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*From the CEO's Pen* by Jack Llewellyn, Chamber CEO

## Working Hard to Support the Durango Community!

Seeing more snow on the ground, it's hard to believe it's already April. All of us at the Chamber have had a very busy start to 2023, and now that we are into the second quarter, I wanted to take a quick glance at all we've done during the first part of the year.

The mission of the Durango Chamber of Commerce is to promote and support the local business community through communication, advocacy, education, leadership, and stewardship. We do this in a variety of ways and through different programs.

In early March, we celebrated Durango by honoring businesses, leaders, and organizations that are making a positive impact on our community with the annual Durango Rocks Awards Celebration. If you know of someone, or a company that should be recognized, please nominate them by going to our website, [DurangoBusiness.org](http://DurangoBusiness.org).

The Chamber educates our members by holding various programs to discuss important issues impacting our region. We feature workshops to assist organizations with marketing, public relations, human resources, management and customer service trainings, and more. We also kicked off a new quarterly series, called "Get to Know the CEO," and featured Rob Sarlls, CEO of Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory. We'll have other CEOs join us to provide information about their personal experiences, their company – it's challenges, successes, and future opportunities, and offer leadership tips that can help you grow.

In February, we partnered with the La Plata County Economic Development Alliance to host a workforce housing forum, where we had more than 120 participants. Housing is a top priority that must be addressed, and we

were honored to bring so many players together for one of these conversations. Public and private partnerships are needed to meet the demand for our area's housing issues and progress is being made.



An important function of the Chamber is advocating for a strong business environment on the local, state, and national levels. Recently, the Chamber, along with La Plata Forum, hosted a City Council Candidates Forum to learn more about the five candidates running for two open positions. As with most all elections, it shapes the future of Durango for the next 10 years.

At the state level, the Chamber is reviewing legislation that could impact our business community and either supporting bills or opposing them and communicating with our members and legislators. It's important that Durango has a voice at the state level to weigh in on policies that could negatively or positively impact our businesses.

The Chamber offers a leadership program called, Leadership La Plata and applications are now being accepted. We invite you to apply or share this information with someone you know who wants to gain personal and professional leadership skills, as well as learn more about the community.

All the efforts of the Durango Chamber are to ultimately help the economy grow. I'm looking forward to the rest of the year, as we have a lot of exciting programs in the pipeline. If you have any questions or thoughts, please don't hesitate to call us at (970) 247-0312, ext. 2 or visit [DurangoBusiness.org](http://DurangoBusiness.org) for more information.

## 2023

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## NEW! Value-Based Memberships

The Durango Chamber is now offering value-based memberships with the ability to choose what works best for your business. The previous structure was a “fair share” model, based on the number of employees with 15 total membership levels. The Chamber has been working on this change for several years, and hasn’t altered its structure in 10+ years, nor has it changed pricing in 5 years. The current 15 levels are being simplified to 7 and all members are being offered a choice of what’s best for them.

The new Value-Based Membership Structure allows business owners to determine what’s important in their partnership with the Chamber, what their needs are, and how they want to take a leadership role in the business community. The Chamber is also making it easier by featuring investment payments via check, credit card and ACH. Payments can be scheduled as frequently as monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually.



Some benefits are a la carte, so businesses can still utilize marketing, advertising, networking, branding and sponsorship opportunities, even if it’s not included in their membership level.

The transition began in January 2023, and the Chamber works on a rolling 12-month year, so member anniversary months remain the same. The next Membership Structure Q & A session is Tues, Apr 11 at 4pm if you want to learn more. If you have questions, please contact the Chamber. Our team is more than happy to answer any questions. (970) 247-0312 ext 2

## Upcoming Programs & Events!

Find more information [here](#).

