

NEWSLETTER >

Rochester Downtown Alliance

SocialICE 2018

In the 10th year of SocialICE, we have seen nothing but increases; increases in participating bars, attendance, and attractions.

Plus...

A preview of 2018 and a special 'Featured Stakeholder Series' with Claudia Tabini and Heidi Mestad.

From the ED

BY JENNA BOWMAN
RDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings Stakeholders,
I am pleased to share that 2018 is off to a positive start. On January 2nd, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) welcomed Bill Fay, formerly with ABC 6 News, to the team in the newly created Events Coordinator position. You will learn more about Bill in this issue, but we are very happy to have him on the team. The intentioned growth to a fifth full time staff person came through a test of a contract staff member last year. This growth is representative of the investment being made to expand on the marketing, programming, and event activation the RDA is focused on providing the Downtown community. On February 1st, the RDA moved from 4 3rd Street SW (above Grand Rounds Brew Pub) to 311 Broadway Avenue South (Historic Paine Furniture Building). The move, which you will read more about in the newsletter, reflects a growing need for additional space, as well as a desire to be more accessible to the public and Downtown stakeholders. We look forward to seeing you!

As you will read in this newsletter, we welcomed five individuals to the RDA Board as of January 1st. The RDA Board now totals 20 members. The RDA Board of Directors plays a critical role with the organization and I greatly appreciate the time and energy each board member provides to the RDA. I would encourage you to connect with the board members. They are your direct line to information about what is happening, but also to the strategic direction and focus of the organization.

As you will see throughout this newsletter, we are busy preparing for a full year. In total, there are 27 days of events and six total programs. Within those six programs, four are in their inaugural year. The programming portfolio is led by RDA Program Manager, Karli McElroy. The programming varies, with a focus on providing residents, visitors, and Downtown employees the opportunity to engage at their leisure. One particular program that reflects this focus is Games on the Grass. This program will offer those in Downtown the opportunity to use lawn and table games while they are on the Peace Plaza. The games will include such favorites as Checkers, Chess, Yard Yahtzee, and more. Thank you to University of Minnesota Rochester (Games Partner) and Destination Medical Center Economic Development Agency (Co-Partner) for this support of this program.

In closing, 2018 is shaping up to be another wonderful year. As always, your engagement is important to us. Please call, e-mail, or stop by; we are always more than happy to connect with you for a personal meeting as well.

Thank you,
Jenna Bowman



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DMC Discussions

STATE LEGISLATIVE LEADERS APPLAUD DMC
BY DMC STAFF



Destination Medical Center (DMC) was a topic at a recent 2018 State legislative preview hosted by the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce. In attendance were Republican and Democratic leaders from the House and Senate, including Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt, House Minority Representative Rick Hansen, Deputy Senate Majority Leader Jeremy Miller, and Assistant Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent.

As part of the discussion, the leaders were asked for their thoughts on DMC. There is strong support. All legislators agreed DMC is a model for economic development and job growth for communities throughout Minnesota.

Speaker Daudt called DMC a “win-win-win” for the economy – locally, regionally and statewide. Senator Miller said DMC is a great example of a public-private partnership. Representative Hansen acknowledged DMC’s reach outside of Rochester. And Senator Kent noted DMC’s ripple effect across the state.

“This feedback is important and validates the significant role DMC plays as the largest economic development initiative in Minnesota,” said Lisa Clarke, DMC Economic Development Agency Executive Director. “We have a wonderful story to tell – a rural success story - with much progress recognized in just a few short years with hundreds of millions of dollars in new investments and construction activity, and many milestones have been met and partnerships forged within the community, county, and around the state.”

As the momentum continues, DMC looks forward to sharing its knowledge and lessons learned with other communities. As Senator Kent stated: “We are one Minnesota. We’re all in this together.”



SocialICE Breaks Records

BY MEGHANN SOUTHWICK
COMMUNITY AND EVENTS MANAGER

SocialICE - Downtown Rochester's Premier Ice Bar Event - celebrated its 10th anniversary in the coolest fashion - literally. Having moved the event one week earlier, the cooler weather certainly aided in maintaining the ice and the crowds gathered Downtown to enjoy it! The event saw an estimated total of 51,500 people across the three event dates, making it the most attended SocialICE since its inception in 2009. This is an increase of 11,500 from 2017 in which event traffic reached 40,000. This is the first time the event has seen attendance surpass 50,000 people; the highest overall attendance recorded previously was 46,000 in 2016.

