

GWA Chamber of Commerce

Proudly serving our members and communities in the

Gateway to the Genesee Country

Scottsville – Mumford – Caledonia - and Surrounding Areas

Annual Report

for the Year Ending
31 December 2023



This document is provided by the GWA Chamber of Commerce, Inc. Board of Directors to detail the organization's activities, operations and financial performance for the defined period, in conjunction with a summary of future plans and objectives.



Table of Contents

- 1 ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION..... 1**
 - 1.1 FORWARD BY THE PRESIDENT 1
 - 1.2 BOARD OF DIRECTORS..... 2
 - 1.3 VISION OF THE ORGANIZATION 2
 - 1.4 MEMBER VALUE PROPOSITION 3
 - 1.5 MEMBERS OVERVIEW 4

- 2 ACTIVITY SUMMARY 5**
 - 2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL 5
 - 2.2 BUSINESS SUCCESS 7
 - 2.3 CONNECTIVITY 8
 - 2.4 ADVOCACY..... 10

- 3 PLANS..... 10**
 - 3.1 ORGANIZATIONAL 10
 - 3.2 BUSINESS SUCCESS 12
 - 3.3 CONNECTIVITY 13
 - 3.4 ADVOCACY..... 13

- 4 TREASURER’S REPORT 14**
 - 4.1 MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER 14
 - 4.2 FINANCIAL RESULTS 14

- 5 APPENDIX – STRATEGIC PLAN 15**

1 ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The **GWA Chamber of Commerce, Inc.** is a New York State Not-for-Profit Corporation that was formed for the purpose of promoting the common economic interests and community development in the **Towns of Wheatland, Caledonia and the surrounding area of Western New York State**, for the benefit of its members, all local commercial enterprises and the communities served. Members of this organization constitute an association of interested parties working collaboratively together for the furtherance of the general interests and common goals of the organization, with activities targeted at improving local business conditions and helping to facilitate a suitable quality of life across the communities served.



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1.1 Forward by the President

“As President of the GWA Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to share my thoughts and observations regarding the Chamber’s activities in 2023. The Chamber remains focused on delivering value to its members and the broader business community. The Chamber has continued to make significant progress with its transformation initiative as a formal trade association. Highlights for 2023 include: the GWA Chamber sponsored the first ever Community Guide publication in partnership with Chamber Member Featured Media, promoting the region served by the Chamber and providing business marketing opportunities. Additional partnerships have provided opportunities for expanded member services and networking meetings have helped Chamber Members connect with each other and the community. It is a pleasure to serve the members of this organization, I look forward to much more progress and value delivered in 2024”.



Lisa Wasson

President, GWA Chamber of Commerce

1.2 Board of Directors

The following table includes the GWA Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors elected for 2023 and their associated roles.

Role	Name
President	Lisa Wasson
Vice President	Mark Turner
Secretary	Debi Fitts
Treasurer	Karen Coyle
At Large	Deborah Stankevich
At Large	Chuck Constantino

1.3 Vision of the Organization

The vision adopted for the GWA Chamber of Commerce provides a long term, aspirational view of the organization. This approved vision provided below is used as a key guiding principle for Chamber operations and planning.

*“The GWA Chamber of Commerce is the preeminent place for supporting local businesses and professionals in the Towns of Wheatland, Caledonia and surrounding areas, while also inspiring inclusive community engagement. Local businesses and professionals receive significant economic value in return for their membership in the Chamber, stimulating the desire for active participation and community contribution. **The region served by the Chamber views the organization as a cornerstone asset for the community, providing leadership that serves as a catalyst for local economic and community vitality in addition to long term sustainability”.***



Images courtesy of Team Lisa Wasson at eXp Realty

1.4 Member Value Proposition

The GWA Chamber of Commerce is committed to delivering realizable value to its members, below is a summary member value proposition provided by the Chamber:

