

Promoting the Alexandria Lakes Area as the ultimate destination to “live, work, play and prosper.”

Official Newsletter of the Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce

MAY 2020 | VOLUME 112 | ISSUE 5

Alexandria featured in Minnesota Monthly as **Best MN Town!**

Last fall, our community was notified that Alexandria was named “Best Minnesota Town” by *Minnesota Monthly* magazine.

Of course, we already knew our community was great, but this honor gave us the opportunity to tell others about the special things that make Alexandria “the ultimate destination to live, work, play and prosper.”

Along with the honor came a 12-page feature in *Minnesota Monthly*. Journalist Erik Tormoen traveled to Alexandria to find out first-hand what made us stand out from other communities. His feature article was just released in the May/June issue.

While one can easily complain that that timing of this “stinks” and that Alexandria lost the spotlight to the Coronavirus, we at the Chamber are sticking with our 2020 theme of “Be Positive, Do Positive.”

We are very proud of this community, and we are thrilled about all the great things going on here that were spotlighted in the article.

Tormoen wrote about our highly ranked health care and education systems, our dining and beverage options that are anything but small town, our abundant outdoor recreational opportunities, and the incredible diversity of business and industry in our area.

Our many lakes and our tourism industry are a focus in the article, to which Tormoen writes: [Alexandria is] “where Minnesota really earns that friendly, outdoorsy reputation.”

Tormoen was in the process of writing this article in February when Alexandria experienced a devastating fire that destroyed some of our historic downtown buildings, displacing some businesses and residents.

He talks about that in the article, commenting on the collaborative spirit and helping hands attitude of the people of Alexandria, which is one of the main things that makes our community stand out.

The lead-in to the article states: “Beauty, progress and resilience make Alexandria *Minnesota Monthly’s* Best Minnesota Town.” We couldn’t agree more!

The May/June issue of *Minnesota Monthly* is available on these local newsstands:

- Elden’s Fresh Foods & Downtown Floral
- Alexandria Cub Foods
- Target
- Walmart Supercenter
- Walgreens



Visit Alexandria MN



Alexandria Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce



alexlakesareachamber

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320-763-3161 | www.alexandriamn.org



We are sad to report that the Duffer's Delight Golf Tournament scheduled for Monday, June 1, 2020 has been cancelled.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS
FOR **JUNE 7, 2021**

START PRACTICING!

Welcome! *April new members*

Nortec Communications, Inc.

Jessy Lusty
13071 County Rd. 5 NE, Carlos
(320) 852-2730
jessel@norteccommunications.com
www.norteccommunications.com

Runestone Heating & Air Conditioning, LLC

Greg Carlson
(320) 763-3954
runestonehtg@gmail.com

Please consider these new members for your personal and professional needs, and welcome them to our network!

Noontime Knowledge is a one-hour informative event held the third Monday of each month. Visit the Alexandria Chamber website, www.alexandriamn.org, for the registration link to this virtual event!

**Join us Monday, May 18, 12-1 pm
Via ZOOM**

Homeownership is Possible!

Wouldn't you rather own a home than rent? Affordable home ownership for qualified buyers is possible with a Community Land Trust.



Join us to learn how WCMCA's Community Land Trust will offer homeownership opportunities for those currently locked out of the market due to rising costs of homes.

Learn about what a Community Land Trust is, how it makes homeownership permanently affordable and what it can do for the Alexandria area.

OUR PANEL

- ▶ **Kelli Minnerath**
Director of Development & Operations, West Central MN
- ▶ **Joe Niehaus**
Affordable Housing Director, West Central MN Communities
- ▶ **Janelle Bennett**
Housing Coordinator, West Central MN Communities

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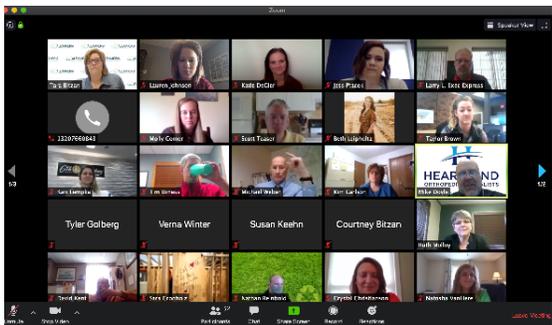
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Chamber Connection aims to keep members connected!

The Chamber realizes the value of face-to-face networking and opportunities to stay connected with all that is going on in the community. Those opportunities are even more important during times like we are experiencing now. While we've had to cancel some of our popular networking events, the Chamber hosted its first VIRTUAL Chamber Connection via Zoom on Thursday, April 23 from 3:30 - 4:30 pm with 50+ attendees!

4 - \$25 Chamber Bucks were also given away courtesy of Quality Computer Services of Central Minnesota. Winners included Shelly Beaulieu of Echo Press, Brett Paradis of KXRA-KX92-299 Radio and Voice of Alexandria, Amy Olinger of Keller Williams Realty and Ruth Molloy of Edward Jones. Congratulations!

