

April 2026



THE Voice

www.gochamber.org

Annual State of the Base breakfast

A record 375 people attended the event hosted by the Chamber in partnership with GFAFB. The message was clear that GFAFB continues to play a vital role in our nation's security.



Base Commander Col Alfred Rosales at The Chamber's Annual State of the Base breakfast.

Upcoming Chamber Events

HALF-DAY LEADERSHIP seminar

Unlocking Potential:
The Culture and Mindset
Advantage



TAMIEN DYSART
CEO & Co-Founder of Think 3D

Discover the New UND: Tours & Talks Showcases a Transformed Campus

UND Tours & Talks is a half-day immersive experience designed specifically for Chamber members and regional leaders. This exclusive program offers a unique opportunity to step inside the university and experience the people, programs, and facilities shaping the future of our community.

Watch for the registration link in a separate email coming soon. Save the May 5th date now.

CHAMBER NEWS

Discover the New UND: Tours & Talks Showcases a Transformed Campus



Over the past 15 years, the University of North Dakota has undergone a remarkable transformation—evolving into a modern, world-class campus that is helping drive innovation, workforce development, and economic growth across our region.

Yet for many in the business community, the full scope of that transformation hasn't been seen firsthand.

On May 5th the Chamber is partnering with UND to change that.

A Behind-the-Scenes Look at UND

UND Tours & Talks is a half-day immersive experience designed specifically for Chamber members and regional leaders. This exclusive program offers a unique opportunity to step inside the university and experience the people, programs, and facilities shaping the future of our community.

Watch for the registration link in a separate email coming soon. Save the May 5th date now.



Visit with Barry

Share your business challenges and success with Barry.

Drop me an email. I would love to stop by your business for a visit.

Barry@gochamber.org

Barry Wilfahrt, Chamber President and CEO



CHAMBER NEWS

Membership Drive Led by Member Volunteers

The Chamber's annual membership drive begins April 3rd, and we have a lofty goal of 40 new members this year. New member recruitment is always on our radar, but sometimes our own members have an even greater effect.

We have eight teams of volunteers, each led by a team captain. These folks are leaders in so many ways, including engaged community leaders. While the membership drive is a lot of fun, it still requires some time, effort, and work outside of their daily jobs. For that, we are truly grateful of their dedication to the Chamber and to making our community stronger every day.



Team captains include:

Heidi Krogstad, German Law/German Wealth
McKenzie Ratelle, LivWell BluPrint
Jacob Marine, Les Schwab
Valeria Becker, UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences
Jacob Johnson, PRO Resources
Brendan Brustad, individual member and retired USAF
Chelse Kippely, Gate City Bank
Barry Wilfahrt, The Chamber

Thank you, team captains!

If you know of someone who should be a Chamber member, I'd love to hear from you. Email me at doug@gochamber.org.

CHAMBER NEWS

Minnesota PFML Program Raises Growing Concerns Among Employers

A new statewide survey from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Foundation is sending a clear message: while employers support paid leave as a benefit, the current Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program is creating significant challenges for businesses across Minnesota.

What the Survey Shows

The survey—representing nearly 700 employers across Minnesota—provides one of the first comprehensive looks at how the program is working in practice.

The findings highlight widespread concern:

- Administrative burden and confusion navigating the program
- Slow approvals and inconsistent communication from the state
- Staffing disruptions, especially for small and lean organizations
- Rising costs layered on top of existing benefits
- Challenges for seasonal, small, and border businesses
- Concerns about misuse, overuse, or lack of safeguards

Perhaps most notably, nearly 80% of employers already offered some form of paid leave before the mandate, underscoring that the issue is not the benefit itself—but how it is being implemented.

Real-World Business Impacts

Employers report that the biggest issue isn't just the payroll tax—it's operational disruption.

According to the survey findings:

- Covering shifts during leave is often difficult or impossible
- Intermittent leave creates major scheduling challenges
- Some businesses report they may need to scale back operations when multiple employees are out

Small businesses are feeling this most acutely, with many describing the program as a “one-size-fits-all mandate” that does not reflect real-world workforce dynamics.

