

2024

Annual REPORT



the Chamber

*Greater Summerville / Dorchester County
Chamber of Commerce*



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dear Valued Business and Community Partners,

As we close out another remarkable year, I am filled with gratitude. This year has been a testament to the power of collaboration, vision, and unwavering commitment to making Summerville and Dorchester County a vibrant place to live, work, and grow.

First and foremost, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Board of Directors. Their dedication and tireless work have been instrumental in addressing some of the most pressing issues our community faces, including leading the charge for a countywide vision plan and securing funding for school growth. Their leadership has been invaluable, and their efforts will leave a lasting impact on generations to come.

To our members, thank you for being the heart of our organization. Your participation and engagement in shaping our community inspire all of us. Whether you've attended events, shared your insights, or supported local initiatives, your contributions make all the difference.

Our staff deserves special recognition as well. This year, they have gone above and beyond to meet the needs of our members. Their creativity and hard work in reimagining our events and programs have set a new standard for excellence and innovation.

To our sponsors, thank you for your unwavering support. Your generosity has ensured that we could deliver a strong lineup of programs and events, making our community stronger and more connected.

A special congratulations goes to the Leadership Dorchester Class of 2024. Your outstanding fundraising efforts and the creation of a beautiful park in the heart of Summerville have truly enhanced the fabric of our community. Your dedication and passion are an inspiration to us all.

As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, I encourage each of you to continue supporting one another and investing in our community. Together, we can build on the momentum we've created and tackle new challenges with the same spirit of collaboration and determination. Your involvement in our efforts will be crucial as we strive to make an even greater impact in the years to come.

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Here's to a bright future filled with promise and possibility!

With Gratitude,

Rita Berry
President and CEO



LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

I'm proud to reflect on the significant strides we've made together at the Chamber. In 2024, we re-established the Inner City Visit, reigniting valuable conversations and connections. We learned so much from our neighbors in Anderson and Spartanburg. This trip officially helped launch the groundwork for a comprehensive vision plan encompassing all of Dorchester County, setting a strong foundation for the future.

Our focus extended to tracking critical issues at our Power Hours. Topics included child care, housing affordability, the economic impacts of our railways, and building new schools. These efforts, coupled with our many ribbon cuttings, underscore the thriving business environment and health of our community.

A special thanks goes to Rita Berry, our CEO, for her partnership and dedication throughout the year. Rita, the Chamber is lucky to have you, and our community is better because of your influence.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the Chamber staff and the Board for their hard work and commitment—it's been a privilege to serve alongside you. I also owe a special thanks to the Executive Committee and the Chamber Foundation Board. You all played a pivotal role in your efforts to advance the Chamber's key priorities. Have I told you how good of a job you're doing?

Congratulations to the 2024 award winners! With more applicants than ever, this year's honorees are a true reflection of the incredible individuals shaping our community.

To 2025 Board Chair, Chris Kahler, your energy and dedication to the organization has been critical and we all stand ready to help you in 2025. Thank you for your friendship and leadership.

Finally, I'd like to thank my team at Asset Integration Consultants, and most importantly, my family for their unwavering support as I fulfilled this role. It's been an honor to serve as your Board Chairman in 2024.

Sincerely,



Michael Wood
Asset Integration
2024 Board Chairman



2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

Michael Wood
Chairman of the Board
Asset Integration Consultants

Chris Kahler, P.E.
Chair Elect
Summerville CPW

Greg Shuler
Chair Elect Designate
Vice Chair, Finance Division
The Bank of South Carolina

Marshall Connor
Immediate Past Chair
Trident Technical College

Don Smith
Vice Chair, Business & Community Development
Hendrick Automotive

Jason Russo
Vice Chair, Membership & Marketing
Hilton Garden Inn/Homewood Suites

Melissa Wright
Vice Chair, Education & Workforce
Dorchester County Career & Technology Center

Amanda Redick
Vice Chair, Public Policy
Project Controls Specialist
HDR

Board of Directors

Kelly Alfreds, Esq.
Attorney
Steinberg Law Firm

Patrick Bosse
Chief Administrative Officer
Roper St. Francis Berkeley Hospital

Deb Campeau
Owner
Rewire LLC

Stephen Chandler
CEO
Summerville Medical Center

Jonathan Dawley
President & CEO
KION North America Corp.

