Economic Development Report


Women's Golf Outing

FOX CITIES CHAMBER

NATIONAL CHAMBER OF THE YEAR



Fox Talks: Generations Collide



Appleton's Octoberfest Kickoff

Q3 2026

Chamber Strategic Updates

Chamber Leads Business Recovery Efforts Following July Tornado

Following the devastating July 27 tornado that impacted Menasha and surrounding Fox Cities communities, the Fox Cities Chamber quickly mobilized to support affected businesses, coordinate resources, and advocate for the region's economic recovery.

Within 24 hours, the Chamber launched a centralized online recovery resource hub to connect businesses with assistance and critical information. Staff conducted business outreach to talk with impacted employers. The Chamber offered free temporary co-working space for displaced businesses. They also coordinated with regional partners on local assistance and 211 reporting.

Recognizing the importance of understanding the storm's economic impact, the Chamber conducted a Business Impact & Recovery Survey to identify immediate needs, financial challenges, and long-term concerns. The findings helped inform recovery priorities and advocacy efforts, including support for a federal disaster declaration and additional assistance for impacted businesses.

The Chamber is now working closely with Menasha Forward, local municipalities, and regional partners to develop longer-term economic recovery strategies focused on helping existing businesses rebuild, retaining those at risk of leaving, and attracting new investment to affected areas.



School supply drive at Miron

Helping Prepare for an AI Future

Did you know that the Fox Cities Chamber has an AI Task Force that brings together technology leaders in the AI space to help the Fox Cities region responsibly adopt AI and become a leader in leveraging its potential?

The Task Force serves as a regional AI think tank, providing a forum to explore emerging trends, discuss timely topics, and consider the opportunities and challenges AI presents for local businesses.

The group is also a strategic sounding board for the Chamber, offering perspectives and insights to help shape future AI priorities and initiatives and ensure the Fox Cities remains informed, innovative, and competitive in an AI-driven world.

Chamber presents nationally on its AI initiatives

The Fox Cities Chamber shared its AI expertise on the national stage in July at the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) annual convention.

Laura Wiegert, EVP of Brand Experience & Engagement, led an interactive tabletop discussion on planning a successful AI Business Summit, sharing lessons from the Chamber's inaugural event.

Wiegert also participated in a panel highlighting innovative ways chambers are using AI, showcasing Francis, the Chamber's AI-powered website assistant, which helps visitors find information and resources.

Q3 Events & Programs

New Leadership Class begins

Leadership Fox Cities kicked off its 9-month program with a successful retreat in September. Welcome to the class of 2026-27: Amber Adams, **City of Neenah;** Kirby Allen, **Morton Safety**; Joleen Ayers, **Community First Credit Union**; Brad Barron, **Nicolet National Bank**; Lindsey Beresford, **We Energies**; Colleen Bies, **Fox Valley Community Learning Center**; Brian Borden, **Investment Designers, Inc.**; Theresa Brockman, **Evergreen Communities**; Kristine Butteris, **City of Neenah Parks and Recreation**; Kelly Carter, **Menasha Corporation**; Clarence Crane, **Appleton Area School District**; Brendan Detjen, **Legacy Private Trust Company**; Patrick Dewane, **Fox Valley Technical College**; Claire Ebben, **Outagamie County**; Kim Fermanich, **Capital Credit Union**; Hollie Foley, **Appleton International Airport**; Sarah Fulmer, **Touchmark on West Prospect**; Shannan Hartel, **Lawrence University**; Tony Holzer, **The Boldt Company**; Jon Jones, **Johnson Financial Group**; Nathan Kaull, **Robert W. Baird**; Patty Kitowski, **Froedtert ThedaCare**; Sarah Kunstman, **Capital Credit Union**; Justin Leadman, **First Business Bank**; Amy Lewandowski, **Prevea Health**; Zachary Marquardt, **US Venture – US AutoForce**; Renee Minlschmidt, **Fox Communities Credit Union**; Allison Moeschberger, **Johnson Financial Group**; Stacy Mueller, **US Venture**; Kat Polack Eagle, **Performance Plastics**; Charlotte Radliff, **Capital Credit Union**; Spring Rank, **YMCA of the Fox Cities**; Kenneth Rucker, **Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin, Inc.**; Kaleb Schinschke, **Bank First;** Jenna Schneider, **Arden Property Group Inc.**; Megan Spranger, **ThedaCare Family of Foundations**; Brenna Van Rooy, **Hawkins Ash CPAs**; Kathy Vanden Hogen **Community First Credit Union**; Vue Vang, **Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity**; Sam Vosters, **U.S. Venture**; John Wagner, **Miron Construction Co.,** Inc.; Emily Wichman, **Image Studios;** Sara Wiegert, **U.S. Venture, Inc**; Shaylan Wilson, **Cobblestone Hotel and Suites**; Kris Zweiger, **Pierce Manufacturing Inc.**

Leader Lab

A group of 10 enthusiastic leaders are currently participating in **Leader Lab**. Leadership skills, and workplace culture are highlighted in this 7-session curriculum.