**Tues, Apr 11 4-5pm** New Membership Structure Q&A Session

**Thurs, Apr 13 5:30pm** YPOD Happy Hour at Zia Cantina North

**Thurs, Apr 20 5-7pm** Business After Hours at LPEA

**Wed, Apr 26 noon-1pm** Lunch & Learn SEO & Web Optimization

**Thurs, Apr 27 5:30pm** LLP Alumni Beer & Food Pairing

**Tues, May 2 8-9am** Coffee Connections with Express Employment

**Thurs, May 18 5-7pm** Business After Hours at 11th Street Station

**Fri, May 19** LLP Graduation

**Wed., May 24** Lunch & Learn Workshop on Social Media

**Wed, May 31** Leadership La Plata Application due

**Fri., Jun. 2 – SAVE THE DATE:** Girls Gone Golfing at Hillcrest Golf Club

## What’s Happening with our Chamber Members

**Apr. 8** Homebuyer Education Class in Durango with the [HomesFund](#)

**Apr. 12** Marketing Mastery with [Ascent Digital](#)

**Apr. 15** Brunch n Blooms at [Eso Terra Ciderworks](#)

**Apr. 28** Ladies Night 2.0 at [Horse Empower Ranch](#)

**Apr 28** [Durango Wine Experience Walkabout Downtown](#)

**Apr. 29** [Durango Wine Experience Grand Tasting](#) at the Smiley Building

**May 3** Southwest Colorado [Small Business Conference](#) at Sky Ute Event Center.

*Do you want your program or event listed? It’s free through your member online portal. Questions, ask [Hannah@durangobusiness.org](mailto:Hannah@durangobusiness.org) or call (970) 247-0312 ext 2*

## Psyche Digital Marketing Offered Valuable Tips on Marketing Events with Confidence

March's Lunch & Learn Workshop focused on marketing events with Psyche Digital Marketing. Workshop participants were given valuable tips and a helpful checklist to ensure events have goals with metrics, target audience, a value proposition, and marketing plan. Thank you to Psyche Digital Marketing for sharing information to help organizations market their events. For more information about this agency, visit [PsycheDigitalMarketing.com](https://PsycheDigitalMarketing.com)



## NEW! Get to Know the CEO Series with Robert Sarlls, Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory

Rob Sarlls, CEO of the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory kicked off the first Get to Know the CEO. This session was free to all Chamber members and held at the Center for Innovation in the Main Mall. Mr. Sarlls shared his insights as a CEO, lessons learned, advice for entrepreneurs, what's in store for the future of RMCF, and more.



## April's Coffee Connections Learned More about Manna Soup Kitchen!

Coffee Connections participants toured Manna's Community Kitchen with new take-out window, food market and helpful resource center. more about the programs and services they offer the community, such as connecting others to housing resources, SNAP assistance. Hosted by executive director Ann Morse, executive chef Seanan Culloty and resource manager Mariss Hunt. Coffee Connections is always free to Chamber members.



## HR Workshop – Leveraging Culture to Recruit and Retain Top Talent!

The Durango Chamber partnered with the Durango Area Human Resources Management group for a three-part HR workshop series. The first workshop reviewed Leveraging Culture to Recruit & Retain Top Talent, presented by Suzanne Phare with Real Ideal Coaching and Erin Hyder with the City of Durango. Watch for details on the next HR workshop in June! Thank you to [Express Employment Professionals](https://ExpressEmploymentProfessionals.com) for sponsoring this session!



### Business After Hours – Apr. 20, 5-7pm at the La Plata Electric Association



Join us on Thursday, Apr. 20 for the next Business After Hours hosted by the La Plata Electric Association. This networking event is ideal for professionals from all over the Durango area, and provides a great opportunity to make new connections with potential clients, partners and colleagues. Pre-registration is only \$10 and includes 2 drinks and appetizers, plus a chance to win great door prizes, thanks to LPEA and Star Liquors. [Register online](#) now to reserve your spot.

