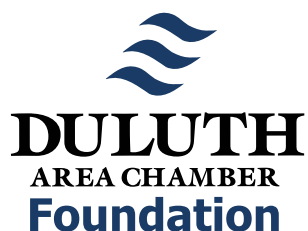


CLASS HANDBOOK

2025 - 2026

**LEADERSHIP
DULUTH** 
Duluth Area Chamber Foundation



2025-2026 SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 10, 2025
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Orientation

Wednesday, September 17, 2025
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 1

Wednesday, October 8, 2025
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 2

Wednesday, November 12, 2025
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 3

Wednesday, December 10, 2025
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 4

Wednesday, January 7, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 5

Wednesday, February 4, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 6

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 7

Wednesday, April 15, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 8

Wednesday, May 6, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 9

Wednesday, June 3, 2026
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Leadership Duluth Day 10
and Graduation



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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 38th class of Leadership Duluth!



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES



Each Leadership Duluth class session presents a valuable opportunity to engage with local leaders from the Duluth area, allowing participants to gain insights into how these individuals effectively utilize a diverse range of leadership competencies to achieve success in their respective roles. The discussions will be tailored to the unique circumstances of each location, fostering an environment where real-world applications of leadership concepts can be explored in depth.

By connecting these experiences to the core learning competencies that underpin the Leadership Duluth program, participants will not only enhance their understanding of effective leadership but also cultivate meaningful community connections. Following these enlightening discussions, members will be encouraged to reflect on the strategies learned and consider practical ways to integrate them into their own professional practices, thereby promoting a collaborative approach to leadership development.

Situational Ethics
Courageous Conversations
Communication Skills
Time Management
Project Management

Leadership Styles
Relationship Building
Organizational Skills
Conflict Management
Cultural Awareness

MEET THE CLASS



J. DAVID ARNOTT

Executive Director
Duluth Superior Symphony

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A member of the Duluth Superior Symphony since 2002, Dave Arnott has been serving as Director of Orchestra Operations since 2022 and as Executive Director since May of 2024. He plays viola, violin, and is an accomplished conductor. He has recently taken over leadership of the Northshore Philharmonic Orchestra. Prior to working full time for the symphony, Dr. Arnott served on the music faculty of The College of St. Benedict/St. John's University from 2001 until his retirement from higher education in 2022. During his tenure at CSBSJU he served a term as Music Department Chair and Chair of the Faculty Senate. Having served as an adjunct instructor at UMD during the 2023-2024 academic year, he will be serving as a senior guest lecturer at UWS in the Fall of 2025.



ZACH ARRINGTON

Manufacturing Engineering Manager
Cirrus Aircraft

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218-850-2521

Born and raised in the South. Industrial/Systems Engineering graduate from Auburn University. Manufacturing allowed me the opportunity to travel; ultimately, ending me in Duluth with Cirrus Aircraft! Myself, wife, 2 kids, 2 dogs, 2 cats, call a small lake cabin in Cotton, MN our home. Avid musician. I play over 20 different instruments and am a member of the local Twin Ports Pipe Band.



KELSEY AURAN

General Manager
MidCoast Catering Co.

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651-263-3481

I am the General Manager with MidCoast Catering Co., The Tasting Room at MidCoast, and The Rambler Food Truck. Originally from St. Paul, MN, I moved to Duluth to attend school at UMD; I graduated with a degree in Graphic Design and Marketing and decided to stay after getting hired with The Rambler. I mainly blame Lake Superior for being too beautiful for me to leave.



CHRISTOPHER BELDEN

General Manager
Duluth Transit Authority

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218-623-4316

I recently took over as the General Manager of the DTA after serving as the DTA's Director of Planning and Grants for the past seven years. I hope to have a positive impact on the organization and the people who rely on us for transportation every day. I am a certified Urban Planner by the American Institute of Certified Planners and have a passion for the inner workings of how communities thrive. I also have a deep passion for this region and am lucky that I get to call it home. I attended St. Cloud State University, where I studied urban planning and business. I love being a father and have two children (ages 7 and 5). In my limited free time, I enjoy camping, kayaking, drumming, DIY projects, and exploring cities.



