



take root
Rushford Peterson Valley[®]
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Newsletter

January 2016



Annual Meeting Recap

Over 50 business and community representatives attended the Chamber's January 26 Annual Meeting at Ferndale Golf Course. Thank you to everyone who joined us for this event and to Rushford State Bank for sponsoring our "Money Tree" centerpieces! In addition to approving the [February 7, 2015 Annual Meeting Minutes](#) and the [2015 Treasurer's Report](#), the membership ratified the election of new board member Steven Halvorson. The 7-member Board of Directors also consists of Peggi Redalen, Gary Marcoux, Angela Colbenson, Robin Paulson, Beth Tudaahl and Megan Boyum. In ongoing support and growth of our business community, the Chamber's 2015 activities and results were presented along with some 2016 planned activities.

Guest speaker Tim Penny, CEO & president of the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, talked about his numerous personal and professional connections to the Rushford Peterson Valley and shared information about the many programs that SMIF offers to communities and businesses across southern Minnesota. In particular he noted the following:



- **AmeriCorps VISTA** program places workers in non-profit organizations working with economically disadvantaged people.
- **Business Loan Fund** targets six key industries--bioscience, renewable energy, food/agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and healthcare--and works in partnership with local lending institutions, economic development organizations, and government agencies to help "fill the gap" between available and necessary financial resources.
- **Business Equity Fund** supports start-up stage businesses or helps established companies

perform research and analysis, patent opinions and filings, and product testing and analysis.

- **Preserving Our Heritage** program provides a means of giving that preserves one of our region's greatest natural assets: farmland. SMIF retains the gifted land as an asset, allowing it to continue to be farmed, and the land provides a lasting legacy for the community and region.

For details about the above or other SMIF programs (such as the FEAST Local Foods Network, SCORE, and the Prosperity Initiative), visit [SMIF's website](#).

Chamber President Peggi Redalen also gave members the opportunity to share news from their businesses and organizations. Brian Krambeer, CEO & president of Tri-County Electric Co-operative (TEC), shared that the Boards of Directors of both TEC and Hawkeye REC in Cresco, Iowa have approved a merger vote by the co-operatives' members. Krambeer has been a shared manager between the two co-operatives for seven years. The Boards of Directors believe a merger will help the co-operative continue to grow, enhance service, and manage costs. For more information, visit the [TEC website's page regarding the merger vote](#) and plan to attend the March 2 informational meeting at 9:00 a.m. at TEC's headquarters in Rushford Village. ***Again, thanks to all those who were able to attend the Annual Meeting!***

Events Calendar

1st Wednesday of the
Month - Lions Club
Evening Meeting

1st Saturday of the
Month - Masons Pancake
Breakfast

February 25

(7:30 a.m.)

Chamber Meeting with
Presentation by Fillmore
County Assessor at The
Creamery

March 2

(9:00 a.m.)

Informational Meeting at
Tri-County Electric Co-op
regarding merger with
Hawkeye REC

March 31

(12 noon)

Tentative date for "State
of Our Cities" addresses
from the three mayors.
Location TBD.

April 13

Food Manager
Certification or
Recertification Course at
Loken's Rushford Inn

Chamber Activities

Membership Drive 2016 began in December with renewal letters sent to the 111 members in 2015. To date we've received 71 paid memberships from businesses, organizations and individuals. Please renew your membership today so you continue receiving our e-newsletters, the expanded listing on the RushfordPetersonValley.com website, invitations to networking events, and more.

February Board Retreats. The Chamber Board will be meeting on two separate occasions in February to set objectives and activities for 2016. Contact Coordinator Jen Hengel by [e-mail](#) or phone by February 5 if you have items to share with the Board of Directors.

February Chamber Member Meeting. Attend a Chamber breakfast meeting on Thursday, February 25 at 7:30 a.m. at The Creamery to hear from **Fillmore County Assessor Cindy Blagsvedt**, who will review 2015 land/property sales data, including a breakdown for the Rushford Peterson Valley. Cindy may also touch on how property is assessed, how commercial property taxes are calculated, the timeline for assessment appeals, and the Fillmore County 0.5% sales tax with more information on revenue and how those funds are being used. **Winona County Recorder Bob Bambenek** will also attend and have residential, commercial and land sales data for Winona County and the townships nearest our area. Contact the Chamber if you have a specific area or question you would like these local officials to address. Meeting RSVPs will be requested closer to the date.