### Receive Referrals with Leads Group Monthly Meetings!

Wanting more qualified business referrals? Need some support with motivation? Join the Chamber's Leads Group which meets once a month with individual sessions set up beyond the group. Each group offers an exclusive seat from different industry sectors, and all industries are welcome! Limited space is available through the Chamber's two Leads Programs. [Learn more here.](#)

### City Council Candidate Forum Offered Great Insight Prior to Election Day

All five of the city council candidates joined the Durango Chamber and the La Plata Forum for the City Council Candidates Forum. They shared their opinions on important issues and what they saw for Durango's future. The Durango Chamber was pleased to, once again, provide this platform as an opportunity for candidates to express their views openly so the public could make informed decisions on election day.

### Learn How to Implement SEO & Optimize Your Website!



Join us on Wed, Apr. 26 from noon to 1pm for our next Lunch & Learn Workshop on SEO and website optimization with marketing agency, [Khara Wolf Design](#). Khara will provide you with ways to develop a conversion-based strategy to increase traffic and sales. Registration is only \$10 for Chamber members, or add lunch for another \$10. [Reserve your seat here.](#)

### Supporting Durango's Business Community!

The Chamber, in partnership with the Durango area Association of Realtors and the La Plata Energy Council formed a governmental affairs coalition that participates in meetings and monitors local and state policies and legislation. Each organization educates, advocates for, or opposes issues as they related to each of their membership organization.

If you are interested to learn the policies and legislation that the Legislative Affairs Coalition reviews, see the [latest report here.](#)



## YPOD Feature of the Month: Sabrina Michalak YPOD Board Member

**What do you do?** I am currently transiting careers. To stay busy I am helping with administrative work for my parents' business.



**Why did you join the YPODs?** I became interested in joining the YPOD due to its mission to connect, empower and engage young professionals. Sometimes it can be hard to meet new people as an adult in a new place. YPOD provides a sense of community and can be a great place to start making connections whether for personal needs or professional needs.

**How long have you been in Durango?** When I moved to Durango in February 2020, I did not have a chance to go out and meet people and experience Durango because a month later, COVID shut everything down. I ended up leaving Durango and moving to Phoenix, AZ. When I moved back to Durango, I made a goal for myself. to take advantage of all that Durango can offer and meet other young adults. So I decided to become a YPOD board member so I could accomplish that goal.

**How do you spend your time?** I enjoy reconnecting with myself and forming new hobbies like baking, yoga and hiking with my dog, Piper(when it warms up).

Information about the YPODs can be found [here](#).

## Featured Leadership La Plata Alumnus: Tim Walsworth

**What do you do for a living?** I have served as the executive director for the Durango Business Improvement District (BID) for the past 10 years.



**What LLP class were you in?**  
2004/2005 – best class ever!

**What do you love about LLP?** LLP provided me with invaluable information about what makes La Plata County tick. It also created lasting friendships and a network of other graduates.

**What has the chamber done for you?** The chamber has kept me connected and helps me grow as a professional.

**What does the chamber do for you?** The Chamber is an amazing partner for the Durango Business Improvement District. Our relationship is very strong due to sharing information and partnering on programs to help local businesses. A Chamber membership is very affordable and it is worth every penny. You

get access to top-class trainings, tons of networking and B-to-B opportunities, and advocacy on a local, regional and statewide level.

**Fun fact about you?** I am a huge football fan, and this year I won my league for the weekly pick the winners of the NFL games. I picked the most correct games out of over 30 players. Watch out Vegas, here I come!

*Interested in participating in LLP? Learn more about LLP or become involved in LLP committees, visit [Leadership La Plata.org](#).*

## Featured Chamber Diplomat: Johnny Castillo

**What is your business?**

I am currently “fun-employed” but actively looking for my next exciting career move. I have been in the building technology sector for over 11 years as a consultant and key account manager for multiple Fortune 500 companies. Managing a broad range of cliental and projects in the healthcare, government, higher education, and K-12 sectors.



**How long have you been a DIP?** I have been a Dip for a little over 3 years, or maybe 4 years. That covid year was a blur.

**How long have you lived in Durango?** I moved to Durango January 25, 2019. I am one of the transplants that loved vacationing in Durango and decided to move here.

**Tell us about your family:** My lovely girlfriend Peyton has a heart of gold for rescuing cats. As of now, we have two 2 cats, a ginger named Bevo and a tuxedo named Izzy.

