

CLASS HANDBOOK

2023-2024

LEADERSHIP
DULUTH 
Duluth Area Chamber Foundation


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ABOUT LEADERSHIP DULUTH

Leadership Duluth is a comprehensive 10-month leadership development program by the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce and the Duluth Area Chamber Foundation that aims to unite, engage, and empower leaders to foster change within their workplace and community.

Throughout the program, participants examine core leadership competencies, learn about Duluth's cultural and business history, and discuss current issues facing the region. As a result, participants grow to understand the elements of a strong community and how their leadership can create opportunities within a business and cultivate a robust economy.

More than 1,500 area professionals have completed the Leadership Duluth program since its first graduating class in 1988.

Congratulations on being selected as the 35th class of Leadership Duluth!



2023-2024 SCHEDULE



September 6

5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
Kickoff

September 13

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Situational Ethics

October 11

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Courageous Conversations

November 8

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Communication Skills

December 13

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Time Management

January 10

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Project Management

February 7

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Styles

March 13

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Relationship Building

April 17

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Organizational Skills

May 8

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Conflict Management

June 5

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Cultural Awareness

June 26

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Class of 2024 Graduation

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

SITUATIONAL ETHICS

Situational Ethics is the understanding that certain situations and circumstances will challenge you as a leader. Together class members will learn from our presenters and visit venues that will help them further understand times of challenge and what you can learn from as a leader when situations arise. We'll also discuss how these leaders responded to their challenges, both positively and negatively.

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Courageous Conversations will dive into Duluth's painful history and stories of our communities of the oppressed and marginalized. Participants will tour Downtown and West Duluth to visit multiple service organizations and learn about the individuals they serve. We will learn how to actively listen and reflect on how to hold a courageous conversation authentically. Together, we will reflect upon your contributions to our community that will shape your Leadership Duluth service project.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication Skills will provide interesting information on how to form a conversation to encourage future growth. Class members will visit an event center and local nonprofits and learn from business leaders and local government officials.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time Management will determine the significance of how impactful time management is in yielding results of significant events and projects in our economy. Class members will learn about these organizations throughout the day, experience varied arts performances, and discuss the major community events that make Duluth unique.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project management will give us the behind-the-scenes outlook with significant industry leaders like Essentia Health's Vision Northland to learn how marketing and launching a product, service, or event can lead to more consumers and clients in your organization.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership Styles will give us a better understanding of the policy work our local and state delegation engages in during this time, which is critical to your leadership development. We will also learn about the impact of our military personnel at the 148th Fighter Wing. We will discuss how advocating for local projects and funding for our local agencies creates a lasting impact for all residents and the economy.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Relationship Building will focus on building relationships with clients and community members and the impact of fostering long-term connections with people. Throughout the day, we will understand how utilizing intrapersonal communication is integral to continuing sustainable relationships.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

Organizational skills will lead us to observe several organizations and learn about their business systems and how it maintains their continued growth and establishment. We will tour several organizations well versed in sustainability and featured in its power of longevity in our area.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Conflict management day is an opportunity for us to listen to experts in the field of facilitating conflict in their organizations. They will share their experiences and the tools and concepts they have used to make civil discourse a part of their work in various sectors.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

Cultural Awareness Day is an opportunity for us to learn more about the diverse population in our area and how they make a positive impact on our community. We will be visiting the local university's multicultural education department to hear from various presenters on the meaning of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging practices that we will take with us in our organizations.



MEET THE CLASS



AZRIN AWAL

(she/they)

Azrin Awal (she/they) identifies as a Muslim, Bengali, Asian-American, Queer woman dedicated to social justice, mental health awareness, public health, and community. Azrin works at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD), where she serves as the Pre-Collegiate & Ambassador Program Coordinator with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). Azrin is a first-generation University of Minnesota Duluth alumni with a background in Public Health, Psychology, and Gender & Sexuality Studies. Azrin serves as an At-Large City Councilor for the City of Duluth and serves on multiple boards and commissions for the city. Azrin wants to be able to use their voice to promote equity and justice, especially in her work at UMD and throughout the City of Duluth.