JOHN BODINE

Owner
Maureen + Associates

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612-703-0305

John is the owner and operator of Maureen + Associates in West Duluth, focusing on interior design and material supply for renovation, addition, and new construction projects. John and his family moved to Duluth in early 2024, after purchasing Maureen + Associates from its founder, Maureen Plaunt. John enjoys spending time with family, golfing, fishing, and hunting.



BRIELLE BREDSTEN

Business and Health Care Industry Reporter
Duluth News Tribune/Forum Communications

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218-723-5260

Brielle Bredsten is an award-winning professional writer, photographer and editor based in rural Minnesota. Over the past decade, she has contributed more than 1,000 articles, feature stories, non-profit press-releases, photographs and columns. Her work has been published in several newspapers and publications. She is currently the business and health care industry reporter for the Duluth News Tribune. She earned a bachelor's degree in Professional Writing & Technical Communication, with minors in Advertising and Creative Writing from Metropolitan State University, in addition to a two-year professional paid internship as reporter/editor of the student newspaper.



NICOLE CHRISTIANSON *(she/her)*

Interim Director & HR Manager
Aspirus St. Luke's

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218-249-5415

I currently serve as the interim Director and HR Manager at Aspirus St. Luke's. I have been with the organization for 3 years, leading the Talent Acquisition team and employee and labor relations functions. I am passionate about serving others and have spent my entire career working in healthcare in the Twin Ports area. I am driven by ensuring that patients and the communities that we serve have access to quality healthcare when they need it. I earned both my bachelor's and master's degrees from the College of St. Scholastica. Outside of work I enjoy spending time traveling, biking, skiing and being with family, friends and my two dogs.



LINDSEY CHRISTIANSON

AVP Commercial Lender
National Bank of Commerce

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218-348-2933

My name is Lindsey Christianson, and I am an AVP- Commercial Lender for National Bank of Commerce. I've been in the financial industry for over 10 years. I graduated from the College of St. Scholastica with a master's in business administration and I currently serve as a board member on the Board of Directors for First Witness. I have lived in Duluth, MN my entire life, born and raised and chose to stay. I have a husband, five kids, and a golden doodle. I enjoy shopping, camping, fishing, attending my kids' sporting events and spending time with my family and friends.



JILL CRAWFORD-NICHOLS
Technology Development Manager
University of Minnesota

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Jill has a dual appointment with the Natural Resources Research Institute and the Technology Commercialization Office at the University of Minnesota. As the Technology Development Manager for NRRRI and UMD, Jill’s role includes collaborating with university researchers to ensure that the meaningful research and inventions developed in Duluth reach the public realm. She moved to Duluth in 2022 and immediately became very active in her new community. Both her and her husband work in community facing roles.



KAROLA DALEN *(she/her)*
Sustainability & Capital Planning Coordinator
St. Louis County

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218-428-9559

I am a dedicated public sector professional with experience in government roles, focusing on environmental regulation, management and sustainability. Currently serving as the Sustainability & Capital Planning Coordinator for St. Louis County, working to lead the strategic planning and implementation of sustainability initiatives, capital improvement projects, and energy efficiency programs. My education background is in Biology and Environmental Studies from the University of Minnesota-Duluth. My past career spans roles in county zoning, wetland conservation, and natural resource management. I am an advocate for improving local food systems for community and environmental resiliency, primarily accomplished through our family farm established in 2004. The farm (Northern Harvest Farm) is a certified organic vegetable farm in Wrenshall, MN providing food to families and businesses in the Twin Ports area.



ALYSSA DENHAM
Assistant City Clerk (Interim City Clerk)
City of Duluth

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218-590-1551

I have worked in administrative roles for the last 20 years in different capacities. I am currently serving as Interim City Clerk for the City of Duluth. I started with the city, in the Clerk’s office, in 2015 as an Admin Information Specialist. In 2022 I was promoted to Assistant City Clerk and in 2025 started serving in an interim capacity as City Clerk. I live out in Solon Springs with my 3 kids, 3 dogs, husband and pet duck. There is nothing more we enjoy than spending time in the outdoors and taking advantage of the beauty of the Northland.