Kevin Graham
Plant Engineering
Volvo Cars USA

Suzanne Green
Owner
Millie Lewis Models and Talent, Ltd

Jack Griffith
Partner
TW Insurance Agency

Will Helmlly
President and CEO
Home Telecom

Jill Nicholas
Co-Owner
Four Green Fields

Dr. Kay Phillips
Executive Director
Dorchester Children's Advocacy
Center

Dr. Shane Robbins
Superintendent
Dorchester School District 2

Aaron Schmitt
Senior Project Manager
SeamonWhiteside

Jessi Shuler
Director of Planning
Town of Summerville

Tara Smith
Chief Operating Officer
REV Federal Credit Union

Kelley Steen
CPA
FORVIS

BGEN Henry "Hank" Taylor, ASAF (Ret)
Retiree

Dr. Thomas Taylor
Owner
Alignment Chiropractic

Gen. Henry "Hank" L Taylor, USAF (Ret)
Retiree

Will Waring
Attorney
Thurmond Kirchner & Timbes, P.A.

John Truluck (Ex officio)
Director
Dorchester County Economic
Development

Steve Doniger (Ex officio)
Executive Director
Summerville DREAM

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The 2024 Leadership Dorchester Class celebrated a significant achievement with the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Children's Discovery Garden in Azalea Park.

This exciting addition to the park is a testament to the vision and hard work of the Leadership Dorchester Class, which aimed to create an engaging space for children to explore and interact with their surroundings.

The Discovery Garden features various nature and music-inspired playground pieces, wrapped benches, and a children's amphitheater, offering a vibrant, interactive environment for young visitors.

This community service project, spearheaded by the 2024 Leadership Dorchester Class in collaboration with the Summerville Parks Foundation, Summerville Parks and Recreation, and the Chamber's Foundation revitalizes an underutilized area of Summerville's Azalea Park, turning it into a place of play, learning, and community connection.



HITTING THE ROAD

This year we embarked on a transformative three-day Intercity Visit to Anderson and Spartanburg, South Carolina. This trip brought together leaders from the Chamber, the Town of Summerville, and Dorchester County, all united by a shared goal of fostering learning and collaboration for the betterment of our community. Over the course of the visit, discussions centered on critical issues impacting Dorchester County's growth and development, including addressing homelessness, tackling childcare challenges, managing growth and economic development, expanding recreational opportunities, and building trust and collaboration across institutions.

In Spartanburg County, participants were inspired by innovative approaches to addressing homelessness and expanding childcare access. Community-driven programs and partnerships in these areas provided valuable insights into solutions that could be adapted for Dorchester County. Additionally, Spartanburg's growth management strategies highlighted ways to balance economic development with preserving the community's character and livability.

Anderson County offered a deep dive into the importance of trust and collaboration among local stakeholders. Their leadership model emphasized fostering cooperation among diverse groups, which has led to successful public-private partnerships and impactful community projects. These approaches served as a valuable model for how Dorchester County can strengthen its own collaborative efforts.

This trip would not have been possible without the generous support of sponsors HTI and BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina.



MEMBERSHIP CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

124 NEW MEMBERS

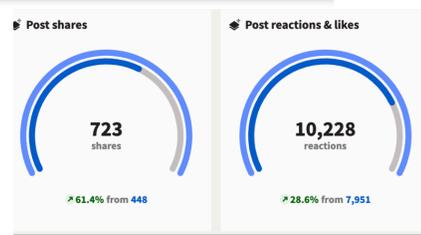
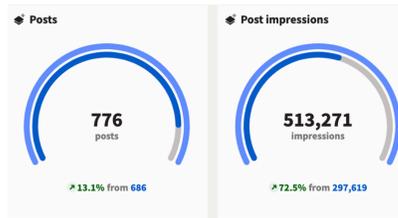
In 2024, we experienced remarkable growth and momentum, which has made our Chamber an even stronger force in our local business landscape. We are dedicated to supporting your business's success and helping you make valuable connections within our network..

