



Q1 2025 Economic Development Report



FOX CITIES CHAMBER
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP



**NATIONAL
CHAMBER
OF THE YEAR**

The latest news and events

Congratulations to Lifetime Achievement award recipients



The Chamber's "Celebrate 2025" recognized individual lifetime achievements of business and community leaders. This year's recipients (left to right) are: **John Hogarty, Bergstrom Corporation**, Gus A. Zuehlke Distinguished Service Award; **Paul Schrode**, Chamber Legacy Award; **Colleen Dicus-Johnson, Network Health**, ATHENA Leadership Award; **John Schmidt**, US Venture, Business Leader Hall of Fame; and **Richard Parks, Modern Woodmen of America**, Joyce Bytof Exceptional Mentor Award.

Media partnership helps spotlight member businesses

The Fox Cities Chamber and **WFRV-TV Local 5 Live** have an ongoing partnership that gives us a segment on their daily morning show twice a month. We always bring a member guest, to share their story, and in Q1 we showcased: Richard Parks, **Modern Woodmen of America**; Member Ribbon Cutting updates; Jill Dolan, a teacher from **Fox Valley Lutheran School**; Steve Zich, **Capital Credit Union**; Austin Hammond, **Mayor of Menasha**; and Nikki Kucharski, **Tattoo Noire Private Studio**.

Chamber launches region's first AI Business Summit

The Chamber, in partnership with presenting sponsor **Miron**, is holding a day-long AI Business Summit on Wednesday, November 5 from 8 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. at the Hilton Paper Valley in Appleton. This is a premier event for businesses, innovators, and professionals looking to explore the power of artificial intelligence in the workplace. This one-day event brings together industry experts, thought leaders, and cutting-edge businesses to discuss practical AI applications, emerging trends, and real-world case studies that are shaping the future.

Designed for businesses of all sizes and at all stages of their AI journey, the program starts and concludes with engaging keynotes and offers several breakout sessions in between.

Early bird pricing is available now through September 10 for \$175 (Fox Cities Chamber members) and \$195 (non-members). Everyone who purchases an early bird ticket will be entered in a drawing to win AI-related prizes. Team discounts are also available – save \$20 per ticket when purchasing 6 or more. Click [here](#) to learn more and register.



*The Chamber's AI Business Summit opening keynote is national futurist **Rebecca Ryan, APF, FRSA**, who will speak on "The Human Edge: Navigating AI's Uneven Revolution in Business."*

Q1 Program and Event Updates

In addition to Celebrate 2025, the Chamber held two other signature events in Q1 that align with its mission of economic development:

Economic Outlook Lunch:

The “Bowtie Economist” Elliot Eisenberg delivered his popular annual address on macro- and micro-economic issues to the Fox Cities business community on February 11, at our annual Economic Outlook Lunch.

Excellence in Education Shining Star Awards:

This tradition honors the work of local educators and has become a signature Chamber celebration. The 2025 recipients, chosen from 250 nominees, were honored at a dinner on March 13 that was emceed by WFRV’s Lisa Malak and Millaine Wells. Honorees were:



- **Karissa Ring, Johnston Elementary**
- **Tracy Larson, Freedom Elementary**
- **Eugene Wall, Little Chute High School**
- **Jennie Gries, Park Community Charter School**
- **Penny Kurkiewicz, Freedom Elementary**
- **Sarah Heezen, Freedom High School**
- **Jill Dolan, Fox Valley Lutheran**
- **Kate Dickinson, Neenah Joint School District**
- **Kyle Dunphy, Kaukauna High School**
- **Jillian Prah, Hortonville Area School District**

Other:

Other Fox Cities Chamber events and programs held this quarter include Morning Mingle, Fox Talks Seminar Series, member ribbon cuttings, ongoing Leadership Fox Cities and Leader Lab classes, and Business After Hours.

Fox Cities Chamber recognized for its impact

The **Fox Cities Chamber** has been recognized as the “Most Impactful Chamber in Wisconsin” by *FDI Insider*, a leading international business publication. The Chamber was honored for its community engagement and innovation, with primary focus on its Connect Free membership.

“This recognition affirms the strength of our Chamber and members, as we partner together to drive economic growth and prosperity for the region,” said Chamber President and CEO Becky Bartoszek. “It reflects the intentional work we’ve done to break down barriers, engage the entire business community—especially our smallest employers—and lead with bold, member-focused innovation.”



Business Attraction and Retention

FCCRP by the Numbers - Q1 2025

Connect Free Memberships - 67 Fox Cities small businesses joined the Chamber at its Connect Free level in Q1. To date, 821 small businesses have taken advantage of this unique free membership opportunity.

YP Memberships - Membership in PULSE Young Professionals grew by 49 in the first quarter. Year-to-date there are 818 individual members. First quarter programming for young professionals included Coffee & Conversation, Axe Throwing, Networking Blitz, Volunteering at Feeding America, Parenting Group, Lunch 'n Learn, Cocktails and Conversation, Restaurant Club, and Night at the Museum.

Employee Friendly Workplace: VT Industries was recognized as a Gold Level Employee Friendly Workplace featuring, bringing the total number of certified companies to 22. Additional congratulations go to **Capital Credit Union**, who moved from Gold to the Platinum Level in January!

Business Support: The Chamber held Business After Hours at three member businesses in the first quarter, providing the opportunity to showcase their company: **Ballard Glenn, Casper's Truck Equipment**, and **OSMS**. Additionally, business milestone ribbon cuttings were held at **Galloway** and **VPI**.

Local Economic Development Support: Fox Cities Chamber Regional Partnership staff participated in the following economic development initiatives in Q1:

- **Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA)** Governor's Conference at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee
- **Governor's Roundtable Discussion** at the Menasha Public Library to discuss key issues facing the Fox Cities
- Joint Finance Meeting at the newly renovated **Appleton Public Library** to discuss issues with members of the Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee
- **Plan Appleton** meetings to develop the Appleton Comprehensive Plan
- **Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce Executives (WCCE)** spring training session for chambers to connect and learn best practices
- **North East Wisconsin Regional Economic Partnership (NEWREP)** Monthly meeting. NEWREP is a non-profit organization committed to promoting and fostering economic development throughout the Northeast Wisconsin region
- **FCEDP** monthly meeting
- We also provided organization of temporary business signage to aid businesses along Ballard Road in North Appleton during the reconstruction of the Ballard Road interchange.



Questions or interested in setting up a free Business Retention & Expansion consultation?

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