Watch Chamber communications for registration links to future Chamber Connection events.



Business Buzz

Counselor Realty, Inc. of Alexandria reported that three of its agents - Pat Ellingson, Marsha Haugen and Joey Crouse - all received their Brokers Licenses in 2020. This brings the total of Brokers at Counselor Realty, Inc. of Alexandria to 17. Also recently joining the Alexandria team is Justin Habel.

ALP Utilities earned a Platinum Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) designation from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for providing reliable and safe electric service. The designation, which lasts for three years, recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement. ALP Utilities also earned APPA's Excellence in Reliability Certificate.

American Solutions for Business packed 575 meals during a week in April for **United Way of Douglas and Pope Counties'** Backpack Attack. This program provides meals on weekends for children who wouldn't otherwise have food to eat.

Ashley Rambow joined **Coldwell Banker Crown Realtors** as a full-time independent sales associate working out of the Alexandria office. Rambow has three years experience in residential real estate sales and is currently working on her e-Pro certification through the National Association of Realtors.

Alternative Senior Care partnered with Electronic Caregiver to provide technology and services that monitor clients safety and well-being from their home. Remote patient monitoring has become a vital tool in the fight to reduce the spread of COVID-19, helping seniors get the care they need from home.

Upcoming Chamber Events

Alexandria Area Young Professionals VIRTUAL Luncheon

Featuring *Kelsi Timm of Helping Hands of Alexandria, MN*

Thursday, May 7 from 12 - 1 pm

Virtual Zoom Event | Visit AAYP Facebook Event for registration link

Chamber Connection

Featuring *Senator Bill Ingebrigsten and Representative Mary Franson:*

Opening Up Our Economy

Thursday, May 7 from 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Virtual Zoom Event | Visit www.alexandriamn.org for registration link

Noontime Knowledge (See Page 2)

Featuring *"Homeownership is Possible"*

Monday, May 18 from 12 - 1 pm

Virtual Zoom Event | Visit www.alexandriamn.org for registration link

#colorBigOle Contest Winners

The Alexandria Chamber helped keep kids busy by conducting a #colorBigOle contest on social media April 13-17. Kids younger than age 12 colored a Big Ole coloring page and images were uploaded to social media using the hashtag #colorBigOle for a chance to win a Big Ole plush doll. Drawings took place every day, Monday - Friday of that week via Facebook live. Dolls were mailed out to the winners below:

Jay Gaustad (5 years old)

Eryn Botzet (11 years old)

Sophie Betterman (8 years old)

Emmy Schmidt (3 years old)

Mark Gerdes (8 years old)

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We made a mistake...

The Chamber Team erred in the February newsletter when we reported on the Ambassador visit to Reach Church. The church - formerly known as Living Waters Church - is located at 1310 N Nokomis St NE in Alexandria. It rebranded with a new name, Reach Church, and a mission to "Reach the Lost." We incorrectly included the word "Lutheran" in the church's previous name. The church is actually associated with the Assemblies of God. Sunday worship is at 9:30 am. Services are currently on-line only due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more at www.reachchurchmn.com.

...and then this happened

Due to an unfortunate print error with our newsletter printer, the inside pages of the February newsletter were inserted into the April newsletter, which means the Reach Church photo and cutline (with the error noted above) were again sent to subscribers. The printer did a fabulous job of resending the correct newsletter the following day, and the electronic newsletter went out without issue. Our sincerest apologies to Reach Church for the error, and the fact the error went out twice. We are proud to have your serving our community.

Support local businesses with Chamber Bucks!

Chamber Bucks are a great way to keep dollars local during this difficult time and ALL year long! Consider giving Chamber Bucks for gifts, employee rewards or bonuses. Anybody can purchase Chamber Bucks and they can be spent at more than 200 hundred participating Chamber member businesses!

Chamber Bucks are available in \$5 increments and are valid for 12 months following the issue date. There is an even dollar-for-dollar exchange - the Chamber adds no service charge to the process!



Call the Chamber at 320-763-3161 or email jess@alexandriamn.org to place your order!

What's the Chamber been doing?

By Tara Bitzan, Executive Director, Alexandria Chamber

Like many of you, our doors have been closed to the public for the past several weeks, but we've still been busy! First, we monitored phones and emails and worked remotely. On April 27 we returned to on-site staffing during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

Our main focus has always been on doing what we can to ensure the businesses and organizations that operate in the Alexandria Lakes Area are successful. With COVID-19, our goal hasn't changed - we are still working hard each day on behalf of our community and members to ensure they are successful.