- a. **Provides a fair and affordable venue for all area businesses, professionals and other organizations** to help define and support activities associated with common business interests and the improvement of general business and economic conditions.
- b. **Offers businesses and professionals with occasions to meet and network in order to develop an understanding of the region's common business interests.**
- c. **Advocates on behalf of the collective businesses and professionals in the communities across the region served**, including: promoting the enactment of laws, the pursuit of applicable grants and support of municipal planning and development.
- d. Markets and promotes the organization and the common interests of the collective business community with the intent to **increase the visibility and awareness of the region served in support of business and economic condition improvement and sustainment.**
- e. Leverages membership scale for **partner collaboration to provide for additional member services and opportunities.**
- f. Provides the opportunity for **additional visibility and enhanced credibility** for local businesses.




1.5 Members Overview

Any business, professional, or individual in the region served by the GWA Chamber of Commerce that is interested in the economic growth, development and prosperity or community welfare is eligible to become a member. Organizational members are prominently represented on the [Chamber's website](#) including a graphic image, a link to a website or Facebook Page and a brief business statement.

2023 Chamber Organizational Members:

Buster's Market	Livingston County Chamber of Commerce
Caledonia Family Dentistry	Patrick Place
Caledonia Marketplace	Pickard Solutions
Charity Bible Church	Primitive Country Gifts
Colby's Catering	Reminisce Soda Fountain
Coyle's Pumpkin Ranch	Salvatore's Old Fashioned Pizzeria
Cute As Can Bee Child Care	Scottsville Ice Arena
Excellent Air Heating & Cooling	Scottsville Spirits
Featured Media	Scottsville Snap Fitness
Free Style Mercantile	Stokoe Farms
Fox Pest Control	Team Lisa at exp Realty
Genesee Country Inn Bed & Breakfast	Vanguard Website Solutions
Genesee Country Village & Museum	Victory Hill
Genesee Valley Agency, Inc.	Wheatland Historical Association

2023 Friends Members:

Linda Dobson	
Kevin Marks	
Oliver Miller	
Linda Turner	
Kristen Tyler	
Karen Wilson	

Scan the QR Code below to view
the GWA Chamber of Commerce
online membership listing



2 ACTIVITY SUMMARY

GWA Chamber of Commerce 2023 activities included endeavors to run and develop the organization, support business success across the region, increase connectivity between members and others, while advocating for the broader business community.

2.1 Organizational

The activities described in this section provide a foundation for GWA Chamber of Commerce operations and other activities while continuing to support **transformation of the organization** towards a more formal and sustainable structure.

a. **By-Laws Update (Revision 2.8)**

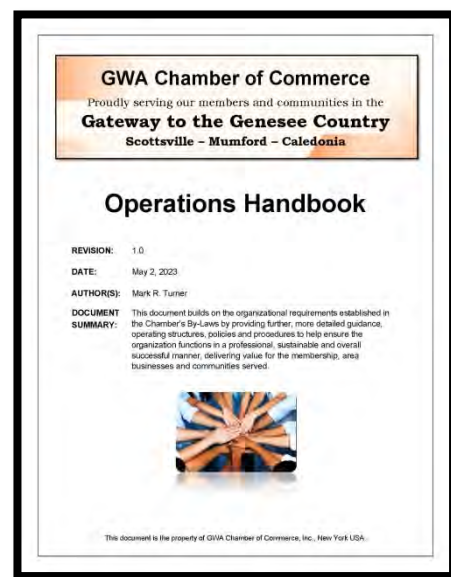
- Terminology updates and clarifications were incorporated to support **achievement of an IRS 501(c)(6) determination** for the Chamber.
- A new **honorary membership class** was defined for individuals (not organizations) to be recognized for rendering extraordinary service in support of the Chamber's stated mission and/or operations.

b. **Corporate Tax Filing**

- A tax return was filed for fiscal year 2022; this was the initial tax return filing for the organization as a newly incorporated Not-for-Profit entity.