LEAH BERG

(she/her/hers)

Leah Berg is the Director of Quality and Risk Management at St. Luke's Hospital in Duluth, MN. She leads patient safety and quality improvement initiatives throughout the organization. In this role, she has developed a passion for process improvement and increasing efficiency. Ms. Berg received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the College of Saint Scholastica and her Master's in Clinical Systems Leadership at the University of Arizona. Before entering her role in quality improvement, she worked as a cardiovascular operating room nurse, administrative representative, and clinical documentation improvement specialist. When not working, Ms. Berg enjoys spending time with her pets, gardening, traveling and enjoying beautiful Duluth, MN.



COREY BESTE

(he/him/his)

I am a registered architect, a graduate of Denfeld High School and NDSU, and have been employed with TKDA since 2012, when TKDA acquired the Duluth-based firm SJA Architects. I live in Lakeside with my wife (a nurse practitioner with Essentialia) and two kids who keep us busy with their involvement in baseball, softball, soccer, snowboarding and Boy/Girl Scouts. In what free time we can find, we enjoy the outdoors and lakes through camping, canoeing, ATV-ing, and hiking. We also like to travel, and enjoy card games while discovering new breweries.



AMBER BURNS

(she/her)

Amber Burns is a multimedia artist, performer and teacher. She graduated from UMD with a BFA in Arts Education and teaches visual art, dance and theater in the Duluth community. In 2018 she finished her MLS degree in Arts Development and Program Management from the University of Denver. Formerly the Artistic Director for the Duluth Playhouse Family Theatre, Amber now manages youth scholarships as the Community Impact Specialist at The Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation. Amber is very passionate about advocating for the arts and has been a board member for the Arrowhead Regional Arts council and is a grant evaluator for the MN State Arts Board. She loves to participate in youth programming and helping the local community.



CHASE CARLSON

(he/him)

I was born and raised in Duluth and did all my schooling here. An interesting fact is that all the schools I attended, except for college, no longer exist. I attended Chester Park for elementary, Woodland Middle School, and then high school at Duluth Central. I attended St. Scholastica for college where I played soccer and got my bachelor's degree in management. I began working at Northwood's while attending college and have enjoyed working with kids ever since. I met my wife there and we now raise our two boys in this community we enjoy.



CAITLIN CROWL

(she/her)

I grew up in Spooner, Wisconsin, and moved to Duluth as a freshman in high school, where I graduated from Duluth East High School. After high school, I attended the University of Minnesota and majored in political science. During my time at the University of Minnesota, I interned for Senator Amy Klobuchar as a campaign intern. After graduating, I went to law school at Mitchell Hamline School of Law. In May of 2022, I graduated from law school and moved back to Duluth to pursue my legal career at Fryberger Law Firm.



MELANIE DAVIS

(she/hers)

Growing my career with United Healthcare is my reality of the expression "Living The Dream". I've felt a great amount of reward throughout my tenure supporting consumers and employees by solving problems and breaking down barriers through innovation and critical thinking. Prior to my experience at United Healthcare, I had the privilege of leading a team of direct care professionals in supporting individuals with physical and intellectual disabilities. My experience in both of these chapters in my career have built the foundation of my passion for community involvement and making a positive impact through supporting others through a variety of different avenues.



KELSEY DUFFY

(she/her)

My name is Kelsey and I am the Business Office Manager for Lake Superior Dental. I was born in Brainerd and moved to the Duluth Area to attend UMD in 2011 where I earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology. After college I spent a year living in Charleston, SC but quickly realized I missed the Duluth area and all it had to offer. When I am not working, I enjoy spending time with my husband Dan, my two pups Winnie and Clark and doing home reno projects. I look forward to meeting you all and learning more about our community!



NATE ELLING

(he/him)

My name is Nate Elling and I moved to Duluth in 2008 when I accepted a job at Minnesota Power. Prior to Minnesota Power I attended UMD and worked for an Independent Power Producer in the Twin Cities and New Jersey. I've been married to my wife Kate for 18 years and we have a 16 year old daughter and 11 year old son. Our family is very active with dance, hockey, baseball, soccer as well as the many outdoor activities that Duluth has to offer.



