

# KASSON CHAMBER NEWS



March  
2021

## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### OUR MISSION

To strengthen,  
promote and support  
our local community  
through an active &  
informed membership.



I'm excited to begin my first year as the Kasson Chamber of Commerce's president. If we haven't met yet, I'd welcome the opportunity to meet you! Feel free to talk with me at a chamber meeting, stop by Citizens State Bank in Mantorville, or email me to schedule a time to visit.

As I'm sure you'll find in both this inaugural message & its subsequent episodes, I like to group things in threes. Given that, I have three levels of priorities for this year – 1) as president, 2) as a board, and 3) as a membership. For my time as president, my (you guessed it, 3!) priorities are: find a new normal post-COVID/lockdowns, engage membership in decision making, and expand the chamber's voice in local policy matters. As a board, we've resolved to encourage shop local, be a resources provide networking, which is being fleshed out in both tactical and strategic manners at the board level. Finally, our board has identified one goal at a membership level – starting Shop Local Fridays – which is discussed at greater length in its own section. This means our chamber has two slots for priorities that need identifying!

I've asked both members & prospective members one question each, when given the chance to help inform myself for this level of priorities.

**For members**, "What have you found provides the most value from your Kasson Chamber membership?"

**For prospective members**, "What could a chamber do or offer that would cause you to pause and consider joining the Kasson Chamber?"

I want to hear your thoughts, and I want our members to ask their non-member friends this prospect question. With this feedback, I'd like to work with all of you on filling out our two remaining membership level priorities. I'm not authorized to offer some sort of cash prize drawing for responses, but I will offer 3(!) just-now-made-up, completely arbitrary 'Presidential Bonus Points' to two lucky winners that provide me feedback by emailing me at [tmonson@csbankmn.com](mailto:tmonson@csbankmn.com) by Tuesday April 13, at 4:30 PM. I will announce the winners at our meeting on April 14th.

Sincerely,  
Tom Monson

# MEMBER HIGHLIGHT:

# MINNESOTA WIFI

## DARIN STEFFL

**How many years have you been in business?** Started in 2012...over 8 years

**What motivates you?**

*My drive to start this company was to improve rural broadband access in the KM Community & the surrounding counties. Being able to provide the best internet option for a home is a great feeling & is what drives us to grow & succeed every day. I love being able to start a business in the community I grew up in & give back to our schools & charitable organizations. One of my primary motivators is reminding myself every day that we're never perfect & there's always room for improvement. Sometimes the status quo stifles innovation & growth as a person, so we always need to believe that there's more to learn & that change can be a good thing.*



**"I see no reason why every business wouldn't want to be involved (in Chamber) to make those connections, socialize, and grow their own business."**

**As someone doing business in Kasson, how does the Chamber help you?**

*MN WiFi joined the chamber back in 2012 & as a 21-year old, new business owner, I was quite shy at the meetings & not sure how the Chamber might help me grow myself & my business. The more I attended the meetings & events, I met more of our members & came out of my shell a bit. The last 8 years have really helped me become more involved in the KM area & our Chamber to make new connections & give advice to fellow members. Since joining the Chamber, I see no reason why every business wouldn't want to be involved to make those connections, socialize, and grow their own business.*

**What problem does your business solve?**

*We now serve parts of 6 counties with internet, phone, and TV services to people who have been left behind by large providers. Our focus is to keep our customers happy & provide them with the same service I expect to experience in my own home. Anything less than perfect service is something we work to fix as quickly as possible. We also provide services to business*

**What's the last thing you read?**

*Well to be honest, I'm not much of a book reader but I read many online articles about business & technology to try & stay educated in our industry & things I'm interested in. I love learning so I read about investing articles, financial earning reports, green energy & electric cars, telecommunications, and the aviation field.*

Do you have someone you'd like to nominate for the monthly member highlight? If so, email your nomination to Kelly Braun by the 15th of every month.



## 15 Reasons Why You Should Shop Local

Ben Lobel, editor of  
SmallBusiness.co.uk

- The local economy
- Create local jobs
- Online isn't always best
- Personality & Character
- Customer service & shopping experience
- Healthier Environment
- Originality & Individuality
- Entrepreneurs
- Help to create the identity of the community
- Local businesses for local charities
- Tradition
- Innovation
- Local Government Incentives
- If things go wrong, you have a friendly face you can go to to help solve the problem



Your Board of Directors is excited to inform you of a new promotion we have scheduled for Friday, April 2nd. The promotion is the first of what we hope to be more "Shop Local Fridays." The 04/02/21 "Shop Local Friday" will ask you to participate by providing a drawing at your place of business for customers to enter that day. All entries will then be turned into the Chamber (details will



follow) with a grand prize of \$250.00 cash (Chamber sponsored) awarded to the winning entrant.