40 RIBBON CUTTINGS

Throughout 2024, our Chamber of Commerce celebrated numerous exciting moments in the life of a business through an array of ribbon-cutting ceremonies. These ceremonies were not merely symbolic; they were a testament to the spirit of innovation, entrepreneurship, and growth that defines our community.



SOCIAL MEDIA



ENGAGING EVENTS

Signature Events in 2024:

- Member Awards
- Women's Luncheon
- Economic Forecast
- Industry Appreciation
- Candidate Forum
- Legislative Luncheon

Other Events in 2024:

- Inner City Visit
- 27th Annual Golf Tournament
- Business After Hours
- Division Meetings
- Nonprofit Council Meetings
- Charleston Regional Business Expo
- Elected Leaders Reception
- Area Council Meetings
- Ribbon Cuttings
- New Member Coffees
- Young Professionals Socials
- Wednesday Workshops
- BOOST

Together, we've expanded our impact and deepened the relationships that make us stronger. I couldn't be more proud of what we've accomplished and am excited for the opportunities the future holds.

-Rita Berry
President & CEO





SCHOLARSHIPS

Investing for the future

In partnership with Robert Bosch, LLC, the Chamber and the Chamber Foundation awards two \$1,000 renewable scholarships to graduating seniors and a \$500 technical scholarship annually in Dorchester County. Bosch, a leading industry in the region, has been a significant community presence for 50 years.

There were 24 STEM applications and four technical applications, making the selection process quite challenging.

On June 18, 2024, during the Chamber Board Meeting, Melissa Wright, Chair of the Education and Workforce Development Division and member of the scholarship committee, proudly announced this year's scholarship recipients.

The \$1,000 renewable scholarships are awarded to Jacob Zahn, Summerville High, and Krystal Judy, Dorchester Academy. The \$500 technical scholarship goes to Emily Marchant from Woodlands High School.

"The cost of education is significantly rising, and scholarships reduce the financial burden for students and families. By supporting students in their academic journeys, we are investing in the next generation of innovators and leaders."

- Melissa Wright



ANNUAL AWARD WINNER

LARGE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Summerville Medical Center

Summerville Medical Center has been a cornerstone of Dorchester County since 1993 and has grown from a small hospital to a 174-bed, acute-care facility that serves families across the region. With comprehensive medical services, including emergency care, surgical procedures, cardiac, imaging, and maternity services, they are dedicated to providing exceptional care.

They deliver more than 2,700 babies a year and have one of the largest obstetrics programs in South Carolina. Last year the hospital celebrated the opening of a Level III NICU as part of the larger women's and children's program designed to provide exceptional care for high-risk moms and babies close to home.

Summerville Medical Center was recognized for the second consecutive year by Healthgrades as one of America's 250 Best Hospitals™, ranking among the top 5% of U.S. hospitals.

With more than 1,000 dedicated employees, physicians, and volunteers, the hospital is committed to reducing healthcare disparities, providing over \$53 million in charity care in 2023 alone, and offering health education programs to promote community well-being. That same year, Summerville Medical Center and Trident Health contributed more than \$50 million in taxes to support the community they proudly serve and call home.

Summerville Medical Center exemplifies excellence, innovation, and community commitment. With high patient satisfaction, cutting-edge care, and a deep sense of responsibility to the people it serves, it stands as a pillar of healthcare in Dorchester County.



ANNUAL AWARD WINNER

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Grand Forest, Inc.

Grand Forest was founded in Summerville in 1985 and has since become the leading U.S. manufacturer of chainsaw protective clothing and distributor of premium forestry tools. Committed to in-house manufacturing, Grand Forest supports local employment while ensuring top-quality products.

The company's industry leadership is evident through its ability to design, develop, and distribute all products under one roof, maintaining complete quality control and upholding rigorous safety standards.

The company's guiding principle, "Our Why is Our People!" underscores their dedication to preserving a strong South Carolina workforce. The factory operates as a true cut-and-sew facility where every employee's expertise and craftsmanship contribute to safety and excellence.

