

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



TALENT

ADVOCACY



EMPOWERMENT

CONNECTIONS




The Chamber
OF CATAWBA COUNTY


Working for business





www.catawbachamber.org

828-328-6111

 facebook.com/CatawbaChamber

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 [@CatawbaChamber](https://www.youtube.com/CatawbaChamber)

 <https://bit.ly/3uW9hiG>

Valued Partner,

March 2020 will forever be a timestamp in our minds—the beginning of an abrupt disruption of our way of life and the way we conduct business. Yet, business in Catawba County was **resilient**.

Little did we know, the changes and challenges would keep coming throughout 2021. The lingering COVID-19 pandemic continued to cause obstacles and challenges for our business community. Like a slow burn sequel, business endured talent shortages, supply chain issues, inflation, federal mandates and reconvened only to socially-distance again. Yet, business in Catawba County **persisted**.

I continue to be amazed by the extraordinary leadership demonstrated by our business community. From resilience to persistence, you recovered quickly and continued on firmly in a course of action in spite of the difficulty you've faced.

Your Chamber continued to forge ahead to anticipate challenges, lighten burdens, inform, address issues and advocate for business in Catawba County. Always striving to do more, your Chamber initiated efforts bringing together leaders from business, government, education and non-profit agencies to find solutions and get things done.

As we cast a forward vision to set the stage for our 50th Anniversary year as The Chamber of Catawba County --- and celebrate the continued impact we will have on business in this region, I invite you to review our Annual Report which highlights notable impacts from 2021.

We humbly thank you for your commitment to the work of your Chamber. It's a privilege to work alongside of you and on your behalf every day.

Working for Business,



Lindsay M. Keisler, IOM, CCEC
President/CEO

Meet The Chamber of Catawba County Team

For assistance utilizing your partnership privileges, contact your personal staff liaison.



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Did You Know?

- Kim Dahlsten received her Certified Chamber Executive of the Carolinas (CCEC) designation in October 2021 from the Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.

TALENT@WORK

- Convened leaders in hospitality, the CVB and CVCC to discuss talent needs for both now and in the future. As a result, this group worked to create the **CVCC Hospitality Academy** that launched in July. It is a 12-week program, and in addition to learning many different skills, CVCC students can earn three certifications — Servsafe, TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures), and RASP (Responsible Alcohol Seller/Server Program). The first cohort graduated in November.
- Hosted a regular convening of our partners in Workforce Development we call the **Workforce Masterminds Huddle** (*K-12, K-64, CVCC, LRU, NCCET, EDC, NCWorks, WPCOG, Chamber*) to provide a platform to share regular updates on new and ongoing programs and initiatives aimed at filling jobs across our region.
- Hosted **Workforce Solutions Industry Roundtables** with Maiden area employers (October) & Newton (November) area employers to discuss needs and solutions around talent recruitment, retention & development. Invited workforce partners to connect them directly to fill their needs (*K-64/CVCC; EDC, WPWDB/NCWorks; Chamber*). Plan to host one in each of the other 6 municipalities over the next several months.
- Met weekly with Shareholders & Investors and their leadership teams to help **audit and refine their talent recruitment and retention strategies** to ensure they are optimizing their use of local resources. Often we pull together other resource partners to join us to make direct connections and glean from their areas of expertise.

- **HKY4Vets** - Since 2016, HKY4Vets, co-led by The Chamber of Catawba County & the Catawba County Economic Development Corporation, has worked with employer partners in Catawba County to connect their talent needs with transitioning military and military spouse talent from NC's military installations.
 - 20 employer & local government partners
 - Hosted 2 Virtual Hiring Events (August & November) for our HKY4Vets Talent Connect Partners
 - Participated in 2 on-post Hiring Events at Fort Bragg, as well as 1 Hiring Event at Camp Lejeune.
- Conducted a **Wage & Benefits Survey** for local employers across most industry clusters in partnership with the Catawba County EDC. CVCC & the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board served as promotional partners. 87 companies completed the survey; representing 17.2% of the total workforce. The 70-page report was released in June to the companies who submitted responses. We will continue to do this annually.