c. **Operations Improvements**

- An **Operations Handbook** was developed that builds on the Chamber's By-Laws, providing further, more detailed guidance. **Operating structures, policies and procedures** are intended to help the organization function in a professional, consistent, sustainable, successful manner:
 - Employees, Contractors and Volunteers
 - Committee Operations
 - Planning
 - Non-Discrimination
 - Anti-Harassment
 - Anti-Trust
 - Records Retention
 - Communications and Media



d. **New Organization Logo**

- As part of the Chamber’s organizational transformation rebranding strategy, a **new organizational logo was developed and deployed** in 2023 that highlights key communities of the region served.



e. **Strategic Planning**

- During 2023, the Chamber Board of Directors actively used the adopted strategic plan as a guide for operations, decision making and other actions towards achievement of the organization’s overall vision. **In addition, a strategic planning session was held during 2023 with leadership supporter members** to review and update the Chamber’s strategic plan. The updated strategic plan is included at the end of this Annual Report.

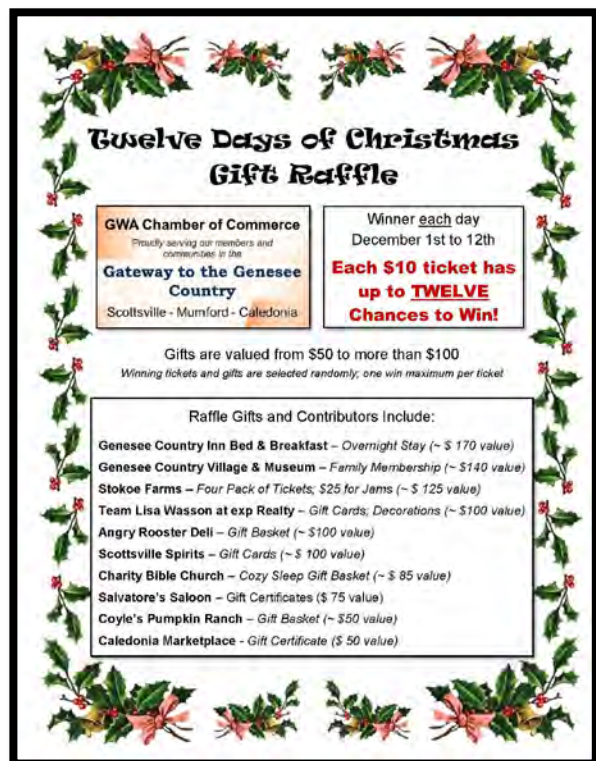


f. **Membership Development**

- The Board of Directors began a broader **member outreach initiative** in 2023 that included a focus on the value delivered to members, resulting in a **substantive increase in membership of almost 40%** over the prior year.

g. **Fund Raising Programs**

- **Twelve Days of Christmas Gift Raffle Event** - The Chamber sold tickets for a gift raffle fundraising activity at various local holiday venues of members: **Genesee Country Village & Museum** and the **Wheatland Historical Association**. Gifts were contributed by Chamber members. The fundraiser was used to promote the GWA Chamber of Commerce and the area’s business community.



2.2 Business Success

a. Positive Business Climate

- **Business Directory.** A comprehensive Business Directory was developed and published on the Chamber's website that provides **an online index of more than 130 businesses** supporting the communities in the region served by the Chamber. The Business Directory web page is also linked via QR code from the new Wheatland and Scottsville Trail Town kiosks.

Chamber members receive premium listings in the directory including a prominent location at the beginning of the indexed category, and a business related graphic with a hyperlink.



