



Chamber of Commerce  
LA CROSSE AREA

# CONNECTION

**JUNE, 2016**



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# Executive Director's Message:

## *Hello Timecard. I've (Not Quite) Arrived*

The day I didn't have to fill out a time card was joyous. Granted, it was a few jobs ago when my responsibilities hadn't grown to the point of the IRS giving their blessing on me being salaried. I recall feeling like I had arrived. I had passed the test! I was free! I could take an extra long lunch to run errands. I could decide how long a project would take and work it to completion versus someone telling me to go home just as I had found my groove. There was societal value to being salaried, and there still is.

I recalled this initial feeling of elation because the idea of being salaried takes on a different meaning as the Chamber headed to Washington D.C. to speak out against proposals to require overtime pay for salaried employees earning less than about \$51,000. The reasoning is explained elsewhere in the newsletter, but my point here is that if the rule goes through as written, our society will have to shift its thinking. Salary would become a number, not a coming of age – right or wrong.

Our society, in part, values salaries for the same reason the IRS put the rule in place – it requires and implies you can make judgements for your employer independently. It is with irony that, as Dr. Tagger Brooks in economics at UW-La Crosse pointed out, many salaried employees will now need to fill out a timecard. It dawned on me that is the only way they would know to pay you for overtime. To approve a timecard means you also have the option to disapprove a timecard.

I will admit, I mourn the loss of some salary qualifications because it was a great tool for both employees



and employers. You know when you became salary there was potential to see your hourly value decline as you worked more hours. You trusted your employer to treat you well. I will admit that every time I see an hourly wage I run through the healthy exercise of "would I take that job to see my hours (and stress level) reduced." I will also admit that it is the challenge of the position I hold at the time I do that exercise that overwhelmingly causes me to answer with, "no way!".

Will Kratt (ISC) had a great comment at the "Mellennials: The Good, the Bad, the Reality" event we had as part of the Young Professional's group. While the context was very different, the implication was the same for many contexts – i.e. many times we create our own monsters. We have grown to value salaries as a status symbol of having "arrived". The new rule re-defines salary as a wage number. How will you redefine salaries within your company?

Vicki Markussen,  
Executive Director  
La Crosse Area  
Chamber of Commerce



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# Your Voice For Unintended Consequences

BY VICKI MARKUSSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE CHAMBER TEAM

## SHOWROOMING IS KILLING OUR

### MAIN STREET, brick and mortar stores.

Dan Wettstein, owner of Wettstein's in downtown La Crosse sees it every day -- an individual walks into a local store, thoroughly evaluates a product, asks the salesperson questions, scans a barcode, sees the price online is 6% less, and walks out to make their purchase online. The salesperson does not earn commission and the store does not earn income to offset the individual's time, expertise and the cost of housing the products (rent, taxes, etc.). Showrooming is when someone uses a physical store for research, then purchases online elsewhere.

"Profit margins are very low in the appliance and electronics industry," says Wettstein, whose family has owned a store in downtown La Crosse since 1951. "It is bad enough we are competing with companies who don't have the overhead of a physical location." He added. "In addition to that, some of these retailers are not charging sales tax, making it hard to compete."

Wettstein's competitive advantage is their customer service. The ability to create a "WOW" experience for their customers through price, service, and selection. Their contributions through volunteer and donations are part of our area's engrained spirit of serving others. The company is an example of our small businesses whose employees are our neighbors, their owners are our community leaders, and their store makes our quality of life much more robust.

Because of Wettstein's insight a few years ago, the La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce advocated last year and again May 4-5, 2016, during its D.C. Fly-In for what is known as Marketplace Fairness on

Capitol Hill. The eight Chamber members attending argued online retailers should have to pay sales tax so that our brick-and-mortar stores aren't at a 5.5% (i.e. sales tax) disadvantage.

"This was one of several topics the Chamber took to D.C. and also takes to Madison every year," says Vicki Markussen, Chamber Executive Director. "We hear issues that are impacting businesses, and when we have a sense it is a collective voice, we take that voice to our local, state and national elected officials. We've been doing that since 1868."

Together, Markussen and the Chamber delegation brought the following issues to the attention of our elected officials.