PETER DOUGLAS

Planner
Resource Renew/Western Lake Superior Sanitary District

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757-613-2488

My name is Pete Douglas, I currently work as a planner at Resource Renew (the brand of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District) and am pursuing a masters degree in infrastructure planning through the University of Washington. I have lived in Duluth for 14 years and enjoy being able to utilize the amenities it provides as a city, while simultaneously utilizing its proximity to the surrounding lakes, woods, and wilderness areas.



RYAN DURAND

148th Fighter Wing Operations Support Squadron Commander
148th Fighter Wing

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218-788-7255

Husband, Father of 2, F-16 Fighter Pilot, a cautiously optimistic/usually heartbroken MN Wild, Viking, and Twins fan, born and raised in Duluth.



JOSH ELDER

Project Manager
TKDA

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218-491-7396

With 24 years of professional experience in the consulting architectural and engineering sectors, I embarked on my career as a drafter right after completing my degree. Over the years, I have continually developed my skills, empowering me to successfully manage projects across diverse construction and design markets. Alongside my primary responsibilities, I have embraced leadership roles within Scouting and orchestrated adult softball leagues and tournaments in the Duluth area for several years. Today, my journey largely revolves around my family and their activities, which lends me to support their youth organizations to provide a positive impact.



MICKALE ENDRES

Senior Manager, Project Engineer
Braun Intertec Corporation

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507-514-0514

I was born and raised in Duluth, part of the last graduating class of Central High School. I then spent two years in Grand Rapids to earn my associate's degree and transferred back to Duluth to obtain my bachelor's degree in civil engineering. Following my schooling, I moved to Mankato where I lived for 7 years, before moving back to the Duluth area. I have two children, Levi and Avery, my wife Chantal, dog Remington, and cat Esme.



AVERY ENOCHSON *(she/her/they/them)*
Electrical Systems Engineer II
Cirrus Aircraft

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I am an electrical engineer who works for Cirrus Aircraft. I grew up in the suburbs of the Twin Cities but went to school in Virginia Minnesota, at the Iron Range Engineering program. Moving to Duluth was the perfect option for me because it allowed me to pursue my passion for aviation but also pursue my love for the outdoors and more creative hobbies. Outside of electrical design work, I keep myself busy by training at a local kickboxing gym, hiking with my dog, climbing with my partner, and taking barre classes with my friends! Additionally, I make sure to carve out time to nurture the right-side of my brain by practicing sketching, painting, and leatherwork. I am always busy, but it makes me so happy. I love the community I have formed here in Duluth and am looking forward to continuing to watch it grow.



JASON FILIPEK
Senior Construction Project Manager
ICS

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218-310-9076

I moved to Duluth in 2022 with my wife, a professor at UMD, our two children, and our two dogs. After living in seven different places, we've chosen Duluth as our permanent home. We live in the Lakeside neighborhood and spend most weekends at our cabin on Grand Lake. I work at ICS as a Senior Construction Project Manager, currently overseeing several projects for Duluth Public Schools. I'm proud to contribute to a city we're excited to grow with and call home.



ROGER GARTON
Project Development Leader
Minnesota Power

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952-484-0766

Roger Garton has dedicated his career to the energy sector, contributing to both public utilities and non-profits. In 2022, he joined Minnesota Power and relocated to the Duluth community to support the development of large-scale energy generation projects. With a strong background in engineering and business, Roger combines technical expertise with financial acumen to drive the success of the initiatives he leads. Outside of work, he serves as a board member for Hartley Nature Center, reflecting his commitment to community engagement and environmental stewardship.



DAISY GOATLEY *(she/her)*
Manufacturing Engineer
Altec Industries

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270-723-9771

Daisy Goatley is a Manufacturing Engineer at Altec Industries, Inc. with a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Louisville, earned in 2019. She began her Altec career at the Elizabethtown, KY facility in 2017. She has called Duluth home since 2021, after visiting the local Altec plant and falling in love with the city. In her free time, you can find her with her two dogs--hiking in the sun, mushing through the snow, or relaxing with a crochet project.



MATTHEW GOTTWALD

Chief Operations Officer
North Shore Bank

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I grew up in Duluth's Lakeside neighborhood and graduated from Duluth East High School. After earning a Bachelor's degree from Michigan Tech, I returned to Duluth to start working at North Shore Bank as a teller. Through 20 years at North Shore Bank, I have worked in various roles and departments leading to my current position as Chief Operations Officer. I am currently serving on the Downtown Duluth Board and on the Spirit Mountain Recreational Authority Board. I reside in Duluth's Lakeside neighborhood with my wife, where we both enjoy staying active in the outdoors in all seasons.



