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THE CHAMBER Impact

NOV/DEC 2023

What is a Chamber - and - What is Your Chamber Doing?

The Chamber's reach and influence goes so much further than events and meetings. Although events and meetings are an integral part of the information sharing and networking The Aurora Chamber provides for its members – there's so much more.

As we come to the end of 2023, we are looking to next year as the launch of becoming essential for business and the community at large. As part of our strategic plan, we will be focusing on the issues that keep our members up at night. As a Catalyst, Convener, and Champion, your Chamber will address

and work on these issues with our members, partners, and industry experts:

- **Workforce** – hiring and employee retention
- **Crime** – its mounting effects on business and the community
- **Homelessness** – its continued effect on business and the community
- **Defending our Community and our Nation** – The Chamber's Defense Council works closely with our military organizations to stay informed and alert
- **Childcare** – accessibility and affordability, so

parents can be part of the workforce

- **Housing** – increasing home ownership through affordable housing efforts
- **Transportation and infrastructure** – working on solutions to decrease traffic
- **Mental Health/Addiction** – Finding solutions that work for business and people

As we move forward, your Chamber President and CEO Naomi Colwell and staff look forward to working with you, our members and partners, to provide essential support and communication about what matters. ■

► Save the Dates



To see upcoming Chamber meetings
as well as Chamber member events –
go to the calendar!

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Chair's Letter

Fellow board members and members of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce:

I hope you all are enjoying this beautiful fall. I have come to appreciate the changing of the leaves more every year and am relishing the nice weather and being able to get out and enjoy all our state has to offer.

I want to thank all of you for your continued support of the Aurora Chamber and the staff, especially during the transition from Kevin Hougen's retirement to Naomi Colwell becoming The Chamber president and CEO. Kevin's legacy is that he positioned The Chamber to be successful, and Naomi has set goals for continuing - and advancing the - success of the organization.

I want to remind all our members of the benefits of Chamber membership. There are seven committees - Arts + Business Connection; Transportation; Government



Kristi Kleinholz
Chair

Affairs, Education and Energy (Public Issues); Women in Business; Young Professionals; and Defense Council. Each of these committees offers monthly programs to benefit members. The Chamber also has the Leadership Aurora program - in its 40th year, and the Emerging Leaders program - beginning its second year. These programs develop leaders in the community and provide leadership training, supporting The Chamber's goal of *Community First, Business Always*.

We look forward to seeing you at these meetings or any of the events The Chamber hosts throughout the year. The Chamber and Board of Directors strive to make sure every Chamber member is valued and receives what they need from their membership and their involvement in The Chamber.

Naomi and the staff will continue to make sure The Chamber is meeting that goal of

Community First, Business Always, along with being a catalyst, a convener, and a champion for businesses. They are currently working on a strategic plan to guide The Chamber into the next year. Chamber staff do their best to ensure that members are involved, welcomed, and that their business is supported within the community.

We ask you as a Chamber member to help us achieve the goal of *Community First, Business Always* by being an active member through attending meetings and events and supporting your fellow Chamber members' businesses.

I enjoy being a part of this community and Chamber and am grateful for how The Chamber and our members have helped support the businesses I have been a part of. I look forward to seeing you at a future meeting or event and I am excited to see the success of The Chamber continue to grow.

Kristi Kleinholz
Chair 2023-24

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DON'T FORGET: "Every employee of a Chamber member is a member of The Chamber"
Please route this issue to your sales reps, account managers, marketing directors, HR and PR departments. You can also access each month's newsletter online at our website, www.aurorachamber.org, so you can forward it to every employee in your company!

THE CHAMBER'S MISSION



The mission of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce is to give a voice to the business community and serve as an advocate for its members, creating a positive business environment that encourages their growth and long-term economic vitality

ChamberCommittees

An Inside Look

ARTS + BUSINESS CONNECTION

Stunning Art in the Park at The Aurora Highlands

Tuesday, September 12, 2023

By Mark Smith, ABC Chair, and owner of PhotoSmith Colorado

There is nothing like the aura of experiencing art in-person!