- \* A call to stop and better evaluate the impacts of proposed rule changes to the overtime for salaried employees, sharing known local impacts, particularly on our non-profits.
- \* An awareness message in hopes of preventing future regulation of our energy grid being secure
- \* Healthcare proposals that will positively impact our ability to remotely monitor patients, take care beyond hospital campuses, reduce unnecessary audits, help rural communities and train the next generation of healthcare professionals.
- \* Protecting last-in-first-out (LIFO) accounting methods that is important to companies that carry inventory
- \* Allowing the government to catch up by slowing the implementation of stage two of Gainful Employment that is intended to hold debt-to-discretionary-earnings ratio in alignment for students graduating with degrees or certificates and to ensure they are finding jobs in their field.

\* A plea not to pass bills that limit the employment options for people with disabilities.

It is a time consuming trip for the eight volunteer delegates, but the Chamber's Government Action Committee Chair Nathan Franklin (Dairyland Power Cooperative) says is beneficial, "Folks need to think about this visit as a hedge, not in terms of current needs. The time to visit electeds is not when your business has a dire circumstance that needs instant attention. These visits build relationships and rapport so when your business/industry has an issue, the groundwork is laid to put your best foot forward and make a difference, rather than frantically trying to influence policy makers with which you have no history."

Having a story like Wettstein's and others puts a face to a problem, otherwise it's too easy for there to be unintended consequences to a proposal. These occur when a well-intentions fix to a problem results in ramifications no one foresaw. Being on the forefront of the rules and regulations that result from bills reduces the costs of changes, delays and hardships

**"WE ARE THE  
COLLECTIVE VOICE  
FOR BUSINESSES  
AND WE TAKE THAT  
VOICE NATIONALLY,  
TO MADISON, AND  
VOICE IT LOCALLY."**

**Vicki Markussen,  
La Crosse Area Chamber  
of Commerce Business  
Executive Director**



## THE WISCONSIN STATE CAPITOL IN MADISON

the bill did not intend to impact.

The Chamber organizes Oktoberfest in the Capitol, taking issues to Madison every year. Every two years it joins forces with the tourism, economic development, downtown and regional groups for this event. Topics this year included transportation, historic tax credits, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, and a thank you for the new interstate visitor's center being built currently.

"When our members bring us problems and suggestions on how we can fix problems, we use these trips to be a proactive organization," said Markussen. "We are the collective voice for businesses and we take that voice nationally, to Madison, and voice it locally.

Local projects include sitting on a committee to envision economic development, transportation and other future best-uses for the Highway 53 corridor, lobbying to save \$1 million in beautification dollars for the interstate redo, and hosting a session on how to get young adults with disabilities into the workforce as one solution to our workforce solution.

Markussen says 88% of Chamber members and hence those that make up our robust community are small like Wettstein's. By uniting to share their stories and adding their voice to the Chamber's local, state and national trips, they can advocate for positive change. The elected are just waiting to hear your story.





# Recent Events



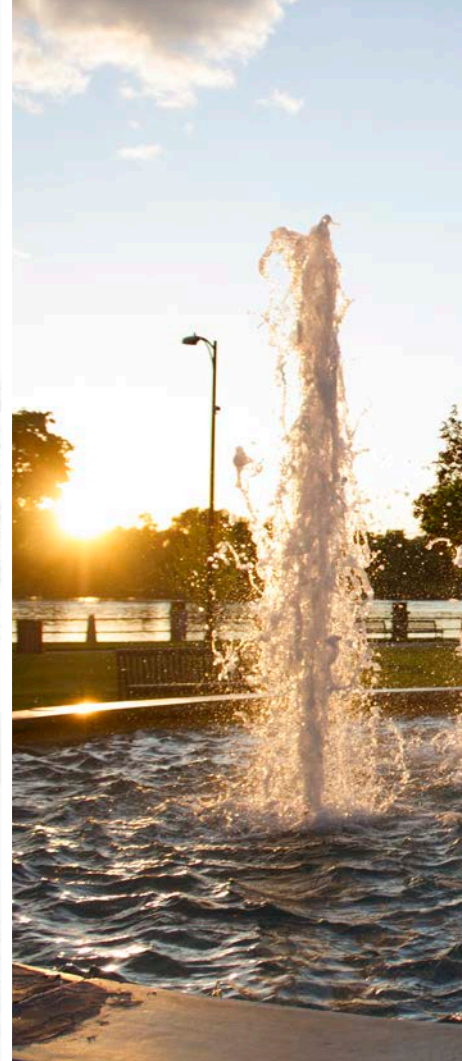
## THE FORUM

La Crosse County Administrator Steve O'Malley and Board Chairman Tara Johnson spoke at The Forum in May on the state of La Crosse County including that our property tax is one of the lowest in the state, that they are selling 24 acres of land near the landfill that will be applied to helping improve the county's lower income neighborhoods. Issues raised by or elected include the ability to cross the railroad tracks for river access (raised by Lee Nerison), the formation of several study committees that non-elected can participate in (Steve Doyle), a \$500,000 tourism GEM grant received in La Crosse (Jill Billings), and the Supreme Court changes and Family Care 2.0 are hot topics (Jennifer Shilling). Anticipated topics for upcoming elections are transportation, job creation, the economy, and education.