BREANNA ELLISON

(she/they)

Breanna (she/they) is serving as the Community Relations Officer for the City of Duluth. She grew up in the Twin Cities before moving to Duluth nearly a decade ago. They graduated from UMD with degrees in both History and Secondary Education. Breanna has worked in a variety of fields – with experience in education, community/political organizing and workforce development, she is passionate and driven to create spaces where communities who have been marginalized can exist, be heard, and lead in Duluth. She loves to connect with community members and build relationships because she firmly believes that we are stronger together. In her free time she enjoys trying new things, spending time on the shores of Lake Superior, and hanging out with friends and family.



MELISSA FANNING

(she/her/hers)

I hold a BA in Elementary Education and have worked at the Duluth Area Family YMCA for the past 20 years in different leadership roles. In 2018, I was promoted to the Y's Community Services Branch Executive Director. I oversee four large programs, supervise leadership staff, manage program budgets, maintain grant compliance, and support our fundraising efforts. I provide support annually to 1,500 youth in the area. When not at work, I'm hanging out with my husband, three children, and grandchild. I like to be outside, go to my children's events, travel, socialize with friends, and visit my extended family.



JAMES GRANDAW

Born and raised in Duluth and graduate of Central High School class of 1992. Enlisted in the 148FW Minnesota Air National Guard in 1992 as an F-16 Avionics Specialist (Drill Status Guardsman). Received a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Engineering from UMD in 1999 and joined Cirrus Aircraft employed as a Manufacturing Engineer 2000-2011. Commissioned as an Intelligence Officer at the 148FW in 2005 and graduated from the USAF Weapons School in 2011. Served as the 148FW Chief of Intelligence 2011-2019, Wing Inspector General 2019-2023 and currently the 148FW Operations Support Squadron Commander.



REBECCA GRAVES

(ikwe/she/her/hers)

Rebecca (Becca) Graves, moved to Duluth in August 2022 and accepted a role at the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council as the Executive Director. Rebecca is a graduate of University Minnesota Duluth with a masters in Tribal Administration and Governance. Rebecca received her undergraduate degree from Bemidji State University in Bemidji, MN. Rebecca worked previously within the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe community as the Executive Director for the Boys & Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area.



REBECCA GRUMDAHL

(she/they)

After graduating from the University of Minnesota Duluth, Becca began their career at STARBASE Minnesota Duluth as a STEM Instructor. Being a Duluth native, Becca naturally has a passion for the environment and outdoor recreation. Becca previously worked at Hartley Nature Center as a summer camp instructor for three summers where her love of education and science came together. In their free time, Becca loves to go birding at Hawk Ridge, hike with her dog, Stella, and canoe camp in the Boundary Waters.



JOSH GUNDERSON

(he/him/his)

Josh has over 12 years of experience providing tax, accounting, finance, and consulting services to privately held businesses and their owners. He has proven skills in tax compliance, tax exposure analysis, tax strategy planning, business structure planning, financial budgeting and reporting, financial forecasting and projecting, cash flow management, accounting operations, transaction due diligence, owner succession and structure planning, and human resource compliance. He works directly with client ownership and executive management to help maintain Federal and State tax compliance. He continually assists with strategic tax planning, complex tax structuring, cash flow and operational planning, ownership transitions and risk mitigation.



DREW GUTTORMSON

(he)

I am Drew Guttormson and I have been living and working in the Twin Ports for the past 11 years as an engineer in manufacturing. I have been with Altec for the past 8 years working in Quality Engineering. I enjoy teaching others so that people have the tools to improve quality in all areas of manufacturing. Outside of work I enjoy the outdoors and all the trails inside the city of Duluth. The history of Twin Ports fascinates me and I love learning about how landmarks were formed and how things have changed over the years.



THERESA HANNU

(she/her)

Theresa Hannu, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, started her nursing career in 1992 at Hennepin County Medical Center. She has been employed by St. Luke's Health System in Duluth as the VP and Chief Nursing Officer since 2021. Prior to St. Luke's, Theresa was at The Metrohealth System in Cleveland, Ohio from 1997-2021 where she held different leadership positions to include Associate Chief Nursing Officer. Theresa holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice Degree and holds Nurse Executive Advanced Board Certified (NEA-BC) through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Theresa is actively involved in the Minnesota Organization of Leaders in Nursing (MOLN) and in the American Organization of Nursing Leaders (AONL). In addition to her roles in leadership, she is an active Associate Professor(Adjunct).