For the September ABC meeting at The Aurora Highlands (TAH), Principal and Director of Onside Development Carla Ferreira guided and narrated the open-air tour in the Golden Hayride, sharing information and stories about the Art in the Park at TAH.

Ferreira and her father, Carlo, work as a father/daughter team with Carla as the creative force for TAH. Prior to climbing onto the converted flatbed truck, Ferreira told stories about the history of the development, spanning from the groundbreaking in 2017 to today, and the vision for the future. Long-range, there are plans for a hospital and a Beach Club which will be open year-round. Ferreira emphasizes that TAH intends to be good stewards of the land and to create an environment that provides residents with a sense of pride – which is enhanced by the Art in the Park at Hogan Park.

The tour started at the full-sized, colorful carousel in the playground, and then a stop at the 110' clock tower monument, which emulates European steeples with a clock that serves as the town square and a gathering place. Ferreira then pointed out the Public Displays of Awareness (PDAs) along the paths, by artist Olivia Steele. The PDAs look like road signs, but with slogans to make you



Umi, by artist Daniel Popper was a highlight of the September 12 ABC tour of Art in the Park at The Aurora Highlands.

think. Next stop was artist Hunter Brown's "Life Blood," with twisting, ribbon-like forms embracing a large reflective sphere that stands for our world and the communities we live in.

Moving on, Totem Triad by artist Lisa Solberg serves as a work of art and is functional for water control. The totems are inspired by the concept of portals or gateways into sacred spaces.

The last stop, Umi by artist Daniel Popper, inspired photos with - and of - the stunning sculpture. Umi's message of representing a harmonious blend of art and nature – a testament to the enduring bond that unites us with our environment – fits well with TAH mission, as well as the mission of the ABC committee of integrating art as a business tool, by demonstrating how business benefits from the arts. Check out <https://theaurorahighlands.com/art-in-the-park/> for more information.

Arts + Creating Food, + Eating Local & Healthy

Tuesday, October 2, 2023

By Mark Smith, ABC Chair, and owner of PhotoSmith Colorado

James Grevious, creator of Rebel Marketplace at the 'last of the season' Oct. 7, 2023 Marketplace.

The October ABC meeting welcomed James Grevious, creator of Rebels in the Garden and Rebel Marketplace. Grevious talked about the process of educating youth to grow food, and then turning that into a local farmers market along with other community members. His goal was to "feed the community one market at a time." The market embraces the diversity of the community as 61 percent of the vendors are Aurora based businesses, 70 percent are owned by people of color and 88 percent are women owned.

After seventeen years in the military, Grevious was inspired by a TED talk by Ron Finley, a guerrilla gardener in South Central LA who said, "Gardening is the most defiant act one can perform." After seeing that, Grevious' passion for gardening grew, because like serving his country it seemed right to serve his community.

Rebel Marketplace is the farmers market held May-October in the parking lot at Del



James Grevious, creator of Rebel Marketplace at the 'last of the season' Oct. 7, 2023 Marketplace.



Mar Park. The Marketplace is one of the three initiatives Grevious has undertaken. He started Rebels in the Garden to help youth understand the importance of growing and sharing healthy food, and the third entity, Urban Symbiosis is focused on building a fair ecosystem and food system that cultivates long-lasting relationships through resources, events, and healthy locally grown food.

After his inspiring presentation, Grevious answered questions and talked about how he has met the challenges of running a garden, a marketplace and a foundation by being creative. Attendees also offered helpful ideas to further aid him with the projects.

TRANSPORTATION

Bus Rapid Transit in the Metro Area

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

By Tim Harris, Horrocks Engineers, and Transportation Vice-chair

BRT is defined as "rail-like" operation of specialized vehicles in dedicated lanes and/or with signal priority, with enhanced stations and higher frequency service than traditional buses.

Jacob Riger, planning manager for Multimodal Planning at the Denver Regional Council of Governments explained that the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan includes 11 BRT corridors in the Metro area to be delivered over the next 25 years through a regional partnership of DRCOG, Aurora, CDOT, Denver, Boulder, Federal Transit Administration and RTD.