The estimated economic impact of SocialICE also saw substantial growth in 2018 reaching \$1,810,907. The estimated economic impact in 2017 was \$1,301,121, and \$1,313,109 in 2016.

SocialICE 2018 attendees enjoyed:

- Specialty drinks from the nine uniquely themed ice bars
- Live DJs nightly
- Life-sized ice sculptures, fire pits, bean bag boards, and LED illuminated seating
- Taking photos in front of life-sized SocialICE letters on the east section of the Peace Plaza

2018 proved to be a record-breaking year. We look forward to what 2019 will bring!

Participating Bars and Restaurants

- Victoria's Ristorante & Wine Bar: Mardi Gras
- The Tap House: Taco Truck Food Truck
- The Half Barrel Bar & Kitchen: Game of Thrones
- The Loop: The Carnival Has Come to Town!
- Dooley's Pub: Dr. Seuss
- Martinis at the Kahler Grand: Lego
- Kathy's Pub: King Kong
- Chester's Kitchen & Bar: Grease Lightning
- Salute! Wine Bar & More: Back to the Future

Congratulations to the 2018 Ice Bar Champions Cup Winner: Dooley's Pub!

Event Partners

- Prototyping Activation Partner: Destination Medical Center – Economic Development Agency
- Photo Station Partners: Think Mutual Bank & Collins Orthodontics
- Heating Partner: Kraus-Anderson Construction
- Radio Partner: Townsquare Media
- TV Partner: CW Rochester



Survey Results

558 Respondents (as of February 15, 2018)

- 76% of attendees were Rochester Area Residents
- 75% of attendees felt more connected to the community after attending SocialICE
- 87% of attendees felt SocialICE motivated them to seek out more activities in Downtown Rochester during the winter months
- 76% of attendees visited at least one shop or restaurant while Downtown for SocialICE
- 77% of attendees view Rochester as a more innovative place after attending SocialICE
- 84% of attendees heard about SocialICE through Social Media

Funding

BY JENNA BOWMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2006, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) began as an organization. In that first year, there was a \$300,000 budget and one staff member, Executive Director A.M. Sandy Keith. At that time 50% of the budget came from the newly created Special Service District, while the remaining 50% was split by the City of Rochester and the Mayo Clinic. Five years later in 2011, the budget had grown to \$525,617 and four staff. That year the Special Service District levy accounted for 36% of the budget, with the RDA matching that through its own generated funding. The City of Rochester and Mayo Clinic each contributed 14% of that year's budget. Fast forward another five years and in 2016 the RDA's budget was \$722,736. The total staff count was still four. However, the RDA saw a boost in the percentage of budget that it generated, with that total being 45%. The Special Service District levy produced 34%, with the City of Rochester and Mayo Clinic collectively providing 20% of the budget. A full breakdown of the budgets and the details can be found below.

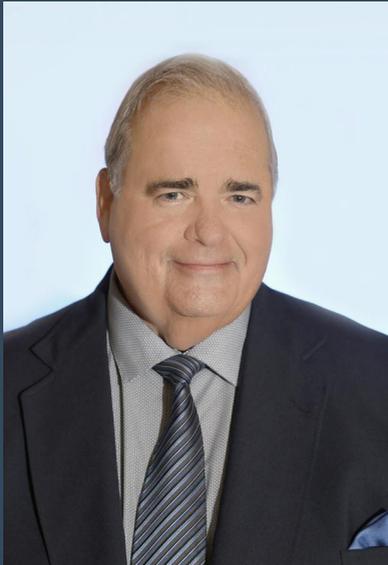
YEAR	SSD	City	Mayo	RDA Generated	Total Expense Budget	\$ Change From Previous Year	Staff Total
2006	50%	25%	25%	\$0	\$300,000	\$0	1
2007	48.50%	23%	23%	5.50%	\$313,126	\$13,126	2
2008	51%	23%	23%	3%	\$324,500	\$11,374	3
2009	44%	19%	19%	18%	\$391,000	\$66,500	3
2010	39%	17%	17%	27%	\$448,826	\$57,826	4
2011	36%	14%	14%	36%	\$525,617	\$76,791	4
2012	40%	15%	15%	30%	\$510,189	(\$15,428)	4
2013	37%	13%	13%	37%	\$572,240	\$62,051	4
2014	38%	13%	13%	37%	\$580,293	\$8,053	4
2015	35%	11%	11%	43%	\$656,434	\$76,141	4
2016	34%	10%	10%	45%	\$722,736	\$66,302	4
2017	31%	12%	12%	45%	\$852,158	\$129,422	4
2018	32%	11%	11%	46%	\$868,816	\$16,658	5

