

Report to the Membership, December 2021



With six months remaining in my two-year tenure as Board Chairman, I'm grateful for having the opportunity to serve this fine organization. And, as the Chamber approaches its 110th anniversary in 2022, I could not be more confident that the organization will continue to endure as the essential driving force that was originally established in 1912 to promote the positive aspects and great potential of Rome. Your valued support makes all that we do possible, and I encourage you to review the information summarized on these pages.

Businesses have re-opened, and the Chamber is actively engaged in working locally as well as with our regional partners to encourage more idea sharing to keep our economy on a solid foundation. I know from AIS' perspective, we are proud to be headquartered in the heart of Griffiss Business and Technology Park. My co-workers and I frequent much of Rome to grab lunch at a local joint, enjoy a beverage at our own brewery or go shopping. I continue to see growth in every corner, and from where I'm sitting I see our community and businesses growing at a tremendous pace. It is an honor to be involved with the Chamber to help facilitate the progress.

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Adam Hovak
Chamber Board Chairman, June 1, 2020-May 31, 2022
Operations Manager, Assured Information Security, Inc.

Recent Areas of Involvement

- Established the **Business Assistance Fund**, supported entirely by Chamber members who donated over \$60,000 to help businesses and organizations that were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. To continue this wonderful trend into the new year, AmeriCU Credit Union just donated an additional \$25,000 to the fund to help the Chamber meet the future needs of businesses. In 2021, Grants of \$500 and \$1000 increments were awarded to 32 recipients who successfully completed the streamlined application process. Included in the total amount raised is the Chamber's contribution of \$5,000, made possible by all who are members of the Chamber.
- Promoting Rome as an ideal community for businesses to succeed is a major initiative of the Chamber. We organized 27 grand openings, ribbon cutting ceremonies, and presented **First Dollar of Profit Awards**. Included in that number are nine **Congratulatory Certificates** presented in recognition of significant anniversaries/achievements by Chamber members.
- Started the **Member of the Week** program to recognize Chamber members who renewed their memberships prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. Membership dues makes it possible for the Chamber to provide its services, and we will take as many opportunities as we can to publicize the products and services of their businesses. Thirty-three members have been recognized to date.
- We launched an **all-new website**: <https://www.romechamber.com/> to better interact with our members and provide you with greater visibility. You are encouraged to use the site to enhance your visibility, including adding your offerings to the Events Calendar and Job Posting portals.
- Hosted the largest and most successful annual **Golf Tournament** to date which is a community staple in providing a venue for Chamber members to interact with one another. Along with our new **Bowling Bonanza** in late February, these venues provide friendly competition, great social interaction and new business relationships.

Continued

- Often referred to as Rome's biggest day of the year, the **Honor America Days Parade, Concert, and Fireworks** is eagerly embraced by a welcoming community every year as the Chamber and the City of Rome jointly present a celebration that promotes our heritage, boosts community pride, and generates economic activity.
- We recently learned from the organizers of the annual **Bike Tour** along the Erie Canal from Buffalo to Albany will be returning to Rome for an overnight stay by more than 700 riders who enjoy the hospitality offered by Rome's restaurants, stores, and shops. The Chamber actively supports the annual visit because it means so much to our local businesses.
- The Chamber gratefully appreciates the **generous sponsors and enthusiastic participants** who loyally support our many events and activities.
- In 1985 the Chamber began offering **health insurance plans** underwritten by the major carriers to our membership. Today, the Chamber is still in a position to offer policy alternatives and affordable choices to small groups and individuals through arrangements made with our on-staff licensed broker.
- The Chamber, in cooperation with the Professional & Business Women of Rome, presented the **National Business Women's Week**, providing important recognition to successful local women who are at the top of their professions. Stay tuned for our candidates for congress forum in 2022, presented by the Chamber and PBW.
- The united association among local and regional chambers and affiliate partners provides a structure to address topics such as tourism, economic development, health care, business/community promotion, and workforce development. With participation from the Rome Chamber, the **Mohawk Valley Alliance of Chambers of Commerce and Affiliate Partners** has offered 23 virtual forums during the past 18 months.
- For months we sent **pandemic-related information** from organizations and governmental agencies with whom the Chamber is closely associated. Topics ranging from health & safety, financing, legal, insurance, employment, executive/legislative action, member-to-member promotions, etc., were presented extensively on a timely basis to keep you up to date and informed.
- We saluted Excellus for its concern over the health and well-being of the business community. Their donation of \$10,000 made it possible to sponsor the purchase of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** for distribution to businesses during the height of the pandemic. More than 115 boxes of supplies were distributed during a two-day period.
- **Business After Hours**, a networking program that the Chamber first introduced to the Mohawk Valley in 1984, continues to be an ideal way for you to get to promote your businesses and get to know your counterparts in a social setting.
- Local sales tax dollars help the City and County meet their financial obligations without raising property taxes. The Chamber's **Shop Rome First** campaign continues to emphasize that by shopping locally we help to keep our City and County a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.
- Annual publication of the **Chamber's Member Directory & Community Guide** is ideal for promoting the products and services available from our members. Additionally, descriptions of the many attributes of Rome, including our cultural, educational, recreational, and health-related amenities, make the publication a "must have" for businesses considering locating in Rome and individuals interested in living here.
- The establishment of a **young professionals** group continues to be a topic of interest that Chamber members are interested in pursuing as there may be possibilities for networking programs and opportunities for social and professional development.
- Since 1966, the Chamber has been providing staff and administrative services for the **Rome College Foundation** to assist in their mission of offering scholarship opportunities for graduating high school seniors and students enrolled in our local colleges. Additionally, workforce development continues to be a topic at Chamber meetings with local leaders and education professionals. We hope to re-introduce successful programs for students in the Rome district.
- **Advocating in support of business** is always high on the Chamber's list of priorities. Recent positions by the Chamber included the following topics:
 - Supported proposed City and County budgets recommending no increases in property taxes;
 - Supported the \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative that is transforming downtown into a vibrant, mixed-use residential/business centerpiece with arts and culture emphasis;
 - Urged that there be no changes in the legislative redistricting lines;
 - Supported the sale and development for the redevelopment of the former Woodhaven housing property;
 - Supported the funding request application for the Griffiss International Airport Economic Development and Revitalization Initiative;
 - Supported MVCC's application to implement an Educational Opportunity Center;
 - Supported the City's application for funding under the NYS Department of Transportation Alternatives Program.
 - Supported the Griffiss Institute's application to continue its work as a New York State Certified Business Incubator.
 - Supported Nascentia Health's application to Empire State Development for development of the former Beeches property.
- The Chamber continues to serve as **the primary source for business and community information for Rome**. The office is accessible and staff is eager to respond to your needs as well as the needs of the public. We always recommend our members first, and sincerely appreciate your continuing membership support!