At the September 6 Transportation meeting, attendees learned a great deal about Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plans and projects in the Metro Area.

Following Riger, Denver's Transit Director David Krutsinger, and the City of Aurora's Traffic Manager Charlie Campuzano, detailed the pending construction of BRT on East Colfax between Broadway and I-225. Operations are scheduled to begin in early 2027, with center-running buses in Denver and side-running buses in Aurora. This \$255 million project will improve safety, increase transit ridership with improved efficiency,

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reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions, and include improved bus boarding facilities through the corridor.

The City of Aurora's Principal Transportation Planner Huiliang Liu described the project to extend the Colfax BRT line from I-225 to E-470 in Aurora. Currently in the early planning stages, operations are scheduled to begin before 2030.

To round out the presentation, CDOT Region 1 Deputy Director of Traffic and Safety Angie Drumm, and CDOT Region 1 BRT Program Manager Ryan Noles, provided information on the Federal Blvd. (from Dartmouth Ave. to 120th Ave.) and Colorado Blvd. (between I-70 and I-25) BRT projects. Preliminary design of the Federal Blvd. corridor and early study of the Colorado Blvd. corridor began in August. Both corridors are scheduled to be operational by 2030.

Adams County, ARTA, and AERO Wednesday, October 4, 2023

The October 2023 Transportation meeting covered updates for Adams County and the Aerotropolis Regional Transportation Authority (ARTA).

Transportation Chair Tony DeVito with AECOM began the presentation with the history of ARTA, which was formed in 2018 by coming together of Adams County, Aurora, and the Aerotropolis Area Coordinating Metro District to address transportation connectivity south of Denver International Airport, east of E-470, and north of I-70. He then turned it over to AECOM Surface Transportation Department Manager Dave Center to talk about projects under design and construction.



Construction of the bridge at E-470 38th Ave/The Aurora Highlands Parkway Interchange.

Center started by saying that ARTA is currently engaged in 18 projects, including 48th Ave, the I-70 & Aerotropolis Parkway Interchange, 26th Ave, Aerotropolis Parkway, and the E-470 & 38th Ave/The Aurora Highlands Parkway Interchange. DeVito emphasized the magnitude of this last-mentioned interchange, by sharing that the bridge required the placement of 200 tons of rebar and 1,300 Cubic yards of concrete or the Equivalent of 130 Mixer trucks on a weekend in July of 2023.

The next presentation featured Northeast Transportation Connections Business Outreach Manager Jaclynn Streeter, who introduced "The Aero," a 100 percent EV



Following the Oct. 4 Transportation meeting, attendees visited the AERO shuttle in The Chamber parking lot.

on-call shuttle service that NETC is in a two-year contract to serve The Aurora Highlands. Following surveys of current residents, AERO will provide on-demand and scheduled rides through a rider app. The shuttles hold seven passengers and are ADA compliant with a wheelchair lift. As development continues, it is anticipated that the shuttle concept will be a big win for the development and for the region.

Adams County Deputy Director of Public Works Janet Lundquist rounded out the meeting by giving a broad overview of (additional) transportation and infrastructure projects in Adams County. She began by sharing the Commissioner priority corridors, which include applying for funding for multimodal improvements to I-270, including Dahlia Trailhead & Sand Creek Greenway; to advocate for segment 3 of I-25 (120th to CO 7) improvements to be included in the 10-year plan; and advocating and continuing to partner with Commerce City on grant applications for construction funds of Highway 85. Additional priorities are pedestrian improvements on Federal Blvd and the E 104 Ave Corridor.

She also talked about the newly implemented Express Lane white line crossing violation fines, which will be slated to be used improvements on I-25. "They are serious about enforcing the consequences of violating these rules," Lundquist said.

She then finished with an update about the flood recovery projects in Adams County. Due to the heavy 2023 spring rains, there were a record 32 road closures in the county. Repairs are in process, and as of the date of this presentation, there were only four closures remaining.