The RDA's funding is one of the main questions and areas of interest. Due to the complex nature of the Special Service District structure, which comes from state legislation, there was a desire to determine a digestible statistic to share with contributing stakeholders. As a part of the 2017 Annual Report, that number was determined. On average a contributing business provides 10 cents per square foot of space within the Downtown. For the ease of math, this means that a business occupying 150 square feet would contribute \$150 for the year.

The RDA is committed to financial stability and adhering to a strong level of fiscal responsibility. In 2017, a Reserves Policy was passed by the Board of Directors. This ensures the organization has three months of operating expenses reserved. Each year an operating budget is reviewed and voted on by the board. If you should have any questions about the organization's finances or the details in this article, please reach out to us.

From the Chair

BY **AL MANNINO**
BOARD CHAIR



“RDA continues to provide motivation for the community, region, and over 3 million annual visitors to experience and enjoy our Downtown.”

May I start by thanking, our 2017 Board Chair Bern O'Brien and departing board members Steve Borchardt, Bruce Dahlstrom, Council Member Ed Hruska, Teresa McCormack, Matt Murphy, and Ahmad Siddiqui for their dedicated and insightful presence. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

We began the year by moving the RDA office to a street front office in the Paine Building. The space will provide room for staff and an emphasis on the RDA as a integral part of the Rochester experience.

One of our strengths is the 2018 Board of Directors. They are a crafted representation of multiple segments of our Downtown businesses. This Board will provide energy and experience.

A very well organized 2018 marketing plan is in place. The plan defines nine different strategic goals to be accomplished this year. They range in topic and size but each is meant to help move the general marketing and

branding of Downtown. Last year, three new programs were introduced. These included, Let's Play Rochester, The Bookworm Walk, and Move on the Plaza. This year, four new programs will be introduced. Two will occur on the Peace Plaza, but the other two will take place in other locations in the Downtown core.

We will also investigate the programing that many communities focus on called Clean, Green, and Safe. While the RDA focus has been driving traffic, we are aware that increased Downtown activation means a need for attention in this area.

All in all, 2018 will be an exciting year and I look forward to sharing more information as the year progresses.

The dynamic metamorphosis of the Downtown business and entertainment environment since the founding of the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) is nothing short of exceptional. RDA continues to provide motivation for the community, region, and over 3 million annual visitors to experience and enjoy our Downtown.

I'm honored to have been selected as the RDA 2018 Board Chair. I am a Business Consultant and have served on the RDA Board since 2014. I've been involved with implementing a number of events such as Zumba on the Plaza, Movies in the Park, and the RedBall Project.

From the Chair is a recurring article within the RDA Newsletter where the sitting Board Chair reflects on the past quarter and speaks to the next quarter.

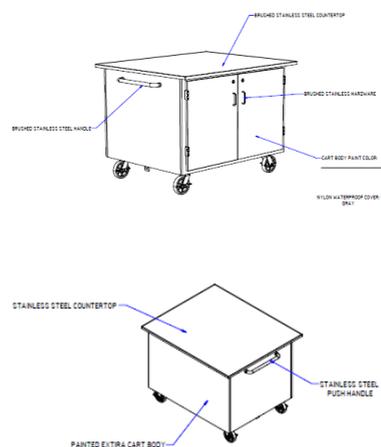
2018 Programs Preview

BY KARLI MCELROY
PROGRAM MANAGER

We're bringing back some favorite programs from 2017, and don't miss out when we test some new concepts to add vibrancy to our Downtown community!

