

CAPE MAY COUNTY CHAMBER



NEWSLETTER || FEBRUARY 2025

From the President's Desk:

Dear Members,

As we step into February, I want to take a moment to reflect on the exciting momentum we've built so far in 2025. The new year has already brought fresh opportunities for growth, collaboration, and advocacy for our business community, and I am proud of the resilience and innovation that define Cape May County.

While winter may be considered the "off-season" for many of our tourism-driven businesses, this is also the perfect time for strategic planning, professional development, and strengthening partnerships. Our Chamber is committed to supporting you through networking events, educational workshops, and policy advocacy that ensures a thriving local economy.

- * Our monthly membership meeting in February has NJDOT Commissioner Francis O'Connor – please register and listen to what he has to say about Cape May County on key policies impacting businesses in our county.
- * Our Non Profits are getting together on February 4th at Atlantic Cape Community College, Cape May Campus.
- * Member Spotlight Initiative - We're highlighting a different Chamber member

each month—be sure to nominate your business!

As your Chamber, we continue to work closely with local and state leaders to ensure your voices are heard. From workforce development initiatives to small business funding opportunities, we are actively engaged in securing resources that will benefit our members.

I also want to take this opportunity to celebrate the many successes within our business community. Whether it's a new storefront opening, an anniversary milestone, or an industry achievement, we love recognizing the hard work and dedication of our members. If you have exciting news to share, let us know!

As always, I encourage you to stay engaged, attend events, and take advantage of the resources we provide. Your participation strengthens the collective success of our Chamber and our local economy.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

Warm Regards,
Barbara Stafford
Jones,
President



* UPCOMING EVENTS *

2/4/25—Non-Profit Summit—Atlantic Cape Community College

2/7/25—Small Business Symposium—Atlantic Cape Community College

2/14/25—New Member Reception—Chamber Office

2/20/25—Membership Meeting—Bellevue Tavern

2/23/25—Gospel Brunch—Grand Hotel of Cape May

2/26/25—Evening Networking Mixer—The Cricket Club

Chamber & Legislative Updates

- ◆ The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce will host NJDOT Commissioner Francis O'Connor at its membership meeting on February 20 at the Bellevue Tavern, sponsored by AtlantiCare Health. Commissioner O'Connor will share updates on South Jersey transportation projects, focusing on Cape May County. **Learn more and sign up.**

- ◆ The Cape May County Chamber Education Foundation elected Michael J. Donohue, Esq. President of the Board of Trustees on January 2, 2025. Donohue is a distinguished attorney based in Cape May County, bringing extensive legal expertise and leadership to his roles. **Read more.**

- ◆ The Cape May County Chamber Education Foundation and The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May will host *Gospel Brunch* on Sunday, February 23, 2025, from 1 PM to 4 PM at The Grand Hotel of Cape May. This inspiring event will feature performances by local musicians and vocalists, a delectable brunch buffet, and a tribute to beloved Cape May singer Lois Smith. Proceeds will benefit the Cape May County Chamber Education Foundation and the Greater Cape May Chamber Foundation, supporting scholarships and educational programs for local students. **Read more.**

- ◆ Education Foundation Scholarship Applications are now open, including funding for Dual and Concurrent Credit Programs (deadline Feb. 25, 2025) and scholarships for graduating high school seniors pursuing college or trade schools (deadline April 13, 2025). Since its establishment in 2015, the Foundation has proudly awarded over \$73,000 in scholarships to support students in achieving their educational goals across a range of programs. **Learn more about these opportunities and how to apply.**

- ◆ The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce proudly presents the 20th anniversary of the Women in Business Conference, held at The Flanders Hotel on Friday, March 7, 2025, from 9 am to 2 pm. This year's theme, "Celebrating 20 Years of Moving Women Forward," highlights two decades of empowering women to overcome challenges and thrive in their professional journeys. Sponsored by 1st Bank of Sea Isle City and OceanFirst Bank, this inspiring event will feature dynamic speakers who embody the theme and share valuable insights for women in business and leadership. **Learn more and sign up.**

- ◆ Chamber President Barbara Stafford Jones spoke with *Shore Local News* about New Jersey's recent 36-cent minimum wage increase, which took effect on Jan. 1. She emphasized how rising labor costs are putting pressure on Cape May County's \$7.8 billion tourism economy—encompassing restaurants, boardwalk vendors, hotels, and fishing industries—and warned that struggling small businesses could face job losses, price increases, and reduced worker hours if the trend continues. **Read more.**

- ◆ The Chamber is closely monitoring the proposed new rules under **N.J.A.C. 7:25-4A**, which address access restrictions to tidal waters for endangered species protection. Proposed N.J.A.C. 7:25-4A.1 outlines a process for the Department to determine when restricting public access to tidal waters and shorelines is necessary to safeguard threatened or endangered species, as well as how the size and scope of these restrictions will be defined.

