

Read All About It:

OUR MEMBERS & OUR COMMUNITY

We serve our membership as a catalyst – the organization through which business and professional people work together for the common good of the community.

Volume 43, No. 1

January 2025



Working Together Today To Create A Fabulous Tomorrow!



A LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT – MARC GONZALES

Greetings to the Chamber Members and the Orchard Park Community,

My name is Marc Gonzales, and I am truly honored to serve as the Chamber President for 2025. My involvement with the Chamber began through my work at National Air Cargo, where we have relied on the Chamber's documentation services for many years. This experience sparked my interest in supporting the Chamber and its mission.

As we move forward, I'm excited to continue rebuilding our Chamber Membership to pre-COVID levels. On behalf of the entire Chamber Board, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the incredible sponsors of our major events—such as the Annual Golf Outing, July 4th Parade, Taste of Orchard Park, Orchard Park Cornhole Tournament, OP Festival of Arts, Health, Fitness & Business Expo and our Annual Business Bash/Awards Ceremony. These events not only highlight the businesses and talents within our community but also unite us to celebrate Orchard Park in a positive and vibrant way.

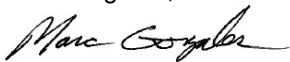
The growth of our Membership and the success of these key events are crucial, as they enable the Chamber to provide the valuable services that help strengthen and support local businesses. To further strengthen our Chamber's Mission, we have introduced a Member's Code of Conduct aimed at enhancing relationships between our members and the community. This Code is available on our website under the Membership tab. We encourage you to review it to better understand the standards of conduct and ethical practices expected of all members.

Along with our ongoing commitment to advocating for the business community, we are also excited about the new initiatives on the horizon, particularly developments around the new Bills stadium.

Finally, a huge thank you to our Executive Director, Don Lorentz, the Administration Staff—Dawn Jenkinson and Jeri Luthart—and my fellow Board members for their dedication and hard work.

I look forward to the exciting year ahead as we continue to grow and thrive together.

Warm regards,



Marc Gonzales
Chamber President 2025



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Outgoing Remarks From Your Past-President **KRISTINA GROCHALA**



Happy Holidays everyone,

Thank you all for allowing me to be a part of this journey and being president for the year 2024, it was a pleasure! I would like to thank the Board of Directors, the Executive team and Don Lorentz, Dawn Jenkinson and Jeri Luthart for their dedication and tireless efforts to serve our Orchard Park business community.

Our Annual Golf Outing, Independence Day Parade, Cornhole Tournament and Taste of Orchard were all great successes. The OP Festival of the Arts saw an increase in vendors and an unprecedented increase in traffic. Vendors, business expo participants, sponsors, and patrons were thrilled and provided great feedback.

We had a very successful year with record breaking attendance for each one of our events, allowing our businesses to have exposure to over 40,000 community members. Adding new successful events and bringing back an incredibly special award ceremony/business bash, it turned out to be a beautiful heartfelt night. Starting in 2025, we are looking to involve businesses and community members with joining our events committee and membership committee. Being able to be a part of our Chamber but specifically focusing on certain opportunities. If you would like to join one of our Chamber committees, please reach out to me or any of our Board members. Our Chamber has come a long way since I started as a Board member 4 years ago. We've grown in financials, launched successful community events, and fostered lasting relationships & friendships. We have strengthened our relationship with the Village of Orchard Park and other area chambers to bring new and exciting opportunities for our members and community. As I step down, I'm filled with gratitude for your trust and support. To our incoming president Marc Gonzales, I hand over the reins with confidence. These achievements belong to all of us. Every member who volunteered at an event, every board member who spent countless hours in planning meetings, every community partner who believed in our vision – you all made this possible.

I encourage you all to join us for our upcoming events in 2025, network gatherings and continue to build relationships with other business owners and community members. Please contact us or visit our website's calendar to join us at future meetings! The future of our Chamber is bright, and we will continue to strive forward!

