

BUSINESS BRIEF

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026



OWATONNA
AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Chamber and Rotary Clubs Plan 6 Candidate Forums

The Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism and the Rotary Clubs of Owatonna are collaborating again this year to host a series of candidate forums for the upcoming election.

Registration and payment are required to attend the lunch and registration is recommended for the forum, due to limited seating. Lunch costs \$16. Visit owatonna.org/advocacy/2026-candidate-forums/ to register or stop by the Chamber office.



Register here

Mondays, September 28 - November 2
Owatonna Country Club
Lunch: 11:30am | Forum 11:50am-1:30pm

Sponsored by:



September 28
School Board

October 5
City Council
At Large &
Ward 3

October 12
City Council
Wards 1 & 5

October 19
State
Representative
& State Senator

November 2
Steele County
Commissioners
Districts 1 & 2

Watch the forum livestreams and recordings on the candidate forum webpage or on the Chamber Facebook page.

Election 2026-Who Are the Candidates?

September 28: School Board

Darren Albers
Damian Baum
Nikki Gieseke
Elizabeth Hedlund
Christopher Lee
Ann Miller
Timothy O'Connor
April St. Martin

Oct 5: City Council At Large & Ward 3

Dan Boeke, At Large
Tony Jurowski, At Large
Joseph "JOE P." Petersen, At Large
Ethan Becker, Ward 3
Marcy Kim Busho, Ward 3
Rick Gnemi, Ward 3
Sarah Sanchez, Ward 3

Oct 12: City Council Ward 1 & Ward 5

Brad Flemming, Ward 1
Tim McManimon, Ward 1
Melissa Danielson, Ward 5
Dale A. Fairbanks, Ward 5
Bruce Nelson, Ward 5
Rebecca Rand, Ward 5

Oct 19: State Representative & State Senator

State Representative:
Zack Meyman
Thomas J. Sexton

State Senator:
John R. Jasinski
Sam Powell

Nov 2: Steele County Commissioner Districts 1 & 2

Justin Ohnstad, District 1
Gary Spatenka, District 1
John Glynn, District 2



Building Owatonna's Workforce, One Student Connection at a Time

What if the next great employee for your business is already sitting in a Steele County high school classroom?

SteeleCoWorks connects area employers with students who are eager to explore careers, gain real-world experience and develop skills that can help them succeed after graduation. For businesses, it's an opportunity to showcase what you do, introduce students to your industry and begin developing relationships with potential future employees.

That's where employer involvement makes a difference.

Businesses can participate in a variety of ways, from classroom presentations and career conversations to job shadows, tours, internships and work that allow students to see what a career actually looks like beyond the classroom. These experiences help students connect what they are learning in school with the skills and careers they may pursue in the future.

And the benefit goes beyond filling an immediate job opening.

When students have the opportunity to discover exciting careers close to home, they are more likely to recognize that they don't have to leave Owatonna to build a successful future. Creating those connections early can help strengthen our local talent pipeline and encourage young people to live, work and invest in the community after graduation.

If your business is interested in connecting with Owatonna-area high school students, we encourage you to get involved with SteeleCoWorks.

Ready to connect with your future workforce? Host a tour. Offer a work experience. Provide an internship. Contact the Chamber at oacct@owatonna.org



Your Chamber Membership Is a Marketing Tool—Are You Using It?

When businesses think about their Chamber membership, networking, advocacy and community involvement often come to mind. But there's another benefit that can be easy to overlook: **your Chamber membership is a marketing tool.** And like any marketing tool, its value increases when you use it.

Start with your Chamber directory listing

People use the Chamber to find businesses they know they can turn to locally. Make sure your online member listing is working for you. Check your business description, website, contact information, categories and other details.

Give us something to promote

Have you added a new employee? Expanded your business? Introduced a new product or service? Celebrating an anniversary? Hosting an event?

Tell us

The Chamber has multiple communication channels reaching members, community leaders, residents and visitors. We can't share what we don't know about, so keep the Chamber team informed about what's happening in your business.

Use Chamber events to increase your visibility

Attending a Chamber event isn't just about having breakfast or exchanging business cards. It's an opportunity to keep you and your company visible.

Business After Hours, Growth Breakfasts, ribbon cuttings, Young Professionals activities and other Chamber gatherings put you in the room with people who make purchasing decisions, provide referrals and influence our community.

Don't just send the same person every time. Chamber events can be a great way to introduce other members of your team to the business community.

Celebrate your milestones

An ambassador visit isn't only for a brand-new business. A new location, remodel, expansion, ownership change or significant anniversary (25-year increments) may all be reasons to celebrate. These events create photos, social media content and another reason to tell your company's story.

Build credibility through involvement

Marketing isn't only advertising. It's also reputation. Serving on a Chamber committee, participating in a program, sponsoring an event or simply showing up consistently helps people become familiar with your business and the people behind it. Over time, visibility builds familiarity, familiarity builds trust, and trust helps drive referrals and business.



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

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.