## BUSINESS AFTER HOURS AT CROSSING MEADOWS

Chamber members enjoyed a wonderful Business After Hours at Crossing Meadows in May. Eight vendors set up tables with information on their business and guests enjoyed great food and drink and door prizes from the many participants. Business After Hours is the best opportunity to network and meet your fellow members. These are held on the second Thursday of every month from 5:15 – 6:30 PM at varying locations.



**SUMMER HAS ARRIVED!!!**



# Upcoming Events



**BUSINESS AFTER  
HOURS AT PEARL  
STREET BREWERY  
THURSDAY JUNE 9  
5:15 - 6:30 PM**

Join the Chamber for a fun filled evening of networking and entertainment at Pearl Street Brewery. Shoot some pool, play a game of ping pong and participate in a fundraiser for Sprout for Kids Foundation. \$1 will get you three shots at the bag toss. Every shot you make wins a prize and all the funds raised are for a great cause! Sip on Pearl Street's fantastic brews, munch on food from Pogy's and The Damn Tasty and enter to win some fantastic door prizes. Please park on St. Andrews or any of the cross streets in the area.

**THE FORUM  
JUNE 13  
7:00 AM**

Lyle and Norma Anderson Education Center @ La Crosse Chamber of Commerce. Hear what's happening in Madison from your local elected official and share feedback.



**YP SUMMER SPEAKER SERIES**

Space is limited for this exciting three-part series. If you have team members in your organization wanting to attend, register them online at [lacrossechamber.com](http://lacrossechamber.com) or contact the chamber directly. Not to be missed!

**2016 GOLF OUTING**

The Golf Outing is right around the corner! Network and enjoy a wonderful day of golf at La Crosse Country Club. Sponsorships are available for this event and registration is open online. Please visit [lacrossechamber.com](http://lacrossechamber.com) for all the information. This years outing is August 29.

## Ribbon Cuttings



## WAUSAU HOMES



# YPCR

**T**he Young Professionals of the Coulee Region participated in Wisconsin's "YP Week" with a series of events aimed at connecting our regions future leaders. The week started at Studio 16 in Onalaska with "Rise and Grind" followed by coffee and connection at Café D'Vine. On Wednesday, the group enjoyed a panel discussion entitled Millennials: The Good, The Bad, and The Reality at Altra Federal Credit Union. An interactive booth at W.L.O.P. (World's Largest Office Party) a reception at The Weber Center for Performing Arts and Comedy Night at Piggy's rounded out a successful week.



Photos by  
Emily Jean  
Photography



*We're excited to announce our first annual*

## **"YP Summer Speaker Series"**

A three-part series bringing you together with passionate leaders and business owners in our community. These round-table style sessions will discuss topics to help you grow as an individual and a professional. 40 spots available.

### **Connect**



**Entrepreneurship and  
Starting your own Business**

**JUNE 21**

**3:30 - 5:00PM**

**TURTLE STACK BREWERY  
125 2ND STREET SOUTH,  
LA CROSSE, WI**

Speakers - Amy and Vince Stodola

### **Grow**



**The Future of "C-Level"  
Executives**

**JULY 19**

**3:30 - 5:00PM**

**THE CHARMANT HOTEL  
101 STATE STREET,  
LA CROSSE, WI**

Speaker - Don Weber

### **Advocate**



**Building Your Brand and  
Self-Promotion**

**AUGUST 16**

**3:30 - 5:00 PM**

**MISTY'S DANCE UNLIMITED  
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Speaker - Misty Lown

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Young **Professionals**  
of the Coulee Region

Register @ [lacrosecchamber.com](http://lacrosecchamber.com)

**Price: YP Member \$99**

**Non-Member \$149**



# Connecting Members to Members

**DBS GROUP** has hired Todd Poss as its CFO and Eric Knutson as field construction manager. Both bring lengthy experience and extensive expertise across the construction contractor continuum, specializing in the design-build approach.