**Why did you become a DIP?** I was an active member in the business community in other towns, and I wanted that same experience when I moved to Durango. I like being involved and volunteering in the community, and the Dips are a great fit for me.

**What is your favorite part of being a DIP?** I love the organized chaos during our meetings, there is never a dull moment and somehow, we always finish on time. Business After Hours are also a favorite. It's great seeing all the people during these events, networking, and supporting the host.

**Fun fact about you:** While on my “fun-employment” quest, I hiked the Colorado Trail SOBO August 2022 (one of the wettest years to do the CT), and I did the Everest Base Camp Trek October – November 2022.

Learn more about the Diplomat Program [here](#).

## Congratulations to Durango Joe's on Opening Their Newest Location in Bodo!

Durango Joes Coffee was established in 2004 by Joe Lloyd and his wife LeAnna, who both shared a dream of opening a chain of coffee shops. Besides serving legendary coffee, Joe is a community leader and local charity advocate who shares the family spirit of exceptional service, and prides himself as being the most caring independent coffee presence in the area. Durango Joe's Coffee has 5 locations in Durango, 1 in Aztec and 5 in Farmington. For more information, visit [DurangoJoes.com](http://DurangoJoes.com).



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## Promote Inclusive Language in Your Organization

Words matter, and, unfortunately, the modern-day professional vocabulary is littered with exclusionary terms. To create a truly inclusive culture, take a hard look at how people in your company are using language. For example, make sure recruiters and hiring managers pay careful attention to language they use when drafting job descriptions so they're not inadvertently deterring candidates of color, women, people with disabilities, or older job candidates. Terms like "hacker" or "ninja" are not only hard for many people to identify with, they're also unnecessary because you can use alternatives like "programmer" or "software engineer" that are neutral and more widely understood. You might also generate a list of words and phrases that are forbidden in product development, marketing, and external communications. These might include terms like "the elderly," "man-hours," and "crazy," among others. It can also be helpful to create a company guide to inclusive language. This can outline practical, accessible tips and tools that can be put into immediate action — and it shouldn't be a static manual. Make sure you also allow for input and co-creation across the organization.



*This tip is adapted from "How to Make Your Organization's Language More Inclusive," by Odessa S. Hamilton et al.*



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## Understanding the Cost-Benefit of Staffing

By Robert Whitson, Owner of Express Employment Professionals of Durango, CO

In North America, there are estimated to be more than 25,000 staffing and recruiting agencies, with nearly 50,000 offices in the U.S. alone. After the ups and downs the workforce experienced the past few years, businesses are looking for solutions for future growth, but with cost-cutting solutions. This is where staffing services excel.

However, when working with temporary employment agencies, it can be hard to understand the cost-benefit. In fact, one of the biggest complaints about using a staffing agency is the cost associated with it. Recently the American Staffing Association (ASA) did a case study explaining the breakdown in bill rates.

Outlining the common misconception that an agency pockets what the employer pays minus what the temporary worker makes, ASA shows that for a staffing agency to pay a worker the national average hourly rate of \$17/hr., they will have to raise the bill rate by 51.5% to cover legally mandated labor costs, general and administrative expenses, while including the industry average of 3.3%. So, while the bill rate charged to a client would be \$25.76/hr., the agency only takes in \$0.85/hr. as a net profit.

With the costs of using a staffing agency explained, let's look at the benefits they provide employers.

### Maintaining a Passive Talent Pool

While businesses only recruit and seek talent when filling an open job position, staffing agencies are constantly connecting with professionals and building relationships with those who are either actively looking for a job or who are just open to test the waters of the market. However, creating a deep talent pool not only takes time and energy, but maintaining it can be just as difficult.

By teaming up with a staffing company, businesses can expand their talent reach exponentially, while staying focused on company operations.

### Recruiting Workers for Direct Hire

When unemployment rates are low, it usually means we're in a job-seekers' market. This means employees may be open to seek opportunities outside their current positions. These



individuals could be passive talent who wouldn't normally apply for an open position but would be willing to speak with a recruiter if the job position was intriguing enough.