A bridge failure from the flooding on 144th – and the consequences of violating the barricade.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, EDUCATION, AND ENERGY (PUBLIC ISSUES)

Proposition HH – Both Sides

Thursday, September 7, 2023

The September Government Affairs meeting was a two-sided discussion about Proposition HH, which is a property tax change and revenue change measure on the November 2023 ballot.

Speaking in favor of the Proposition, State Representative Mike Weissman began the meeting, by stating that he believes HH is a responsible tax relief for Colorado that does not hurt our schools, libraries, fire districts, water districts, and hospitals. He argued that HH reduces property taxes for homeowners, provides relief for seniors and renters, and caps future tax increases. He also talked about how Colorado businesses are burdened with disproportionately high property taxes because of the Gallagher Amendment and believes Prop HH will reduce the non-RAR from 29 to 25.9 percent. He added that renters pay property taxes through rent raises, and Prop HH sets aside \$20 million annually to provide property tax relief for renters.



State Representative Mike Weissman (D)



Ben Murrey, Independence Institute

Ben Murrey, with the Independence Institute, opposes the proposition and sees HH as a tax increase and not long-term structural property tax reform. Murrey argued that Prop HH is the largest tax increase in the state history that guarantees no protections for commercial properties after 2032, takes away taxpayer TABOR refunds, and allows the state to keep and spend TABOR refund money indefinitely after 2032 without additional voter approval.

Murrey further argued that Prop HH permanently locks in the historic tax increase on residential property caused by repealing the Gallagher Amendment and does not control the future growth in property taxes for residential or commercial properties.

It's a difficult proposition to understand, with spirited proponents on both sides. [More information about Proposition HH.](#) The Chamber officially neither supports nor opposes Proposition HH.

City of Aurora Candidate Forum

Thursday, September 28, 2023

The Government Affairs committee did not meet in October, but instead, was invited to

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attend the City of Aurora Candidate Forum for the November 7, 2023, election. The forum was held at the Aurora Municipal Center in the Council Chambers and had the largest in-person audience in recent history. Chamber President and CEO Naomi Colwell served as the moderator.

The forum included Mayoral candidates Mike Coffman, Juan Marcano, and Jeffrey Sandford; Ward IV City Council candidates Jonathan Gray and Stephanie Hancock; Ward V City Council candidates Angela Lawson and Chris Rhodes; Ward VI City Council candidates Francoise Bergan and Brian Matise; and At-Large City Council Candidates Alison Coombs, Curtis Gardner, Thomas Mayes, and Jono Scott.

Candidates were allowed up to one minute opening and closing statements and all answers to questions were limited to one minute. The forum was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, Sentinel Colorado, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, and Aurora Women's Club. The forum was live streamed, and the recording is available on AuroraTV at <https://www.auroratv.org/series/election-programming>.



Chamber President and CEO Naomi Colwell served as the moderator for the forum.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Why the World Needs Women Leaders

Tuesday, September 26, 2023



Trish Elley, PhD



Sherri Adams, PhD



The September Women in Business meeting was hosted by Colorado Technical University on its Aurora campus.

At the September Women in Business meeting, Colorado Technical University faculty Trish Elley, PhD, and Sherri Adams, PhD identified the characteristics and mindset that all successful women share and discussed the

characteristics of effective leaders in the 21st-century workplace (Hint: they are not what they once were).

They identified the top three characteristics of a successful woman as resilient, effective communication skills, and empathy/inclusivity. The audience added the following characteristics to the list: intuitive, confident, competent, and inspirational.

Women are rated higher than men on key leadership capabilities including taking initiative, resilience, practicing self-development, driving for results, displaying high integrity and honesty, developing others, collaboration/teamwork, building relationships, championing change, and motivating others.

Elley and Adams asked members of the audience to define an empowering mindset. Examples offered included a growth mindset, self-confidence, ambition, and emotional intelligence. According to Elley and Adams, women leaders are skilled at diversity of thought, improved organizational performance, and creating an inclusive & engaging workplace culture.