But how we are going about that is much different, and our members' needs are definitely much different right now. Here are a few things we've been doing:

- A list of COVID Resources can be found on our website at alexandriamn.org.
 - We are utilizing our eblast system to send up-to-date communications on resources, programs, etc. These go out at 10 am and 2 pm Monday through Friday with additional blasts as needed. Call 320-763-3161 to get signed up for those.
 - We are still honoring our usual member offerings by appointment - such as certificates of origin or notary services.
 - We are filling Visitor Guide and Relocation Packet requests and are referring member services to callers and email requesters.
 - We've been filling Chamber Buck orders, which is a GREAT way to help support local businesses and keep dollars local, which will be needed now more than ever.
 - We've utilized Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to keep you informed, but also to share the good news of all that is happening in our community. There's been a lot of great stories shared about how the community is rallying. Share your stories by tagging the Chamber and Pride of the Lakes on your posts.
- Our staff and members of our Chamber Membership and Ambassador Teams have been reaching out to our members to simply have conversations about how the Coronavirus has impacted their business or organization and to ask what they most need right now. We then do our best to connect them with the proper resources to meet those needs.

Finally, we've been working collectively with other Chambers from throughout the state with the Minnesota Chamber in advocating on your behalf for the Governor to reopen as many businesses as possible, as quickly as possible, while keeping you, your staff, and your clients as safe as possible.

Our goal - and that of our collaborating entities throughout Douglas County - is to get our community through this challenge with the least amount of negative impact.

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#AlexMNSpirit

Spirit Week in Alexandria!

The City of Alexandria encouraged everyone to stay connected through Alexandria Spirit Week April 20-24! Community members showed their spirit by dressing in the theme of the day and posting their images on social media using the hashtag #AlexMNSpirit. Check out a few of the posts we found on Facebook!

MONDAY, APRIL 20 – LOOK ALIKE DAY

Dress like someone you know ... your favorite celebrity, movie character, family member, co-worker, your boss, or join with others to dress alike!



Posted on Facebook by **Viking Bank**: Employees from Viking Bank dressed as each other and as the movie character, Mickey Mouse.

TUESDAY, APRIL 21 – ALEXANDRIA SWAG DAY

Show off your Alexandria logo-wear or your favorite local business logo wear.



Posted on Facebook by **Counselor Realty Inc. of Alexandria**: Employees from Counselor Realty Inc. of Alexandria showed their Alexandria swag by representing different businesses in the Alexandria area.

THURSDAY, APRIL 23 – BRING YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY

Snap a photo with your kid(s) while hard at work.



Posted on Facebook by **Integrity Title, Inc.**: Owners/Employees of Integrity Title, Inc. brought their kids to work!



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 – EARTH DAY

Dress in Earth tones or be creative and dress like the sun, moon, stars, Mother Nature ...



Posted on Facebook by **Eye Associates of Alexandria**: Employees from Eye Associates of Alexandria showed their Alexandria spirit for Earth Day.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24 – CARDINAL DAY

Dress in your Cardinal gear or dress in red!



Posted on Facebook by **Alexandria Community Education**: Employees from Alexandria Public Schools showed their cardinal pride.

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We've added Video Visits as a convenient and secure option to meeting with your provider when a physical visit isn't practical. For more information, go to news.AlomereHealth.com/introducing-secure-video-visits



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Be Positive, Do Positive in the Alexandria Lakes Area!

Many great things have been happening in the Douglas County area during this difficult time. Businesses helping each other, individuals helping each other, positive messaging and decorative displays on signs and windows... good is happening all around us. Take a look at just a few examples we've come across on social media!



Posted on Facebook by Voice of Alexandria: Volunteers have been painting murals on windows all over town. Char Slack is pictured here painting a mural on an outside window at Alomere Health in Alexandria. The painting is just one of many that will adorn the 60 windows on the east side of Alomere Health. All of the work is being done by volunteers of Helping Hands of Alexandria.



Posted on the Helping Hands Facebook page: Thousands of masks have been made locally thanks to many volunteer cutters, sewers, and material and financial donors.



Posted on Facebook by Colorful Seasons Garden Center: Colorful Seasons knew how important Palm Sunday family traditions are in our area and purchased 200 palms to share with the public.



Posted on Facebook by Douglas County Emergency Management: Panther Distillery of Osakis and Ida Graves Distillery of Alexandria are shifting their focus to making hand sanitizer to help fulfill needs.



Posted on Facebook by Geneva Capital LLC: A simple pay-it-forward campaign was happening with businesses buying lunch for other businesses in the area. Zimny Insurance Agency bought lunch for Geneva Capital and in return Geneva Capital bought lunch for Winning Edge and Bursch Travel. Great way to support each other and local restaurants!



Posted on Facebook by Alexandria Technical & Community College: Volunteers came together to create baskets including bleach, paper towels, children's books, art, activity items, and a special gift for childcare providers. More than 100 baskets were delivered to family childcare providers in Douglas County.



Posted on Facebook by Quincy Roers: Roer's Bakery posted a fun sign in front of its business letting the public know they are open!

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