- Engaged with the US State Department to better understand the resettlement process for Afghan refugees.
- Keisler serves on the Board of Directors for **K-64** (ex-officio); Sheree Watson, CEO of Graystone Eye is our voting Chamber Delegate.
 - Keisler serves on the **Workforce Portal Subcommittee** to create a comprehensive website to serve as the connection point between employers, students/parents, schools & displaced workers.
 - Keisler serves on the **Broadband Subcommittee** to advocate & create solutions for increased access to high-speed internet for education & commerce.
- Dahlsten serves on the **CVCC Manufacturing Academy Advisory Board**
- Keisler serves on the Executive Committee for **Apprenticeship Catawba**



EMPOWERMENT@WORK

- Hosted the **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Summit** on May 19th – We secured thought leaders from both our local business community and across the country to share their insights, lessons learned and best practices about diversity and inclusion in the workplace. 265 attendees attended virtually.
- Continue to lead **“The Catalyst: Entrepreneurs Supporting Entrepreneurs,”** a collaborative of local founders, mentors and entrepreneurial support representatives (Chamber, SBTDC, the CVCC Small Business Center, the Manufacturing Solutions Center, SCORE and Lenoir Rhyne University) who are growing Catawba County's start-up community.
 - Re-launched monthly in-person **“Founders Meet-Ups”** in July. Invitation is limited to local Founders, potential mentors for local start-ups and/or scalable ventures, or entrepreneurial support organizations.
- Keisler served on the Funding Appropriations Committee for the **Everyday Entrepreneurship Venture Fund**, awarding grants to start-up businesses who are CVCC students and alumni.
- **Facebook Live Q&A “Working For Business” series**, Keisler conducted a live interview on Facebook with business leaders from across the county each month.
- **Leadership Catawba:**
 - Graduated 27 participants in May from the 2020-2021 Leadership Catawba program.
 - Our 2021-2022 enrollment concluded with a full class (& waiting list). The class roster was released in a full-page feature of the Hickory Daily Record in July.
 - Completed the Orientation & Class Retreat August 12-13th at Catawba Country Club & Tree Top Adventures of Lake Hickory
 - In November, Terry Phillips, Director of Multicultural Affairs at LRU, served as the facilitator for a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Workshop.
 - Hosted the Leadership Catawba Alumni for a social at the Hickory Crawdads in September.
- Wrapped up our pilot cohort of **High Performance Leadership (HPL)**. In partnership with StrongLead in May. This is a cohort-based model with added monthly one-on-one Executive Coaching sessions. HPL is solely focused on developing the leader themselves – transitioning them from key player to strong leader.
- Hosted a **COVID-19 & Your Business Webinar Series**, including topics:
 - *Paycheck Protection Program II*
 - *COVID-19 Vaccination Deployment for Group 3 (Frontline Workers)*
 - *Employee Retention Tax Credits*
 - *Biden Administration Executive Order: Vaccine Mandate/Testing Protocol*
- Partnered with the Small Business Center at CVCC to co-host the following workshops as a part of our **Resilience@Work Series** & our **Business Reboot Series** to specifically address business issues because of the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - *Selling Products on Amazon & Etsy*
 - *E-Commerce with Shopify*
 - *Updating your Social Media Strategy in a Post-Pandemic World*
 - *Managing Cash Flow*
 - *Restaurant Revitalization Grant & Shuttered Venue Grant*
 - *Turn Your Website into a Lead Generator*
 - *Marketing in a Social & Mobile World*
 - *Using YouTube for Branding Your Business*
 - *Using LinkedIn as a Business Tool*
 - *PPP Updates for Small Business*
- Partnered with the CVCC Small Business Center, the SBTDC & the Hickory Hub Coworking Community to host the **“Digital Happy Hour”** Series for small business owners.
 - Tuesday August 24 - *Increase Your Revenues/Sales via Digital Marketing*
 - Tuesday October 19 - *How Google Tools Can Help You Drive Customer Acquisition*
 - Tuesday January 11, 2022 - *Want to Start Your Own Business?*
- Hosted our **Annual Women's Leadership Conference** virtually with 4 main stage speakers & 8 Pop-In Professional Development sessions. 484 registered attendees—including attendees from 8 different states.
- Hosted a **Pathway to Policy Workshop for the “Great American Smokeout”** to provide employers with the tools to create smoke-free and tobacco-free workplace policy in November, in partnership with the American Heart Association and LiveWell Catawba



