

# DISCOVER EAST CENTRAL MINNESOTA

*Just a Cup Away*

**Wednesday, April 13, 2022**

**12:00 - 4:30 pm**

at Wintergreens Golf & Grill

in Isanti, MN

**PRESENTED BY GPS 45:93**



*Ben Winchester*

*Rural Sociologist & Senior Research Fellow  
University of MN Extension Service*



*Catalina Valencia*

*Executive Director of Business Development  
MN Dept of Employment & Economic Development*

Fill your coffee cup, get in your car, and take the short drive to East Central Minnesota to join GPS 45:93 for a special event that will showcase the economic opportunities brewing just north of the Twin Cities. Thriving and tight-knit communities, proximity to the state's three largest metropolitan areas, and natural beauty create a region with an unparalleled quality of life. Come learn about the economy, labor force, and financial and technical assistance available in the region and hear the stories of several successful businesses. Your next deal could be just a cup away!

***Continuing Education has been applied for and 3.0 credit hours are pending approval from the Minnesota Department of Commerce.***

Registration Fee is \$35.00 per person

**Wintergreens Golf & Grill • 306 Credit Union Drive NE • Isanti MN 55040**

Register Online at: [tinyurl.com/GPS4593April2022](https://tinyurl.com/GPS4593April2022)

# MNCAR

MINNESOTA COMMERCIAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
REAL ESTATE/REALTORS®

*GPS 45:93 is a regional economic development partnership that includes members from five counties in East Central Minnesota. Each member is dedicated to capitalizing on the strengths that come from being an alliance and working together. We act as a conduit for businesses to access resources; help prospective businesses connect and find educational opportunities that would otherwise not be available to them; and we provide a regional approach to workforce development and business retention.*

**GPS 45:93 | 315 Main Street South | Pine City, MN 55063**

[www.gps4593.com](https://www.gps4593.com)

# PRESENTERS



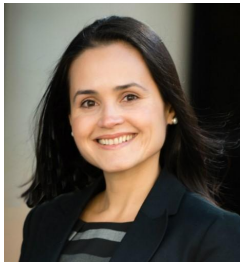
## **Sandy Voigt, Director of Women's Business Alliance**

Sandy Voigt joined the Women's Business Alliance (WBA) in 2018 to serve central MN. The WBA is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, a program of the Entrepreneur Fund and Certified Women's Business Center. Through organizations such as the Initiative Foundation, Region Five/NCEDA, and MN Technology, Voigt spent time working with business financing loan programs, grants for community and economic development and technical assistance programs for businesses. Voigt is serving as the 2022 President for GPS 45:93.



## **Ben Winchester, Rural Sociologist & Research Fellow for the U of MN Extension Service**

Ben has worked in and for small towns across the Midwest since 1997 — with a focus on his home state of Minnesota. He joined the Extension Center for Community Vitality in 2008. As rural sociology and evaluation educator for the center, Ben manages evaluation studies that monitor the effectiveness and outcomes of leadership, civic engagement, tourism, resident recruitment, and community economics programs for center activities. Ben also conducts research on topics relevant to community vitality. He is currently analyzing rural community leadership, especially as it affects community-wide requirements to support the public sector to "keep the town running". Before joining Extension, Ben was on staff with the Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota-Morris.



## **Catalina Valencia, Executive Director of Business Development for DEED**

Catalina Valencia is a global expert in economic development, corporate location strategy and site selection, business & government relations, and international trade & development for both the public and private sector. In her present position as the Executive Director of Business Development for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, DEED, Catalina works with communities and businesses on building and growing their presence in Minnesota. Prior to joining DEED, Catalina was Founding Principal of Terrafinder Consulting LLC, a corporate location strategy, economic development, and export development consultancy—where she advised both companies and communities worldwide. Before establishing Terrafinder, Catalina worked as a Senior Consultant at Global Location Strategies (GLS) and served as Business Development Director for Greenwood County, SC. Catalina has also held global marketing, business development and international development roles at the U.S. Soybean Export Council, Western Union, the Colombian Government Trade Bureau (ProColombia) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Catalina earned a Master of International Affairs, Concentration: International Economic Policy & Latin America from Columbia University, and a Master of International Business in Colombia.



## **Stephanie Hillesheim, Community Development Director for the City of Isanti**

Stephanie Hillesheim is a community development professional with a demonstrated history of serving communities in the East Central Minnesota region with economic development, parks and recreation as well as planning and zoning projects. Her skills in event and budget management, public speaking, grant writing and leadership make her an excellent advocate for communities. Hillesheim believes in the power of collaboration, which is part of the mission for GPS 45:93 where she is currently serving as the 2022 Vice President.



## **Lezlie Sauter, Economic Development Coordinator for Pine County**

Lezlie Sauter is a community development professional and certified community action professional that has served non-profit and government entities in East Central Minnesota for over 15 years. Her experience with Lakes & Pines Community Action Council, City of Pine City, and Pine County have provided the region with expertise in housing rehabilitation, grant writing, strategic planning, economic development, and community development programs. She is passionate about community development and supporting local businesses and giving them the tools to grow and thrive. She resides in southern Pine County with her family, is an avid gardener and exhausted hockey mom.