Employee Frustration Also Emerging

The survey also found that employees themselves are experiencing challenges:

- Confusion navigating the system
- Frustration with payroll deductions
- Delays in benefit approval
- Increased reliance on employers to manage the process

CHAMBER NEWS

Even though the program is state-run, employers report they are still heavily involved in helping employees navigate claims—adding to the administrative burden.

What Businesses Are Asking For

The Minnesota Chamber and local chambers are advocating for practical reforms to make the program more workable, including:

- Greater flexibility for small and seasonal businesses
- Clearer rules and guidance from the state
- Simplified administration and better coordination with existing leave programs
- Reasonable exemptions and stronger program safeguards

These changes are aimed at making the program more balanced and sustainable for both employers and employees.

Local Leadership Supporting Change

Importantly for our region, District 1 legislators representing East Grand Forks—

DRIVE RESULTS DURING PEAK SEASON

For seasonal businesses, peak season often determines how the entire year performs. Trust the marketing team at the Grand Forks Herald to develop a digital advertising strategy that aligns creative, media placement and performance tracking so every channel works together to drive results.

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Senator Mark Johnson and Representative Steve Gander—have been supportive of efforts led by the Minnesota Chamber and local chambers to improve the PFML program.

Their engagement reflects a recognition that border communities and regional employers face unique challenges, particularly when operating across state lines or managing seasonal workforces.

Legislature Holding the Line

Despite growing concerns from employers across the state, the Minnesota Legislature has so far shown limited willingness to make meaningful changes. Many business leaders view this as part of a broader trend of increasing regulatory pressure that is outpacing practical implementation realities.

The Bottom Line

Minnesota employers are not rejecting paid leave—they are asking for a system that works.

The Chamber will continue to advocate for:

- Common-sense reforms
- Flexibility for employers
- A program that supports—not hinders—economic growth

As implementation continues, the voice of the business community will remain critical in shaping a more balanced and effective PFML program for Minnesota.

DEED Small business grants for paid leave now available

- If you qualify as a “small employer” under the PFML program, you can apply for a grant to help cover costs when an employee has taken leave for expenses incurred after Jan 1, 2026. These grants help manage the cost of hiring temporary workers, increasing hours or wages, or training staff while an employee is out on PFML.
- Grants offer up to \$3,000 per leave, with a maximum of \$6,000 per employer each calendar year. The program is funded at \$5,000,000 annually, and once those funds are fully used, no additional grants will be awarded that calendar year.
- To learn more and apply, [click here](#).

CHAMBER NEWS

UAS Industry in Grand Forks Region Shifts Toward Defense Opportunities

The Grand Forks region's Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) industry is entering a new phase of growth—one increasingly shaped by national security priorities and federal investment.

At a recent meeting of the Chamber's UAS Committee, industry leaders discussed how new Department of Defense (DoD) funding—particularly in counter-drone technology and advanced UAS development—is accelerating activity across the region and reshaping how local companies do business.

A Shift Toward Defense Markets

For years, much of the local UAS ecosystem focused on commercial and private-sector applications—from agriculture to infrastructure inspection.

That is now changing.

With significant new federal investment flowing into defense-related drone capabilities, many Grand Forks-based companies are pivoting toward serving as DoD contractors, subcontractors, and technology suppliers.

This shift reflects both opportunity and necessity:

- Defense funding is currently scaling faster than commercial UAS markets
- Federal demand is focused on counter-UAS systems, security applications, and advanced autonomy
- Companies are adapting to meet federal procurement standards and mission requirements

The result is a rapidly evolving ecosystem where defense applications are becoming a primary growth driver.

FAA Milestone Accelerates Momentum

Adding to this momentum is a landmark achievement for North Dakota.

The Northern Plains UAS Test Site recently received full FAA approval to integrate drones into the National Airspace System (NAS)—a first-of-its-kind capability at this scale.