BREANNA GUTHMILLER *(she/her)*

Community Council Director
Junior League of Duluth (JLD)

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After chasing higher education, adventure, and new experiences around the U.S., I came back to the one place that always felt like home. The community I've found in Duluth is unlike anywhere I've lived and my connection to the outdoors is strengthened by the endless miles of shoreline and trails. By trade, I'm a psychologist who has primarily worked with folks involved with the legal system. I'm passionate about finding opportunities for healing, growth, and connection, and I currently serve as the Community Council Director for the Junior League of Duluth. I'm also a bonus mom, partner, lover of anything outdoors, gluten free Gemini silly goose, and #1 human to a 17-year-old pup.



HANNI HESSEN

Senior Manager
RSM US LLP

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I provide tax consulting and compliance services to a variety of private sector companies. I specialize in the consumer and industrial products, construction and professional services industries, serving clients both locally and outside the region. I focus on the complex planning opportunities faced by mid-sized businesses and their owners as they navigate acquisition and sale transactions, succession, multi-state and international tax issues.



CHRISTA HOFF

Sr. Project Controls Specialist
Burns and McDonnell

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218-590-1322

I am essentially a lifelong Duluthian moving here when I was 9, staying to go to college at UMD and buying my home when I was 25. I've worked in a few different industries from the public schools to health care to sales before finding my place in the construction industry almost 2 decades ago. I have a husband, 2 teen stepdaughters and 2 dogs at home that all keep going outside of work as well.



JEANETTE HOLLINGSWORTH *(she/her)*

Branch Executive Director
Duluth Area Family YMCA

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My career at the Y began very part-time as a preschool swim instructor when my three daughters were toddlers. Since then, I've grown into roles in aquatics and camp leadership and served as operations director. I am honored to serve the Duluth Area Family YMCA as the Executive Director for the downtown branch. Before launching my Y career, I worked in the healthcare and radio broadcasting industries—experiences rooted in service, safety, and community. As a former broadcaster, I bring strong communication skills and a passion for connection to everything I do. I'm excited to learn and grow alongside the 2025–2026 class.



TYRA JARAMILLO-KRAEMER

Associate Director
First Witness Child Advocacy Center

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218-727-8353

My name is Tyra and I work for First Witness Child Advocacy Center as the Associate Director. I started as a Forensic Interviewer and Trainer after completing my Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology from the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and then worked my way up to a Program Director, and now an Associate Director. I was also able to obtain my MBA in Organizational Leadership and Change from the College of Saint Scholastica while working at First Witness. I enjoy many aspects of my work, but especially love the connection that it gives me to my community and the ability to make positive change.



TYLER JENSEN *(he/him/his)*

Director of Nursing
Essentia Health - St. Mary's Medical Center

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712-830-7502

My name is Tyler Jensen, and I am honored to work for Essentia Health as a Director of Nursing at St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth. I have worked in healthcare for over 12 years in various roles, including as a paramedic and a nurse. I have experience in critical care, flight nursing, and in the emergency department. I attended the University of Northern Iowa and Allen College where I obtained a bachelor's and master's degree in nursing. My family and I moved to Duluth from Iowa in 2021 and have since then planted our roots and love to call Duluth home. I am also honored to serve in the Minnesota Air National Guard. To stay active, a couple of the activities that I enjoy are hiking, golfing, and cross-country skiing.



MEGAN JOHNSON

HR Director
KnitWell Group

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218-590-7740

I am a passionate HR leader in Duluth that loves this community who has hired many new college grads over the years to launch a great start in their HR career within the Duluth area. Married to a Twin Ports teacher and small business owner with 2 small kids- we are immersed in this community. My family is constantly exploring all this amazing place has to offer as we have been Sky Zone, Aquarium and Duluth Children's museum members. We LOVE Duluth!