This is where staffing companies shine. By seeking out professionals who fit the culture and have the values and skills needed to excel in the open position, staffing agencies can find the right person and place them in a full-time position either through recruiting or accessing the pipeline of talent staffing agencies have at all times.

### Allowing Businesses to Hire Through Evaluation

As companies adjust to the current job market, hiring managers likewise are adjusting their traditional views on which workers would be a good fit for open positions, looking past customary requirements.

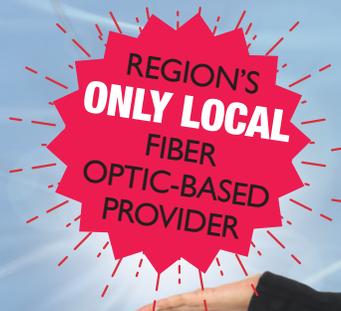
However, without checking off all the boxes, the question remains if the candidate has what it takes to excel in their position.

Staffing companies, like Express Employment Professionals, offer the opportunity to place a candidate through Evaluation Hire. During the evaluation period, the employee is able to prove to the company that they are the right match for the job, as well as see if the job is the right fit for their career goals. At the end of the evaluation period, the company can decide to hire or to move on to another candidate.

*The Durango Express office is located at 321 So Camino Del and serves the Four Corners area. Local businesses and applicants are encouraged to stop by, visit [ExpressPros.com/durangoco](http://ExpressPros.com/durangoco) or call (970) 403-8780.*

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## Build a Team Culture That Honors Quiet Time

Life is noisier and more distracting than ever. As a manager, how can you build a team culture that truly honors quiet time? Start by deliberately talking about it. Begin an open dialogue with your team in which each member has an opportunity to answer the following questions:



- **In what ways do I create noise that negatively impacts others?**

The best starting point is to have everyone check-in with themselves.

Encourage people to question whether any given habit is necessary or if it's really just an unexamined impulse — a default that needs to be reset.

- **What noisy habits bother me most?** This isn't an opportunity to point fingers but ask people to be honest about what most disrupts their day.

- **How can I help others find the quiet time they need?** This is an opportunity for everyone to step up and to commit to group norms such as “no email Fridays” or “no meeting Wednesdays.”

*This tip is adapted from “How to Build a Culture That Honors Quiet Time,” by Justin Zorn and Leigh Marz*

  
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## LLP Monthly Focus:

### 3 Ways Successful Leaders Navigate Difficult Times

By Stacy Reuille-Dupont, StudioB



As we shift from the frozen winter season to the mud season in Durango, let's talk about what to do when it rains.

When we think about rain, it feels “blue,” “down,” “dull,” and “depressing,” especially if those clouds block the sun for too many days in a row. What about when those feelings are part of your work environment? How do you navigate negative experiences successfully at work?

Here are three ways to help you and your team shift from a negative mindset to something more productive.

First - it is important to recognize the negative. Teams that ignore what isn't working risk invalidating the struggle members are feeling. This leads to more time and energy spent navigating invalidation rather than the solution.

However, if your team spends too much time stuck in invalidating conversations, then you will tank out morale and collaboration. It is important to allow acknowledgment of what isn't working and then shift to solving the problem. This isn't necessarily a time for everyone to vent and spiral, but enough sharing that main themes and topics are expressed.

Second - shift the conversation to solutions, then listen. Your group members have valuable information, ideas, and options to share. They know the work from the front line and need enough information from the higher ups to have some power in the process.

This doesn't mean everyone knows every detail or that it is a majority group consensus. However, when your team feels part of the process, they are more passionate about making it work. And as the ones getting the work done, they have a lot to offer management on how to meet the goals and expectations of a project or pivot.

Third - make sure your team has emotional connection. People need other people to be healthy. Our brains and nervous systems rely on each other to develop and regulate.

