

St. Patrick's Breakfast March 17

Honorary Irish Person Must Be Present

Oh, the suspense.

It's almost too much to bear in that crowded room of prominent business leaders, and there's really no way to prepare for the moment when Chamber President Ward Todd announces the name of the hour.

That's how last year's Honorary Irish Person Cheryl Bowers felt at the 2016 Peter B. Mathews St. Patrick's Day breakfast at the Best Western Plus in Kingston.

"The name pops into Ward's head. I know it really is a secret. It gets decided that morning," Bowers said.

Todd always emphasizes that you have to be present to win, as the old saying goes.

"Last year, I had a few names in my head of who he might pick, and it wasn't me," Bowers recalls. "I froze and couldn't believe it."

Bowers, the Chief Operating Officer at Rondout Savings Bank, did compose herself after the initial shock and got up to deliver an impromptu speech.

"Lyle Schuler (the 2015 Honorary Irish Person) said you better have a speech ready just in case. He was

right," Bowers said.

"It was very, very emotional, and without sounding like a drama queen, when you think of all the great people in our community and what they do, to be picked above them, I still get kind of prickly thinking about it. It's a big group of people to get singled out of."

The nail-biting breakfast is just around the corner. It happens on March 17 at the Best Western Plus from 7:30-9 a.m. and not only features the Honorary Irish Person, but St. Patrick's Day merriment like festive tunes, fun-time banter and the ever-popular green orange juice.

Entertainment this year will include the Kingston Lions Club Roarin' Pride Band and the Kingston Ancient Order of Hibernians Pipes and Drums.

Everyone attending will receive a long-stemmed green carnation compliments of J&A Roofing.

This will mark the 48th year the Chamber has held the St. Patrick's Day gathering—the most popular of the

Continued on page 9



Tania Barricklo – Daily Freeman
Cheryl Bowers,
 2016 Honorary Irish Person

**March
 Breakfast**

**March 17
 7:30-9:00 am**

**Held at:
 Best Western Plus
 503 Washington Ave.
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Sponsor:



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March 22 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Membership Mixer @ Belleayre Mountain Ski Center

181 Galli Curci Road | Highmount, NY

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Reservations are required.

April 7 | 9:00 - 10:30 am

New Member Meet & Greet Courtyard by Marriott

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You'll Get A Lift At This Mixer

Belleayre Hosting Skiing, Networking

This is a Chamber Mixer that literally could go on all day.

That's right. The Belleayre Mountain Ski Center in Highmount is offering business leaders a unique Mixer on March 22. Chamber members who register in advance can ski from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. for just \$10 and then stay for the Mixer from 5-7 p.m. in the Overlook Lodge.

Whether you hit the slopes that day or not, Chamber members will gather at 5 p.m. in the lodge to mingle and network. There will be plenty of food, prepared by Belleayre's own caterer Centerplate.

"We just want to have all the businesses come together and just enjoy the day and have a good time," says Joe McCracken, Belleayre's marketing manager.

"Belleayre has something for everyone—from steep slopes, to bumps, glades, parks and some great learn-to-ski terrain. No matter your ability, we have something for you."

"It's been a while since we had a Mixer up here and we just want to showcase some of our improvements and our great skiing," said McCracken. "Why not come up here and see what we're all about?"

McCracken said Belleayre is a welcoming place for skiers of all levels, including newbies. Chamber members who want to enjoy the day at Belleayre don't have to be expert skiers and can hit any of the 12 beginner trails.

"We have the best learn-to-ski terrain around," he said. "Our terrain is very effective for the new beginners who come to our area to learn. We have some top-notch instructors and we have kind of a fun program to help make learning easier and more fun."

"Our terrain includes trails from learners to experts. You name it, we have it."

McCracken said Belleayre has seen several upgrades since the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) took the ski resort over from the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in 2012.

"There have been a lot of lodge improvements," McCracken said. "There have been snow-making improvements. If anybody hasn't been up here in a while, there are a lot of changes that have been going on. We just want to showcase all of our brand-new things that have been going on."

On Feb. 16, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced even more improvements. The state will invest \$8 million to install a new, high-speed gondola; multiple lodge expansions; and the addition of modern amenities for both lodges at the resort.

"The project will increase visitation, enhance customer experience and provide a major boost to tourism in the Catskills and the region's economy," Cuomo said. "Belleayre Mountain is one of the crown jewels of the Catskills and a major driver of the region's tourism economy."

