Ithaca, NY--The Tompkins Chamber is pleased to announce that it will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, June 16th at Emerson Suites at Ithaca College, and begin celebrating its 125th Anniversary Year. Annual recognition awards for the Entrepreneur of the Year, Not-for-Profit Organization of the Year, Distinguished Business of the Year, the Noel Desch Key Person of the Year, and the Howard Cogan Tourism Award will be a key aspect of the program.

The Chamber was officially established on December 24th, 1897, as the “Ithaca Businessman’s Association”. Since that time, the Chamber has undergone several name changes and numerous transitions to become the organization it is today. In 1916, the Association became the “Ithaca Board of Commerce, Inc.” and in 1925, became the “Ithaca Chamber of Commerce, Inc.” In 1973, the Chamber established the first Conference & Visitors Bureau in Tompkins County, meaning that the Ithaca/Tompkins CVB will turn 50 in 2023. Finally, the Tompkins Chamber became the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce in March of 1977 – and has held that name ever since.

The Tompkins Chamber and its Convention & Visitors Bureau are also pleased to announce the following award winners, to be recognized as part of the annual meeting bruncheon event:

The Entrepreneur of the Year Award will be awarded to the owners of Salt Point Brewing Company – Sarah and Chris Hesse, and Camilo Bohórquez. This group of entrepreneurs started out brewing beer at home, which evolved into a partnership and the initial Salt Point Brewing location at a small building near Rogues Harbor Inn in Lansing. Over the last two years, and despite major disruptions caused by the pandemic, Salt Point has expanded their business considerably, built a new location, and created a community hub in Lansing. They did this all while making excellent beverages, serving quality food with a priority on local farms and suppliers, and taking great care of their employees.

The Not-for-Profit of the Year Award will go to the Paleontological Research Institution, known by most as PRI. PRI has been selected for their important work providing free resources and educational opportunities locally and nationally, and is also to be commended for their tireless efforts to educate
about climate change. With its two venues, the Museum of the Earth and Cayuga Nature Center, PRI provides free educational outreach opportunities and programs on a weekly basis to the local community, as well as national audiences online. PRI’s latest endeavor, Earth@Home, is an interactive online resource that allows anyone to learn about Earth and its life, with a focus on geology, paleontology, climate, and the connections of Earth’s different systems. PRI has adapted to the virtual teaching environment by making events, workshops, and resources available for free online.

**The Distinguished Business of the Year** is Cayuga Health System. Cayuga Health, under the leadership of President & CEO Dr. Martin Stallone, has heroically led our community’s healthcare response to the COVID-19 pandemic – including establishing new laboratory space, testing centers, vaccine sites, and managing their treatment capacity to support some of the best outcomes in the nation. While navigating these challenges, their team has also created unique partnerships and community investment strategies resulting in a mixed-use development at Ithaca’s Carpenter Park, and the redevelopment of a significant portion of the Shops at Ithaca Mall in Lansing. Finally, their focus on workforce development will support pathways to healthcare careers through multiple initiatives, including the Physician Assistant program at Ithaca College.

**The Howard Cogan Tourism Award** is being awarded to the Finger Lakes Land Trust. The Finger Lakes Land Trust was selected for their tireless advocacy and care for Tompkins County’s natural wonders, consistent efforts to preserve and enhance our outdoor recreation assets, and particularly for their work to preserve the Bell Station property in Lansing. The Howard Cogan Award is designed to recognize leaders in the community who have helped to create programs and tourism related product that strengthens our reputation as a vibrant and unique destination – qualities which Finger Lakes Land Trust has exemplified for many years.

**The Noel Desch Key Person of the Year Award** is being awarded to Aly Evans. Aly has demonstrated servant leadership from the first moment she was appointed to the Tompkins Chamber Board of Directors, in her work as a Chamber Ambassador, and in her leadership roles at several area nonprofit organizations. Aly is always the first to lend a helping hand, volunteer to be present or conduct outreach calls, and offer support and praise for the Chamber’s team. Aly’s impact on the community is noteworthy in her relatively short time here, including at Family Reading Partnership, Boyce Thompson Institute, and most recently, as the Executive Director of Foodnet Meals on Wheels.

*About Noel Desch:*
“Every day is a gift.” Noel Desch was a community leader who had a significant impact on Ithaca and Tompkins County over several decades. Noel was an engineer, a veteran, a town supervisor, a giver, and a doer. He was quiet, patient, respectful and always acted with integrity; never with any expectation for personal gain or recognition. The Tompkins Chamber was one of several organizations that benefited from Noel’s leadership, intelligence, heart, and engineer’s penchant for quality.

**The Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce** looks forward to celebrating these award winners and the Chamber and CVB’s accomplishments from 2021, as well as kicking off their 125th Anniversary Celebration. To learn more and register for the event, visit tompkinschamber.org/events.
About the Tompkins Chamber

With over 700 active members, the Tompkins Chamber is dedicated to making our county a great place to live and work. We are a progressive, forward-thinking organization dedicated to promoting business in our region by being the community's nexus. The Tompkins Chamber works to forge links between and among business and government, community organizations, residents, and institutions.

The mission of the Tompkins Chamber is to foster sustainable economic growth through service to our members, strategic advocacy, workforce development, destination marketing, and quality-of-life investments.