Learn best practices from Rocket City

Our next **Leadership Exchange** will be in Huntsville February 16-18, 2027. Join us in "Rocket City" as we gather ideas, strategies and approaches to make our community even stronger.



Summer Golf Outing

Quarterly Events

The **Summer Golf Outing** brought together a wide variety of business professionals in July. **Launch: Summer Intern Series** also wrapped up in July with many new connections made for these local interns. In August, the Chamber held the first **Women's Golf Outing,** bringing together 75 women for an awesome outing. During September, the Chamber held the annual **Octoberfest Golf Outing** as well as **License to Cruise and Octoberfest**, which brings in over 300,000 attendees each year.

Fox Talks focuses on generations at work

Nearly 40 people attended the Q3 **Fox Talk, Generations Collide:** Unlocking the Power of a Multi-Generational Workforce. Presenter Chad Kopitzke fromSBDC led participants in a lively discussion.

Strengthening school/business connections

The **Emerging Talent Alliance** continued to work to strengthen the connections between business and education by planning their next Innovate for Tomorrow session, a collaboration between ETA and the Chamber's AI Task Force on AI in schools and businesses on November 9.

Q3 By the Numbers

Connect Free Memberships - 66 Fox Cities small businesses joined the Chamber at its Connect Free level in Q3. To date, 1,244 small businesses have taken advantage of this unique free membership opportunity. Overall, the Chamber has 2,100+ members.

Employee Friendly Workplace (EFW) - Employee Friendly Workplace: **US Venture** celebrated 4 years as a platinum level employee friendly workplace. **Miron Construction** celebrated 1 year as a platinum level employee friendly workplace. Platinum is the highest achievement for the EFW certification and demonstrates the continued commitment to employees and workplace practices.

YP Memberships - Membership growth remained strong for the Fox Cities Chamber Young Professionals Network, with 10 new members joining and bringing total active membership to 904. The FCCYPN has continued to create meaningful opportunities for young professionals to develop their skills and strengthen connections across the community. Throughout Q3, programming included the Internship Series, Cocktails & Conversations, Coffee & Conversations, Dale Carnegie, and Level Up Live, offering multiple ways for participants to interact with their peers and applying knowledge to their career paths.

Business Support - The Chamber held Business After Hours networking events at 3 member businesses in the third quarter, providing the opportunity to showcase their businesses to the community: **Plexus Corp., Miron Construction, and Van Zeeland Nursery.** Ribbon Cuttings to celebrate various milestones were provided to: **Walmart- Neenah, Kelly Davies Homes Team, Ivory Rose Bridal Boutique, The Bob Karisny Training Center, CopperStone Assisted Living and Memory Care, The School Of Ballet 5:8 Fox Cities, USA Ninja Challenge-Appleton, State Farm- Erik Hosking, 7 Brew, Sola Salons In Menasha, Baish Engineering, KidsUnited, L&S Electric, Primrose Retirement Community Ribbon, CornerStone Caregiving, Natural Grocers, Smiling Dog Orchard 15 year Anniversary .**

BRE Efforts: Chamber staff met with 43 Fox Cities businesses in the third quarter of 2026. Each business presents unique challenges and concerns, and our goal is to provide resources for the business to overcome those obstacles and thrive within our region. .

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

Contact Jack Herkowski, Manager of Economic Development, Fox Cities Chamber: jherkowski@foxcc.net

Find us online:
FoxCitiesChamber.com

Media partnership supports local businesses: The Chamber featured the following members on Local 5 Live in Q3: **Mosaic Family Health; City of Menasha; GG West African Cuisine; Multicultural Coalition; McFleshmen's Brewing Co**.; and also highlighted recent businesses who held ribbon cuttings.

Economic Development Assistance: During the third quarter, staff completed 2 customized wage analyses, assisted with 4 site selection and business attraction projects, and fulfilled 6 economic data requests for employers, municipalities, developers, and community partners. Staff attended In-Development, a conference which brings together developers, business leaders, economic development professionals, municipal leaders, investors, and industry experts driving growth across Northeast Wisconsin.