Financial, Legal & Insurance	Genesee Valley Agency, Inc.	258 North Street Caledonia, NY	(585) 538-6844	
	Allstate Insurance Agency	3155 State St Caledonia, NY	(585) 538-2670	
	Chase Bank	1 Rochester Street Scottsville, NY	(585) 889-2802	
	Five Star Bank	3110 Main St Caledonia, NY	(585) 538-2000	
	Tompkins	3155 State St Caledonia, NY	(585) 538-2110	

- **Community Guide.** The Chamber sponsored a 2023 Community Guide in partnership with Chamber member **Featured Media** to market the region served by the Chamber that includes the Towns of Wheatland, Caledonia and surrounding areas while highlighting the Villages of Scottsville and Caledonia and the Hamlet of Mumford. **Featured Media designed, printed and produced the publication, providing opportunities for businesses to purchase advertising and articles.** Feedback on this inaugural Community Guide has been extremely positive, many thanks to Featured Media for a great job on this publication.



b. Local Economic Vitality

- **Genesee Valley Trail Town Initiative Grant Project.** The GWA Chamber is the lead organization of record representing five area contributing partners supporting this economic development grant. Execution continued for the 2022 Wheatland – Scottsville GVTTI grant project, including the construction of informational kiosks at Canawaugus Park in the Village of Scottsville and on the property of Chamber Member **Free Style Mercantile** in the Hamlet of Mumford. The Chamber is providing financial management for the grant matching contributions working in close collaboration with Chamber Member **Genesee Country Village & Museum** that is serving as a fiscal agent for the grant funds. The Chamber is also hosting Wheatland Trail Town content on its website going forward. The project will complete in early 2024.

c. Recognizable Community Brand.

- In order to more effectively market the region served by the Chamber, including its constituent businesses and communities, a unique regional brand of “**Gateway to the Genesee Country**” is being promulgated across all Chamber media and marketing collateral and is available to share with all members and other businesses in the region. The previously described 2023 Community Guide also promoted this regional brand. **Featured Media** created a graphical map of the region covered by this brand.



2.3 Connectivity

a. Networking

- **Before Hours Business Networking.** The Chamber sponsored its first four of these meetings during 2023. These meetings are intended to provide a casual networking environment designed to exchange information and help build relationships among Chamber members and connections with the communities served. Hosting members share information and perspectives regarding their business, opportunities and potential common business needs. Thanks to Chamber members: **Team Lisa Wasson @ eXp Realty, Colby's Catering, Stokoe Farms and the Livingston County Chamber** for hosting in 2023.



b. Conduit to Local and Regional Entities, Resources.

- **Livingston County Area Chamber of Commerce.** The GWA Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Livingston County Chamber of Commerce in 2023 through reciprocal memberships. This partnership is intended to expand outreach and access to broader resources and services for GWA Chamber members, such as educational and information sharing opportunities.
- **Letchworth Gateway Villages.** The GWA Chamber continued in 2023 as a contributing partner with Wheatland's local municipalities to be a member of the Letchworth Gateway Villages organization along with nine other Genesee Valley Trail Town communities. This partnership provides access to regional marketing resources and potential opportunities for broader funding access.



- **Wheatland Community Hall of Fame**
The GWA Chamber continued to sponsor the Wheatland Community Hall of Fame in 2023, supporting the Chamber's positive local brand through visible community leadership. The Wheatland Community Hall of Fame recognizes and celebrates deserving citizens and supporters in the Wheatland Community, **providing marketing and promotional opportunities for Chamber Members**, while also facilitating public engagement by promoting a positive community spirit. Community Hall of Fame inductees and Volunteers of Distinction are publicly recognized on the Chamber's website and in the Wheatland Municipal Building in partnership with the Town of Wheatland municipality.



- h. **High Schools Scholarship Program.** The Chamber continued the tradition of providing scholarships for one deserving graduating senior selected from each of the Wheatland-Chili and the Caledonia-Mumford School Districts. In 2023, the Chamber received and evaluated multiple applications from each school, selected deserving students from each school and contributed scholarships to each student in the amount of \$500.

2.4 Advocacy

a. Letters of Support

- **Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway.** The Chamber provided a letter of support for the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway for a grant regarding Genesee Valley State Park interpretive signage planning, design and development. A coordinated system of attractive and informative interpretive signage promotes geo-tourism and visitation of the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park and the many communities and small businesses adjacent to the Greenway, including the communities in the region served by the Chamber.
- **Village of Scottsville.** The Chamber provided a letter of support for the Village of Scottsville's application for a 2023 Genesee Valley Trail Town Grant sponsored by the Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) organization. This grant will further integrate the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park into the Wheatland and Scottsville collective communities, facilitating business and community development through geo-tourism, while also strategically positioning for potential future local trail expansion.