Games on the Grass

Starting this summer, Games on the Grass will feature public lawn and tables games housed in a portable game cart near the grassy area of Peace Plaza. This passive program will provide residents, patients, and visitors to enjoy green space and play games over lunch, or between appointments. The Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) is excited to partner with Destination Medical Center, and University of MN - Rochester on this project.



of-way of the street. According to a survey of businesses who sponsored parklets outside their establishments in San Francisco, New York City, and Philadelphia; increased visibility and revenue of their business were reported after installation. The RDA is excited to be pursuing construction of up to two parklets on Historic Third Street this spring - with anticipated opening at the end of April.



RDA PARKLET PLAN



RDA PARKLET PLAN



Social Steps

Happening on Peace Plaza select Fridays, June - August, Social Steps features free themed dance classes and performances by

Dahl Dance. The RDA is also excited to collaborate with Kahler Hospitality Group to provide accompanying drinks to each themed class.

Bookworm Walk

Back by popular demand - the Bookworm Walk is a children's book walk set in flower planters along the Riverfront and ending at the Rochester Riverfront Mural and waterfall. The Bookworm Walk will feature four classic children stories mid-May through the end of August.



Historic Third Street Parklets

A parklet is a temporarily constructed mini-park within the public right-



Popcorn Day

BY BILL FAY
EVENTS COORDINATOR

The Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) celebrated its first event of the year in conjunction with National Popcorn Day 2018. RDA once again partnered with Carroll's Corn to provide complimentary bags of triple mix popcorn to people in two Downtown locations; the Subway Level outside of Associated Bank and the first floor of Shops at University Square.

The popularity of the 2nd Annual event was evident early on as crowds of people gathered in the in both locations before the event had even started. The excitement continued throughout the morning and early afternoon with a steady flow of people snagging a bag on their way by the tables.

After running out of popcorn in about 30 minutes in 2017, the RDA increased the number of bags from 1,000 to approximately 2,000. In 2018, staff handed out popcorn for about an hour in the Subway location and 90 minutes in the Shops at University Square.

The celebration of National Popcorn Day is meant to not only bring happiness to those who work and interact in Downtown Rochester daily, but also to say thank you to the community for being so supportive of the RDA and its mission of keeping Downtown vibrant. The RDA looks forward to continued engagement with the Downtown community, employees, and stakeholders through events like National Popcorn Day.

RDA Board Members

BY SAMANTHA ROSSI
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER



Photo (from left to right): Bern O'Brien, Bruce Dahlstrom, Ahmad Siddiqui, Teresa McCormack, Steve Borchardt, and Matt Murphy.

The Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) would like to take this opportunity to thank five members of the Board who served their final year on the Board of Directors. These members include Steve Borchardt (Rochester Area Foundation) Bruce Dahlstrom (Hers Women's Clothing), Council Member Ed Hruska, Teresa McCormack (The Urban Studio), Matt Murphy (Kathy's Pub), and Ahmad Siddiqui (The UPS Store). Both Council Member Hruska and Ahmad have served on the Board since 2010. Bruce, Teresa, and Matt have all served since 2011. Steve has served on the Board since 2014. These individuals have provided a tremendous amount of time and energy to the RDA. We thank them for their passion, commitment, and leadership.

The RDA is pleased to announce the appointment of five new Board members. The names and details about those individuals can be found below. In total there were ten applicants, all of whom were of very high quality. The Board Development Committee reviewed all ten applications and made their appointment recommendation to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors. We thank all those individuals who took the time and energy to apply. The RDA is fortunate to have such skilled and passionate stakeholders.



NAURA ANDERSON – CASTLE COMMUNITY

Naura has a strong background in marketing, communications, and public relations. In addition, she is well versed in event logistics and community engagement. When asked which of the RDA values resonates the most with her, Naura shared, "Build It Together. I am a firm believer that bringing people together around a common goal will achieve the best possible outcome. Including diverse backgrounds and perspectives brings new ideas and invites new audiences to participate in all that our community has to offer."



PAUL ARMON - ARMON ARCHITECTURE

Paul is both a property owner and architect who has been involved in the RDA Space & Place Committee. He has a strong background in strategic development. Paul's desire to serve on the Board come from a place of wanting Downtown Rochester to be a better place to live, work, and have fun. When asked what he would bring to the Board of Directors, Paul shared, "I will bring a realistic approach to problem solving and help to keep the vision simple, keeping the programs realistic, manageable, and effective."