This development is a game changer.

It allows:

- Routine, scalable drone operations beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS)

CHAMBER NEWS

- Real-world testing and validation in controlled but operational airspace
- Faster pathways from research and development to deployment

For defense-focused companies, this creates a unique advantage: the ability to test, validate, and demonstrate technologies in a real-world environment without leaving the state.

Why Grand Forks Is Positioned to Lead

The convergence of these developments is reinforcing Grand Forks as one of the nation's premier UAS hubs.

Key strengths include:

- Proximity to Grand Forks Air Force Base and national security missions
- A growing network of private companies, startups, and research partners
- The Northern Plains UAS Test Site's expanded capabilities
- Strong collaboration between industry, government, and higher education

Together, these assets are attracting attention—and investment—from across the defense sector.

What This Means for the Regional Economy

The shift toward defense-focused UAS work brings both opportunity and change.

Opportunities:

- Increased federal investment and long-term funding stability
- Growth in high-paying technical and engineering jobs
- Expansion of local supply chains supporting defense contractors

Looking Ahead

The Chamber's UAS Committee emphasized that this is a pivotal moment.

As federal priorities continue to drive investment in drone and counter-drone technologies, the Grand Forks region is uniquely positioned to:

- Lead in next-generation UAS innovation
- Serve as a critical hub for national defense applications
- Continue building a diversified, resilient UAS ecosystem

The shift is already underway—and the region is moving quickly to meet the moment.

HALF-DAY LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

If You Manage People, This Seminar is for You

Leading people is one of the most challenging and most important responsibilities in any organization. Setting expectations, building engagement, and maintaining accountability requires intentional leadership.

That's why the Chamber is hosting Unlocking Potential: The Culture & Mindset Advantage on April 15. This is a focused half-day seminar built to deliver practical tools leaders can apply immediately.

The Chamber presents...



This seminar will be led by Tamien Dysart, CEO and Co-Founder of Think 3D. With more than 16 years of leadership experience and a track record of developing high-performing teams, Tamien works with organizations to build intentional cultures that drive measurable results.

Participants Will Leave With:

- A clear framework for strengthening leadership mindset
- Practical strategies to increase engagement and accountability
- Tools to align teams around clear performance expectations
- Action steps that can be implemented immediately

This is not abstract theory. It is structured, practical leadership development designed for today's workplace.

Date: April 15, 2026

Time: 8:00 a.m. to Noon

Location: Minnkota Power

Chamber Members: \$149

Non-members welcome! \$174

Click QR code to register



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ROSE CREEK GOLF COURSE

BISMARCK | 7.7.26
HAWKTREE GOLF CLUB

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The Chamber
GRAND FORKS • EAST GRAND FORKS

The Chamber Grand Forks/East Grand Forks

JOB BOARD

gochamber.org/community-job-board

Solve Group Health Cost & Compliance Issues with ICHRAs

Health insurance continues to be one of the biggest challenges for employers, with rising costs, unpredictable renewals, and increasing complexity.

At our upcoming Brown Bag on April 22, we'll take a practical look at an alternative approach: Individual Coverage HRAs (ICHRAs). Many employers are starting to re-evaluate their current plans and explore whether this model could offer more flexibility and control.

This session will cover how ICHRAs work, how they compare to traditional group plans, and what to consider when deciding if it's a fit for your organization. You'll also hear real-world examples and have the opportunity to ask questions throughout.

This is a non-sales, educational session designed to help you better understand your options and next steps.



Wednesday, April 22, 2026

11:30 am - 1:00 pm - Chamber of Commerce Board Room

Brown Bag Seminar 

The Chamber
GRAND FORKS • EAST GRAND FORKS

Presented by...