AARON HANSEN

(he/him/his)

Aaron is a Project Manager / Interior Designer at DSGW and 1997 NDSU (Fargo, ND) graduate with a bachelor's degree in interior design. Currently he is working on projects in ND, MN, MI, and managing a \$65 million hotel and resort expansion. Local projects Aaron led interior architecture include Lake Superior College - Health and Science Center, University of Minnesota Duluth Life Science Building, and Duluth's - Lincoln Park and Ordean East Middle Schools. Aaron serves on Glensheens - Building Grounds Committee, NDSU's - Board of Visitors and is currently planning a warm destination wedding with his beautiful fiancé Melissa (Missy).



NIC HANSEN

(he/him)

Nic Hanson is the Student Readiness and Success Coordinator at Proctor Public Schools. He leads the Pathways Program @ Proctor High School and helps to ensure that all students graduate with a plan instead of just planning to graduate. Prior to his current role with Proctor Public Schools, Nic spent seven years as a Work-Based Learning Coordinator with Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and coordinated the Work Experience program at seven different high schools. Nic is also a musician, golfer, gardener, traveler, is generally curious about the world and enjoys life.



TYLER HAUTAJARVI

(he/his)

Hello, I am Tyler Hautajarvi. I have worked at Cirrus Aircraft for just over 10 years and I am currently an IT Client Ops Supervisor. I am Proctor High school and UMD grad and I have lived in the Duluth area my entire life. I have a Wife, Corrie and twin 3 year old girls named Livi & Lola.



TIFFANY HUGHES

Tiffany Hughes is CEO of A&L Properties, a commercial real estate, leasing, and property management firm that since 1985 has developed or restored more than 40 properties in the Duluth-Superior area. Tiffany, who has been with A&L since 2000, is currently a member of the Chamber's Board of Directors. She and A&L dedicate their time and other resources to finding the perfect fit for prospective tenants, tenant relations, enhancing downtown vitality, supporting military veterans and sponsoring community events that range from Movies in the Park to Grandma's Marathon, to the Bike Duluth Festival and more.



HEATHER HUGHLEY

(she/her)

I am a Duluth native who enjoys the vast nature landscapes of our area. In the summer you can find me boating, swimming, or kayaking Lake Superior with friends and family. I enjoy the Bayfront concerts, The Duluth Symphony, Bulldog hockey, skiing at Chester Bowl or Spirit Mountain; and Bentleyville is one of my favorite times of year. I have worked in hospitality for over twelve years and previously worked in non-profit for five. Both of these professions have allowed me to follow my passions of helping others, making people happy, and bettering our community.



VERONICA KNAFLA

(she/her)

I accept bids on anything from construction and demolition, to cherries and toothpicks. As a Procurement Specialist Sr. with the SLC Purchasing Division, my office oversees purchasing activities for approx. 20+ departments and agencies, in 60+ different worksites, throughout all the County's 6,860 miles. Many don't know, but St. Louis County is the largest County east of the Mississippi River. I have a demonstrated history of working in the public sector (9+ yrs), a BA Degree focused in Business Administration and I also hold two internationally accepted certifications in public procurement: Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) and Certified Public Procurement Officer (CPPO).



ERIN KREEGER

(she/her)

Erin is the Executive Director of the Duluth Library Foundation, which champions the Duluth Public Library and works to increase its capacity to serve the region. Prior to joining the Foundation in September 2021, Erin was a fundraiser at The College of St. Scholastica. Erin moved to Duluth after spending a decade working in Washington, D.C., where she focused most of her time on criminal justice reform. Erin holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies from the University of Wyoming and a Master's in Public Administration from George Mason University.



LYNDSY LINDQUIST

(she/her)

Lyndsy Lindquist is the Branch Manager of US Bank in Spirit Valley. She has been with US Bank since 2017 and in a leadership position since September 2022. She grew up in Two Harbors and now lives in Esko with her husband Scott and two daughters Gabrielle and Ava. Lyndsy is an effective leader in today's work environment, leading by encouragement and direction. She co-hosts a weekly Manager Development call where she mentors and guides bankers who are on a path to becoming branch managers. She was previously involved in a weekly US Bank Women in Leadership group where she explored a variety of issues affecting women and other marginalized groups in the workplace and helped to effect meaningful change amongst her peers. She is making a name in the Spirit Valley area by getting a donation for Spirit Valley Days and entering the parade. Her current project is working with the US Bank marketing team to design a US Bank shirt that recognizes the importance of mental health. Lyndsy is looking to get more involved in the Duluth area to meet others, make connections, and see how she can contribute more to the community. She has only just begun her journey as an effective leader and would love to learn more!