Sammy Miranda
Lakeside Foods

Annie Priebe
Federated Insurance

Christy Tryhus
Riverland Community College



Our community looked much different when Federated Insurance® first opened its doors in downtown Owatonna in the early 1900s. Its recognizable, prairie-style headquarters near Central Park was originally surrounded by dirt roads, horse-drawn wagons, and a handful of Mainstreet businesses that catered to the town's residents and surrounding farmers. At a time when a barn or house fire was one haphazardly placed candle away, Federated Insurance built a reputation for providing quality fire coverage to farm implement dealerships, lumberyards, and some of the nation's first auto dealerships and gas stations. The company became known for charging an equitable price, providing superior service, and settling claims fairly. With its Owatonna roots and financial stability established, Federated Insurance steadily grew from a modest regional fire insurance provider into a national, multi-line company protecting more than 47,000 businesses across 48 states.

Today, Federated Insurance is among the largest mutual insurance companies in the United States and the parent company of several subsidiaries including Granite Re, Inc., a surety bonding company based in Oklahoma, and HDVI, a commercial trucking insurance company headquartered in South Carolina. In territories throughout the nation, Federated's direct marketing representatives provide property and casualty, workers compensation, life and disability income, and bonding products to businesses in select industries. Their tailored coverage is complemented by industry-leading risk management support that includes access to a team of direct risk consultants, onsite safety walk-throughs, a safe driving app, online client portal, multi-day loss prevention seminars, a network of independent business succession and estate planning attorneys, an employee handbook builder, employee safety meeting materials, workplace signage, and more.

The past decade has been one of tremendous growth and innovation at Federated Insurance. The company has more than doubled its number of property and casualty clients, entered new markets, completed acquisitions, opened additional offices, and created approximately 600 new jobs – the majority of which are in Owatonna and Mankato, Minnesota.

As it has since the days of dirt roads and candles, Federated Insurance generously shares its success with the communities where its employees live and work. In 2025, the company had a \$3 million charitable giving budget. A significant portion of those funds supported causes in Owatonna.

Its United Way® Workplace Campaign generated \$364,822 for the United Way of Steele County. Additionally, the company hosts the annual Federated Challenge® fundraising event benefitting Minnesota's three Big Brothers Big Sisters® agencies as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America®. In 2026, the Federated Challenge raised a record-breaking \$5,488,000. One hundred percent of those funds will go to the cause as Federated Insurance covers all event expenses. With an incredibly bright future ahead, Federated Insurance will continue to be a prominent employer and corporate citizen our community can count on for years to come.



The Fairgrounds & Four Seasons keep visitors coming long after the fair

The Steele County Fairgrounds and Four Seasons Centre continue to be tourism powerhouses long after the final day of the Steele County Free Fair. Following a record-setting fair year, the grounds transition seamlessly into a fall calendar that continues to bring people to Owatonna from outside our community. Below are just a few highlights that you'll see on the grounds beyond fair season.



- **North Central Highland Cattle Show & Sale** — A regional draw for Highland cattle breeders, buyers and enthusiasts, with exhibitors and guests coming from the Midwest region supporting overnight visitors.
- **Annual MN Sheriff's Posse Wagon Train for Youth** — A multi-day equine event that brings riders, families and supporters together from across Minnesota while raising funds for youth programs.
- **Chubb's Brew-BQ** — A popular BBQ and community gathering featuring competition teams, food, beverages and live music that draws visitors to the Fairgrounds for an evening out.
- **Pinnacle Pro Wrestling** — A ticketed professional wrestling event that attracts fans from Owatonna and surrounding communities to the Four Seasons Centre.
- **Rustic Mamas Fall Market** — One of Owatonna's largest shopping events, attracting 2,000+ shoppers and more than 100 vendors for a day of shopping, food and entertainment.
- **Rooted & Rising Rural Forum** — A multi-day gathering bringing rural community, business and economic development leaders to Owatonna from across the region and beyond.
- **Steele County Relay for Life** — A community fundraising event that brings cancer survivors, families, teams and supporters together for an evening of food, entertainment and remembrance.



Find all events here

Owatonna welcomes Eric Perkins this fall



Following his 25-year career with KARE 11, Perkins is now creating engaging travel content that highlights the people, places and experiences that make Minnesota communities worth visiting. His Travel Perks team will be in Owatonna to capture the personality of our community and showcase the "perks" of a visit—from our history and attractions to shopping, dining, outdoor recreation and the people who make Owatonna special. It's another exciting opportunity to share Owatonna's story with audiences beyond our own backyard and inspire future visitors to put Owatonna on their travel list.

The Retail Collective: Creating Opportunity in Downtown Owatonna



A thriving downtown is built on more than storefronts—it is built on opportunity. That is the idea behind the Retail Collective, a new retail incubator at Rose Street Center in downtown Owatonna.

Located at 115 E. Rose Street, the Retail Collective provides local makers, creatives, and aspiring entrepreneurs with a place to bring their products directly to customers without taking on the significant cost and commitment of opening a traditional storefront. The space is an initiative of Main Street Owatonna and offers a unique shared retail experience featuring products from local vendors.