Brent Vik, Farmers Union Insurance

Brent Vik is a local insurance agent licensed with numerous health insurance carriers in our area, including Blue Cross Blue Shield, Sanford, Medica, UnitedHealthcare, Humana, and many others. He has been with Farmers Union Insurance in Grand Forks for over thirteen years, and over the past five years, he has specialized in healthcare coverage, serving the community with dedication and integrity.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER FOR SEMINAR](#)

\$25/Member & \$35/Non Member (Includes Lunch)

If you have questions, please contact the Chamber. doug@gochamber.org or 701-772-7271

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Heartland Hearing Professionals

4680 S Washington St, Suite D, Grand Forks, ND 58201

701-251-4014

<https://heartlandhearingprofessionals.com/>



Heartland Hearing Professionals provides personalized, patient-centered hearing healthcare. We specialize in comprehensive hearing assessments and work closely with each individual to develop a customized treatment plan tailored to their unique communication needs. While we offer advanced hearing aid technology, our care goes far beyond simply dispensing amplification. Our Doctors of Audiology understand the anatomy and physiology of hearing, and we dedicate the necessary time, attention, and expertise to ensure every patient receives compassionate support and meaningful improvements in their hearing and overall quality of life.

Annie's Chocolates

1726 S Washington St, Suite 68, Grand Forks, ND 58201

218-280-0853

<https://www.facebook.com/annieschocolate/>



After almost 20 years as a chocolatier, specializing in hand-crafted and high end chocolates, I am beyond excited to be opening a store in the Midtown District, formerly Grand Cities Mall.

In this charming shop, the focus is on crafting moments, not just transactions. Customers at Annie's Chocolates are welcomed with a warm smile and a taste of something special, making each visit feel like a personal indulgence. The air is filled with the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee, perfectly complementing the velvet scent of chocolate. We want this space to become a haven for locals to linger as well as a must-visit destination bringing people in from all over to the great city of Grand Forks.

After nearly 20 years as a chocolatier specializing in hand-crafted, high-end chocolates, Annie has opened a charming new shop in the Midtown District (formerly Grand Cities Mall).

At Annie's Chocolates, the focus is on creating moments, not just transactions. Guests are welcomed with a warm smile, a taste of something special, and the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee paired perfectly with artisan chocolates.

Designed as a place to linger and indulge, Annie's Chocolates aims to be both a sweet escape for locals and a must-visit destination for anyone exploring Grand Forks.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Agristo

3600 27th Ave N, Grand Forks, ND 58203
ruben.devos@agristo.com



Since its founding in 1986, Agristo has been supplying customers across Europe and beyond. The company continues to expand within Europe to meet growing demand in the European markets, while also strengthening its European export position through investments in Belgium (Wielsbeke) and France (Escaudoeuvres). The European market for frozen potato products has seen steady growth, but this increase requires a significant boost in production capacity. Given the large consumption volumes in Europe, even small growth percentages in the market demand substantial expansion in production capacities.

The same growth trends are evident in the North American markets of frozen potato products, where demand is rising faster than in Europe, and consumption volumes are higher. In selecting production locations, Agristo has consistently focused on two key criteria: availability of raw materials (potatoes) and sufficient market scale for its private label segment. Seeing strong potential in both potato supply and market growth in North America, Agristo is now ready to invest in its first production facility in the United States, focusing on high-quality products, innovation, and state-of-the-art technology.

After years of extensive potato trials in various U.S. states, Agristo has identified Grand Forks, North Dakota, as the ideal location for its new facility. The company is confident in the region's high-quality potato farming and is collaborating with local authorities to prepare an industrial plot and enhance logistical connections to reach Agristo's U.S.-based clients. Agristo plans to invest over \$800 million in a cutting-edge production facility. This investment is expected to create 300 to 350 direct jobs in North Dakota and will stimulate indirect investments in agriculture and supply chain, boosting local and regional economies.

Hepper Olson Architects, Ltd.

PO Box 147, Buxton, ND 58218
701-841-1000
<https://www.hepperolson.com/>



Hepper Olson Architects, Ltd. is a full-service architectural firm based in Buxton, North Dakota, serving communities throughout North Dakota, Minnesota, and the surrounding region. Founded in 2001 by architect Bobbi Hepper Olson, her firm brings experience across a wide range of project types, including commercial, civic, educational, industrial, religious, custom residential, and multi-family housing, and has specialized experience in historic preservation.