AMBER LYNN LOWELL

"Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you." Shannon Adler

My name is Amber and I would like my legacy to be that of integrity, character, loyalty, honesty, work ethic and leadership. I believe good work ethic and leadership have been a fundamental part of most of my achievements and entrepreneur experiences. I have owned and co/owned five businesses locally. I don't feel that it is as notable as my leadership role in my postal career and now my newest endeavor with Proctor Public Schools. I'm a current member of MASBO (Minnesota Association of School Business Officials). I have completed a Leadership Academy offered through MASBO as well as finished MASBO Institute. I'm currently working on my Minnesota Association of Business Officials Certification which would allow me to work into other roles within the school district. I want to continue my leadership journey with gaining as much knowledge and experience as possible; in which I don't believe that journey ever ceases to exist. I think we should all encourage and support one another in leadership, no matter the capacity in which it's in. I think leadership comes in all forms and is not just something within a career but within a person and their entire life. I hope to be selected for this opportunity to continue on my journey and to leave a lasting legacy for my family and community.



JOSHEPH MCGINNIS

(he/him/his)

My name is Joseph McGinnis. I am originally from New Jersey. I attended Montclair State University and completed my B.S./M.S. in Marine Biology and Coastal Science. I joined the Coast Guard in 2016 and worked as an Apprentice Marine Inspector in Mobile, AL. Currently, I am the Waterways Management Branch Chief for MSU Duluth. I am responsible for the safety of federal navigable waterways in Western Lake Superior. I have a wife, a 7 month old son, and 3 pets. I love meeting new people, learning about other's experiences, giving back to the community, and trying new experiences.



ANGIE MILLER

Angie is a Sr. HR Generalist at North Shore Bank primarily focusing on recruiting and hiring for over five years. She is a member of both the Northland Human Resource Association (NHRA) and Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). She recently completed the HR Management Certificate program at UWS. Angie is a lifelong resident of the Twin Ports and surrounding area and volunteers regularly at her church Central Assembly in Superior.



KRISTIN MONTGOMERY

Hello! My name is Kristin Montgomery - a born and raised Duluthian! Professionally, I am a VP/Wealth advisor at Bell Bank and have been a financial advisor and financial planner for over 13 years. Personally, I'm married to Derek and we have three kids - Evan (15), Jaxon (11) and Quinn (8). I enjoy spending my time attending my kids sporting events and other activities, and as a family we enjoy movie nights, playing board games, bonfires, and pickleball and basketball on the driveway!



CHAD NURMINEN

(he/him)

I was born and raised and currently residing in Duluth (Morgan Park) with my wife Jamie and our three kids: Wesley 16, Hewitt 14, and Lydia 9. I enjoy spending time watching and coaching my kid's soccer teams, time at our family cabin, and cooking. To stay active I enjoy mountain biking, golfing, and cross-country skiing. I work for Essentia Health as the Director of Support Services. In my role I support teams in Nutrition, Environmental Services, Guest and Volunteer Services. I have a Culinary Degree and an M.B.A



ANDREW PAPKE-LARSON

(he/him/his)

Andrew is a professional Landscape Architect working at Barr Engineering in Duluth, MN. He holds an undergraduate degree in Environmental Science from Luther College and a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Minnesota. Andrew is also a board member of Starry Skies North, a local non-profit working to reduce light pollution and raise awareness of the value of our dark skies. In his free time, Andrew is an avid trail runner and enjoys Duluth's amazing single track trail system.



JEN PENNINGTON

(she/hers)

My name is Jen Pennington. I'm the Director of Sales and Marketing at the Sheraton Duluth Hotel. I first jumped into the hospitality industry in 2019 when I started as the Sales Manager and moved into my current position almost three years ago. In my role, I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with both local community members as well as share what I love about our city to travelers and planners. In my free-time, I try to spend most of my time outdoors. My son and I enjoy hiking, kayaking, swimming, camping and exploring new places and restaurants.