Your business will also be encouraged to add any special events or store discounts that day to help promote our "Shop Local" theme. We will use our social media outlets and the DCI to advertise and promote the event. You may also want to consider some additional advertising to help spread

the word. We will need to know if your business is participating as we will be listing all participating businesses leading up to 04/02/2021.

We will be discussing this promotion at our upcoming March membership meeting. We would welcome any ideas that you might have to add to our first "Shop Local Friday."

# Friday, April 2nd, 2021





# BUSINESS & COMMUNITY GRANTS

## U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

website: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)

### *Paycheck Protection Program (PPP Draw 2)*

- ▶ Application can be found under 'Coronavirus Relief Options'
- ▶ Businesses with few than 20 employees & sole proprietors only
- ▶ Open March 10 through 31, 2021

### *Shuttered Venue Operators Grants*

- ▶ For details, [CLICK HERE](#)

## KASSON EDA BUSINESS PROGRAMS

website: [bit.ly/KassonEDASPrograms](http://bit.ly/KassonEDASPrograms)

### *Business Facade Improvement Program*

- ▶ Matching grants to assist businesses to improve their facades & curb appeal
- ▶ Matching grants cover 50% of a projects cost up to \$2,000 per project
- ▶ [CLICK HERE](#) to get an application

## SOUTHERN MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

website: [www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org)

### *Paint the Town Grants*

- ▶ The Paint the Town Grant Program is designed to engage volunteers, create a sense of community pride and build collaborative efforts that beautify communities through "Painting the Town" with a new community mural, community welcome sign or painting an historic structure. Paint the Town grants are administered by SMIF in collaboration with various Ace Hardware stores located in our region. Communities with populations under 10,000 are eligible to apply.
- ▶ [CLICK HERE FOR GUIDELINES](#)
- ▶ Deadline: March 31, 2021

## NEW MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

### *Travis Arment*

American Family Insurance,  
Arment & Associates, LLC

#### Website:

Arment & Associates, LLC

#### Location:

402 S Mantorville Ave

#### Phone:

(507) 374-6645

#### Team Beliefs

Our team believes there's more to insurance than the policy itself. It's about providing dependable protection, friendly service and flexibility to meet our customer's needs. We offer home, auto, life, farm and commercial insurance products tailored to fit your unique lifestyle. You can count on team Arment to provide industry leading service, so you can be confident that your dreams are well protected.



# PREK-12 EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT:

# DCD & TRANSITION PROGRAM

## KM HIGH SCHOOL

KoMet Coffee is a small business at Kasson-Mantorville High School that is run by teacher Alyssa Swanson and our KoMet students enrolled in the DCD & Transition Program. Students are taking orders, making the drinks, delivering them to staff throughout the building and working the till. KoMet Coffee is just one of the ways in which Alyssa Swanson is living the programs mission:

*To give students real life, hands on experiences to help them grow their independent living, vocational, functional, and interpersonal skills.*

It is Swanson's professional goal to create a comprehensive and life ready program, something so incredible for our KoMet students that, "...other people want to open enroll and bring their kids to KM's Transitions program." Alyssa



will be speaking briefly about the program at our March 10th meeting and would love to partner with any Kasson business that is interested, so be thinking of some ideas for this crew because time with these KoMet students will definitely put a smile on your face while allowing you to have some things done for your business!

Alyssa Swanson's contact information:

Email: [a.swanson@komets.k12.mn.us](mailto:a.swanson@komets.k12.mn.us)

Phone: 507-634-2961

## EXCITING NEXT STEPS FOR OUR KMHS TRANSITIONS PROGRAM

In house apartment

Daily meal plan &  
preparation

KoMets Coffee  
Expansion

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### WHAT DO WE NEED TO MAKE OUR NEXT STEPS A REALITY?

#### For the apartment:

- Twin size bed
- Bedding
- Night Stand
- Corner TV Stand
- Table Cloth
- Decor
- WII/DVD Player
- Handicap Accessible  
Washer & Dryer
- Locking Pantry

#### For KoMet Coffee:

- Electric Portable Sink
- Countertops
- Table
- Locking Cash Drawer
- Fridge
- 30 Cup Urn (3)
- Ice Machine
- iPad