When people feel connected to the people (co-workers and customers) impacted by their work, purpose and meaning are built within work tasks. When purpose and meaning are part of the work teams collaborate better, are more successful solving problems, and more passionate about

the work. This results in a more productive team and less absenteeism.

When people feel emotionally disconnected from each other competition for recognition and ego accolades result. The resulting behaviors derail true connection and successful navigation of difficult times in the office.

As you consider how your team weathers storms, consider how your leadership style impacts their ability to make a difference in the workplace. Leaders steer the bus. If you want a healthy team, you need to be a healthy leader.

If you are an authoritarian or passive leader driven by fear, anger, arrogance, or a need to dominate, your team isn't going to be as healthy as a leader driven by assertive communication and collaboration. Understanding your personal leadership style and how to manage those with differing styles is important if you are going to be a successful leader.

If you have no idea what I am talking about, it may be time for you to join the next class of Leadership La Plata! In this program you'll learn about your leadership style, how it interacts with others, successful conflict management tactics, stress reduction techniques for your style, and successes as a competent leader. Applications are now open and being accepted for next year's class.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can be a leader who innovates and creates the world around you, consider joining next year's LLP class. Applications are due the end of May. Learn more at [leadershiplaplata.org](http://leadershiplaplata.org)

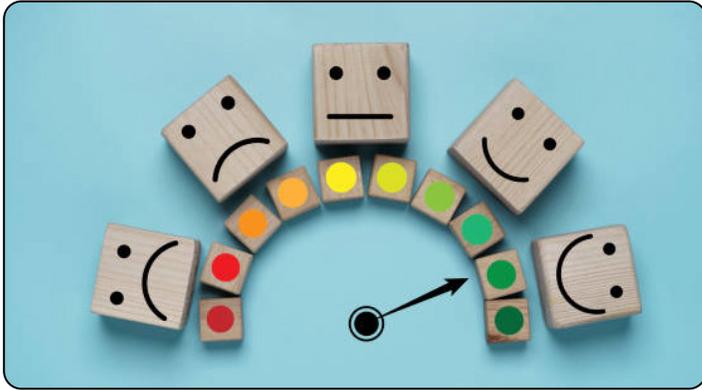
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Author: Stacy Reuille-Dupont, PhD, LAC, CPFT, CNC - [Learn More About Me](#). She owns [Studio B](#) a place to Create.Your.Self. We are passionate about helping people create a vibrant life using psychology and physiology.

## La Plata County Extension: Health Tip of the Month by Nicole Clark

### Eating your emotions? Sample this instead.



Emotions are a blessing and a curse. Conceptually, we know they exist, and we feel them daily. Yet oddly, we don't always have the emotional intelligence to understand, recognize or manage our emotions. For some, managing emotions equates to eating, and it's aptly dubbed emotional eating.

Anyone can participate in emotional eating, though women are more prone to it. Eating in response to emotions may feel good momentarily, but most people walk away from it feeling something negative, such as guilt, embarrassment or failure.

Aside from the mental health impact, it can also compromise physical health including weight gain from excess calories. It's obviously a response most people would prefer to overcome. But how?

It may seem like a big ask, but research suggests that self-compassion and mindfulness practices can make a significant difference. Giving yourself permission to receive this gift isn't always easy, so let's start with an icebreaker.

A book fell on my head. I only have my shelf to blame.

Nothing like a corny joke to make you smile, smirk or grimace. But more importantly, this joke suggests an act not in accordance with self-compassion, that being self-blame.

Self-compassion is 1) awareness of emotions (aka mindfulness and emotional intelligence), 2) treating ourselves with kindness and considering our needs, and 3) viewing experiences and emotions as a common humanity rather than something only you experience. Despite what your inner voice may say about self-compassion, you do deserve this. Give it a try!

#### Mindfulness:

- Mentally [scan your body](#) for pain or tension
- Name your emotion. Need help finding the words? [look here](#).
- State your feeling as a fact, without judgment:
  - "I feel burdened and heavy at this moment".