Giving back is key to their mission. Employees hold leadership roles on boards like the Summerville Chamber of Commerce, Trident Technical College Foundation, Girl Scouts, Flowertown Players, Forest Resource Association, and Sew Products board.

Grand Forest's unwavering commitment to safety, quality, and community well-being defines them as an outstanding business and community partner.



Beyond BASIC Life Skills

Beyond BASIC is a nonprofit dedicated to empowering adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through life skills training, education, and community involvement building confidence, independence, and essential life skills. Their hands-on, inclusive approach sets them apart, with participants called "Teammates" and staff "Team Captains," emphasizing equality, shared responsibility, and self-empowerment.

By partnering with local businesses and nonprofits, Beyond BASIC creates jobs and social opportunities while challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusion.

Beyond supporting "Teammates," Beyond BASIC actively educates the community on the value of hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities, driving positive change in attitudes and local policies. They launched Beyond Handcrafted—the area's first inclusive gift shop supporting entrepreneurs with disabilities. Additionally, Beyond BASIC has launched a vending machine business, allowing Teammates to develop practical job skills while providing reliable, high-quality vending services.

The efforts of Ashton, Molly, the Team Captains, and most importantly the Teammates at Beyond BASIC have not only helped give hope and resources to the special needs community, but they have done it in a way that unites the community.



ANNUAL AWARD WINNER

EMERGING LEADER OF THE YEAR

Tiffany Johnson-Wilson

Tiffany Johnson-Wilson is the founder and CEO of Johnson & Wilson Real Estate Company. She has built a woman-owned business recognized for its excellence and innovation. Her leadership has led to the development of programs like "Hometown Heroes," supporting local service members, teachers, and first responders, and the "Lease Buyout Program," assisting renters in becoming homeowners.

Tiffany's achievements have been recognized by the U.S. Small Business Administration, naming her the 2024 South Carolina Female Small Businessperson of the Year.

Beyond business, Tiffany is a passionate advocate for equity in real estate and a mentor for women leaders. Through her nonprofit, Hope for Homes, she empowers underserved families with secure housing and essential skills for financial independence.

Her deep commitment to Summerville is evident in her service on boards such as the Sustainability Institute and Lowcountry Local First, as well as her involvement with Habitat for Humanity, the South Carolina Community Loan Fund. She also serves as Councilwoman for District 2 for the Town of Summerville.



ANNUAL AWARD WINNER

TRAILBLAZER OF THE YEAR

Kate Speciale

Kate has demonstrated exceptional leadership and vision since joining Summerville Medical Center as Director of Surgical Services in 2016. Her influence has been pivotal in expanding and enhancing the hospital's surgical program, which has grown by 37% under her leadership.

Her forward-thinking approach has been instrumental in launching new surgical programs tailored to the community's evolving needs, such as pediatric general surgery, pediatric GI and ENT surgery, a comprehensive spine program, and Level II trauma care.

Prior to her role at Summerville Medical, Kate made a lasting impact at Trident Medical Center, where she led the development of robotic surgical programs and helped establish a successful burn program in collaboration with the Joseph B. Still Burn Center.

Beyond her professional achievements, Kate is deeply committed to community service. As a 2019 Leadership Dorchester graduate, she played a key role in raising \$150,000 for a STEAM lab at Summerville Elementary School and later served on the Leadership Dorchester Advisory Council for three years. Her dedication extends to national service, as she currently serves on the HCA Healthcare Surgical Services National Advisory Board.

Kate's unwavering dedication to high-quality patient care, community service, and professional excellence has earned her top rankings within HCA Healthcare's South Atlantic Division and the prestigious Unit of Distinction award. Her visionary leadership, professional impact, and passion for giving back make her a truly deserving recipient of this award.



ANNUAL AWARD WINNER

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Anna McSwain

Anna McSwain is the Marketing & Investor Relations Administrator for Dorchester County Economic Development. Her entrepreneurial spirit and strategic prowess have propelled her to the forefront of our community.