Known for a thoughtful, collaborative approach, Hepper Olson Architects works closely with clients from concept through construction to deliver high-quality, functional design solutions. The firm is committed to supporting local communities by creating spaces that reflect client goals and become meaningful parts of the region's built landscape.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

GF – EGF Metropolitan Planning Organization

600 Demers Ave, East Grand Forks, MN 56721
701-746-2660



The Grand Forks–East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves as the regional planning and policy-making body for the Greater Grand Forks area, bringing together local governments, agencies, and community stakeholders to guide the region’s future growth and development.

As a federally designated organization, the MPO plays a key role in coordinating transportation and infrastructure planning across city and state lines, ensuring that projects and investments are developed through a collaborative and long-term regional vision.

Through its work, the organization helps align federal, state, and local efforts while encouraging public participation in planning processes that impact how people move throughout the community—whether by vehicle, public transit, bicycle, or on foot.

Cam Tweten – Oxford Realty

camerontweten@gmail.com
701-740-9031



Cam Tweten is a real estate professional with Oxford Realty, serving Grand Forks and the surrounding region with a strong background in residential real estate and homebuilding. With more than two decades of experience in building homes, he brings a well-rounded perspective to the buying and selling process, helping clients navigate each step with confidence.

A graduate of the University of North Dakota, Cam is actively involved in the community and has served on several local boards, reflecting his commitment to the region both professionally and personally.

In addition to his work in real estate, Cam is also connected to Village Homes, a local housing development company, further reinforcing his hands-on experience and insight into the local housing market.

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Hosted by Widseth

3590 S 42nd St, Grand Forks, ND

Thursday, April 16, 2026

4:45pm ~ 7:00pm

Widseth invites all Chamber members and their employees to join them for a great Business After Hours event.

**Complimentary hors d'oeuvres, Drink Ticket & Cash Bar, Great door prizes.
Progressive cash drawing is at \$500 (winner must be in attendance).**

Stop by...Enjoy the fun and take advantage of great networking opportunities.
You might even win **\$500** in our Progressive Cash drawing!

Remember, BAH is FREE for all Chamber members! Is your employer a Chamber member? That means YOU ARE TOO!

See you Thursday, April 16, 2026 at Business After Hours!

*Because of the nature of this event, no one under 18 may attend.

Thank you to Amazon Hub for hosting an eventful Business After Hours.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

March 2026 Renewals

The following businesses know the value of their Chamber Membership and have renewed their membership in The Chamber GF/EGF.

5-Star Collision & Glass Center
ABSOLUTE GLASS
Altru Health System
Altru Rehabilitation Hospital
American Red Cross - Eastern North Dakota
& Western Minnesota Chapter
Area Community Credit Union
Back Alley Studios
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Family
Realty
Bloom Beauty Bar
Bluepeak Fiber Internet
Bonzer's Sandwich Pub
Caulfield Studios
Century Electric, Inc.
Custom Aire
Diana Hoverson Country Financial
Drain Savers
Edgewood Healthcare, LLC
Ellingson Companies
Erickson Financial Advisors
Fert-L-Lawn
Forks Freightliner
Grand Forks Region Economic Development
Corporation
H & R Block - DeMers Ave

HELIX wine & bites
Hugo's Wine & Spirits - 32nd
Hugo's Wine & Spirits - Columbia Rd
KROX Radio
Marco
Merry Maids
Midtown District
Midwest Planning, LLC
Mobile Pro
Morgan Printing, Inc.
Pampered Chef - Brenda Kovar
Pediatric Partners, a part of the Sevita
family
Petro Serve USA
Relate Care Clinic
Salon 222
Service Providers for Seniors
Ski & Bike Shop
State Farm Insurance - Randy Fenley
Steffes Company - Grand Forks
TEARS Organization
Three Farm Daughters
Twotrees Technologies
Wallwork Truck Center



of U.S. adults agree that their local chamber of commerce is a **trusted resource and partner** for businesses.



feel that their local chamber has an impact on **growing businesses locally**.