McCracken said Belleayre does bring "people to the mountain" and it's not uncommon to see cars with skis on the roof parked at local businesses in the winter.


"We truly are an economic engine for this area," he said. "Whether you're going to the restaurant or a local shop or a hotel, we're helping provide a little extra stimulation for everybody. I think we're very important to the area and community is very important to us."

McCracken said the Chamber's Business-After-Hours Mixers are a great opportunity to stay connected to the local business community.

"Showcasing one's business is important and the Mixers are a good time to explore what is going on in the area," he said.

Belleayre Mountain Ski Center, located at 181 Gall Curci Road in Highmount, can be reached at (845) 254-5600 or www.belleayre.com.

Chamber mixers are a great way to network and promote your business. Be sure to bring plenty of business cards. This free networking event is open to Chamber members and prospective members. Reservations are a must and can be made by calling the Chamber office at (845) 338-5100 or by registering online at www.ulsterchamber.org.



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What's Your Chamber Story?

By Don Verity,
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Ulster County Regional
Chamber of Commerce

Back in 2007 my company took ownership of 92.9 WBPM radio and my good friend Tony Marmo introduced me to Ward Todd and the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce. Joining the Chamber turned out to be one of the best business decisions I made to help grow our radio station's revenues and influence in the community. Today, as the new Chairman of the UCRCC Board of Directors, I have made it a priority to spread the word about how Chamber membership can benefit every business large and small in our region.

At the January Chamber Breakfast I posed the question to the audience "What's your Chamber story? Why did you join the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce? What do you get out of membership? Why do you stay a member?" In fact, we honored several businesses that morning that were celebrating up to 40 years as Chamber members and I'm sure all of them have great stories to tell.

Since membership is the lifeblood of

this organization, your Chamber of Commerce needs to increase its ranks to stay healthy. New members bring new ideas and new energy to the business community that in turn can grow our region's economic vitality. Currently over 1,000 businesses and organizations are members of the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce!

So, that brings me to this point: The Chamber needs you to "tell your Chamber story" to a local business you may know that is not a member. Perhaps hearing your story will encourage them to want to join too. If you have a hot prospect please call the Chamber office at (845) 338-5100 and ask for Carol Ricken. She will contact them with all the details.

In the months to come you will hear about opportunities to invite prospects to



Don Verity

Chamber functions. Until then, tell your story to another business today. Ask them to consider joining too. Your Chamber will help their business thrive just like it has for the other thousand businesses already enjoying membership!

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New Café Opens in Kings Mall

Mother Earth's Storehouse Expands

Mother Earth's Storehouse in the Kings Mall has hired Tony Cecilia as a manager and he is overseeing a new deli and cafe as the area's premier natural food and vitamin store expands once again.

Cecilia has brought the recipes for his famous grilled pizzas with him to his new gig.

"I've introduced new grilled pizzas on the menu," Cecilia said. "I'm making them here and we've introduced some new vegan-style pizzas."

Cecilia sold his food truck and hooked up with Mother Earth's in September. The new kitchen, deli and café opened late last year and provides healthy choices for people on the go.

"Everything's organic and healthy

foods," Cecilia said. "We're not moving away from the heritage."

Chris Schneider, who owns Mother Earth's along with his brother, Kevin, said the bakery would remain where it is and expand, while the café and deli take up the front of the store.

"We have a whole section of grab-to-go foods," Schneider said. "People can pick up something for dinner or assemble one from what we have."

Schneider called Cecilia "very knowledgeable" and a great addition.

"He's got some very good recipes," Schneider said. "It just gives us another twist with the small, personal pizzas."

"It's a very convenient item for people for lunch, it's very healthy and



we can almost make any kind of pizza that someone would want. We can do vegetarian or vegan."

Cecilia said the vegan cheese he will use on some of the pizzas "mimics fresh mozzarella."

"It's unbelievable," he said. "We'll be introducing that on the pizzas. We don't just cater to the vegan/vegetarians. You can also come here and get a nice hot lunch."

"Everything is organic. You can't beat the organic foods they put out here. It's very healthy."

Cecilia said the menu would also feature grilled chicken and seafoods and possibly breakfast in the future.

"You don't find too many places that do strictly organic foods," he said. "We put out some really good hot dishes."

The café/deli expansion will allow the store's bakery to expand.

"Our bakery has become very, very popular," Schneider said. "We've got a very good reputation with both organic and vegan items."

Mother Earth's has expanded several times over the years, most recently to create more space for its produce section.