Covid had a disproportionate impact on women in the workforce, as they faced challenges that led them to leave or scale back their participation. These impacts included childcare/remote learning, job uncertainty, and work-life balance. The speakers explored the definition of a successful leader - and provided three specific strategies to foster women leaders. They recommend that every woman needs to have three people in their professional life: a coach, a mentor, and a sponsor.

The meeting was sponsored by and held at the Colorado Technical University Aurora campus.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

City of Aurora Public Safety Training Center (CAPSTC)

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

On October 11, Lieutenant Justin Shipley, director of the Aurora Police Training Academy, hosted The Chamber's Young Professionals at the City of Aurora Public Safety Training Center (CAPSTC).

The center opened in 2016 and is a shared facility with capacity for the Aurora Police Department and Fire Rescue to train together. The center includes a 40,000 square foot classroom/training building with five classrooms, a five-story drill tower and clean



Young Professionals at the October 11, 2023 tour of CAPSTC. Who doesn't want a photo in front of a fire truck?

burn building, elevator shafts and warehouse space, a three-story Class A burn building, a multi-story tactical search and rescue building, an urban driving track integrated into a tactical village, and a skills pad with straight away and perimeter live fire and transportation emergency props.

The tour started in the training simulator room where recruits experience life-like incidents, and must learn to make critical decisions in tense, uncertain, and quickly changing situations. Each virtual scenario then unfolds based on the trainee's decisions whether they choose to deescalate the situation or use force. The group also toured the fully equipped gym, the wrestling room for practice sparring, and the fire truck and maintenance vehicle warehouse.

DEFENSE COUNCIL

Defense Council at CPSTC

Thursday, August 24, 2023

August's Defense Council was held at the City of Aurora's Public Safety Training Center (CPSTC). Aurora Fire Rescue Chief Alec Oughton, and Aurora Interim Police Chief Art Acevedo, welcomed the council to the joint training facility and provided overviews of their respective departments. Congressman Jason Crow (CD-6) was the special guest and provided council members



Congressman Jason Crow addresses Defense Council Members at the City of Aurora's Public Safety Training Center.

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RibbonCuttings & OpenHouses

Ribbon cuttings
mean business: **150 Jobs**



Ent Credit Union – 23350 E Smoky Hill Rd Aurora, CO 80016

On August 24, 2023, Ent Credit Union Service Center Manager Chris Hamby cut the ribbon to celebrate the new branch in the Southlands area. Business After Hours was also hosted at the branch and guests enjoyed an open bar, Jimmy Johns sandwiches, and a raffle for a \$100 gift card. Ent Credit Union is ranked Colorado's #1 Credit Union by Forbes, serves over 500,000 members, and has more than 40 service locations in 14 Colorado counties. Ent Credit Union is offering a \$200 bonus for opening a checking account by the end of 2023. Chamber Ambassadors attending the event: Sanjay Tyagi, Schooley Mitchell of Denver; Lisa Miller, Armstrong Relocation/Amazing Moves; Danielle Lammon, Danielle Shannon Agency/Allstate Insurance; BK Martin, Ent Credit Union; Brian Weiher, Colorado Insurance Broker/Trusted Risk Advisor; Deb Kirschbaum, Priority Properties, Inc.; Kristine Minty, 2 Flippin Chicks; Jon Mize, Vasa Fitness; Phil Gibson, Unity Group at Keller Williams; and Jason Read, RTB Technologies. (8/24/2023) www.ent.com (719) 574-1100

COMMITTEES (CONT'D)

with information on sponsored bills supporting military members, veterans, and family members. He also talked about the Air National Guard's fighter recapitalization and the importance of retaining a strong capability at Buckley Space Force Base along with the need for a Space National Guard.

Military unit reports, a congressional staff report from Senator Bennet's office, and presentations from Houses for Warriors and the Colorado Freedom Memorial Foundation were also provided. Following the meeting, attendees were offered a tour of CPSTC.

The DoubleTree by Hilton, Aurora-Denver sponsored the breakfast for the meeting.