90%

A horizontal bar chart with a teal bar representing 90% of the total length. The percentage '90%' is written above the bar.

believe that their local chamber has an impact on **growing the local economy**.



say that their local chamber has an impact on **addressing challenges** within their community.

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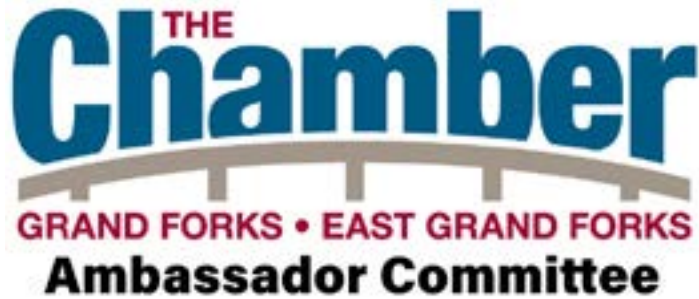
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Top **TEN** Chamber Membership Benefits

- 1.** *New Business Contacts* – Networking and new business contacts will help your business grow. With more than 100 chamber programs and events, you'll have no problem adding to your contact base.
- 2.** *Credibility* – Make a statement that you are committed to the future of the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks region.
- 3.** *Leadership Development* – The Chamber offers learning and professional development opportunities to help you run a smarter, more profitable business.
- 4.** *Community Commitment* – Community involvement benefits you and the community and shows your commitment to helping our region grow.
- 5.** *Referrals* – The Chamber's referrals of our members are a great return on your investment.
- 6.** *Publicity and Exposure* – Publicity and heightened name recognition as a Chamber Member shows your customers and potential customers who you are.
- 7.** *Marketing & Advertising* – Targeted and affordable advertising offered by The Chamber help you promote your business effectively on a small budget.
- 8.** *A Healthy Local Economy* – Be a part of a group that is committed to creating a strong local economy to keep our business momentum moving forward.
- 9.** *Gain a Voice in Government* – The Chamber is your representative on a local, regional, state and national level. With over 1100 members representing thousands of area employees, The Chamber speaks with a strong voice for our business community on issues affecting your business.
- 10.** *Partnership* - You will be a part of an organization whose mission is to create an environment that encourages business success while enhancing the quality of life in our region.

AMBASSADORS MEETING



The Chamber Ambassadors extend a warm welcome to new businesses, actively participate in celebrating grand openings and special events, and engage in various Chamber activities.

The Chamber Ambassadors play a crucial role in fostering a vibrant business community by actively encouraging and supporting new and fellow members. Their mission is centered around creating opportunities for businesses to thrive while simultaneously contributing to the community's well-being.

Their dedication involves promoting The Chamber to potential members, highlighting the benefits of membership, and showcasing the community as an excellent place to live and do business. Ambassadors commit to attending monthly meetings and participating in diverse events throughout the year, such as Ribbon Cuttings, Business After Hours, and Chamber activities. Through their commitment and positive representation, Ambassadors actively contribute to the success and growth of The Chamber and its members.

The Ambassadors meet on the 3rd Monday of the month.



Ambassador Lunch from March: @ Spud Jr's new location. Had Chris Kalash and Peter Johnson from Anne Carlsen Center speak to our group.

RIBBON CUTTING

The Chamber Ambassadors would love to meet you and celebrate your business with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

If you are interested, please contact Doug at **772-7271** or Doug@gochamber.org to schedule a ribbon cutting event.