JENNIFER BECKER - THE BLEU DUCK

Jennifer is co-owner and Director of Special Events at Bleu Duck Kitchen, situated in the Historic Conley-Mass building. Not only does she have 23 years of experience in the service industry, but also supports the Rochester Downtown Alliance's view of collectively creating a welcoming, vibrant, and unique Downtown Rochester. Jennifer's combination of leadership and vision, with an ability to collaborate, make her an excellent source for Downtown events. When asked what she is looking forward to by serving on the board, Jennifer replied, "I am excited to see Downtown Rochester thrive; providing opportunities and support for Downtown is the best way to see that growth!"



CHRIS FIERST - THE HALF BARREL

Chris is a co-owner of The Half Barrel and will represent the restaurant and bar industry on the Board of Directors. Chris brings knowledge in human resources. When asked which value resonates the most with him, Chris shared, "Be Passionate. I would say that it is my very nature to be passionate and positive about everything I do. I believe in order to be passionate about something you must fully understand it, and I am always striving to grow and educate myself more and more. I've resided here now for 6 years and am constantly seeking out new ventures, relationships, and greater depth of knowledge of Rochester and its business market."



SHRUTHI NAIK - MAYO CLINIC/VYRIAD, INC.

Shruthi is a local entrepreneur and co-owner of a biotech company which resides in the Mayo Clinic Business Accelerator. She serves in a volunteer capacity with the Minnesota Children's Museum and on the Committee for Urban Design and Environment (CUDE). Shruthi participated in the 2016 Rochester Prototyping Festival. When asked what she would bring to the Board, Shruthi shared, "I have become adept at bringing together teams to build and implement projects. I am excited about some of the new programs and Start-Up Grants that RDA is now offering and I believe my insights and skill sets will contribute to the vision of the RDA including helping to design new or expand existing events, programs, or services."



Ladies Night Out

BY MEGHANN SOUTHWICK
COMMUNITY AND EVENTS MANAGER

Back for its third year, Ladies Night Out will take place on Thursday, March 8 from 5:00-9:00pm in Downtown Rochester. Twenty-one businesses are registered to participate, each offering a unique promotion, incentive or activity. In 2017, a total of fifteen \$75 mini-grants were provided to support the expanded programming or promotion by a participating business. This year, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) will be providing up to twenty-five \$50 mini-grants to participating businesses allowing for even more programming.

This year, each attendee will receive a punch card and one complimentary punch upon arriving at the event, and an additional punch for every \$10 spent thereafter. At the end of the evening, attendees are encouraged to turn in their completed punch cards at one of the drop-off locations to be entered into prize drawings. Also new this year will be the opportunity to attend two Style Sessions leading up to the event led by Wardrobe Consultant, Alicia Goodson, and featuring Downtown products and retailers.

Ladies Night Out is intended to offer Rochester an opportunity to shop, dine, and mingle together while supporting Downtown businesses. The event aims to drive an increase in economic spend that night, as well as raise awareness of the unique products and services offered by the Downtown business community. Through post-event survey results, the estimated economic impact of the event last year was \$30,000. In addition, of the estimated 500 attendees, 81% of survey respondents agreed that Ladies Night Out motivated them to shop, dine, or use services in Downtown Rochester.

Data Makes an Impact

BY JENNA BOWMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2016, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) started to collect data as a part of each core events. This focus came from a conversation about understanding the impact of the investment being made to the core event portfolio. Aside from Thursdays on First & 3rd, the majority of events presented by the RDA do not see revenues. In fact, major events like SocialICE and STYLE, experience a double-digit loss. However, there is an awareness that to create and encourage vibrancy in the Downtown, these investments are critical.

In 2017, over 2,800 surveys were collected. While a large number were collected during on Thursdays on First & 3rd (1,292), there has been a focus and goal to ensure strong survey numbers have been

achieved for all events and programs. The insight from the surveys has allowed us to better understand items like who is attending, how much are they spending, and where are they getting their information. Through questions about spending, we estimate that there was \$9.27 million dollars in economic impact because of RDA events. Of that, it is estimated that \$7.55 million of that is from Thursdays on First & 3rd alone.