Lodging Tax Ordinance Amendment. On January 25, the City of Rushford City Council adopted amendments to its Lodging Tax Ordinance, which has been in place since 1995. The amendments change the organization receiving these funds from Historic Bluff Country to the Rushford Peterson Valley Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber Board of Directors will be responsible for utilizing these dollars for "the purpose of marketing and



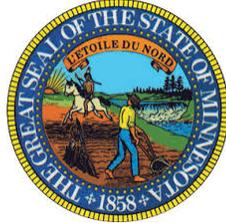
Purchase "take root" brand t-shirts at Rushford Hardware. Men's and Women's sizes available in several colors.

Share news or events!

If you have information to share with your fellow Chamber members or would like to be considered for the Business of the Month, please contact the Chamber office. Also, Chamber members may post employment opportunities on the RP Valley website at no cost. The Chamber coordinator updates the local Cable Access Channel, so community events will be put on that channel and the RP Valley website.

promoting the city" as stated in Minnesota Statute 469.190. The Board will seek input in the use of the funds from lodging establishments that collect this tax. The ordinance also calls for quarterly financial reports to the City of Rushford.

89th Minnesota Legislature will reconvene its regular session on March 8 and end no later than May 23, 2016. You can call, email, or write a letter to your legislator. To speak to your representative or senator in person, contact their office to make an appointment. When sending an e-mail, remember to



include your name, postal address, and phone number.

Our state elected officials are:

[Senator Jeremy Miller](#) - District 28

[Representative Greg Davids](#) - District 28B, including Fillmore and Houston counties

[Representative Gene Pelowski Jr.](#) - District 28A,

southern portion of Winona County

Business of the Month

Engelson & Associates, Ltd. (E&A) was formed in 1963, but the firm didn't arrive in the Rushford Peterson Valley until 1998 when it purchased the tax office of partners Dale Evavold and Ruth Peterson. E&A has locations in La Crosse, Holmen and Rushford and a total of 20 employees. The firm's three owners are William J. Sherry, CPA and Earl E. Engelson, CPA in La Crosse and Bradley J. Peterson, CPA in Holmen. At the Rushford office in the Mill Street Mall, you'll



Engelson & Associates, Ltd.
Certified Public Accountants and Consultants

find full-time employees Sarah Brown and Beth Manful and tax-season employees Ruth Peterson, Martha Stensgard, and Sharon Rustad.

You can receive help with your farm or business accounting and taxes--or your individual taxes--right here in the Rushford Peterson Valley! E&A is dedicated to being a reliable resource for all of your tax and accounting needs, from helping you file your taxes to answering questions. Examples of their services include: Individual, Corporate, Partnership, Fiduciary and Estate Tax Planning and Preparation; Electronic Filing; Quick Books Advisory Services; Bookkeeping and Payroll Services; Business Audits, Reviews and Compilations of Financial Statements; and Employee Benefit Plan Audits. Call 864-1040 for more information.

The Chamber recognizes Engelson & Associates as the Member Business of the Month, commending its 18+ years of business in the Rushford Peterson Valley!

Local Business & Community News

Root River Trail Towns' representatives are planning the first annual Trail-wide Clean-up for Saturday, April 23 (the Saturday immediately following Earth Day). Jen Hengel and Gail Boyum are organizing the clean-up in the

Rushford Peterson Valley. If your civic or church group would like to be involved with picking up trash along a portion of the trail or a community park, please contact the Chamber office by March 31.

Community Education's [adult and family offerings](#) this winter and spring trips.

Office/Business Space

The following commercial locations are available for sale or rent:

- Space for rent at the intersection of Hwy 43 & Hwy 30 in downtown Rushford. About 1,000 square feet of space for \$675/month plus utilities. The owner would also consider the sale of the entire building (currently renting 2 apartments, 1 hair salon, and 1 office space. 5,000+ s.f.). Call 864-4400 or email creighton@horihan.com.
- Pam's Corner building has office space available to rent. Contact Pam Brand at pamscorner@acegroup.cc for details.
- Loken's Rushford Inn would like fellow Chamber members to know the hotel is for sale. Go to www.darrauctions.com for details.