ADVOCACY@WORK

- Managed the **Land Use Development Board**, a partnership with the CV Realtors Association and the CV Homebuilders Association to discuss and review land use policies in Catawba County to ensure we maintain a business-friendly landscape for residential and commercial development.
- Utilized the **EssCert** platform to issue & certify 504 exporting documents for our Shareholders & Investors, year to date.
- **Legislative Agenda Taskforce** drafted and proposed our 2021 Legislative Agenda, which was adopted by our Board of Directors on February 17th. These local business priorities have been communicated with our local, state and federal elected officials.
- Invited our state delegates to participate in a **Legislative Roundtable** to discuss the various priorities within our Legislative Agenda and hear updates from the General Assembly. Rep Adams and Sen. Proctor were in attendance.
- Issued statements of support for **SB116 & HB951**
- Keisler is an active participant in the **NC Chamber Federation**, a coalition of the state chamber and local chambers across North Carolina, meeting weekly with the NC Chamber team to provide insight on the issues impacting our business community for their team advocate within the N.C. General Assembly during legislative session.
- Keisler is an active participant in the **Charlotte Regional Business Alliance Chamber Coalition**, which collectively adopts and advocates for regional legislative priorities.
- Contracted with **Brian Francis Consulting Services as Advocacy Director** to work alongside staff with our Legislative Agenda Taskforce and provide regular monitoring & updates regarding our pro-business policy priorities to our Chamber partners.
 - In September, started the **weekly Advocacy@Work updates** which provides a brief video update with activity locally, in Raleigh & Washington D.C. which impacts business. Topics have included but aren't limited to: the NC Budget; Redistricting; Federal Infrastructure Bills; Vaccine Mandates; the need for local residential housing, and more.
- On Nov. 15, hosted **NC Labor Commissioner Josh Dobson** at the Chamber for a roundtable discussion with regional business leaders who would be impacted by this mandate.
- Hosted 2 webinars regarding the **Biden Administration Vaccine/Testing Mandate** for employers with 100+ employees (September & November) to assist them with dissecting the mandate & making preparations in the event that it was upheld.
- Co-hosted a **Regional Housing Forum** on Friday, August 27th in partnership with the Western Piedmont Council of Govts to discuss the state of housing in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA. 100 were in attendance.
- On Wednesday, December 15th, hosted a **Legislative Update with Speaker of the NC House of Representatives Tim Moore**.
- **2022 Legislative Agenda** setting process began on December 1st with our active Advocacy@Work Taskforce made up of over 30 business and community leaders.

CONNECTIONS@WORK

- We are proud to have **25 Chamber Ambassadors** who meet for monthly check-ins and serve as an extension of our team to assist us with retention efforts of our Chamber Shareholders.
- Transitioned **First Friday Morning Brew** back to in-person starting in June. Our virtual events averaged about 40 attendees per month; our June event had 75 attendees; July - November had nearly 100 attendees
- 3 weekly **Leads Exchange Groups** are meeting in-person (Tuesday, Wednesday & Fridays at 8:00AM)
 - Our Tuesday Leads Exchange Group has hosted "pop-up" meetings at locations in Newton, Maiden, Conover, Catawba, Claremont & Hickory, inviting both current and prospective Chamber partners to attend.
 - They also collaborated with the Hickory Young Professionals to co-host a morning mixer at the Hollar Mill in November.

- Hosted **16 ribbon cutting celebrations** in 2021; 10 of which were also livestreamed via social media.
- Hosted a **New Partner Connection Luncheon** in May & December for our newest Shareholders & Investors.
- Hosted the **32nd Annual Golf Classic** in September for 250 golfers, plus 50 additional sponsors & volunteers at Lake Hickory Country Club at Catawba Springs.

- Led a **"Small Business Season: Shop Local Guide"** campaign on social media to encourage our followers to shop local during the holiday season, while providing additional promotion to participating Chamber Partners. 45 businesses participated.