KYLER KINN

Department Manager
The Jamar Company

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218-348-8535

I grew up just outside of the Duluth area in between Duluth and Two Harbors. I graduated college at UMD with a mechanical engineering degree. Throughout school I started working with the Jamar company as an intern and have been here ever since. I currently live out by Brighton beach with my wife, son, and dog. Outside of work I enjoy spending my time outdoors with family and friends fishing, hunting, golfing, biking as well as spend plenty of time working on projects around the house whether it's house, yard, or vehicles.



DAVID KOLTZ *(he/him/his)*

Senior Environmental Engineer
Barr Engineering Co.

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218-529-7111

I'm a practicing professional civil engineer at Barr Engineering Co. here in Duluth. My focus is on water-related permitting and compliance for a wide range of clients in the mining, power, manufacturing, and public sectors. After spending over 20 years working, playing, and raising our two sons in the western US, my partner, Erica, and I specifically chose to return to the Midwest and settle in Duluth in 2019. We couldn't be happier with our choice and are committed to investing in and contributing to Duluth's continued success.



ERIC LAGERGREN

Architect
DSGW Architecture

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I'm a husband, father, Architect, occasional woodworker, and mediocre angler. Multiday wilderness ski trips over frozen lakes, or canoe trips across thawed ones are an ideal use of my free time, and I think the best meetings are under an hour and include food. While Menards trips without the kids are my time to reflect and recharge, my greatest joy comes from guiding them each day as they discover and grow.



MARIAH LANGER *(she/her/hers)*

Project Manager/Senior Certified Interior Designer
LHB

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218-216-8247

I'm a Project Manager and Senior Certified Interior Designer at LHB with a background in commercial interior design, recently returned to the North. I have a strong professional interest in the continued growth of Duluth and am excited to contribute to that through both design and business development. My role allows me to combine creativity with strategic thinking, designing environments that not only look great but also support functionality, brand identity, and workplace productivity. I'm actively involved in business development, which gives me the opportunity to build relationships, understand client goals, and help connect our services with community needs. I value the chance to contribute to projects that not only serve our clients but also support broader economic and cultural development in the region.



CHARLEY LANGOWSKI *(she/they)*

Executive Director
Northern Bedrock

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507-450-5857

Charley Langowski is a passionate preservationist and advocate for traditional trades. With a background in historic preservation and nonprofit leadership, Charley brings a deep commitment to hands-on training and community engagement. As Executive Director of Northern Bedrock, Charley works to empower the next generation of craftworkers while protecting the cultural and built heritage of Minnesota. She is excited to collaborate with fellow leaders in the 2025–2026 class to share knowledge, grow impact, and champion the trades.



NEIL LARSON

CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER®
Wheeler Associates

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218-336-8536

My name is Neil Larson, I am a Financial Adviser, CFP® at Wheeler Associates in Duluth. I was born and raised in Duluth and graduated from UMD in 2013 with a Bachelor of Education. Before working at Wheeler Associates, I worked in automotive sales @ KOLAR Automotive Group for 8 years. I live in the Kenwood of Duluth, have two amazing children, Nina (6), Patrick (4), & an Australian Shepard, Kaner (9). I am passionate about ‘making the most’ in life; being a father, staying connected with friends and family, helping people with a variety of financial needs, and being a part of the Duluth Community that I have called home for my entire life.



JOE MUZLJAKOVICH

Project Engineer
Kraus Anderson Construction Company

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218-830-1319

My name is Joe Muzljakovich and I am a project engineer at Kraus Anderson Construction Company. I grew up in the lower peninsula of Michigan and graduated from Wayne State University with a B.S. in Construction Management. I chose Construction Management because I wanted to be apart of a fast paced environment while contributing to the growth of strong communities. I moved to Duluth 2 years ago and love everything the area has to offer. Outside of work I enjoy watching and playing sports, going on hikes, and hanging out with friends. I am married to my high school sweet heart and we are expecting our first baby in June 2025.



JESSICA NELSON

Owner
Maid in Duluth, LLC

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218-721-6879

I'm Jessica Nelson, owner of a local cleaning business, Maid in Duluth, LLC. I started this company with a simple goal: to help people feel more at ease in their homes and workplaces by providing dependable, high-quality cleaning services. As a small business owner, I'm passionate about building strong, lasting relationships—both with my clients and within the community. I take pride in being reliable, detail-oriented, and committed to making a positive impact through my work. Outside of business, I enjoy spending time with my family and soaking in the beauty of our Northland lakes. I'm always looking for ways to grow, connect, and give back. Joining the Chamber is an exciting opportunity for me to network with other local leaders, support our shared community, and continue learning as a business owner.



