

# Hutch/Reno County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting celebrates economic success

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More than 950 Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce members dressed in professional attire milled about the Sunflower South building on Thursday filled with booths representing dozens of chamber sponsors. The booths represented dozens of industries, from People's Bank and Trust banking practices to Oneok's natural gas systems manufacturing.



That evening after going through the exhibition hall, they flowed into the Kansas State Fair's Meadowlark building to hear from chamber staff, board of directors and guest speaker Denise Lee Yohn.

## **The Chamber's Annual Meeting**

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The 2021 Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting invited chamber members to an evening dinner with business presentations, awards and the featured speaker, Yohn, who presented on brand and culture in businesses. This year, it covered 2020 and 2021 topics due to last year's restrictions.

The annual event moved to the Meadowlark building on the Fairgrounds from the Sports Arena because the attendance swelled in size, said Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Debra Teufel.

"Our goal is always 1,000, and we were very close to that goal," Teufel said.



**More:** The Hutch/Reno County Chamber named Hutch Putt its small business of the month

The evening honored the 12 small businesses that received Small Business of the Month awards in 2020 and named Zenor Electric as Small Business of the year for its owner, Dusty Moore, valuing his employees and making connections within the community, Teufel said.

This year's premier sponsor, Dillons, celebrated its 100-year legacy from its foundation in 1921 to the businesses and relationships it garnered over the century.

Dillons corporate affairs manager Sheila Regehr praised the chamber for working so much with its community.

"(The chamber is) leading our community to do great things, and we're appreciative of the work they do every day, building us to be better than we were in the past and looking for a bright future," Regehr said.



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## Hutchinson's industries represented

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Oneok, a significant sponsor for the chamber, set up a large booth near the front of the exhibition and participated in the meeting afterward. Oneok operations manager Nathan Alexander said he enjoys the networking opportunity of the sponsor exhibition before the conference each year.

Oneok increased its sponsorship to the chamber due to the excitement surrounding the activities and efforts put back into the community, Alexander said, and they're excited to see how much it will continue to grow.

"Every time we're here, we usually find is the people we're already doing business with, like Bridgman Oil, and we're already engaged in the community," Alexander said. "It's just good to see them in a different setting and then make contacts for other services that we don't

have yet, and we can take advantage of like Bower Communications."

Reno County serves one of the most industry-diverse counties in the nation, Teufel said, covering manufacturing to boutiques, nearly every industry visited the annual meeting.

**More:** New downtown storefront GUNBROS aims at growing Hutchinson's firearm enthusiast community

## Growing the Hutchinson Chamber

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Bradley Brooks, division president of Primary Residential Mortgage Inc., or PRMI, said his main takeaway from the meeting included how much community involvement the chamber represents. PRMI continues its chamber membership after seven years, and according to Brooks, there's been a surge of new businesses joining.

"I think we're starting to see a younger group of business owners getting involved in the chamber, and the ability to network with those other businesses and share experiences and ideas has been really great," Brooks said.



Yohn, the featured speaker at the chamber's Annual Meeting, presented merging brand and culture to create a more transparent and open business model by building that culture within the company. Her expertise in brand leadership spans multiple prominent companies like Facebook and Target.

According to Teufel, The Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce acts in more theaters outside of commercial development and works to develop the industries that affect economic growth.

"I think our chamber is very fortunate and unique in that we are the umbrella not only for chamber membership but for economic development and tourism along with downtown development," Teufel said. "We are a fairly unique chamber in having all those components in one unified voice."

The chamber's annual meeting included the sponsor exhibition in the Sunflower South building, a social and networking opportunity for members and the evening banquet to celebrate the businesses' successes for Hutchinson's commercial industries.