- ◆ The Chamber is monitoring **Senate Bill 629**, which proposes corporation business tax (CBT) and gross income tax (GIT) credits to help restaurant owners offset the rising state minimum wage. The bill outlines specific tax credits based on employee wages and hours worked, with limits on eligibility, a cap of \$12,500 per employee, and availability restricted to restaurant owners with five or fewer locations for up to 10 years.

- ◆ The **No Tax on Tips Act** has been introduced in Congress to exempt servers and bartenders from paying income tax on their earned tips. Supporters say this would increase take-home pay for workers and help restaurants attract employees while including safeguards to ensure fiscal responsibility. The Chamber will continue to monitor this legislation and its potential impact on the industry.

- ◆ Immigrants play a vital role in the restaurant industry, making up over 20% of the U.S. restaurant and foodservice workforce. With immigration policies set to change in the coming months, the National Restaurant Association and the Restaurant Law Center are closely monitoring developments to keep the industry informed. In partnership with Fisher Phillips, they have compiled key information on workplace immigration issues to address ongoing changes. To support restaurant owners and operators, they will host a webinar on workplace immigration compliance on Monday, February 10, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. **Learn more.**

Chamber Event Highlights



January Membership Meeting – January 16

The Chamber hosted its first sold-out Membership Meeting of 2025 at The Reeds at Shelter Haven sponsored by Reel Fire Protection on January 16. Key presentations included updates from representatives of the Delaware River and Bay Authority, with Ceil Smith, Deputy Executive Director; Benjamin S. Clendaniel, Director of Airport Operations; and Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations, highlighting major initiatives and operational updates. Eustace Mita Sr. of ICONA Resorts captivated the audience with exciting plans for the proposed ICONA Wonderland in Ocean City, offering a glimpse into a transformative project for the area. The event marked a strong start to 2025, underscoring the Chamber's commitment to keeping its members informed and connected with developments that shape the local economy.

Our next luncheon meeting is Thursday, February 20, 2025.
Networking and check-in begins at 11:30am with the program to start at 12:00pm.

Leading Leaders Seminar—Jan. 22

Chamber members participated in an insightful *Leading Leaders* Seminar hosted by Cathy Walker of Dale Carnegie Training of Central and Southern New Jersey. Held at UMC The Shores in Ocean City on Jan. 22, this engaging workshop provided seasoned leaders with the tools and strategies needed to navigate the complexities of guiding other leaders. Participants explored leadership styles, learned how to create a sustainable organizational vision, and discovered ways to foster collaboration, accountability, and growth within their leadership teams.



Small Business Symposium—Jan. 17, 24, 31

The Chamber partnered with Cape May County bizHub to present *4-Part Small Business Symposium* at Atlantic Cape Community College—Cape May Campus.

The workshop series featured an impressive lineup of speakers who shared valuable insights to help small businesses thrive in today's competitive landscape.

Sage Del Valle, CEO of Differnt Systems, (pictured left) opened the series with a presentation titled *New Technology & Small Business – Breaking Through the Hype*, offering practical advice on leveraging technology effectively.

Janel Mallon and Nina Contento, (pictured right) social media experts from Laura Bishop Communications, explored strategies for *Growing Engagement & Spreading Awareness With Social Media*.

Bill Stefanelli of Leading to Success provided actionable tips for improving *Operational Efficiency for Small Businesses*, while Richard Healey of Impact Business Coaching will close the series on Feb. 7 with a session on *Growing Sales & Marketing In Your Small Business*.

Each speaker delivered actionable tools and strategies, making the symposium an invaluable resource for business owners and professionals.



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Out on the Town with Our Members

One of the Chamber's staff recently visited **Smeltzer & Sons** in Cape May Court House for chicken feed and dog supplies and was blown away by the store's variety and quality. Smeltzer & Sons carries a broad selection of pet products, featuring trusted brands to meet the needs of dogs, cats, birds, farm animals, and even horses. Whether it's premium pet food, treats, or accessories, they have something for every animal lover. The store also goes beyond pets, offering a full range of items for gardening, lawn care, and landscaping, including hardscaping supplies, tools, and bulk stone. In preparation for winter, they also stock a variety of snow removal essentials. Smeltzer & Sons has truly earned its reputation as a local favorite for pet owners and homeowners alike!