Edward Jones

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Grand Forks, ND 58201
701-772-9243

MEMBER NEWS

Bluepeak Expands Fiber Internet to East Grand Forks, Minnesota

Bluepeak, a leading provider of high-speed fiber internet across Oklahoma, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Texas, and Wyoming, is proud to announce its expansion into East Grand Forks, Minnesota. This investment brings next-generation Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) internet to homes and businesses, strengthening the city's digital infrastructure and supporting its growth in an increasingly connected world.

"This expansion reflects our continued investment in building a strong, future-ready fiber network throughout the region," said Rich Fish, CEO of Bluepeak. "By bringing high-capacity fiber service to East Grand Forks, we're ensuring more communities have the connectivity needed to thrive today and support long term growth for years to come."

Bluepeak's build plan for East Grand Forks includes multiple construction phases to bring service online. Design and engineering are nearing completion, and permitting is underway. Residents will begin to see utility marking and underground fiber installation this spring. Bluepeak will notify neighborhoods ahead of construction and contact eligible addresses as soon as service is ready to order.

Bluepeak's new fiber network in East Grand Forks will provide residential speeds up to 5 Gig and business speeds up to 10 Gig. Built with cutting-edge FTTH technology, the network ensures ultra-reliable connections, low latency, and scalability to handle growing digital demands—from high-definition streaming and telehealth to remote work, online learning, and business expansion. Bluepeak also provides whole-home WiFi powered by eero, offering consistent coverage throughout the home plus advanced security features through eero Secure and eero Plus.

For TV entertainment, customers can choose between a traditional channel lineup that includes local coverage and major networks like ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC, or Bluepeak Stream – a modern, app-based experience that combines live TV, on-demand content, and access to popular streaming apps in one easy-to-use platform.

Beyond speeds and technology, Bluepeak's expansion represents a long-term investment in East Grand Forks. By modernizing the network infrastructure, the company is ensuring residents and businesses have a resilient, future-ready connection that will support economic growth, community initiatives, and evolving connectivity needs for decades to come.



MEMBER NEWS

Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals Host the 2026 GGFYP Annual Launch Event

More than 130 local professionals gathered at The Opal Event Center for the 2026 GGFYP Annual Launch on Tuesday, March 3rd. The event recognized the achievements and highlights of GGFYP members over the past year and gave attendees a preview of the Young Professionals Regional Summit event coming this July.



The program featured keynote presentations from Dane Jackson, Head Coach of UND Men's Hockey, and Joel Larson, General Counsel at Altru Health System.



Coach Jackson spoke about the importance of building a strong culture and emphasizing a team-first mentality. These values have guided him throughout his professional journey, from his early playing days at the University of North Dakota to his current role as the leader of a program that thrives on loyalty and tradition.

Larson's message focused on compassion and intentionality. Drawing from his experiences representing people during some of the most difficult moments in their lives, he emphasized that care and authenticity cannot be fabricated. He encouraged attendees to lead with genuine concern and purpose to make the most of their opportunities and relationships.

The event also recognized standout young professionals and organizations making an impact across the Greater Grand Forks community through several annual awards:

- Grow Grand Award (presented to an employer who has created exceptional workplace opportunities and an environment where young professionals can thrive): Bully Brew Coffee
- Young Professional of the Year (recognizing outstanding achievements by a GGFYP member): Torosa Johur (UND)
- Student Young Professional of the Year (recognizing outstanding achievements of a Student Young Professional): Jay Sankhla (UND)
- Legacy Young Professional of the Year (recognizing a "graduated" Young Professional who has continued to support and vouch for GGFYP in a multitude of ways): Matt Fischer (Probitas Promotions)

MEMBER NEWS

Alerus senior wealth advisor Holland Slick earns Certified Private Wealth Advisor certification



Holland Slick

Alerus is pleased to announce Holland Slick, a senior wealth advisor based in Grand Forks, has earned the Certified Private Wealth Advisor certification from the Investments & Wealth Institute. This designation recognizes the expertise and specialized skills she provides to meet the complex needs of high-net-worth clients.