While economics is imperative to the vitality of Downtown Rochester, it is also important that we understand how the core events and programs are impacting our community. With that in mind, each survey asks for attendees to respond yes or no to the statement, "I feel more connected to my community after attending

this event." In 2017, 88% of attendees responded yes to that question. This insight is an important part of the work that the RDA is charged to do.

In 2018, the organization will focus on obtaining an increased number of surveys. The data continues to be an important part of our planning process, as well as our evaluation process. We will also seek to understand the changes seen in surveys collected in 2016, 2017, and this year. This focus positions the RDA as a data driven organization. It shapes our investments and ensures we are keeping a finger on the pulse of the community. If you are interested in learning more about this data collection and surveys, please let us know.



1,500+ surveys collected in 2016
2,800+ surveys collected in 2017



61% of attendees got their information about an event through social media



Over 300,000 attendees in 2017



88% of attendees feel more connected to the community after attending one of our events

Summer Events Preview

BY MEGHANN SOUTHWICK
COMMUNITY AND EVENTS MANAGER

Coming off a successful and exciting winter events season, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) is gearing up for another vibrant and active summer in Downtown Rochester. Continue reading for a complete list of summer events, a brief introduction to each event, and how you're able to get connected. The RDA is pleased to have such a positive impact on Downtown and the community through its events, programs, and activities. Enjoy, and we'll see you this summer!

Thursdays on First & 3rd **Every Thursday, June 7 – August 30**

Returning this summer, is another fun-filled 13 weeks of art, food and beverage vendors, and musical entertainment on 1st Avenue and the Peace Plaza. Downtown spaces will be activated in new and exciting ways. The weekly event will also feature a new line-up for Themed Thursdays, a component that continually provides innovative activities for all ages. If you are looking to get involved this year as a vendor, sponsor, or as a Themed Thursday partner, visit our website at downtownrochestermn.com for more information.

Movies in the Park **June 16, July 21, August 18, September 15, 2018**

In partnership with Premier Banks of Rochester and Charter House, Movies in the Park will be back for three Saturdays this summer, and newly added, one Saturday in the fall! Bring a chair or blanket and join us in Central Park for this free, fun outdoor event underneath the stars. Whether you're bringing a date or your whole family, there will be a movie for you. Stay tuned for movie reveals on our website.

Sidewalk Sale **July 16 - 22, 2018**

Summer always brings sizzling temperatures and sizzling deals. Join us all week long for exciting deals, specials, and summer discounts at participating retailers. Don't miss the sales along Peace Plaza and 1st Avenue during Thursdays on First & 3rd on July 19. Participating businesses will be lining the streets with deals all day long.

Dogs Downtown **Saturday, August 4th**

Mark your calendars for the 4th Annual Dogs Downtown event presented by Subaru of Rochester and Supporting Partners, Winona State University - Rochester and Olmsted Medical Center. The event is back for another day of tail-wagging fun! This canine-centric event is jam packed with activities, performances, games, and giveaways for you and your four-legged friends to enjoy. Dog lover, owner, or not, this event is truly one you won't want to miss.

New Events Coordinator

BY RDA STAFF



Bill Fay

Events Coordinator

Bill Fay is the Rochester Downtown Alliance's (RDA) Events Coordinator, a new position added in 2018. Bill had been with ABC 6 News (KAAL) for the entirety of his professional career before joining the RDA in January. Bill has spent a lot of time in Rochester throughout his life and has grown to love the community. He and his wife Brianna love Downtown Rochester so much, they got married there (see crazy family photo below). When he has free time, he enjoys spending time with Brianna and their kids Aiden and Lucy (who love walking the skyways!).

Why the RDA?

The city of Rochester is booming right now, including the Downtown area. The Rochester Downtown Alliance has been an integral part of the process to get to where the city is today. When I saw the opening to be part of a team that cares so much about the city it was an easy decision to make. Being a part of the RDA allows me to become more a part of the Downtown community that I love. The future is extremely bright for this organization and the city it serves. I'm extremely excited to do everything I can to continue the mission of the RDA and ensure all who come in contact with Downtown Rochester—whether it be a visitor, business, permanent resident, or someone else—have a wonderful experience and remember the time they spent here. I can't wait to see what the future has to offer for the RDA and Downtown Rochester!