Thank You to Our Outgoing Board Member

David Even

David's dedication and professionalism will be greatly missed. While he is stepping down from our Board, we are confident he will remain actively involved in the organization he has so effectively represented. We extend our heartfelt thanks for his service and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

Congratulations!

OFFICERS & NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Newly installed officers and directors of the Chamber are prepared to begin their terms of service on the board. We thank them for their commitment.

2025 Officers

President.....Marc Gonzales - National Air Cargo
 President-ElectWilliam Meister - Federated Insurance
 Past-President / Treasurer..... Kristina Grochala - KeyBank
 Vice-PresidentRoberta Bemiller - RLB Coaching & Career Consulting
 Business Networking Chair..... Greg Wright - Buffalo Bills, Inc.

New Board Members

Erik Ardenski.....WNY Wood Products
 Kim CloudenFathey Beer Company

KUDOS & CONGRATULATIONS TO...

...**Scott & Kathy Bieler** recognized by the Buffalo History Museum for their unwavering dedication and impactful contributions to Buffalo and the surrounding region. Their efforts have greatly transformed our community. The Bielers were presented with the prestigious Red Jacket Award. Scott is with the **West Herr Auto Group**.

...**The Orchard Park Quaker Marching Band** recently performed at the New York State Field Band Conference Championships at the JMA Wireless Dome in Syracuse. For the second consecutive year, the band earned third place out of nine schools in the Large Schools 2 class, concluding a successful field band season.

...**Adiam Tsegai**, officially installed by **SUNY Erie** as its president, making her both the first African American and the first woman to hold this prestigious role.

...**OP Chamber Members** named to Buffalo Business First "40 under 40"; celebrating the people who make a difference in their companies and communities: **Thea Pecht** - Senior Vice President, corporate communications for Upstate and WNY regions at **M&T Bank**; **Lisa Sanders** - Director of dining services at **Fox Run Orchard Park** and **Ryan Seufert** - Owner & Founder of **Silver Grove Financial Group Inc.**

...**OP Chamber Members** named to Business First's Company Index of Power 100 Leaders of Color: **Rene Jones** - Chairman & CEO of **M&T Bank**; **David Hollis** - Chief Human Resources Officer, Senior Executive Vice President at **M&T Bank**; **Thurman Thomas** - President of **34 Group Inc.**; **Adiam Tsegai** - President of **SUNY Erie**; **Adam Perry** - Partner at **Hodgson Russ LLP**; **Glenn Jackson** - Chief Diversity Officer at **M&T Bank**; **Chiwuikwe Owunwanne** - Corporate Responsibility Officer, community relations manager at **KeyBank**; **Latricia Davis** - Director of Inclusion, Equity and Diversity at **West Herr Auto Group**; and **Bradford Watts** - Associate VP of Community Relations and DEI at **People Inc.**

...**Patricia A. Rauh** joined **Hodgson Russ LLP** as an associate in the firm's Trusts & Estates Practice.

...**The Orchard Park Fire District EMS** recognized by Mercy Hospital for their heroic actions during recent emergency response calls. The honored **EMS** team members included **James Guggemos**, **Aimee McCarty**, and **Logan Girdlestone**.

...**Hillcrest Volunteer Fire Co.** was also recognized by Mercy Hospital for their heroic actions during recent emergency response calls. The honored **EMS** team members included **Jason Stuhr**, **Ron Hendershot**, and **Taylor LaBelle**.

...**The Eternal Flame Falls** in the Shale Creek Preserve section of Chestnut Ridge Park was voted the most popular "alternative" landmark in New York by international travelers. It was voted 27th out of 120 in the nation. Thanks to the **Chestnut Ridge Conservancy** for their preservation and restoration of Chestnut Ridge Park.

OUTSTANDING RECOGNITIONS!