**FAMILY & CHILDREN'S CENTER** appointed Jon Evans as director of development. Evans brings significant experience in the non-profit sector both in development and program management and serves on the board for the Upper Mississippi Valley Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

**GENSLER** has named Joan Meyers as Managing Director of its La Crosse office. Julie Henline has assumed the role of Client Relationship Director. Gensler is committed to the La Crosse community in which its employees live, work, and play.

**NATURALLY UNBRIDLED WELLNESS, LLC** welcomes Dawn Olson, Certified Holistic Nutritionist. Dawn holds advanced certification in Nutrition Response Testing and customizes nutrition programs based on how your body responds to a variety of foods and supplements. To learn more, visit [www.naturallyunbridled.com/services](http://www.naturallyunbridled.com/services).

**THE SALVATION ARMY** is seeking donations of jelly, granola bars and other kid friendly, sack lunch foods. Volunteers will be delivering 300 lunches a day to kids in need during the summer Feed the Kids program. Contact 608-782-6126.

**VITERBO UNIVERSITY'S** Charles D. Gelatt Finance Simulation Laboratory will open in August 2016. It will feature cutting-edge technology, including two 22-foot stock tickers and computer terminals equipped with financial markets simulation software. For more information, contact [teknothe@viterbo.edu](mailto:teknothe@viterbo.edu) or 608-796-3376.

Want to be a supervisor or manager? Newly promoted? The **WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE** Supervisory Management program is designed for working adults who want to improve their managerial, supervisory, and leadership skills. For more information, contact [supervisorymgt@westerntc.edu](mailto:supervisorymgt@westerntc.edu) or visit [www.westerntc.edu/superman](http://www.westerntc.edu/superman).

**WETTSTEIN'S** Wettstein's welcomes Debbie Lee and Nate Ulrich to their sales team. Both individuals have had several years of sales experience. Please give them an opportunity if you are in need of appliances, electronics, furniture, or mattresses. Stop at Wettstein's, 215 3rd Street N., La Crosse or contact 608-784-6868.

**HOME2 SUITES DOWNTOWN LA CROSSE** is opening in July 2016. The contemporary and eco-friendly suites have fully stocked kitchens as well as separate living and sleeping areas. Complimentary breakfast. Innovative exercise/laundry space. Outdoor built-in grills, fire pit lounge and indoor saline pool. Contact Sheila Hilke 608-385-2725 - [explorehome2suites.com](http://explorehome2suites.com).

**CHIROPRACTIC FIRST OF LA CRESCENT** will be hosting a Family Fun Night on June 9 from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in La Crescent. Proceeds will benefit The 300 Foundation for the La Crescent/ Hokah School District. Lots of food, fun and games! Free to attend. For more information, contact 507-895-2225.

New and seasoned writers are welcome at the **FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY CENTER'S** writing retreat, "The Soul's Story: Writing Through the Ego's Chatter," presented by Theresa Washburn from August 12-14. For more information, visit [www.fscenter.org](http://www.fscenter.org) or contact 608-791-5295.

**MIDWEST TOYOTA'S** Borrow a Bike program offers service customers a chance to ride one of four new Trek bicycles purchased from Smith's Cycling & Fitness. Riders also get a token for a free Pearl Ice Cream Parlor cone. The bikes will be donated to New Horizons Shelter & Outreach Centers in late fall.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE "CONNECTING MEMBERS TO MEMBERS" SECTION OF THE NEWSLETTER.** Share your business developments with your fellow Chamber members. Submit items before the 10th of the month, no more than 40 words in length and limited to personnel news or changes, new ownership, merger or acquisitions, awards, change of location, expansions, remodeling, or sponsorship of community events. The Chamber reserves the right to edit items over 40 words in length. Submit your information to Dawn Honken at [dawn.honken@lacrossechamber.com](mailto:dawn.honken@lacrossechamber.com).





# EVENT SPOTLIGHT: THE HONOR STUDENT BANQUET

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**On April 20, 2016** The La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce honored the top 5% of graduating seniors from our area High Schools at the 2016 Honor Student Banquet. Students enjoyed a catered dinner at University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, a fun candy buffet and inspiring speeches. La Crosse native and Aquinas graduate, Will Kratt, gave a powerful keynote address and Logan High School student, Emma Mutschelknaus, gave a wonderful student response. This is a tremendous honor and the La Crosse Chamber and all the event sponsors are very proud of this wonderful group of students.



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Jordana Snyder  
Photography





## *THE BEST* **Business-to-Business Golf Outing**

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