Bill's Downtown Favorites:

Sandwich: City Market NY Pastrami

Burger: Grand Rounds "MacReuben"

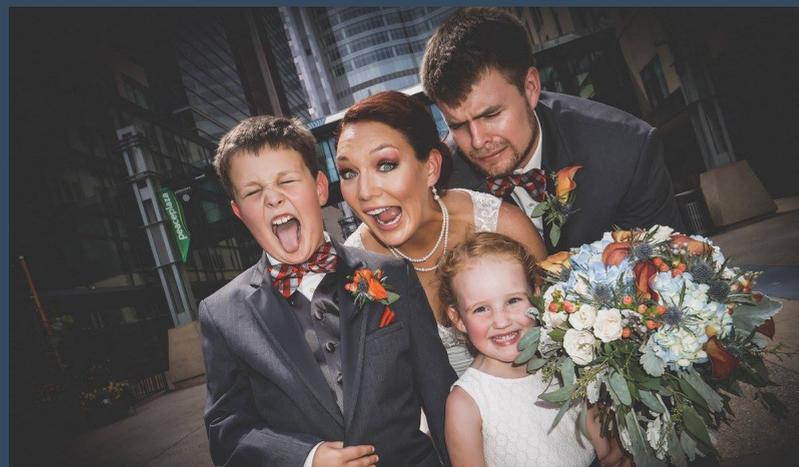
Coffee: Café Steam Dirty Chai

Appetizer/Side Dish: Terza Gnocchi or Porch Brussel Sprouts

Place to Shop: Counterpoint Home

Sight to See: Mayo Field

*Note: Bill loves all Downtown shops and restaurants





Featured Stakeholder Series

w/Claudia Tabini of The Chocolate Twist and Heidi Mestad of the Minnesota Children's Museum Rochester

BY SAMANTHA ROSSI
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

What is your favorite thing about Rochester?

Our biggest asset in Rochester is its people! So naturally, our favorite thing about Rochester is the collaborative power of people that build our community. Even in the last 10-20 years, we have seen a myriad of collective efforts of people and organizations rolling up their sleeves to help make Rochester more vibrant, connected, and inclusive. Which is why, through shared missions of empowering youth and connecting through experiential learning, The Chocolate Twist and Pop Up Play from Minnesota Children's Museum Rochester are adding value and vibrancy into the downtown.



Why did you start the company? What inspired you?

CT: We started The Chocolate

Twist with two main goals in mind: generate income for Boys & Girls Club of Rochester, and offer jobs and job training opportunities to youth. All profits made at The Chocolate Twist go to support programming at Boys & Girls Club so we can better serve more kids. Youth that works at The Chocolate Twist will learn through curriculum-based programs, and through mentorship, from bookkeeping, to marketing, and customer service skills. As the idea matured we realized we also had the opportunity to create a space where we could bring people together. A place where people do not feel rushed, where they could stay and interact with one another, thus strengthening the sense of community.

HM: While working on other projects with BCGR, we started to talk through The Chocolate Twist concept and ideated on how best to create that interactive environment. Since museums are experts at creating experiences for people to connect and learn (about each other and/or topics), it was a perfect collaboration! This aligns with our strategic growth plans to create pop up experiences outside of the 4 walls of our museum to help broaden the perceptions of what a museum, and its experiences, can offer the community!

What has been your most memorable moment(s) since going into business?

HM: We set out to create a space that would foster intergenerational connectedness between ice cream and interactive games. And...oh my! The connection of strangers has really taken off!

We saw the power of this demonstrated when two women (a generation or two senior) playing chess (and of course, eating ice cream) were joined by two younger boys, who were there with their parents. They started playing together! Strangers, joined by ice cream and the power of play.



CT: The second moment would be seeing our teen workers' excitement! Their innovative ideas and the camaraderie between new Boys & Girls Club kids, and old Club kids, has made all this work worth it! We received an email from one of our teens' school: they wanted us to know they had not seen this kid that excited and animated in a long time. This proves that when teens are empowered...their light even surprises themselves!

Why is it important to you to be operating from downtown Rochester? Why did you/do you want to be downtown?