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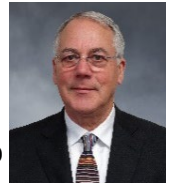


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Chamber Membership Matters

We exist to support our membership, whether you are a business of 1 or 100.
We invite you to get engaged, connected and inspired.

VISIBILITY

STAND OUT

Get noticed as an active member of your community!



ECONOMIC GROWTH

Our Community Events bring in thousands of people to the area.



CREDIBILITY

Your reputation matters!
Chamber Membership is respected by the community.



NETWORK



It's NOT just who you know, it's who others know!
Networking is Powerful!

VOICE

We advocate on your behalf!
Gain a say in what happens through our Chamber's advocacy efforts.

**Get Involved.
Have Your Say.
Make A Difference.**

DISCOUNTS

Member to Member Discounts increase your buying power.



Membership in the Orchard Park Chamber is a sound business investment. From saving you money on basic business services to networking and representing your voice on regulatory issues, the Chamber strives to make your business stronger.

You are the reason we continue to work towards making Orchard Park a place where people want to live, work and play. We appreciate you and are honored to have you as a part of our Chamber family. Please remember to renew your membership and help us to continue to offer great services and events in Orchard Park.

Are you getting ready to Retire or Turning 65?

Medicare & Health Insurance Roadmap:
Planning for Your Future

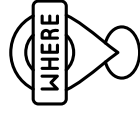
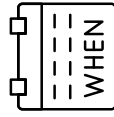
Our Service:

- ✓ Road Map to Medicare
- ✓ Medicare Basics
- ✓ Planning for Spouse
- ✓ Individual Health Insurance Options until 65

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Medicare/Health Insurance Planning Meeting



January 7, 2025
5:30pm to 7pm

Orchard Park Chamber
6524 E. Quaker St.
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Register at: OrchardParkChamber.org



**MEET OPChamber Advantage:
A GREAT HEALTH PLAN STRATEGY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES!**

The **Orchard Park Chamber** in partnership with **Hartloff Benefit Solutions LLC** have teamed up to provide our members with the most comprehensive Health Insurance Programs available. We invite you to set up a free consultation with one of their Health Insurance Brokers to come up with the best coverage, at the most effective costs for you and your business. The peace of mind knowing that you have industry experts guiding you through this process is our main goal. Ask them about **The 3 E's of Benefits - Educate, Empower Enroll!**

OPChamber Advantage Offers:

- **Group/Employee Benefits**
- **Voluntary Benefits**
- **Medicare Benefits**
- **Dental/Vision**
- **Group Life/Disability**
- **Supplemental Insurance Packages**
- **Think HR/Mineral – HR Resources**



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For more information, contact our partnership team at Hartloff Benefit Solutions.
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Special OP Chamber Member Travel Offer!

Chamber member, Michele Chapuis, owner of Europe Your Own Way, is offering fellow Chamber members a \$200 discount on her June 2025 trip to Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway!! Don't miss this opportunity.

Small group tour of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway - June 6-17, 2025. (Max 12 people - 8 spots currently available). The only payment required to hold your spot is a \$500 deposit. The balance is due in 2 equal payments on Nov 1, 2024 and March 1, 2025.



Tour Description: You'll join an experienced tour leader and our small group for the ultimate guided experience. Wander along historic cobbled streets, taste the distinctive cuisine of each nation, marvel at coastal landscapes and fjord scenery and hop on thrilling cruises and train rides. This is the Scandinavian trip of a lifetime.

Start Location: Helsinki, Finland - Finish Location: Bergen, Norway Accommodations:

9 nights hotel; 2 nights cruise

Included Meals: 11 Breakfasts and 4 Dinners

Transportation: Private vehicle, ferry, train

Leader/Guide: 1 English speaking tour leader throughout. Local guides will also be used in some locations.