Defense Council at CTU

Thursday, September 28, 2023

September's Defense Council was held at Colorado Technical University's (CTU) Aurora Campus. CTU Vice President of Community Relations Beth Braatan welcomed the council and provided an overview of CTU.

CTU was founded in 1965 by two Air Force officers who wanted to help veterans transition back to civilian life more easily through education. Each year, CTU awards 50 full-tuition scholarships to service members, veterans, their family members, and caregivers. In addition to full tuition, scholarship recipients receive a new laptop computer, all course material, a dedicated student success coach, specially trained military education advisors, and 24/7 technical support and tutoring.

Council members also received military and congressional staff reports, an update on Veterans Administration Health Care, and an overview of Employer Support to the Guard and Reserve.

CTU's support of our men and women in uniform is unprecedented. One example is their Title Sponsorship of the Armed Forces



Defense Council Chair Jim Puscian, and Chamber President and CEO Naomi Colwell, present CTU Vice President of Community Relations Beth Braatan with a plaque in recognition of CTU's eleven-year title sponsorship of the Armed Forces Recognition Luncheon (AFRL).

Recognition Luncheon (AFRL) for the past eleven years.

Breakfast sponsors were Troy Williams with RE/MAX Masters Millennium (Homes for Heroes), and Michelle Lanigan with Edge Home Finance. ■



Fitzsimons Credit Union –
2201 Fitzsimons Pkwy
Aurora, CO 80045

On September 12, Chair of the Fitzsimons Credit Union Board of Directors Lyle R. Artz, Board Member Betsy S. Brauer, and President & CEO of Fitzsimons Credit Union Robert Fryberger cut the ribbon to celebrate the grand re-opening of the Fitzsimons Credit Union Anschutz branch. Guests were treated to empanadas, chips and salsa, churros, cookies, frozen drinks, Fitzsimons Credit Union mugs, and a raffle! The renovations began May 2023 to modernize the lobby with features such as upgrades in technology, improved privacy in service areas, added Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs), and a more fluid layout to welcome guests. Chamber Ambassadors attending the event: Jon Mize, Vasa Fitness; and Sanjay Tyagi, Schooley Mitchell of Denver. (9/12/2023) www.fitzsimonscu.com (303) 340-3343



Heather Gardens – 2888 S Heather Gardens Way, Aurora, CO 80014

On September 15, 2023, Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman and City Council for Ward V Alison Coombs, joined President of Heather Gardens (HG) Metropolitan District Daniel Taylor, and Arapahoe County Commissioner Leslie Summey, to cut the ribbon celebrating the 50th Year Anniversary of Heather Gardens, in Aurora, CO. City Council member Alison Coombs also Heather Gardens is an active adult community known for its lifestyle, beautiful campus, and challenging 9-hole golf course. Also attending the event were President of the HG Association Board Jill Bacon, CEO of HG Jon Rea, and President of the HG Metropolitan District Board Daniel Taylor. The celebration was presented by the HG Brokers: Owner Bruce Henson; Nancy Henson; Beth Inhelder; Heather Maiurro; Leigh Kulla; Melinda Cary; and Misty Sheely. The celebration included the showing of a "then and now" video and a time capsule burial ceremony. The capsule is filled with memories of the past and will be unearthed in 2073. Following the ceremony, guests enjoyed cake, sparkling wine, and networking! Chamber Ambassadors attending the event: Brian Weiher, Colorado Insurance Broker/Trusted Risk Advisor; Deb Kirschbaum, Priority Properties, Inc.; Oma Mohamed; Farouk Mohammed; and Jon Mize, Vasa Fitness. (9/15/2023) <http://HeatherGardens.org> (303) 755-0652

The Beginning of the Journey: Leadership Aurora Class of 2024



The Leadership Aurora Class of 2024 at their September 2023 Class Retreat.

By Wendy Reneé, Montessori Del Mundo and Leadership Aurora Class of 2024

On Thursday, September 14, 2023, the Leadership Aurora Class of 2024 launched the two-day retreat in Breckenridge, CO – marking the beginning of their 10-month journey. The retreat focused on creating community amongst the 39 participants, learning more about leadership styles, and committing to making a difference in the Aurora community.