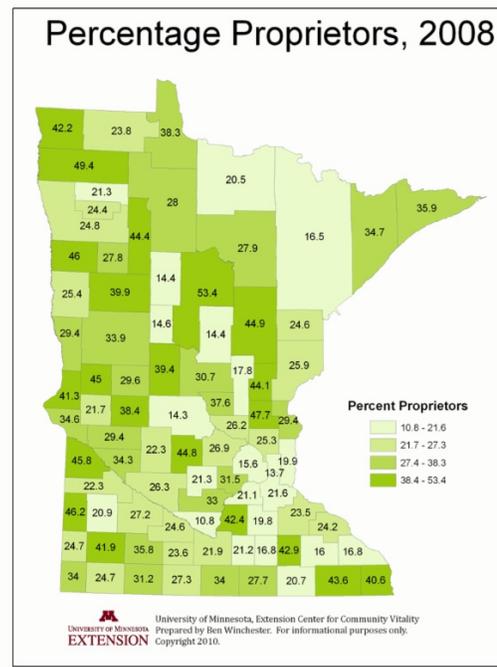
News from around the region & beyond

Small Biz Survival is a website created in 2006 by Becky McCray to share rural business and community building stories and ideas with other small town business people. She and her husband own a retail liquor store in Alva, Oklahoma and a small cattle ranch nearby. Becky is also an international speaker on small business. It's worth a few minutes of your time to read Becky's recent website post titled "[Sorry I didn't read your 'rural is dying' article](#)" If you enjoy the article, go to the Chamber's Facebook page and share the article's link with your friends and colleagues.

Southeast Minnesota Together will host a Strategy for ACTION Regional Conversation on Thursday, February 25, 12 noon to 4 p.m. in Stewartville. This meeting follows three regional workshops held last fall at which several possible solutions to southeast Minnesota's workforce shortage were identified. Some of the common strategies for action were as follows: developing stronger school-business partnerships; mentorships, apprenticeships, and career pathways; marketing the region to attract new workers; improving workforce transportation and housing. For more information on the February 25 meeting or to stay connected with the group's work, visit [their website](#).

Ban the Box. Over the past few years, a growing list of city, state and local governments; organizations; and private companies have come forward to support "Ban the Box." It's an initiative to persuade employers to remove the question "Have you been convicted?" from job applications and delay that inquiry until the final stages of the hiring process. The goal is for employers to make hiring decisions based on a candidate's skills and qualifications, not their past transgressions. [Read more from the U.S. Department of Labor.](#)

Center for Small Towns' looks at sole proprietors. The Chamber receives e-mails from the Center for Small Towns at the University of MN-Morris. A recent e-mail is shared here:



"We thought it would be great to start the new year with a post looking at a growing segment of our labor-force; sole proprietors. Or, as we like to call them, '1099-ers.'

As we have posted before, many of our rural Minnesota counties can have up to 50% of their labor force in a sole proprietor role [43.6% in Fillmore County according to the map on the left]. This sector of our workforce still

seems to be a bit of a mystery to many rural community and economic developers. Who are these people? And, why do they choose to be this type of worker?

[Small Business Labs](#), a blog that 'covers the key social, technology and business trends impacting small business,' has been covering this segment of labor force over the past year and we wanted to pass along some of their posts that start to answer some of these questions. It is a [growing segment of our labor force](#) that other businesses are relying on more regularly. Along with flexibility in where they choose to live, sole proprietors also have a lot more [choice in their clients](#).

[Independent and non-independent workers have very different risk profiles](#), which means independent workers will accept certain risks in return for greater autonomy and flexibility.

Small communities are in a great position to recruit and retain these types of workers, but it is important to know why these folks choose a specific type of employment situation. Please share any experiences any of you have had with sole proprietors in your communities. Are you noticing more people working within this category of employment?"

The Center for Small Towns is seeking input from rural Minnesota communities regarding sole proprietors. To read more or share your experience, contact the Center for Small Towns here:

blog: www.cforsmalltowns.org

website: www.morris.umn.edu/cst

facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/centerfor.smalltowns>

twitter: <https://twitter.com/CforSmallTowns>

Contact

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