JASON PETERSON

(he/him)

Experienced and committed to financial and business leadership. I was born with an entrepreneurial spirit, starting my first successful business on my 16th birthday. I love watching an idea grow into a thriving company that supports its customers, uplifts the community, and empowers its employees. In 2008 I co-founded a nonprofit theater in the Twin Cities, Yellow Tree Theatre, and over thirteen years built it into a successful organization that became a pillar in our community. Currently I hold the position of Director of Finance for Intectural, a dynamic architectural distribution company focused on sustainable building products. In my role I provide fiscal leadership, sales support, and a willingness to tackle any task that needs to be done.



JOSEPH PIKE

(he/him)

Joe grew up in Duluth and is a Denfeld valedictorian. He went to college at Gustavus Adolphus, got a tech job in the Twin Cities, and unfortunately forgot to live here for a couple decades. Thankfully he found his way back home to the Twin Ports in 2019, now working in internal audit at ALLETE/Minnesota Power focused on IT/cybersecurity. He earned an MBA from St. Scholastica in December 2022. An avid sports nut, Joe enjoys golf, bowling, skiing, and watching the Twins, Wild, and Bulldogs. Joe lives in Hermantown with his wife and their two young children.



ERIC REISINGER

(he/him/his)

Eric has served as a Commercial Banker at Bremer Bank since 2018, helping customers from St. Cloud to the Canadian border. With more than 22 years of banking experience, he works closely with middle-market companies. Eric grew up in St. Cloud where he still resides. However, Bremer has asked Eric to work with the Duluth team to deepen the Bremer impact in the region and he is looking forward to it. Eric enjoys mountain biking, wake surfing, wheel throwing pottery, traveling, and spending time with friends and family, most importantly his wife Elizabeth and their two teenagers.



MACKENZIE MORGAN REYKDAHL

I am a Business Banker at Frandsen Bank and Trust. Out of the office, I coach spring/summer basketball and am the Vice President of the Superior Jaycees. My hobbies include basketball, lifting weights with friends, skiing, swimming and cooking. I grew up in Washburn, Wisconsin and went to college at the University of Wisconsin - Superior where I studied Economics and Math.



KELLY SCHAMBERGER

(she/her)

I am the marketing and communications manager for Marshall School—and also an internationally-awarded fine artist, art instructor, published author, and a leader and advocate in Duluth's addiction recovery community. I earned my bachelor's degree in art and professional writing from the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, and have continued my education in marketing, arts administration, business management, graphic design, illustration, and classical realism oil painting. I live in Duluth with my husband Andy and our daughter Shylah, have a home studio for my painting career, and enjoy working out, reading, and spending time with friends in my free time.



CHERYL SKAFTE

(she/her)

Moving to progressively bigger cities after graduating from Hermantown High School, Cheryl attended Hamline, did AmeriCorps in Baltimore, and lived out a childhood dream of being a New Yorker. She briefly returned to Duluth in 2005, intent on moving back east, but that never happened. She's solidly rooted here and happily so. She's obsessed with Lake Superior, active in local community theater and deeply committed to work that makes Duluth a better place to live, work and play. In 2023, after ten years with the City of Duluth, she was hired as the University of Minnesota Duluth's Public Engagement Coordinator.



JESSE SMITH

(he/him)

I am originally from Lakeville, MN, just south of the Twin Cities, and moved up here last year for work. I graduated from the University of Minnesota law school in May 2022 and began working for Hanft Fride law firm in August of the same year. When not working, I enjoy hiking, water-skiing, crosswords, and watching Minnesota sports.



LORI STEINBACH

I am the Director of Office Administration for the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce. I am also the secretary for the Duluth Library Board. Originally from Silver Bay, MN but moved to Duluth to attend college. I graduated from DBU and started in the tourism/hospitality industry right after. I love to help people and want everyone to see the good Duluth has to offer. How lucky are we to live on the greatest of the Great Lakes In my free time I enjoy reading, going to concerts and movies, attending my niece's high school basketball games and have a love for hockey, primarily the NHL. I have been a diehard fan of the Detroit Red Wings since 1990. My goal is to see a game in every NHL arena, I have 7 left to visit.