OLIVIA NISKA

Event Planner
DECC

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My name is Olivia, and I am an Event Planner at the DECC. While attending St. Scholastica for Organizational Leadership, I held multiple internships- one of which was at the DECC, which is where I have been ever since! I've had the honor of bringing to life two new events in Duluth- Cider North and Duluth Taco Fest. I grew up in Cook, MN, where I developed my small-town values of hard work and community. Now that I am living in the "big city", I find joy in seeing those same values shine in the people that I have had the chance to work with. I spend much of my spare time coaching the UMD Cheerleading team and soaking in all of my auntie-time with my niece and nephew!



MELISSA ORTMAN

IT Supervisor
ALLETE

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218-390-1145

I am Melissa Ortman, currently celebrating my 20th year at ALLETE/Minnesota Power. I started as an applications programmer and have progressed to my current role as an IT Supervisor. I currently live in Duluth with my family. In my spare time, I enjoy camping, hiking, fishing and generally spending time outdoors.



PATTY PAQUETTE *(she/her)*

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Board
Duluth Public Schools

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218-336-8752

I'm Patty Paquette, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Board with Duluth Public Schools. I'm passionate about social justice and believe in the power of public education to build more equitable, inclusive communities. In my role, I support leadership through collaboration, clear communication, and thoughtful coordination, helping ensure our systems serve all students and families well. I value integrity, trust, and connection, and I'm excited to grow alongside others who are committed to making a difference. Outside of work, I stay grounded through time with loved ones, nature, and live music, which bring joy, perspective, and balance to my life.



MELISSA PETERSON *(she/her)*

District Curriculum Director
Duluth Edison Charter Schools

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517-425-4852

I serve as the District Curriculum Director at Duluth Edison Charter Schools, bringing a strong background in curriculum development, leadership, and grant acquisition—having written and obtained over \$500,000 to enhance student learning. I am deeply committed to fostering an educational environment where every child is seen, loved, and empowered to succeed. My journey includes 20 years as a military spouse, which has cultivated adaptability, perseverance, and a global perspective that enriches my approach to education. I hold a Bachelor of Science from Northern Michigan University and a Master of Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Massachusetts. Beyond the classroom, I find inspiration in nature whether I'm camping, hiking, or exploring new terrains. My outdoor adventures are frequently marked by amusing, sometimes precarious, moments that remind me to embrace the unexpected. I believe those experiences, much like education, are about resilience, discovery and joy.



JENNA PETERSON *(she/her)*

Organizational Development Director
Udac

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218-623-1722

Jenna is an experienced Organizational Development Director at Udac, bringing over a decade of expertise in management and leadership roles. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Northland College, which has strengthened her foundation in client-focused services. Jenna has dedicated her career to supporting individuals in achieving personal and professional growth, empowering them to reach their full potential in the workforce. Before joining Udac, Jenna honed her leadership skills in healthcare management, demonstrating a deep commitment to helping others. Her earlier experience at a small business further enhanced her management and client service abilities. Jenna is passionate about fostering positive change in the lives of those she serves, helping clients build confidence and independence. Outside of her professional life, Jenna enjoys gardening, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and kayaking. She and her wife are proud pet parents to two dogs and two cats.



PETER PFANKUCH *(he/him)*

Community Impact Specialist
Boreal Waters Community Foundation

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612-208-4822

Peter moved to Duluth in 2023 with a passion for working within the community and building relationships with the people and land around him. After growing up in Minneapolis and graduating from Montana State University with degrees in Economics and Business, he is now grateful to call Duluth, and its engaged and beautiful community, home. Prior to working at the Community Foundation, Peter spent seven years working at a philanthropic software company helping maximize the impact of the philanthropic sector. He's worked directly with non-profits and foundations of all sizes throughout the US and Canada to help solve the unique challenges they face and is grateful for the opportunity to now focus on helping steward the place he lives. When not at work, Peter enjoys sharing good cooking with friends, running through Duluth's parks and trails, watching local music, and reading books by the lake.