To earn CPWA certification, advisors must have at least five years of industry experience and complete a comprehensive exam covering areas including applied behavioral finance, charitable giving, estate planning, and wealth transfer. Ongoing education and adherence to a strict code of professional responsibility are required to maintain certification.

Holland joined Alerus in 2016 and specializes in providing comprehensive financial guidance to nonprofits and individuals and families with complex financial needs. In addition to being a Certified Private Wealth Advisor, she is a Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor and holds FINRA Series 7 and 66 licenses, in addition to life, annuity, accident, and health insurance licenses in North Dakota and Minnesota. Holland is a graduate from the University of North Dakota, where she earned a bachelor's degree in managerial finance and accounting. In 2025, she was voted Best Financial Advisor in Grand Forks by readers of the Grand Forks Herald.

The logo for Alerus, featuring the word "ALERUS" in a dark blue, serif font. A stylized blue star or spark is positioned to the left of the letter "A".

MEMBER NEWS

Danielle Piekarski Named “Woman to Watch in North Dakota Business” by the Greater North Dakota Chamber



Danielle Piekarski

BBI International is proud to announce that Danielle Piekarski has been named a 2026 Woman to Watch in North Dakota Business by the Greater North Dakota Chamber. The recognition highlights emerging professionals who demonstrate strong potential and early leadership within their industries.

Piekarski has been with BBI International for four years and plays a key role in supporting the company’s conferences, media platforms, and industry outreach. Through premier events and publications, she helps connect businesses with the people and opportunities they need to grow.

“Danielle brings an exceptional combination of organization, communication skills, and creativity to everything she does,” said Anna Simet, director of content for BBI International. “Her ability to manage complex projects while building strong relationships across the industries we serve makes her a tremendous asset to our team. We are proud to see her recognized as a Woman to Watch in North Dakota Business.”

In her role as content & program manager, Piekarski manages conference speaker logistics and assists in program development across BBI International’s global portfolio of events. Her structured and detail-oriented approach has enabled her to successfully coordinate conferences featuring more than 170 speakers, overseeing everything from speaker onboarding and communication to on-site support to ensure a seamless experience for presenters and attendees.

Beyond conferences, Piekarski contributes to the company’s media operations by coordinating digital content for Carbon Capture Magazine and UAS Magazine. She manages digital article distribution, produces bi-weekly newsletters, and assists in coordinating, editing, and occasionally writing articles for print editions. Her work also includes research and editorial support for the Carbon Capture Facilities Map.

Piekarski further supports BBI International’s media platforms by hosting and managing podcasts for the company’s portfolio of publications and events. She oversees scheduling, recording, editing, and production to ensure each episode delivers valuable insights for industry audiences.

In addition, she manages social media marketing across BBI’s publications and events, promoting new issues, feature stories, registration deadlines, abstract submissions, and award nominations.

BBI INTERNATIONAL
MEDIA & EVENTS

THE CHAMBER

Executive Committee

Chair: Derek Holt, First Community Credit Union

Chair Elect: Anna Rosburg, Alerus Center

Past Chair: Mike McLean, JLG Architects

Russel Crary, Crary Real Estate

Chris Jordheim, Widseth

Daren Muscha, Bass Pro Shops

Barry Wilfahrt, Chamber GF/EGF

Board of Directors

Landon Bahl, 322 Hospitality Group & Dist. 17 Legislator

Matt Bredemeier, Grand Forks Subaru Kia

Mylo Einarson, Nodak Electric

Jon Fargo, RealTruck

Todd Forkel, Altru Health System

Dean Gorder, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc.

Tony Hodny, H&S Electrical Services, LLC

Meloney Linder, University of North Dakota

Keith Lund, GF EDC

Emily O'Brien, ND Human Services Agency

Shari Olson, Northland Community & Technical College

Scott Reck, Northdale Oil

Curtis Regan, Dakota Commercial & Development Inc.

Andy Schneider, Dakota Concealed/GF County Sheriff

Andrew Vigen, Vigen Construction

Tyler Wilson, Vilandre Heating, Air Conditioning & Plumbing

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