse Line and Express Care Online* – Symptom triage and treatment in the comfort of one's home
- *Patient Online Services/Mayo Clinic App* – Message your care team, view test results, refill prescriptions and more
- *Mayo Mobile Health Clinic* – A mobile unit offering virtual or in-person care to communities with two exam rooms and an on-site laboratory
- *Primary Care on Demand* – download the app for convenient, timely access to trusted Primary Care - when and where you need it most.

Mayo Clinic Health System is grateful for your trust and for allowing us to care for your health and well-being.





Rhonda Guthier

Can you Put a Value on 25 Years?

On May 15th Rhonda Guthier will retire from the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism serving the business community for the last two and a half decades! Traits like 'hardworking', 'detail oriented' and 'dedicated' are so appropriate for Rhonda. Go deeper and there is a true dedication to the community and the people who live and work here. The Chamber and all of the businesses and organizations who've been part of the chamber over the last 25 years are better off because of Rhonda's care for them. All the best in the next stage of life Rhonda!

Scholarship for a Business Major

Why do OHS alumni return to Owatonna? Often, it's based on the experience they had here growing up. Which is why Owatonna has success attracting young professionals back to the community. Part of that is the support they feel, which is why the Chamber Ambassadors, and North Risk Partners do a \$1,000 Ted G. Ringhofer scholarship for an OHS student going into a business-related field.



Halle Theis accepts the 2025 Ted G Ringhofer scholarship

Ted G Ringhofer was president of the Chamber for 29 years and served on city council for 24 years. He is credited with a lot of the growth and success of Owatonna. Thank you to the businesses and donors who supported the Ambassador Golden Opportunity Dinner, those funds go towards this scholarship.

What's it Mean to be 5 Star?

The Owatonna Chamber has been accredited through the US Chamber of Commerce since 1975 (thank you Ted G Ringhofer). Every 5 years the organization goes through reaccreditation and has received the top honors from the US Chamber of 5 stars the last 2 times. We'll be going through the process this year for reaccreditation.



Sean Williams, Owatonna Development Center kicks off the Angel Network program

Owatonna Angel Network

A much-needed mechanism to gain support for budding entrepreneurial businesses is now in place locally thanks to Sean Williams and the Owatonna Area Business Development Center.

The Owatonna Angel Network recently put 3 entrepreneurs in front of a group of potential investors. The plan is that these and future businesses will get support that propels the business forward, ideally in Owatonna.

EVENTS Update

Julia Seykora, Director of Events

What's on the Horizon for Healthcare in Greater MN?

The Chamber Growth Breakfast focuses on topics of a statewide or regional nature and then focuses in on local impact. Join us on Thursday, March 19th as we explore the future of healthcare in greater Minnesota. Will the many critical health care services be available in each community? How do hospitals survive financially? How will changes impact greater Minnesota's ability to grow? These discussions and more.



Rob Cunningham
Chief Operating Officer
Olmsted Medical Center



Brenda Kollar
Director of Operations
Owatonna Hospital and
Allina Health Faribault
Medical Center, both part
Allina Health



Dr. Jason Wray-Raabolle
M.D.; Physician Lead

Thursday, March 19th, 7:30-9:00AM

Torey's Restaurant Upstairs Conference Room

Cost: \$20 (hot breakfast)



April Volunteer - Hops for Habitat

Volunteer with Young Professionals at the Habitat for Humanity: Hops for Habitat event on Saturday, April 11th from 3:00 – 6:00 PM at Four Seasons Centre. This event features many local breweries, wineries, cideries and more! Help pour for the attendees and enjoy the second half of the event free of charge. Registraton required.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



HOME IMPROVEMENT PROFESSIONALS, INC.

Clay Hazelman
301 Byron AVE, Byron, MN
507-775-6156
clay@hipforhomes.com



MEMORIAL BLOOD CENTERS

Ronda Maurer
737 Pelham Boulevard, St. Paul, MN
888-448-3253
Ronda.maurer@innovativeblood.org



STATE FARM – ADAM WINKELS AGENCY

Adam Winkels
345 Florence AVE, STE 101, Owatonna
507-414-5290
Adamwinkels21@gmail.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CHAMBER GROWTH BREAKFAST

March 19

Location: Torey's Restaurant & Bar
208 N Cedar AVE, Owatonna

Topic: State of Healthcare with Owatonna Providers



CHAMBER GROWTH BREAKFAST

April 16

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Topic: AI Adoption-Determining What's Right for Your Business

Location: Torey's Restaurant & Bar
208 N Cedar AVE, Owatonna



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

March 24

5:30 – 7:00 PM

Location: Sparetime Entertainment
333 18th ST SE, Owatonna



YOUNG PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL EVENT

April 22

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Location: TBD

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER (HOPS FOR HABITAT)

April 11

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Location: Four Seasons Centre
1525 South Elm AVE, Owatonna

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

April 28

5:30 – 7:00 PM

Hosted by: Mineral Spring Brewery & Olmsted Medical Center-Owatonna

Location: 210 North Cedar AVE, STE 1, Owatonna



Gift Certificates and Spring Go Hand-in-Hand

Don't forget that Chamber Dollars can be used year round and are great for teacher gifts, confirmations, graduations and more!

Stop by Monday - Friday; 8 am - 5 pm to pickup a supply this spring and summer. Mary Jo can assist you at: mrobbins@owatonna.org or give her a call at 507-451-7970.



CHAMBER PACK DEADLINE

Supply 550 copies of your promotional insert for May/June mailing; \$150 by **April 28th**.

OFFICE CLOSINGS

The chamber office will close at noon on April 3rd for Good Friday.



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 AM-5 PM



Business Brief is published by the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism

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