



Alpena Area  
Chamber of  
Commerce  
Serving all of Northeast Michigan

235 West Chisholm Street  
Alpena, MI 49707  
989.354.4181  
[www.alpenachamber.com](http://www.alpenachamber.com)

## CHAMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### March 2021

- 3 - Ambassador meeting
- 4 - Government Relations Committee meeting
- 9 - Economic Development Board meeting

### April 2021

- 1 - Government Relations Committee meeting
- 7 - Ambassador meeting
- 8 - Good Mid-Day Alpena Event; 11:30 a.m. sponsored by Builders First Source
- 27 - Chamber Board meeting

For ribbon cuttings and event details, contact the Chamber at 989.354.4181 or visit [www.alpenachamber.com](http://www.alpenachamber.com).

## 2021 CHAMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson: Diane Shields - MidMichigan Health; Vice Chairperson: Tom Berriman - Alpena Public Schools/Alpena High School; Past Chairperson: Eileen Budnick - mBank; Secretary/Treasurer: Nick Brege - Alpena Community College  
Directors: Julie Allen - Holiday Inn Express; Gretchen Kirschner - Builders First Source; Janis Sahr - Thunder Bay Winery/Regalo Luxury Gifts; Anna Soik - City of Alpena; Adam Szydowski - Besser Company; Travis Weide - Lafarge

# CHAMBER NOTES

## Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce

By serving its members, the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce actively champions economic development and the advancement of the community's quality of life.

January/February 2021

## Spring is right around the corner!

While we wait for the warmer weather and longer days that are in our future, we sometimes instead focus on the remaining snow and cold wind that is still here today. In the same way it appears that we are on the verge of returning to some level of normalcy, but it cannot seem arrive soon enough. While it is certainly easy to focus on what activities we have missed over the last year, or the activities that continue to be affected each week, let's encourage each other and stay positive. Spring is nearly here!

In the Chamber office, our staff has heard many encouraging stories from local businesses about all the support they have received from our awesome community. Stories about acts of generosity or going the extra mile to assist someone is great to hear. If you have an amazing story, we would love for you would share it with us!

Chamber staff continues to work for our members in every way possible and we have been busy. Last month we were able to help Target Alpena distribute \$1.8 million in small business assistance over a five-county area, for a total of \$5.5 million given out over the last year through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's grant programs. In addition to these programs, we are also working closely with other various government agencies and the health department to keep them informed about the status of our members.

While we continue to advocate for additional assistance for our members, the Chamber also continues to partner with the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance and we are collectively calling for a metric based plan to reopen our restaurants, event venues and bars. In Michigan these businesses represent 12% of the workforce, and we feel that there should be some measurable tools in place so these businesses can properly plan ahead and have a degree of certainty regarding the reopening process.

In closing, let's continue to encourage everyone to think about our local businesses, and the continued impact we can make by shopping local!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As we continue to grow in membership we are able to accomplish more. We appreciate all of our members, both new and returning.

**Alpena Landscape Supply and Services, LLC**  
516 Robbin Ave.  
Alpena, MI 49707  
989.340.2333



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\* IA, KS, MO, NC, TN, TX and WI do not allow for the 5% up-front discount due to state filings.

# Thank you for your continued support!

## Strategic Plan Update

### Advocacy

Adam has been regularly meeting with the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance to make sure northern Michigan is represented and accounted for in the State government. NMCA is currently partnering with the restaurant association to attempt to have the Governor accept a reopening plan based on metrics that would allow restaurants to better gauge when they can reopen safely.

He also attended a regional meeting to learn about the new proposed budget that the Lieutenant Governor is presenting. The Lieutenant Governor also hosted a Northeast Michigan roundtable on February 26, which the Chamber participated in.

### Education

We are working with Alpena Public Schools to help facilitate some of the Marshall Plan partnerships with businesses. This program will link high school and early college students with technical positions in local businesses.

We continue to provide educational resources in our weekly enotes regarding COVID protocols as well as general business development.

### Exposure

We have continued to answer our membership's questions regarding assistance. We are in the process of analyzing 2021 events and attempting to provide as many exposure activities for our members as possible. We are hoping for an April Good Mid-Day Alpena Lunch.

### Economic Development

January was dominated with the MEDC Survival Grant Program. Chamber and Target staff administered the program which brought another \$1.8 million dollars to area small businesses (we were not part of the decision making process). Alpena County businesses received about \$650,000 in assistance. These grants were targeted to businesses that had been most impacted by the November Mask Order and business shutdowns.

We seen progress on several different development projects being considered. There are several projects in various stages of due diligence, and we are hopeful some of these will get announced and commence. We should all be encouraged by the fact there is interest in our community.

### Savings

Staff met with partner CardConnect. They are a credit card service that has been a partner of the Chamber for several years and provide discounted service to our members. They have been reaching out to our members to let them know about the discounts they offer.

### Military Support

Chamber and CRTC staff worked with various local partners to hold a Community Council meeting on January 21st. The event was a kickoff with many new community partners participating. CRTC staff introduced themselves and their ongoing missions and discussed how to become more involved into the community. These meetings are planned to be held quarterly in the future, with two meetings a year open to the full public.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**Thunder Bay Eye Care** is celebrating their 20th year of serving Alpena with its full scope optometric office. They offer comprehensive eye exams, up to date contact lens services and the latest in eyewear. Dr Garant has been in practice for over 35 years and his staff of six is well trained and ready to help you with all your eyecare needs.

Located at 1011 W. Washington Ave. in Alpena, Thunder Bay Eye Care strives to keep up with the latest in eye care technology, including retinal photography, automated visual field testing, optical tomography of the optic nerve and central retina.

The optical has up to 1,000 frames in stock with the latest styles available and a willing staff to help you find the right frame and lenses for your lifestyle. The eyecare field is a rapidly changing market and Thunder Bay Eye Care makes every effort to stay up on the latest changes. They accept most insurances and do everything in their power to make your visit as pleasant and seamless as possible. Feel free to check them out on their recently updated website at [www.thunderbayeyecare.com](http://www.thunderbayeyecare.com) or call to make an appointment at 989.356.EYES.

**WATZ** has a long, rich heritage in the broadcast industry. The station was the first commercial broadcast facility in Alpena, and one of the first in Northern Lower Michigan. November of 2021 will be the 75th anniversary of WATZ. The station it is still owned by the same family who founded it in 1946.

WATZ plays a contemporary country format, adding in many of the classics that seem to only get better with age. For over 32 years, Steve Wright has anchored WATZ's popular morning show, which features local topics and conversation, Information, trivia, and Trademart, a well-loved WATZ tradition. Mary Thurston keeps you company through the midday with her quick wit and quirky sense of humor. Mike Rhea takes over for your afternoon drive and Ben Stevens takes care of weekends and fill-in duties. WATZ features specialty programming like The Original Country Gold Show with Rowdy Yates, Rick Jackson's Country Classics, Trucker Radio, Bob Kingsley's Country Top 40 featuring Fitz, Country Gold Sunday morning with JR Wooster, and Gospel Music Time with Susie Martin. Elaine Misiak hosts the legendary "Sunday in Poland" show from 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

The WATZ News Department is led by longtime News Director Bruce Johnson, with reporter Ben Stevens keeping you informed with reliable, complete, and trustworthy reporting.

For your fix of hometown heritage radio, tune in to 99.3 FM, listen online at [watz.com](http://watz.com) or download the radiocenter app on a smartphone or mobile device.

WATZ also operates 105.7 WZTK featuring a 24 hour news and talk format.



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