KRISTY RAMEY

IT Manager, Store Infrastructure
maurices

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Hello, I am Kristy Ramey. I was born and raised in the Duluth-Superior area and currently reside in Hermantown with my husband and daughter. I love traveling and being outdoors and attending all the amazing events we have right here in Duluth! I started my IT career with the maurices Home Office in 1999 when I was fresh out of college and have been there ever since. I have worked in most areas within maurices IT throughout my years, and am currently in IT Management supporting technology, networks, and systems across our 850 stores throughout the US and Canada.



ADRIENNE RITCHIE TOMS

Emergency Services Manager
Aspirus St. Luke's

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Hello, my name is Adrienne. I am the Manager of the Aspirus St. Luke's Emergency Department. I have worked for the Aspirus St. Luke's hospital for 15 years in a variety of roles from nursing assistant to my current role. Nursing is a second career which still allows me to use skills from my first degree in teaching to help staff and patients every day. In my spare time I have a passion for family, cooking, sports and outdoors. With my husband and 4 kids, we love to explore and travel.



RACHAEL ROBINSON

Rehabilitation Manager
Essentia Health

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I am Rachael, a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) with a strong clinical background and a second Master's degree in Forensic Psychology. My forensic training has broadened my understanding of the judicial system and the challenges within behavioral health. I have worked across diverse medical and educational settings, supporting individuals from birth through higher education. In addition to my clinical work, I have served as an Innovation Coach, where I focused on creative problem-solving and developing effective solutions to address evolving challenges in education. This role has strengthened my passion for driving positive change through collaboration and forward-thinking strategies. I am committed to fostering growth, adaptability, and meaningful impact in every setting I engage with. My multidisciplinary background equips me to approach challenges with insight and flexibility, striving to improve outcomes in healthcare, education, and the broader community.



JONNY ROMAN
Owner/Lead Coach
Jonny Roman Coaching

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Jonny Roman is an executive Life and Business Coach with a Master’s in Psychology, specializing in leadership development and performance optimization. With a deep understanding of human behavior and organizational dynamics, Jonny helps leaders, entrepreneurs, and teams unlock their full potential and drive sustainable growth. Drawing from both academic insight and personal experience with transformative coaching, Jonny offers a unique blend of strategic thinking and emotional intelligence. He partners with clients to clarify vision, strengthen decision-making, and navigate the challenges of leadership with confidence and clarity. Known for “holding the vision” until his clients can fully step into it themselves, Jonny focuses on sustainable transformation—empowering leaders with actionable tools, self-awareness, and proven strategies to lead with impact. Discover more about Jonny’s work at JonnyRoman.com.



CHERYL ROSSI
Controller
A&L Properties

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Cheryl Rossi is the Controller at 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. Cheryl joined the A&L Properties in 2007. She and A&L team 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.



BRAELYN SATHERS
Realtor®
JS Realty

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Hi, I’m Braelyn Sathers, a Realtor at JS Realty and a proud third-generation real estate agent in Duluth. I graduated from Proctor High School in 2020 and went on to earn a degree in Exercise and Sport Science with a minor in Business Administration while playing collegiate hockey at the University of Wisconsin–River Falls. After four great years, I’m back in my hometown and excited to continue my family’s legacy in real estate.



ABBY SAVOLT *(she/her)*
CPA
TMS Financial

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Abby graduated from UMD in 2017. Shortly after graduation, she became a licensed CPA in the state of Minnesota. Abby spent six tax seasons working for a national public accounting firm in Duluth, before working for local accounting firms. Currently she is working at TMS Financial. She specializes in individual, business, trust and estate tax compliance. Abby also offers bookkeeping and accounting services to small business. She is devoted to using her knowledge and expertise to help her clients so they can focus on what they are passionate about. She loves working with and getting to know individuals and businesses in Duluth and the surrounding area.



JERAD SIKKINK

Commercial Loan Officer
Members Cooperative Credit Union

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I moved Duluth with my wife in 2018 from Central Minnesota and have loved this community ever since. Besides a couple of months during COVID, I have worked with Members Cooperative Credit Union in multiple positions and departments. We enjoy kayaking out on Fish Lake as well as hiking the SHT. I don't think it's common, but we love the winters in Duluth and always look forward to the first snow fall.