As Rochester has evolved over these last 10-20 years, it has not lost its authenticity of being a great place to raise a family. Now, as our downtown continues to grow into an even stronger, aspirational urban core, we know that we need to step in to help build our downtown with that authenticity in mind and in partnership with our youth, so they contribute to lead and shape our Rochester in the future. We know youth and families are a key ingredient to achieving such downtown vibrancy and we are excited to bring such experiences to add that sense of community into the downtown.

Through our members, youth, and families, we know that downtown is not a common place for community members to go. We are excited to expose downtown to new people and bridge such perceptions.

Is there something in your store that would surprise most people?

CT: One of the things we hear the most is how big and bright the space is, the number of flavors, and the giant games and how it feels welcoming to just pick up a chess game with a stranger, or join a game of giant twister!

Is there a fan favorite, popular item, or brand that people can't just seem to get enough of?



CT: The "This is Serious" ice cream, a wonderful concoction of caramel, chocolate chunks, cashews, and peanuts. People can't seem to get enough of it!! And the Red Magis Spun chair. We see people show a bout of doubt when first rocking backward in the chair and then break into a confident smile with their first rotation and then into uncontrollable giggles as they pick up speed. We have seen people of all ages sit on it and the reaction is always the same!



RDA Finds a New Home

BY SAMANTHA ROSSI
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

On February 1, 2018, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) moved into the north side of the main floor of the historic Paine Furniture Building, which, until recently, has sat vacant for several years. On the south side of the main floor is our friendly neighbor, The Chocolate Twist, which you can read more about in the previous pages.

The new main floor location offers the RDA better accessibility to Downtown Stakeholders, along with the public and the additional square footage that provides the much-needed space to house the growing organization's five full-time staff and occasional interns, as well as the space needed for various meetings.

The RDA is looking forward to activating the prominent Downtown location and has partnered with a local artist with hopes to bring life to the windows of the building. "The RDA is dedicated to building a vibrant Downtown community," says Jenna Bowman, Executive Director of the RDA. "We want people to see spaces and places that exude energy and showcase the activities and initiatives that give Rochester its unique character."

We would also like to invite you to join us for our Open House and Ribbon Cutting on Wednesday, March anytime between 10:00am-6:00pm, with the Ribbon Cutting with Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce taking place at 4:30pm.



A Word From Our Staff

Karli McElroy, Program Manager

Each new year brings fresh ideas together for 2018 and I'm thrilled to be a part of it. In a recent conversation, I detailed the different types of programming happening this year and that person was struck by just how many different ages and groups of people we touch, ranging from 3 – 60+ years of age, as an organization we feel fortunate to bring people of all ages together to enjoy Downtown, and all it has to offer in addition to our programming. We look forward to seeing you out there this summer!



Meghann Southwick, Community & Events Manager

Time flies when you're having fun, right? It's hard to believe the RDA's winter season is nearly complete. On the heels of SocialICE, I am reminded that anything is possible with a consistently dedicated and passionate team pushing out great work. It is both humbling and motivating to realize the reverberating impact of our work throughout the community. I'm looking forward to a fantastic summer events season – see you in the sunshine!

Bill Fay Events Coordinator

We're in the thick of 2018, and with a new year comes this new career for me with the RDA. The first major event of the year, SocialICE, has come and gone. Being a part of the team which helped make that happen was a great experience. Seeing the joy SocialICE brought to the community reaffirms how blessed I am to be in this role. I'm looking forward to this new year and the great events yet to come!



Samantha Rossi, Marketing & Communication Manager

2018 has been off to a great start and I'm looking forward to growing the awareness and brand of the RDA. As I work diligently towards our nine marketing initiatives of 2018 I find myself feeling extremely excited and blessed to be part of such an amazing organization. Cheers to 2018 and I hope you have you join us for our Open House!

DOWNTOWN

Rochester, Minnesota

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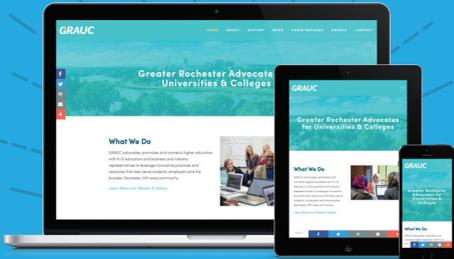
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