The retreat was filled with opportunities for learning, competition, laughter, reflection, planning, vulnerability, commitment, and relationship building. An example of this wonderful combination is that on the first evening, each participant was provided a bingo card, with a 'claim to fame' about each class member. The challenge: Be the first to match your classmates to their 'claim to fame.' It was a tough competition to win because everyone was so engrossed in learning about each other! Our class is full of unique, spectacular, powerful, and interesting individuals.

Friday was an intense day - diving deep into personal leadership styles through the

results of their Insights Discovery profiles. Franco Marini, an adjunct professor at the University of Denver's Daniels' School of Business, facilitated the training with humor, real-life applicable examples, and lots of audience participation. Throughout the



day, class members saw the power of being intentional and making a "public" declaration of their intentions. Marini introduced the class to Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices and then sent them to practice awareness and observation in the midst of competition and chaos. Everyone also got the opportunity to collect tips, tricks, and hacks from everyone else about a specific skill they wanted to improve. For example, receiving feedback, delegating, conflict resolution, time

management, etc.

To close out the session, Marini led a "commitment" ceremony in which every class member hooked their carabiner to a circle of rope held by all and committed to how they intended to show up for the class. It was a simple, but powerful exercise. An evening of fun, dancing, cocktails, and delicious food at Fatty's Pizza brought this powerful day to a close.

On Saturday, the last day, the class heard from three LA Alumni, Jason Altshuler (LA 2006) with My Electric Home, Jennifer Evans (LA 2010) with Advantage Security, and René Leon (LA 2016) with Aurora AutoPros, who answered questions about the impact participating in the program had on their lives both personally and professionally. Class members committed to serve on at least two class committees during their tenure, and finally, the class elected a class president. Congratulations to Courtney Klein with Aurora Mental Health & Recovery.

So many great connections, reflections, and inspirations occurred during those two and ½ days – an there is much more to come from this class! ■

MemberNews



Executive Director of The Havana Business Improvement District Chance Horiuchi at the Business Recognition Awards Ceremony.

Celebrating Aurora's Business Recognition Awards

The City of Aurora and its Business Advisory Board hosted its Aurora Business Recognition Awards Ceremony on October 18 at The People's Building in the Aurora Cultural Arts District.

Chance Horiuchi, executive director of the Havana Business Improvement District received the Aurora-South Metro Small Business Development Center's Chuck Hahn Small Business Advocate of the Year Award, for her tireless support of the 2,100 businesses in a global district that offers arts, shopping, dining, living, and more.

In addition, the Havana Business Improvement District was awarded the Energy Leader Award, which was developed as an outcome of the City's Energy Action Plan, created and implemented through Aurora's participation as an Xcel Energy Partners in energy community. The Havana BID's board and executive director, Horiuchi, received the award for highlighting the unique energy needs and interests of the district's member businesses and supporting energy action through customized delivery of energy information.

Additionally, awards were given to CME Catering (Innovation and Creativity); Five Star Multiple Services (Small, Small Business); Lady Justice Brewing (Resiliency and Community Impact); Pearl of Siam (Service Industry and Hospitality); and You be You Early Learning (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion). Roshni and Aurora Mental Health & Recovery received Essential Hero Honorable Mention Awards for their continued support of the community throughout the pandemic.

You can view the ceremony on [YouTube](#).

Chamber Supports Veterans Small Business Conference

The Aurora-South Metro Small Business Development Center hosted the 16th Annual Veterans Small Business Conference on Sept 18, 2023, at the Hyatt Regency Aurora-Dever Conference Center.

The conference featured speakers from across the country, practical training sessions and relevant exhibitors for veterans, as well as their business partners and spouses, that were at various stages in their entrepreneurial journeys. Chamber Executive Vice President and chief of Military Affairs Rene Simard joined Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman and Aurora-South Metro SBDC Executive Director for welcome remarks at the conference, and the keynote address was given by Chamber member DeNOVO Solutions President and Owner Danny Moore. Chamber President and CEO Naomi Colwell moderated the Military Spouses: Small

Business Panel, focused on military spouses taking the entrepreneurial leap to start their own business.