#### Self-kindness:

- Attend to physical discomfort by touching your body where it hurts, changing positions, stretching or taking a deep breath.
- Speak words of affirmation (even if you don't believe them, yet).
  - "I'm not perfect but I am good at \_\_\_\_\_".
- Speak to yourself like you would a friend.
  - "I am a failure, I can't stop myself from eating" becomes "I tend to eat when I feel bad, but I believe in my ability to change this".

#### Common Humanity:

- See your life experiences as something others can relate to, you are not alone in this world.
  - "Everyone has something they don't love about themselves, it's part of being human".

#### Moderate Physical Activity, Three Times a Week (minimum):

- [Physical activity](#) develops our capacity for self-efficacy, self-determination and improved mood. In other words, it helps you feel more confident, self-controlled and happy.

Curious to know how self-compassionate you currently are?

[Take this quiz](#).

NOTE: The practice of self-compassion, and the exercises described here are adapted from the work of Dr. Kristen Neff, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin.

La Plata County Extension health programming:  
[nicole.clark@co.plata.co.us](mailto:nicole.clark@co.plata.co.us) or (970) 382-6461.

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## New Members

### Animas Marketing

Tyler Rice  
1150 Main Ave, A  
Durango, CO 81301  
[website](#)  
Marketing/Digital Media/Public Relations

### Blue Rain Gallery

Sheila Huggett  
934 Main Ave  
Durango, CO 81301  
[website](#)  
Art Dealer

### Durango Accounting

Alaina Joy  
361 S Camino Del Rio #306  
Durango, Co 81303  
[website](#)  
Accounting/Bookkeeping & Tax Service

### Organized...Beautifully by Maureen

Maureen Alden  
92 Whispering Pines Circle  
Durango, CO 81301  
[website](#)  
Professional Organizer

### River Roost

Sabina Hernandez  
801 Camino Del Rio  
Durango, CO 81301  
[website](#)  
Accommodations

### Steel Fire Studio LLC

Jon Brooks  
P.O. Box 1511  
Cortez, Colorado 81321  
[website](#)  
Home Design

### Tech Host Academy

Heather Martinez  
555 Rivergate Lane  
Durango, CO 81301  
[website](#)  
Consultant-Business/Marketing & Related



# Want to Grow Your Business?

Join a Chamber **LEADS GROUP**

Call or email today to join or find out more information!

**970.247.0312** or [chamber@durangobusiness.org](mailto:chamber@durangobusiness.org)



## Renewed Members

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11th Street Station  
 Advanced Concrete Solutions, Inc.  
 Alpen Rose RV Park  
 Alpine Bank  
 Ameriprise Financial  
 Animas High School  
 Arete Mortgage  
 Best Western Rio Grande Inn  
 Colorado Housing Finance Authority  
 Dorothy Parker Design  
 Durango Antique Market  
 Durango Financial Planning  
 Durango Kennel Club  
 Durango Liquor & Wine Co.  
 Durango Natural Foods Co-op  
 Eagle Block Company  
 Energy Council  
 Exit Realty Home & Ranch  
 FredrickZink & Assoc. PC  
 Hegarty  
 Jay Short Insurance Agency, LLC  
 Jon Sherer Agency  
 Just Ask Christy - Artisanal Goods & Services  
 Kysar Millennium Leavitt Insurance Agency

La Plata County Search & Rescue  
 Mercy Regional Medical Center  
 Mesa Verde National Park  
 Michalak Insurance Agency  
 Newbold, Chapman & Geyer PC  
 Oxford Financial Planners  
 Parts Unknown  
 Peak Eyecare  
 Powerhouse Science Center  
 Residence Inn by Marriott  
 River Liquors  
 Sachs Construction, LLC  
 San Juan Symphony  
 Serious Texas BBQ  
 Southwest Republican Women  
 Springs Resort  
 State Farm Insurance/ Denise Elliott  
 Sunnyside Meats, Inc.  
 The Payroll Department, Inc.  
 Twin Buttes Dental  
 Vaughn Johnson DDS MS Orthodontics  
 Veritas Fine Homes, Inc.  
 Wagon Wheel Liquors

## Connect with the Community through the Chamber Diplomat Program!

The Chamber Diplomats help support the business community by assisting with member retention, recruitment and engagement. They also meet key business members, build relationships, help celebrate accomplishments, and enhance community involvement. There are a few spots available for 2023! Find out more information, [here](#).