Smeltzer & Sons is located at 1139 Route 9, Cape May Court House. They are open everyday, except Sundays, from 8am-5pm. Learn more at www.smeltzers.com.



One of our staff members spent an afternoon at **Cold Spring Brewery**, located within the Historic Cold Spring Village, and had an incredible time catching up with friends. The cozy ambiance of the restored 1804 English-style barn made it the perfect spot to relax and enjoy great conversation. As New Jersey's first non-profit microbrewery, Cold Spring Brewery not only offers a unique atmosphere but also a lineup of expertly crafted beers that reflect both quality and tradition. We tried a flight to sample their refreshing ales and rich porters. They even make their own sodas, so there's something for everyone to enjoy! The brewery's commitment to history is evident, with proceeds supporting the educational programs at Historic Cold Spring Village. Whether you're drawn to the charm of the historic setting, the exceptional craft beer, or the friendly service, Cold Spring Brewery offers an experience that's as heartwarming as it is flavorful.

Cold Spring Brewery is located at 735 Seashore Road in Lower Township. Visit www.coldspringbrewery.org for tap menu and events. Visit www.hcsv.org for more information on Historic Cold Spring Village.

A member of our staff dined at **The Cricket Club**, a charming restaurant located in a beautifully renovated Victorian building in historic downtown Cape May. Upon arrival, they were warmly greeted by friendly hosts who provided attentive service throughout the evening. Opting for the chicken sandwich, they found it to be a delightful choice from the eclectic menu, which draws inspiration from local ingredients and global flavors. After dinner, they enjoyed a specialty cocktail from the unique selection of libations at the one-of-a-kind wooden bar. The evening was further enhanced by live music, a regular feature at The Cricket Club, creating a lively and enjoyable atmosphere.



The Cricket Club is located at 106 Decatur Street in Cape May. Visit www.capemaycricketclub.com for hours, menu and events.

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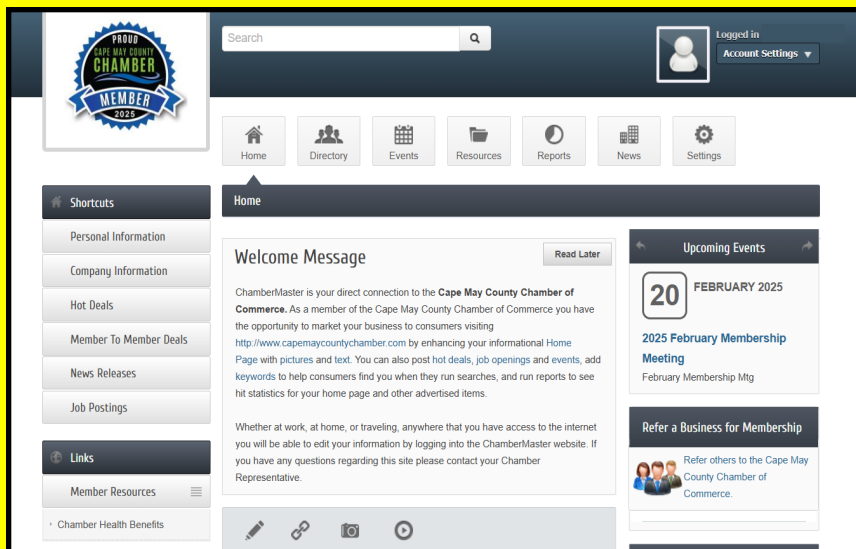
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Maximize Your Membership: Share, Connect, and Shine!

Did you know your Chamber membership gives you a platform to amplify your business?

- **Spread the Word:** Post your events, news, job openings, and special offers directly on the Chamber's website and membership portal—it's easy and effective!
- **Boost Your Visibility:** Keep your member profile updated with your products, services, hours, and more to help potential customers find you.
- **Shop Local & Save:** Discover products, services, and exclusive member-to-member deals and discounts from fellow Chamber members.



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Advertise in the 2025 Calendar of Events!

This high quality, four color, glossy calendar promotes Cape May County events, concerts and activities, with a distribution of 40,000. With affordable rates, this very popular calendar is a great way to promote your business to visitors and locals all year round.

**Contact Becky Kennedy,
Membership and Marketing Administrator
at (609) 465-7181 or email admin@cmcchamber.com
for pricing and availability.**

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Contact info@cmcchamber.com or call 609-465-7181 for more information and to book.

Cape May County Chamber of Commerce

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