Itinerary:

- Day 1 (6/6) – Arrival in Finland - Free time.
- Day 2 (6/7) – Explore Helsinki & Sail to Sweden – Free morning, then cruise to Sweden.
- Day 3 (6/8)– Arrival in Sweden & Welcome – Free day, then welcome drink.
- Day 4 (6/9) – Highlights of Stockholm – Guided tour of Stockholm. Afternoon/evening free to explore.
- Day 5 (6/10) – To Denmark & Tour – Morning travel to Denmark; guided walking tour of Copenhagen. Evening free.
- Day 6 (6/11) – Castles & Gardens – Morning guided tour of Rosenborg Castle; walk through botanical garden. Lunch at famous Torvehallerne food market, then canal boat tour. Rest of day free to explore.
- Day 7 (6/12) – Copenhagen & Journey to Norway – Morning free to explore. Overnight cruise to Oslo.
- Day 8 (6/13) – Arrival in Norway/Tour of Oslo – Morning arrival in Oslo; guided tour. Rest of day free to explore.
- Day 9 (6/14) – Norway in a Nutshell® & Flam – Morning departure on Norway in a Nutshell® train towards Bergen (ranked among 20 best train trips in the world); in Myrdal, board Flåm Railway for 12-mile ride with 3,000 ft descent to the village of Flåm. Free admission to Flåm Railway Documentation Centre. Group dinner.
- Day 10 (6/15) – Fjord Cruise & Mountain Ride – Morning free to explore Flåm; board cruise to continue the Norway in a Nutshell® journey – includes Aurlandsfjord and World Heritage-protected Nærøyfjord (narrowest fjord in the world). In Gudvangen, bus to Voss and then train for final stretch of the journey to Bergen. Free evening.
- Day 11 (6/16) – Medieval Bryggen & Bergen - Guided walking tour of Bergen (“Capital of the fjords” - Norway’s 2nd largest city), includes tour of Bryggen (medieval part of the city—UNESCO World Heritage Site). Funicular up to mountain, Fløyen, for views over city and fjords. Afternoon free to explore. Evening group farewell dinner.
- Day 12 (6/17) – Departure from Norway – Take a taxi or airport bus to airport.

Includes: Accommodations for 9 nights (+ 2 cruise nights); daily breakfast; private transfer from Helsinki- Vantaa Airport to hotel; overnight cruise from Helsinki to Stockholm; tour leader; dinners as a group (4 total); private tours with local guides in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Bergen; one lunch in Stockholm; transfers to/from train stations & harbors in Copenhagen and on arrival to Oslo; train from Stockholm to Copenhagen; guided tour of Rosenborg Castle in Copenhagen; sightseeing boat tour in Copenhagen; entrance to Tivoli in Copenhagen; overnight cruise from Copenhagen to Oslo; Norway in a Nutshell® tour from Oslo to Bergen including a stopover night in Flåm; luggage transfer from Oslo to Bergen (1 bag per person); return tickets for Fløibanen funicular in Bergen.

Excludes: Flights; transfers to/from cruise terminals in Helsinki & Stockholm; transfer to/from airport in Bergen; personal travel insurance; meals & drinks at restaurants and entrance fees (unless otherwise stated); porter service.

Prices start at \$6500 pp; discounted pricing if you want to skip Helsinki and join us in Stockholm.

Please reach out to Michele directly with any questions or requests for additional information –

michele.chapuis5@gmail.com. <https://europeyourownway.com/tours/scandinavian-highlights-june-2025/>

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Kristina Grochala . . . Past-President/Treasurer
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Greg Wright . . . Business Networking Chair
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The Newsletter of THE ORCHARD PARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
6524 East Quaker Street, Orchard Park, NY 14127

Upcoming Events January 2025

Jan. 7th - **5:30pm** Medicare/Health Insurance Planning Meeting

Jan. 9th - **8am** Business Connections Networking Group

Jan. 14th - **12pm** Southtowns Connections Networking Group

Jan. 23rd - **8am** Business Connections Networking Group

Sign up at: <https://orchardparkchamber.org/networking/>



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