At this conference, those looking to start a business learned how to utilize their existing skills to lay the foundation for a successful venture. Those who were already operating a business explored options to grow their current operation, including government contracting, improved marketing efforts, potential certifications and more.

[MEMBER NEWS continued on page 10]



Left to right at the Veterans Small Business Conference Spouses Panel: Tracie Dominguez, owner and executive director of HomeWell Care Services; Naomi Colwell, president and CEO, Aurora Chamber of Commerce; Lisa Jordan, co-owner and CCO, CrossFit Bonnie & Clyde; and Hark Harold, Founder, EOS Worldwide.

AmbassadorSpotlight

Kendra Thibault, Edward Jones

Kendra Thibault is a remarkable individual known for her exceptional involvement as an Ambassador for the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. As a second-generation financial advisor with Edward Jones, Kendra focuses on building personal relationships with her clients so she can guide them for a financially safe and secure future. She also recently completed coursework to achieve the title of Certified Financial Planner.

In addition to her commitment to The Chamber's Ambassador Team, Kendra is a member of Young Professionals, Women in Business, and the Defense Council. Her dedication and passion for fostering local business growth have made her a prominent figure in the Aurora community. In addition to her Chamber involvement, she is a member of the Aurora Gateway Rotary and Junior League of Denver.

Beyond her professional pursuits, Kendra is an avid golfer, and loves



Kendra with her husband, Cody, and their 2-year-old Bernese Mountain Dog, Loki.

spending time with her husband, Cody, and as dog mom to their 2-year-old Bernese Mountain Dog, Loki.

While she excels in her role as a financial advisor, Kendra's ability to balance her professional life with her personal one is truly admirable. She is a shining example of someone who not only thrives in her career and personal life, but also finds time to support and engage with her local community, making her an influential and cherished member of Aurora. ■

Donor Alliance Honors City of Aurora with 2023 Community of Excellence Award

In alignment with their mission to save and heal lives through organ and tissue donation and transplantation, on October 6, Donor Alliance presented its Donor Alliance Community of Excellence Award to the City of Aurora and Mayor Mike Coffman. The Award recognizes an exceptional individual or organization in the region committed to inspiring and educating their residents about making the decision to give the gift of life. This year, Aurora showed its commitment by becoming Colorado's first Donate Life Community – a program that utilizes grassroots efforts in communities to create a culture where donation is embraced. More than 18 events have been held so far in Aurora this year to start the conversation around the power of donation.

"I'm proud and honored to recognize Mayor Mike Coffman and the City of Aurora," said Jennifer Prinz, president and CEO of Donor Alliance. "Aurora is creating an environment where residents feel well informed to register

as an organ, eye, and tissue donor when they go to the DMV. More than 1,500 people in our region are still waiting for a lifesaving transplant, so it is critical we continue to speak out in our communities on the importance of the cause. Donor Alliance is excited to see what our partnership brings to Aurora for years to come."

During the reception, Ward II Aurora City Council member Steve Sundberg shared that his support of organ, eye, and tissue donation is also personal. "I was literally going blind from the disease Keratoconus, and because of two successful corneal transplants, my vision is nearly perfect," said Sundberg. "I'm so grateful to the donors and the technology that made those life-changing transplants happen for me."

"As home to two major transplant centers with the University of Colorado Hospital and Children's Hospital Colorado, Aurora needs to be a foundational advocate in raising awareness around donation with our diverse community," said Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman.

One person can save up to eight lives through organ donation and save and heal up



Aurora Mayor Mike Coffman accepts the Donor Alliance Community of Excellence Award for the City of Aurora from President and CEO of Donor Alliance Jennifer Prinz.

to 75 more through tissue donation. Last year, 278 donors in our region saved more than 700 lives through organ donation and nearly 2,000 more tissue donors were able to save and heal more 143,000 people. ■

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