



## **Seeking same** **Chamber to help young Nashuans connect**

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Concord has one. Manchester got one a few years ago. Now Nashua is about to get its very own organization dedicated to young professionals, spearheaded by the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce.

Chris Williams, president of the Chamber, expects the organization to launch in May. At the moment, a "core group" of young professionals is meeting to put the infrastructure together.

"For once, they're going to have an organization that is all about them and is intended to specifically promote their development, both on a personal basis and on a professional basis," Williams said. "They're going to be able to meet other people who are young and in similar points in their careers and industries and they're going to be able to use this organization as a platform to learn from ... established leaders in the community."

The advantage to the Chamber and the city, on the other hand, is that Nashua can be marketed to people looking for a place to live and work.

"The problem with Nashua, much like the rest of New Hampshire, is that we have the stigma that we're not a cool place to live and work," Williams said. "Having an organization like this will help combat that stigma."

Williams said Nashua's proximity to Boston, the Seacoast and Manchester's airport made it the ideal location for young people to locate, but what had been missing was a way for those young people to connect and network.

Young families have historically gravitated toward Nashua for its celebrated school system — recent superintendent-related controversies notwithstanding.

"For young professionals who are looking to start families, they're not going to find better schools in the public education system," Williams said.

Williams, who used to be vice president of Manchester's chamber of commerce, also started that city's young professionals network. He's still on that organization's board of directors.

"The biggest difference between the two organizations is that Manchester's group is entirely independent of any other organization in the city," Williams said. "Our organization is being driven by the Chamber." That

gives Nashua's group a more solid financial footing, he said. The Concord Young Professionals Network is also backed by the local Chamber of Commerce.

Just the difference between cultures of different cities makes setting up networks a new affair each time.

"Manchester young people tend to be more visible with each other," Williams said. "I've found that it's easier to meet other young people in the business community up in Manchester, whereas the younger demographic in Nashua's business community tends to be less visible."

Williams said that the more service-oriented business universe in Manchester might make interaction more likely than in Nashua, where high-tech businesses and branches of larger corporations kept communication with the local community to a minimum. He said he'd probably have to test that hypothesis out before committing to it, though.

To be eligible to join the new group, you should live in the Nashua area and be between ages 20 and 40 — roughly.

"If you've got someone who's 43, 44 years old and they want to be a part of it, we don't tell them they can't," Williams said. "As long as you're young at heart, we want you to be part of the organization."

#### **Yuppie links**

Concord Young Professionals Network: [www.ConcordYPN.org](http://www.ConcordYPN.org)

Manchester Young Professionals Network: [www.MYPN.org](http://www.MYPN.org)

Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce: [www.iugonashua.com](http://www.iugonashua.com).