3 PLANS

The GWA Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors has identified the following plans for 2024. These plans are defined as actions that describe what is intended to be accomplished with one or more corresponding approaches of how to complete.

3.1 Organizational

The activities described in this section support GWA Chamber of Commerce operations and the ***transformation of the organization*** towards a more formal structure.

a. Organization Transformation

1. **Action** – *Continue path to Federal Tax Exempt status as a 501(c)(6) entity.*
 - Complete and file IRS Form 1024 to become a 501(c)(6) organization.
2. **Action** – *Share organizational progress and plans in an interactive manner.*
 - Hold an in-person Annual Meeting of the Members, presenting prior year progress and upcoming year plans. Facilitate member networking.

b. Membership Development Program

1. *Action – Achieve at least 15% voting class membership growth from 2023.*

- Engage in leadership meetings with key existing members to facilitate retention and collect input regarding business needs and Chamber value.
- Use in-person meetings to market and promote the Chamber to local non-member businesses by reaching out to influential decision makers and individual business owners. Leverage existing Chamber collateral as support (i.e., Annual Meeting material, Community Guide).
- Create a plan to engage with the region's industrial businesses as an underserved group of candidate Chamber members.

2. *Action – Increase the number of Friends members in 2024*

- Develop an improved campaign and method for engaging prospective members in the Friends membership class. Consider Friends member participation in the Academic Scholarships Program and Wheatland Community Hall of Fame Program.

c. Fundraising Programs

1. *Action – Increase annual Chamber fundraising revenue by at least \$ 500.*

- Develop and implement a plan for at least one new Chamber fundraising activity.

d. Potential Additional Programs

1. *Action – Explore the possibilities to increase Chamber engagement with businesses and the community and develop a plan to implement.*

- Consider methods utilized by other New York Chambers of Commerce to sponsor and participate in events without encroaching New York or Federal trade association rules and regulations (i.e., perhaps a companion 501(c)(3) type of organization).
- Consider methods to recognize and celebrate member businesses, such as the development of annual business awards program for the region covered by the Chamber.

3.2 Business Success

a. Positive Business Climate

1. *Action* – Identify and share affordable opportunities for member educational and other informational types of services.
 - Leverage the GWA Chamber’s partnership with the **Livingston County Area Chamber** to their understand events and offerings, communicate opportunities with the GWA Chamber membership.
 - Participate in a Chamber of Commerce association to learn about additional affordable opportunities.
2. *Action* – Collaborate with Chamber Member **Featured Media** to help increase the businesses represented in the 2024 Community Guide by at least 15%.
 - Promote the Community Guide as part of the 2024 Membership Development Program.
3. *Action* – Help facilitate local business employment.
 - Explore local employment needs and options for sponsoring a job fair targeted at the region covered by the Chamber.

b. Local Economic Vitality

1. *Action* – Identify and participate economic development opportunities
 - Continue to actively support the Genesee Valley Trail Town Initiative, help educate the community regarding the benefits of program participation.

c. Awareness

1. *Action* – Enhance Chamber, member and community recognition.
 - Promulgate the defined regional brand more broadly through multiple marketing channels.
 - Consider and implement strategy and approaches to increase the Chamber’s presence on Facebook. Explore the potential of creating and utilization of other social media communications channels.

3.3 Connectivity

a. Networking

1. Action – *Identify additional networking meeting opportunities for members*
 - Utilizing a similar format to the 2023 Before Hours Business Networking meetings, identify a different timeslot that would allow other members to participate. Consider additional guest speakers.

b. Conduit to Local and Regional Entities, Resources.