For prospective business owners, this creates an important stepping stone. Starting a retail business can be intimidating. Entrepreneurs need to understand their customers, test their pricing, learn what products sell, and build confidence before committing to a permanent location. The Retail Collective offers a lower-barrier way to gain real-world experience while introducing their products to shoppers.

The benefits extend beyond individual entrepreneurs. Every new vendor gives customers another reason to visit downtown, discover local products and support a small business. The Retail Collective can help create more activity, energy, and foot traffic in Downtown Owatonna, complementing established shops, restaurants, and community events.

It also fits naturally into the broader mission of the Rose Street Center, which brings together resources. With shared workspaces, creative resources, and business support available under one roof, the center creates an environment where an idea can move from concept to product and potentially from a shared retail space to a permanent downtown business.

The hours at the Retail Collective are Thursday and Friday, 4pm-8pm, Saturday 9am-3pm and Sunday 11am-3pm. **On Saturday, September 19, we invite you to join us for our Grand Opening/Open House from 9am-3pm.**



Does Your Business Have What It Takes to Bring Home the Lighted Parade Trophy?



On Friday, December 4, last year's winner, Owatonna Public Utilities, is ready to defend their title. Your business can shine bright and be seen by over 5000 spectators. More information and entry forms will be available on our website starting on **Thursday, October 1**. Entries are limited to 85, so register early!



The 2026–2027 Chamber Growth Breakfast Series Is Coming!

What's next for our workforce? What will businesses need to know? And how do we prepare for the future?



Join us Thursday, October 15, as we kick off a new season of Chamber Growth Breakfasts at Torey's Event Space, 208 N. Cedar Ave.

October–June

- Thought-provoking topics
- Regional and local experts
- Business and community connections
- Conversations that matter to your business

October 15: THE FUTURE OF OUR WORKFORCE

Watch for your Growth Breakfast postcard featuring the full October–June schedule, topics and speakers!

Want the best value? Register for a Series Pass and receive ONE event FREE!

Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Annual Dinner

Friday, January 29, 2027
Owatonna Country Club

A night to celebrate the people, businesses and partnerships that make our community stronger—and look ahead to what's possible when we move forward together.

Contact Julia to learn about sponsor opportunities at:
jseykora@owatonna.org.



Watch a video with highlights from last year's Annual Dinner.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



MAD DOG DUMPSTERS LLC

Dillon Simon
1770 State Avenue, Owatonna MN 55060
maddogdumpstersllc@gmail.com
(507) 676-5009



ZIEGLER CAT

Nathan Miller
3627 N County Road 45,
Owatonna MN 55060
nathan.p.miller@zieglercat.com
(888) 729-9992



HEALTH TRACK PHYSICAL THERAPY

Jennifer O'Connor
328 N. Cedar Avenue, Owatonna MN 55060
drjen@healthtrackpt.com
(507) 413-6284



STEELE COUNTY DFL

Mandy Young
PO Box 272,
Owatonna MN 55060
steledfl@gmail.com
(507) 390-8392



BLACK BEAR DISPENSARY

Carrie Worsk
209 W Bridge Street, Owatonna MN 55060
carrie@blackbeardispensary.com
507-413-0133



SANCO ENTERPRISES

Eric Standke
2317 Consul Street,
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SYVERSON PRESSURE WASHING

Isaiah Syverson
739 55th Street NE Lot 120,
Rochester MN 55906
syversonpressurewashingllc@gmail.com
(507) 990-9251

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FARMERS MARKET

Saturdays through October 31

7:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Central Park

ROSE STREET CENTER OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, September 19

9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Location: Rose Street Center

115 East Rose Street

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Refresh Your Network: Business After Hours at

Culligan Ultrapure

Tuesday, September 22

5:30 to 7:00 PM

Location: Culligan Ultrapure

125 West Front Street



CANDIDATE FORUMS

Mondays, September 28 - November 2

11:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Location: Owatonna Country Club

1991 Lemond Road

Y-PRO COMMUNITY VOICES ROUNDTABLE

Tuesday, September 29

12:00-1:00 PM

Location: Owatonna Eagles - Banquet Hall

141 East Rose Street

Join the Owatonna Young Professionals for an interactive Community Voices Roundtable, designed

to bring together young professionals and local leaders for an open discussion about the issues, opportunities, and ideas shaping our community. Moderated by Brad Meier, President of the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce.

CHAMBER GROWTH BREAKFAST

Thursday, October 15

7:30 to 9:00 AM

Location: Torey's Event Space

208 North Cedar Avenue



Y-PRO SOCIAL

Tuesday, October 20

Details to come!



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Making Connections That Add Up! Business After Hours at Community Bank

Tuesday, October 27

5:30 to 7:00 PM

Location: Community Bank

640 West Bridge Street



CHAMBER PACK DEADLINE

Supply 550 copies of your promotional insert for November/December mailing; \$150 by **October 24th**.



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

Riverland
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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www.riverland.edu