Anna regularly assists in event production and fundraisers for multiple nonprofits including Charleston Southern University, Summerville Baptist Church, the Summerville Chamber, and The Ark of SC. As a professional photographer, she has donated her services to nonprofits, families, and community events across the region. Her generosity to the community is not new as she also dedicated her time and resources during COVID to unite and engage her community by offering "Porch Portraits" to families during the pandemic quarantine. This act of kindness awarded her a "One in a Million" recognition from Multiplying Good, formerly the Jefferson Award.

This past year Anna volunteered as a professional instructor by dedicating her time and talent to participating in Dancing with the ARK Stars. Through her involvement, she not only raised vital funds for Alzheimer's care but also helped to raise awareness about the local nonprofit which produces the annual event, helping it to achieve a record fundraising amount and sellout attendance.

Her support of the local arts scene extends for many years as she has spent decades volunteering as a dance instructor, choreographer, production assistant, and cheer coach for the local nonprofit stage scene and children's recreation leagues.



ANNUAL AWARD WINNER

BERLIN G MYERS AWARD

Colin Martin

Colin Martin dedicated 25 years of service to our nation as a United States Naval Officer and retired a Navy Captain in 1997. He commanded a guided missile frigate across seven oceans and served in multiple leadership roles, as well as an instructor at the Surface Warfare Department Head School.

Following his military service, Colin continued his legacy of leadership in local government. He served as the County Administrator for Dorchester County, the Executive Director of the Berkeley County Water and Sanitation Utility, and the Town Administrator for the Town of Summerville, retiring in 2020.

Colin has shown extraordinary dedication to community service. His extensive volunteer work and board leadership include Dorchester Habitat for Humanity, Summerville Presbyterian Church, Summerville Rotary Club, Charleston Navy League, Trident Medical Center Advisory Board, Lake Marion Regional Water Agency, Charleston Area Transportation System, the BCD COG, Palmetto House Homeless Shelter, Dorchester County Centennial Committee, Sculpture in the South, Dorchester PAWS, Meals on Wheels, and Public Works Arts Center.

Colin continues to inspire as a full-time volunteer, giving back to the community with the same passion and dedication that has defined his entire life. His selfless service, leadership, and impact make him truly deserving of this Lifetime Achievement Award. Please join us in celebrating a remarkable individual whose legacy will continue to shape and uplift our community for years to come.



SUMMERVILLE TOURISM

2024 Stats

Visitors in Visitor Center
5,563 guests

Relocation Inquiries
447 people

Leads Assisted
7,672 (9% increase from last year)



Sweet Tea Festival



With the assistance of SCPRT's Tourism Advertising Grant, we marketed in 9 national and regional magazines, ran a spring social media ad campaign that achieved 1,272,336 impressions and 27,278 link clicks, advertised on two interstate billboards, and featured signage and video ads in two state welcome centers.

Sweet Tea Cocktail Contest
People's Choice winner:
Amaret-Tea from
Sweetwater One Twenty Three

Based on feedback from our members and with a vote from the Board of Directors, we have a clear vision for 2025.

2025 PRIORITIES

Below is an outline of the key initiatives for the Greater Summerville/Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce within our Divisions and Councils.

PUBLIC POLICY DIVISION

Secure a consultant and funding to develop a county-wide vision plan with input from the larger community

- Explore options for a more equitable school funding
- Encourage more Public/Private partnerships

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DIVISION

Support lifelong learning

- Partner with DD2 and DD4 to expand business partnerships
- Support mentorships and training
- Continue to advocate for a "Center of Excellence"
- Provide online resources and tools empowering individuals and businesses to thrive

MEMBER SERVICES DIVISION

Focus on member retention and new member growth

- Member spotlight for first year members
- Create a diagram roadmap for new members
- Planned icebreakers for businesses to interact and create an inclusive environment
- "Chamber Night at the _____" events

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Address barriers related to attainable housing and childcare

- Partner with other regional organizations that are aligned with these issues
- Engage with existing developers to identify barriers and opportunities



In 2025, the Chamber will demonstrate its unwavering commitment to our community by championing initiatives that matter most to our businesses and residents.

Chris Kahler, P.E.
2025 Chamber Chair
Summerville CPW