

**T**hey say membership has its privileges, and the popular slogan holds true for the 127 chambers of commerce from 24 counties in the northern one-third of Ohio that make up the Northern Ohio Area Chambers of Commerce. The organization of independent local chambers of commerce has been providing opportunities for chamber members to lower operating costs through discounts on health insurance and other services for more than 15 years.

NOACC membership is open to chambers of commerce only. As members of NOACC, chambers of commerce can then relay to their memberships a variety of discounts and benefits that are available to NOACC's large buying pool. The organization's main goal is to attract members to local chambers of commerce and keep them engaged by offering significant discounts and competitive rates on services that businesses want and need.

"Any one of our programs can save a business owner the cost of their chamber of commerce membership, and in some cases they can save thousands of dollars," Vicky Hawke, NOACC's executive director, says. "As an organization, we

# ONE-STOP SHOP

## NOACC PROVIDES MYRIAD BENEFITS TO CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE ACROSS NORTHERN OHIO

BY LAUREN SABLE FREIMAN  
PHOTO BY LAURA WATILO BLAKE



*Northern Ohio Area Chambers of Commerce board members (from left) Vicky Hawke, Wayne Lawrence, and Steve Petti inside the lobby of Melange in Beachwood: "Our goal is to help businesses understand how it is beneficial to their business to develop a relationship with chambers of commerce that they may not have had in the past," Lawrence says.*

are unique because we offer a program that is valuable equally to different size chambers with different needs. There is no one like us.”

Through NOACC’s group purchasing power and an exclusive provider arrangement with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, small businesses can benefit from health insurance discounts usually reserved for large companies.

By leveraging the nearly 30,000 members of participating chambers of commerce, NOACC also has negotiated exclusive discounts with preferred vendors on necessities, such as office supplies, workers’ compensation, group life and disability insurance, transportation services, shipping and freight services and payroll processing services.

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In addition to the exclusive provider agreement for health care coverage from Anthem and preferred vendor discounts, NOACC is working to add additional value to chamber membership by growing the scope of discounts for members. With the new approved vendor program, chambers will be able to customize savings for their members based on their unique needs, Wayne Lawrence, chairman of NOACC and executive director of the Beachwood Chamber of Commerce, says.

“It will take a year or two to build a significant database of businesses who want to do business with small businesses and chambers,” Lawrence says. “Our goal is to help businesses understand how it is beneficial to their business to develop a relationship with chambers of commerce that they may not have had in the past.”

As the approved vendor program grows, Hawke envisions businesses being able to shop for everything they need, from carpet cleaning to cars.

“The sky is the limit,” Hawke says of the program.

Because NOACC discounts are only available through a participating chamber of commerce, NOACC, in conjunction with local chambers, will be launching a campaign promoting the value of chamber membership.

“A lot of people don’t know how much value is in their local chamber, and we really want to get the message out there,” Hawke says. “Small businesses need a lot of help in today’s economy, and local chambers have been working on behalf of their local businesses for decades. By banding together with chambers, we hope we can get the message out that businesses can get a lot of help from their local chambers, and now they can get valuable discounts too. Chambers do it all.”

The chambers that make up NOACC range from very small, volunteer-only chambers to large county chambers, and each offers additional benefits and programming that is tailored to meet the needs of their membership. Networking events, educational programming and legislative activities are benefits that appeal to people throughout the business community, from small, home-based business owners to large manufacturing companies.

And for those who question the impact that chambers of commerce have on the community, Hawke stresses the importance of a thriving local business environment.

“Businesses are important to communities because they provide jobs, services and a tax base,” Hawke says. “Every strip of business, shopping mall, car wash and barber is important. If they don’t have business, they’ll end up leaving, and you won’t have that service in the neighborhood.”

According to Hawke, the next time the local chamber advertises its annual golf outing, you might want to sign up.

“It may look like a golf outing, but it is a great place to do business,” Hawke says. ■

For more info: [noacc.org](http://noacc.org)

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