HANNAH STEVENS

(she/her)

I joined Wheeler Associates in April of 2015 as the Group Services Director. Previously, I was the Director of Operations at the Edgewater Hotel and Waterpark and worked in hospitality for eleven years. As Group Services Director I provide guidance and support to businesses offering benefits to their team. It is my responsibility to obtain and administer insurance benefits for my clients and assist employees directly by providing benefit education and ongoing customer service. I obtained my Life and Health Insurance license in 2015 and am working to acquire my Certified Employee Benefits Specialist (CEBS) designation in 2023.

I am a member of the Duluth Chamber Ambassadors and Northland Human Resources Association. In 2021, I was honored as one of Duluth's twenty under forty and Ambassador of the year.

In 2004, I attended the UMD and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 2009. It was at UMD where I met my husband, and we chose to grow roots in Duluth! We were blessed with a new addition to our family in October of 2022 with the birth of our daughter, Parker who is an absolute joy.

I've enjoyed getting more involved in our area and make a point to attend education sessions, client events, Chamber gatherings and partake in local business happenings. Getting to know the individuals that make up our community makes me happy! In my (now limited as a parent of a 4-month-old) free time I enjoy hiking, exploring our city, attending yoga classes and spending time with my husband, daughter and our Chihuahua, Auggie.



KYLIE THOMPSON

(she/her)

Hello, my name is Kylie Thompson and I reside in the Duluth area with my husband (Alex) and daughter. I currently work for Members Cooperative Credit Union as the Duluth regional branch manager and love working with my team and community. I enjoy being a part of any type of house renovation or project on my "down" time and seeing what a new space can look like. Between my toddler and Australian shepherd, I like staying busy outside!



MAXWELL VERGELDT

I'm currently employed as an Assistant Project Manager at Kraus-Anderson Construction Company's Duluth Office. In 2020 I completed my Bachelor of Science in Construction Management at North Dakota State University, before moving to the the Iron Range of Minnesota to be a team member on the construction of the state-of-the-art Rock Ridge High School. In 2022 I relocated to Hermantown, where I currently reside. Outside of work I spend my time reading and pursuing my passion for the great outdoors, including hiking, fishing, hunting and golfing.



MATTHEW VOGT

I joined Cirrus Aircraft in February of 2023 in their internal controls division. My goal in my role is to help advance the business's financial controls and internal processes. Previously I was at Ernst & Young for five years in their assurance practice where I performed financial statement audits and SOX internal controls assessments. I graduated from UMD in 2017, with an Accounting and Finance major. I enjoy the outdoors and all the outdoor experiences Duluth has to offer.



GABRIEL WALSH

(he/him)

In June 2022, I went from an annual vacationer to a resident of the Twin Ports region and have loved every minute of it. I serve as the CEO of the Lake Superior Area REALTORS and work in Duluth every day. I have served both as an attorney and now CEO in real estate associations for the last four years and enjoy supporting REALTORS® who help people everyday in often the most important transaction of their lives. In my free time, my husband and I are either boating on Lake Superior or skiing in the area!



MOLLY WASCHE

I am a St. Cloud State grad, retired radio DJ, and mom of two. I love meeting new people and creating life long friendships. I thrive on good energy and prefer non-awkward social events with good music and a decent wine selection. I have worked at the DECC since August of 2022 and although it hasn't been that long, the best part of the job is working with great people that make the 8 hours a day away from my kids feel guilt free. I am excited to soak in Duluth's secrets and welcome new acquaintances. Not only for business opportunities but for the days you need an emergency vet, a new AC unit or your car towed- who are the little guys to call? I love knowing someone who knows someone. I hope Leadership Duluth provides me with a broader outlook on this city people absolutely adore and I hope it teaches me things I didn't even know I needed in my life.



SHAWNA WEAVER

(she/her)

Shawna is the program director for the Duluth Armory's Music Resource Center. She has been an educator and program director in the area for more than ten years, and is passionate about helping the next generation of Duluthians thrive. Along with her work in the music community, Shawna teaches in the psychology department at the college of St. Scholastica and yoga at Inner Bliss. She is involved with environmental justice work and wrote a recently released book titled, Climate Grief: From Coping to Resilience and Action. She holds a PhD in Education and an MA in counseling psychology.