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- **Leaders Retreat:** We are in the process of our strategic planning process to establish/update our Strategic Priorities as an organization. Part one consisted of collective quantitative data through a survey to Chamber Board Chairs, in addition to, past Board Chairs and strategic leaders across Catawba County.
- **The Chamber Board of Directors** made the decision to pay off our long-term note on our building, executing our debt pay-off acceleration plan early that was made in 2018.
- **Plans for renovations to our Chamber building,** starting with our lobby, have commenced.
- Keisler served as Board President for the **Carolinas (NC & SC) Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives**
- Dahlsten served on the **US Chamber of Commerce Foundation Institute for Organization Management** National Board of Trustees
- Dahlsten received her **Certified Chamber Executive of the Carolinas (CCEC)** designation in October 2021 from the Carolinas Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives.
- The Chamber of Catawba County won a national **Communications Excellence Award** (*out of nearly 150 entries*) for our "Resilience@Work" video.
- Dahlsten asked to be a presenter during the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives National Convention, the ACCE Events Training Conference and the CACCE Staff Leadership Development Conference.
- Keisler was a featured guest on the ChamberChat Podcast.
- Two new professionals were added to our team **Nathan Cooley, Partner Recruitment & Sponsorship Manager** and **Emily Jaynes, Shareholder Relations & Events Manager.**
- The Chamber of Catawba County won an **Innovative Programming Grant** from CACCE for their work in creating the Catawba County Wage & Benefits Survey.
- Keisler was selected for the **2021-2022 North Carolina Leadership Forum** which provides an opportunity for civic, business and political leaders from across North Carolina to discuss issues central to the future of our state.
- Keisler serves as a board member for the **Newton Downtown Development Association.** Dahlsten serves as a board member for the **Hickory Downtown Development Association.**
- Keisler serves on the **Business Development Commission** and the **University City Commission** for the City of Hickory.
- Keisler and Dahlsten serve on the Advisory Board for the **Hickory Young Professionals.**
- Keisler serves on the **Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Board.**
- Keisler serves on the Advisory Board for the **Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC).**

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

Processed

504

Export documents for
area manufacturers

Welcomed

105

New Shareholders
& Investors in 2021

Maintained a

89%

Retention Rate

20,758

Viewers reached with our
Facebook Live Q&A Series of
interviews with local business owners



16,954

Numbers of likes, storyviews, &
post engagements on social media during our
Holiday Small Business Season Campaign.

SHOP
LOCAL

Our Chamber
Ambassadors made

669

Touches in the form of calls, emails,
virtual visits, and mailed cards to
Chamber Partners on our behalf.

103

The number of subject
matter experts, community
partners and leaders that
the Leadership Catawba
participants engaged with
during their cohort experience.



1,950 Volunteer
Hours

Contributed to
The Chamber in 2021.



8

shift:
mindset. strategy. influence. perspective.

16th Annual
Women's Leadership
Conference

PRESENTED BY



CATAWBA VALLEY
HEALTH SYSTEM

Participants from 8 states attended the 2021
Women's Leadership Conference, presented by
Catawba Valley Health System

Catawba County Chamber Executive Board

Chair: **Dedra Flournoy**, *Thrive Forward Collective*
Immediate Past Chair: **Philip Moore**, *Pinnacle Financial Partners*
Vice Chair: **Lori Alala**, *Broome Associates, A Legacy Insurance Partner*
Treasurer: **JP Jones**, *Davidson, Holland, Whitesell & Co., PLLC, CPAs*
Zackary Cranford, *Cranford Hospitality*
Matthew Gordon, *Corning Optical Communications.*

Jeri Hartshorn, *Whitfield's Flowers & More.*
Mike Kelly, *Hickory Real Estate Group, Inc.*
Andrew Matthews, *Matthews Construction Co., Inc.*
Kim Dahlsten, *The Chamber of Catawba County, Ex-Officio*
Lindsay Keisler, *The Chamber of Catawba County, Ex-Officio*

Catawba County Chamber Board of Directors

Nat Auten, *YMCA of Catawba Valley*
Ericka Reyna Bartlett, *Graystone Eye*
Pat Carver, *First Citizens Bank*
Doug Cottrell, *Clarity Web Solutions*
Twyla Deese, *Catawba Farms /Cabin 68 Brewery/Carolina Vines*
Brad Edwards, *CommScope, Inc*
Molly Gross, *Patrick, Harper & Dixon, LLP*
Rod Harkleroad, *Frye Regional Medical Center*
Brandon Hucks, *Rock House Farm Family of Brands*
Leslie Knapp, *Mellow Mushroom*
Steven Pennell, *US Conec, Ltd.*
Peter Rumswinkel, *Sarstedt, Inc.*