1. Action – *Continue to collaborate with key strategic partners as appropriate (i.e., Livingston County Area Chamber of Commerce).*
 - Evaluate the value proposition of each existing and potential new key strategic partner to ensure the relationship delivers sufficient value to the Chamber and its members.
2. Action – *Engage a broader cross-section of the Wheatland Community for the **Wheatland Community Hall of Fame Program** annual nominations process.*
 - Meet with other organizations and present information about the Wheatland Community Hall of Fame and Volunteers of Distinction recognition and solicit nominations input from these organizations.

3.4 Advocacy

a. Municipal Interaction and Support

1. Action – *Enable closer interaction between the business community and the corresponding municipalities and school systems.*
 - Coordinate information sharing meetings between Chamber members municipal and school system leadership.
 - Continue to offer letters of support for regional entities that benefit the business community.

4 TREASURER'S REPORT

4.1 Message from the Treasurer

I am pleased to present the 2023 financial results for the GWA Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has continued to operate in a conservative and financially prudent manner to help ensure fiscal sustainability. The organization effectively broke even this year while engaging in multiple new activities. I look forward to upcoming opportunities to help grow the financial strength of the organization while delivering value to members and communities.



Karen Coyle

Treasurer, GWA Chamber of Commerce

4.2 Financial Results

Statement of Activities					
Revenue	Categories	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Restricted	Totals
	Membership Fees	\$ 1,935.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,935.00
	Investment Income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	Fundraising	\$ 490.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 490.00
	Contributions	\$ 1,019.64	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,019.64
	Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	Community Benefit Programs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	Economic Development Programs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	Other Revenue	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
	Subtotal	\$ 3,444.64	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 3,444.64
Expenses	Categories	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Restricted	Totals
<i>Supporting Services</i>	General & Administrative Activities	\$ (2,281.93)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (2,281.93)
	Fundraising	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<i>Program Services</i>	Community Benefit Programs	\$ (1,078.18)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (1,078.18)
	Economic Development Programs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (3,892.29)	\$ (3,892.29)
	Subtotal	\$ (3,360.11)	\$ -	\$ (3,892.29)	\$ (7,252.40)
	Change in Net Assets	\$ 84.53	\$ -	\$ (3,892.29)	\$ (3,807.76)
	Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$ 2,391.30	\$ -	\$ 5,629.62	\$ 8,020.92
	Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 2,475.83	\$ -	\$ 1,737.33	\$ 4,213.16

5 APPENDIX – STRATEGIC PLAN

Below is a summary from the Chamber’s 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan.

Goals	Objectives	Strategic Initiatives
Business Success	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive business climate 2. Local economic vitality 3. Marketing and Promotion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define a business support ecosystem with resources, such as education, guest speakers, seminars; perform a needs assessment as basis for an ecosystem development plan. 2. Identify, promote and actively participate in business and economic improvement opportunities; help educate businesses and communities about economic improvement. 3. Promulgate the regional brand for cohesive promotion and marketing of the region as a destination for locals, visitors and tourists. Redevelop Chamber social media approach and grow marketing impact of this channel.
Connectivity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networking 2. Conduit to local and regional entities, resources. 3. Development of local leaders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create added opportunities for business and community interactions including: testimonials, idea development and education; recognize and celebrate area businesses. 2. Establish and nurture formal relationships, collaborative partnerships; share information; facilitate collective thought leadership with local municipal and school system leaders. 3. Leverage Committee leadership and external organization liaison opportunities.
Advocacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognizable "Voice of Business" in the community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Influence public policy to address general business concerns with local, regional entities to promote business sustainment and growth. Continue to support community and regional initiatives with letters of support.
Organization Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Robust Chamber membership 2. Organizational transformation 3. Consistent financial performance 4. Operational excellence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver and communicate recognizable member value; proactive member outreach; develop broad friends membership. 2. Complete formalization and depth of organization capabilities with IRS 501(c)(6) income tax exempt determination. 3. Identify methods and opportunities to diversify revenue streams for business and community initiatives in the context of a trade association. 4. Review organizational performance; identify improvement opportunities, execute improvement plans.

Revision 1.0 18-December-2023