LINDSEY WHITLINGER

(she/her)

I am an Insurance Advisor with Bell Insurance. With 15 years of experience, I specialize in property and casualty insurance. In 2021 I joined the Bell team and am very thankful to have joined a team whose mission is to pay it forward. It allows me to continue to grow in my career while serving clients and the community first. A few of the local organizations I am involved in are the Arrowhead Builders Association, the Lester River Rendezvous, BNI, and Rotary. As a lifelong Duluth resident I enjoy being at our cabin, spending time with my family, and exploring all the beautiful outdoor places our city has to offer.



NATHAN WISEHART

(he/him)

I grew up in northern Minnesota and graduated from Bemidji State University. Always knew that I wanted to live in Duluth, and had an opportunity out of college to do just that. I worked for a small business based out of Milwaukee with a presence in Duluth for 14 years. In 2016 I had an opportunity to join Involta and made the jump to working in critical facilities. 7 years later I am the Data Center Manager for our Duluth sites, and our company is growing in leaps and bounds.



WENDY WOJTYSIAK-ERICKSON

(she/her/hers)

Over the last half dozen years, I've committed to growing my leadership acumen. During that time, I finished my degree and worked on a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) certificate. Through my journey to date, I was able to formulate my personal mission statement, to utilize learning, joy, and compassion to be an actively involved advocate. It is important to me that people continue to be invested in where they live. I'm also a big boardgame geek, love walking my husky puppies on our country road, listen to entirely too many podcasts, and enjoy the empty nest life with my hubs.



MATTHEW ZIMNIEWICZ

I currently serve as the Director of Operations, 179th Fighter Squadron, 148th Fighter Wing, MN Air National Guard, where I am responsible for the planning and execution of all F-16 flight operations at Duluth International Airport. I have been in Duluth as a member of the 148th Fighter Wing since 2020, prior to that I spent 12 years on active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps as an F/A-18 fighter pilot. I am originally from WI; I consider both MN and WI home and I am happy to be back in the region while continuing to serve.

LEADERSHIP DULUTH STEERING COMMITTEE



JEBEH EDMUNDS
(she/her)
Director of Education

Jebeh Edmunds leads the curriculum and day-to-day activities for Leadership Duluth. She is the founder and CEO of Jebeh Cultural Consulting LLC, in training effective strategies in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging in organizations and has trained dozens of for and not-for-profit organizations. Jebeh has eighteen-years of experience as an educator with the Duluth Public Schools and an Adjust Professor at The College of St. Scholastica. She earned a bachelor's degree in communication, a post-bachelor's teaching certificate, and a Master of Science in Teaching from The College of St. Scholastica. She is a proud first-generation Liberian American immigrant. She and her husband Andy are the proud parents of two boys, Maxwell and Mateo.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Zach Burns, Owner/Operator, Encompass Learning

Jebeh Edmunds, Director of Education, Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce

Daniel Fanning, Vice President of Strategy & Policy, Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce,
Executive Director, Duluth Area Chamber Foundation

Leah Kohlts, Director of External Relations and Community Resources, Duluth Area Chamber Foundation

Kathleen Privette, Director of Events and Board Operations, Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce

Aili Ratike, Trust Executive, North Shore Bank

Elsie Storm, Owner, Turing Life Gold



The Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce has continuously served as the region's premier advocate for commerce and industry since 1870. Through facilitating interaction among business, government, education, labor, and the greater community, the Duluth Area Chamber has actively been creating innovative opportunities for business to advance within local and global economies. With approximately 1,000 members throughout the region, the Duluth Area Chamber is one of the largest and most influential Chambers in the state.



The Duluth Area Chamber Foundation was established in 2022. As the legal 501(C)(3) fundraising arm of the Duluth Area Chamber, funds from the Foundation may be used to help support local businesses and the community with initiatives like public policy and advocacy work, workforce development and recruitment, market based research, equity and inclusion work, economic development, funding for the Duluth Chamber's Military Affairs Committee (MAC) and Policy Committee and programs like Duluth & St. Louis County Days at the Capitol and Leadership Duluth, and more.

**LEADERSHIP
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Duluth Area Chamber Foundation



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