Regina Stiltner, *Splentique*
Lesa Williams, *Twin City Insurance Agency, Inc.*

Ex-Officio

Cameron Bixby, *Hickory Young Professionals*
Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, *Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau*
Michael McNally, *NC Center for Engineering Technologies*
Scott Millar, *Catawba County Economic Development Corp.*
Dr. Gary Muller, *Catawba Valley Community College*
Rachel Nichols, *Lenoir-Rhyne University*

Thank You to Our Chamber Investors!

(Annual Investment Greater than \$1,500)
(As of 02/10/2022)

These organizations are our premier partners that make a vital commitment to driving economic prosperity & business competitiveness success through their voluntarily enhanced annual investment.

Titanium Level: Appalachian State University, Catawba Valley Health System, CommScope, Inc., Frye Regional Medical Center

Platinum Level: Corning Optical Communications, LLC, Davidson, Holland, Whitesell & Co., PLLC, CPAs, HSM Solutions, Martin Starnes & Associates CPAs, P.A., Peoples Bank, Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company, Inc., Sutter Street Manufacturing - a division of Williams-Sonoma

Gold Level: BB&T now Truist, Catawba Valley Community College, Curtis Media Group, Duke Energy, First Citizens Bank, First Horizon Bank, Hickory Daily Record, Hickory Living Magazine, HK Research Corporation, Pat Appleson Studios, Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc., Republic Services of NC, von Drehle Corporation, Wells Fargo Bank, NA, WHKY 1290AM / 102.3FM & WHKY-TV

Silver Level: Benco Steel, Inc., Cargo Integrated Logistics, Cargo Transporters, Inc., Carolina West Wireless, Catawba County, Graystone Eye, Lincotek Surface Solutions, PNC Bank, Sherrill Furniture Company, Shurtape Technologies, LLC, Two Trees Sports Bar and Grill, Tyson Foods, Vanguard Furniture, Inc., ZF Chassis Components, LLC

Bronze Level: 74 South, Abernethy Laurels, Alex Lee, Inc., Avendi Rx, Barnhill Contracting Company, Belk, Black's Tire & Auto Service, Inc., Broome Associates, A Legacy Insurance Partner, Canteen Vending Service, Capital Concepts Financial Group, Carolina Caring, Carolina Container Company Inc., Carpenter Company, Inc., Catawba Valley Living at Rock Barn, Charolais Steakhouse, City of Hickory, Cloninger Ford of Hickory, Concentrix, Corporate Armor, a Temprano Techvestors company, CPI Satcom & Antenna Technologies, C.R. Laine Furniture Company, Dalco Nonwovens, LLC, David E. Looper & Company, Inc., Everett Auto Team, EveryAge, First Security Company, Inc., Foothills Distillery, LLC, Gabriella White Furniture, GKN ePowertrain, Granny's Country Kitchen, Hickory Crawdads Baseball, Inc., Hickory Falls Health & Rehabilitation, Hickory Mechanical, Inc., Interstate Foam & Supply, Inc., LEE Industries, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Mellow Mushroom-Hickory, Mike Johnson's Hickory Toyota, Momentum Tire & Car Care, Moretz Mills, LLC, Neill Grading & Construction Inc., Newton Family Physicians, P.A., OrthoCarolina-Hickory, Paramount Automotive Group, Patrick, Harper & Dixon, LLP, PDQ-Hickory, Poppelmann Plastics USA, LLC, Realty Executives of Hickory & Lake Norman, Regenbogen Studios, LLC, Renwood Mills, Sarstedt, Inc., Southside Power & Fitness, LLC, Standard Oyster Company, Steele Rubber Products, Inc., Sunrise Appliance Center, Sunrise Camping Center, Transportation Insight, LLC, Trinity Ridge, Trinity Village, TSG Finishing, LLC, Wal-Mart, Conover Store #4224, Wal-Mart, Hickory Store #948, Wanzl North America, WestRock, YMCA of Catawba Valley, Young, Morphis, Bach & Taylor, LLP

Working for business