TYANNA SORENSON

Human Resources Director
Spirit Mountain Recreation Area - Duluth, MN

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I'm Ty Sorenson, HR Director at Spirit Mountain. I specialize in large-scale seasonal hiring, union relations, and building strong workplace cultures. I've spent my career focused on employee engagement, benefits, and helping people do their best work. I'm especially proud of the work I've done around change management and growing our team to better serve the public. I graduated from UMD and still call Duluth home. I sit on the advisory board for UMD's I/O Psychology master's program, and I'm passionate about expanding the J-1 visa program to bring more diversity and awareness to the region. I love developing people and truly believe in seeing the good in others—that's both a personal value and a professional strength. Outside of work, you'll usually find me in the garden, skiing, camping, hiking, backpacking, or working on some sort of crafty side project.



KIRK SUONVIERI

Operations Group Senior Enlisted Leader
148th Fighter Wing

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Kirk Suonvieri Jr. is the Operations Group Senior Enlisted leader at the 148th Fighter Wing. He provides enlisted leadership & management to all assigned Operations group enlisted members and related functions in support of 148th Fighter Wing and 179th Fighter Squadron daily operations, training, and readiness.



ANIKA THOMPSON

Director of Development
Duluth Playhouse

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Anika Thompson is the Director of Development at Duluth Playhouse, where she combines her passion for storytelling with a deep commitment to building community through the arts. A Duluth resident for 20 years, Anika is also an active theatre artist who has directed productions with several local companies. She holds an MFA in Playwriting and a BA in English and Theatre, and brings both artistic insight and strategic experience to her work. Whether she's crafting compelling fundraising campaigns or collaborating with artists behind the scenes, Anika is driven by a belief in the power of theatre to connect, challenge, and inspire.



BUD TRNKA *(he/him)*
Volunteer and Event Coordinator
Chum

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Bud Trnka is the Volunteer and Events Coordinator for Chum in Duluth. He is passionate about connecting people and ideas to address community needs. Bud believes that deeply loving a place means working on its challenges and is inspired daily by the region’s balance of opportunities and helpers. He also serves on the board of the Young Athletes Foundation, which supports local youth sports and promotes healthy, active lifestyles. Bud has long admired Leadership Duluth and welcomes the opportunity to grow as a leader, build meaningful connections, and contribute to the community he deeply values.



ROBERT UNZEN
Vice President, Operations
Lake Superior Consulting, LLC

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I have spent the majority of my 17-year career in various HR roles. I currently serve as the Vice President of Operations at Lake Superior Consulting, where I have spent the last eight years, previously holding the role of HR Director. I attended college at Saint Scholastica where I hold a master’s degree in management. I am also currently a commissioner with the City of Hermantown Economic Development Authority. Beyond my professional career, I am deeply committed to community engagement and youth development.



SCOTT VEZINA *(he/him)*
Director of Community Engagement
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Scott holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in Communications and Sociology from The University of Minnesota Duluth and has over 15 years of experience in the communications & marketing field. Over this time, he has worked for various types of businesses, including regional and national marketing firms, technology and sales companies, and nonprofit organizations. He specializes in branding, graphic design, copywriting, digital and traditional advertising, and almost anything creative. As Director of Community Engagement for True North Goodwill he is responsible for managing the local nonprofit’s marketing, communications, and fundraising efforts. A Duluth, MN native, Scott has a strong passion for our business communities ongoing success and growth. When not at work he enjoys writing music, exercising, playing card and board games, and spending time with his friends, family, and pets.

LEADERSHIP DULUTH STEERING COMMITTEE



KATHLEEN PRIVETTE

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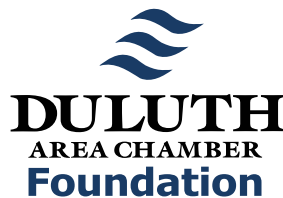
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Moving business forward. ►

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 Area Chamber's Military Affairs Committee (MAC) and Policy Committee, and programs like Duluth & St. Louis County at the Capitol, Leadership Duluth and more.

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Duluth Area Chamber Foundation



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