## Business Connection

### The Wells Group with John Wells

By Sara Lynn Valentine

"I grew up in Grants, New Mexico, which at that time was the uranium capital of the world," John Wells says. "My grandma lived in Durango, and I visited every summer." John then attended Fort Lewis, where he studied business.



"The professors knew the students by name and were very involved in the community. They connected us with real life business projects in Durango." In addition to course work, John attended the 'University of Ore House' - bussing, waiting tables, and eventually bartending, acquiring an invaluable education in 'service.'

He also learned to love skiing, backpacking and hiking. John graduated in 1977, but discovered that even with a college degree, it could be difficult to make ends meet in Durango. Between evenings bartending and daytimes teaching skiing, John worked all the time. "So I bought a condo and got into the real estate business. It was not a great experience, so I took classes so I could do better next time." John got his license in 1979.

After five years working for other brokerages, John put together a business plan, and partnered with Jim Wotkyns to open The Wells Group at 901 Main Avenue. "We needed a loan to renovate and buy office equipment and furniture," John says. "We went to lots of banks and heard 'Thank you but come back another time.' The president of Burns Bank said yes.

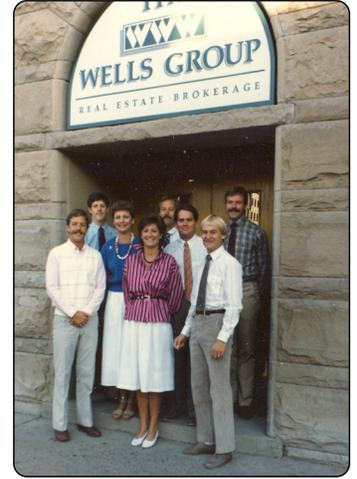


"We have many good brokerages in Durango, but the Wells Group business model is different. We don't want part-timers. From the beginning, we've focused on supporting our agents with excellent, robust training so they can make good livings as full-time real estate professionals while providing outstanding service to clients."

# WELLS GROUP

REAL ESTATE

Buying a house is the largest purchase most Americans will ever make, and regularly scheduled classes, seminars, fun team-building events and annual retreats with nationally recognized teachers keep The Wells Group agents on top of changing markets, economic conditions and increasingly complex legal requirements.



"We want to make sure everybody stays balanced, doesn't burn out, has the tools to reset and recharge and be grateful," says John.

Every year, independent of fund-raising, The Wells Group gives a substantial percentage of company profits to good local causes. John has served on multiple nonprofit boards and participated with boots on the ground in many philanthropic programs.

"Our local nonprofits and organizations need assistance," John says. "We lead by example, and our 38 agents support approximately 50 organizations with both their expertise and finances. Giving back honors the community that has been good to us. It's the right thing to do, and it's a rewarding thing to do. I still enjoy what I'm doing," John says. John's longtime friend and partner, Jim Wotkyns, retired in 2021.

The Wells Group's Annual Real Estate Forecast has been a popular event in March for more than 20 years. Covid concerns prompted the change of venue from the Concert Hall to a video format, which has the advantage of being able to be replayed and reviewed.

Learn more at [WellsGroupDurango.com](https://WellsGroupDurango.com) or visit 1130 Main Avenue. You can reach John and all the Wells Group agents at (970) 259-6680.

### Thank You to Hillcrest Golf Club for Hosting the Mar. 16 Business After Hours!

Business After Hours hosted by Hillcrest Golf Club was a great success with more than 85 people present, great door prizes, delicious food & beverages, plus entertainment provided by the golf simulator and fantastic views. Many thanks to Hillcrest and Star Liquors for providing terrific door prizes!



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FRIDAY WALKABOUT  
SATURDAY GRAND TASTING  
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