



Back to Business...In Person



Guests enjoy casual networking at the first Business After Hours held by Hygienic Art Park.

While we have seen each other over the past year, it was primarily in a three-inch box on a Zoom screen. Business continued on this platform and creative approaches to networking helped keep us connected, but it just wasn't the same.

Starting this spring, the Chamber began hosting events in person, and the organic connections of face-to-face meetings quickly bore fruit.

On May 20, the Chamber gathered at Sweet Hill Farm in Gales Ferry with the recipients of the Dominion Foundation grant for minority- and veteran-owned businesses. Businesses quickly identified synergies and suppliers for products and services within the group of 17 attendees.

"I was able to connect with multiple business owners in the area," said Ashon Avent, Chief Visionary Officer of Main Avent Sports custom designed apparel. "It feels good to be able to mingle with like-minded individuals and members of the Chamber to offer services and swap ideas."

Charlene Rand, founder of Rustic Boutique Catering and Events and manager of Sweet Hill Farm, was one of those businesses. They are currently discussing new uniforms for Rand's staff.

The first gathering was followed in fast succession by a series of ribbon cuttings, showing the economic rebound and pent-up excitement for growth in the region. Giant scissors in hand, the Chamber community celebrated with CENTURY 21 Shuttlers & Sails at their Niantic and Mystic locations; Chelsea

Groton Bank's Westside Branch in Norwich, Creative Konnection and Mhoor Art, both in New London. Coming up this summer we celebrate Curaleaf Groton's first year on July 24 and the grand opening of Ace Hardware in Waterford on August 6.

"Eastern Connecticut was among the hardest hit in the state during COVID," said Tony Sheridan, Chamber President and CEO. "We are seeing recovery, a rise in entrepreneurs, and businesses looking at new ways to work and provide services based on what they learned during the pandemic. As always, the Chamber is thrilled to play its role in bringing businesses together to expand our economic growth. We wish businesses a well-earned strong summer season."

Business After Hours resumed on June 16, hosted by Hygienic Art on a perfect evening in the Art Park. Almost 100 people gathered for live music and live interaction with colleagues from around the region.

On July 22, the Chamber will celebrate the winners of the annual Regional Chamber Awards from both 2020 and 2019, joined by SECT Cultural Coalition who will present their annual awards. The summer soiree at Latitude 41° next to Mystic Seaport will offer a relaxing opportunity to reconnect over lawn games, cocktails, and a jazz trio.

The Chamber is currently filling its late summer and fall calendar with opportunities to network, including Business After Hours, Business Breakfasts, and celebrations. To learn more about attending or hosting an event, visit ChamberECT.com or call 860-701-9113.

CHAMBER EVENTS IN YOUR AREA

Regional Chamber Awards Celebration

Thursday, July 22 | Latitude 41°, next to the Mystic Seaport

Sponsored by Pat Munger Construction, The Whaler's Inn, Stifel, Montville Florist, and Curaleaf

With a summer soiree, we will gather for the Regional Chamber Awards honoring our 2019 and 2020 winners, Essential Worker Heroes, and SECT Cultural Coalition Annual Awards, recognizing resiliency, adaptation, and community spirit in a difficult year.

2020 ECTy Award Winners:

Small Business of the Year

Cardinal Honda

Business of the Year

Charter Oak Federal Credit Union

New Business of the Year

Sea Services North America

Community Revitalization Leader

The Whaler's Inn

Nonprofits of the Year

Backus Hospital (Hartford Healthcare)

Lawrence + Memorial Hospital (Yale New Haven Health)

Best Place to Work

Liberty Bank

Industry Innovator

ThayerMahan

Young Professional of the Year

Molly Bruno

Volunteer of the Year

Maria Miranda

See our 2019 winners at ChamberECT.com/regional-chamber-award-winners

SECT Cultural Coalition's Annual Awards:

Outstanding Arts & Cultural Organization

Florence Griswold Museum

Outstanding Business Supporter of Arts & Culture

Chelsea Groton Bank

Business Breakfast and Mini-Expo: The Business of Cannabis

Wednesday, Sept 8 | Holiday Inn, Norwich

Sponsored by Triton Technologies

With the recent legalization of recreational marijuana in Connecticut, we are here to answer your questions on what this means for the cannabis industry in our region and state.

Register for events at ChamberECT.com/events.

A Unique Program for a Region Like No Other



Leadership Eastern CT participants hear from Mystic Aquarium employees during their Tourism and Arts Session.

Leadership Eastern CT has it right in the name. For more than 30 years, the focus has been on our region—one that encompasses the largest submarine base and manufacturer in the U.S., major tourism draws like the casinos and aquarium, energy producers from nuclear

to emerging wind power, family farms and aquaculture, quaint villages and cities on the rise. "The Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Program provides valuable insights into many strengths and resources we have in Eastern Connecticut, but sheds light on the challenges we face as well," said Richard

Balestracci, VP and Commercial Loan Officer at Chelsea Groton Bank, Leadership Class of 2013. Recently honored in Independent Banker magazine's 40 Under 40, Balestracci saw value in the experience that "highlighted so many components of the region, which help shape our vision and focus for the future" and provided "an excellent opportunity to build lasting relationships."

In a two-year program, a cohort of about 30 meet top-tier executives in a wide-ranging curriculum that examines the interacting forces at play in our region. Networking within the class, with presenters, and

alumni of the program contributes to a powerful web in the region with long-lasting benefits to all involved.

Thematically organized sessions explore industry, tourism, government, community services, and military installations. The group exercises their skills with a capstone community service project, fully implemented by the participants. In the second year, participants coordinate sessions for the incoming class, further building leadership and networking opportunities.

Employers have sponsored employees in the program, gaining connections in the region and promoting the professional development of rising leaders in their organizations. Participants consistently appreciate the opportunity, maintain contact with class members, and bring current regional knowledge back to their institutions.

"I think this program would be great for any business professional to participate in, if they truly want to learn more about the community they serve," said Donna Yother, President, Sava Insurance Group, Class of 2010.

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LEADERSHIP ECT CLASS OF 2023 APPLICATION
ChamberECT.com/leadership | 860.701.9113

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