"When we first opened we were 1,400 square feet," Schneider said. "This is going back to 1978. Now we're up to 20,000 square feet."

"We're constantly moving the store

around and reinventing it and bringing in a lot of new products and keeping up with cutting-edge items."

Mother Earth's features a complete selection of organic groceries and specialty foods.

"We have a lot of items that you can't find anywhere else, a lot of specialty ingredients, spices and herbs," Schneider said. "We have a very large bulk food section."

You also can find a large vitamin selection in a department "staffed by a very knowledgeable crew," Schneider said.

The store also has a growing loyalty program, Schneider said. Details are at www.motherearthstorehouse.com.

Mother Earth's Storehouse employs 74 people at its Kings Mall location and a total of 115 if you include its other locations in Saugerties and Poughkeepsie.

The business also has a social conscience and supports the community in a variety of ways.

"We donate a lot of gift cards to school fundraisers and a lot of other fundraisers in the area," Schneider said. "We always support them. We do quite a bit."

Mother Earth's Storehouse, located at 300 Kings Mall Court in the town of Ulster, can be reached at (845) 336-5541 or www.motherearthstorehouse.com.

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There's a Reason Business Borrows Here

St. Patrick's Day Breakfast

Continued from page 1

monthly breakfast meetings. The late Len Cane, longtime Chamber President, is credited with starting the tradition that has become one of the Chamber's most anticipated events of the year.

Though it has been modified in recent years, the idea remains the same: Recognizing someone in Ulster County who goes above and beyond the call of duty outside of his or her profession.

Bowers fully fits that description.

She sits on the board of the Kingston Boys and Girls Club as well as the SUNY Ulster Foundation and is a trustee at Vassar Hospital. She also runs a communitywide pre-Thanksgiving Day dinner for the mentally challenged and is very active with the New

York Bankers Association through which she and others have begun a women's leadership conference.

Bowers, whose maiden name is Perpetua, said she has no Irish heritage—making the honor all the more meaningful.

In the past, only the non-Irish were considered for the title of Honorary Irish Person, but since Sister Mary Feehan, who is Irish, was selected in 2014, Todd has altered the rule a bit.

Bowers still gets a tad nervous when she recalls that morning last year when Todd announced her name.

Her advice to this year's honoree is the same as Schuler's.

"Have a speech ready, but enjoy the moment and then live the whole day over and over again. That is a very cool moment, and throughout the year, be proud of it. Enjoy

the honor because it really is an honor," she said.

As for the knitted hat that gets placed on the recipient's head like a crown, Bowers said wear it with pride.

"I still have my white beret and plaque here. For weeks after, I was recognized by business colleagues who give me laminated copies of the story and congratulated me. It's a big deal."

Advance registration is required and payment for the event must be made at the time of the reservation. The cost is \$25 for Chamber members and \$35 for non-members.

For more information, call the Chamber office at (845) 338-5100. Reservations can also be made and paid online by going to www.ulsterchamber.org.

For those who miss the breakfast, watch for photos on the Chamber's website

and Facebook page shortly after the event to find out who wins in 2017.

Chamber breakfast programs are a great way to network with other local business leaders and stay on top of current events. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. For more information or to register, call the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 or go online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

Everyone who attends the Honorary Irish Person of the Year breakfast, will receive a beautiful long-stemmed green carnation courtesy of Ian Horowitz and



Wishing Everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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Nekos' Brand Finds New Home

Saugerties Pharmacy...A Family Tradition

Walk into the new Saugerties Pharmacy and it will remind you of your grandparents' old five-and-dime, a trip back to a simpler era before impersonal chain pharmacies took over.

The independent pharmacy bears the famous Nekos' name above the entrance and you'll always find either owner Peter Nekos or his fellow pharmacist Kelly Davis behind the counter.

"We get to know everybody and everybody knows us," Nekos says of the pharmacy at 250 Main St. "It's like it used to be."

That's just the way the Nekos family likes it.

He decided to close an independent pharmacy in the heart of Red Hook after 15 years and open a Saugerties Pharmacy on June 1 at the site of the former Beadle's Pharmacy. Nekos said Red Hook is too transient today and has "lost its local flavor." He wanted that hometown feeling again.

"Dutchess County and Ulster County are two different places," Nekos said. "Everybody in Ulster County knows each other."



"There's three generations of people here. If they don't know me, they know one of my brothers or sisters or my aunts and uncles. Everybody's friendly. Ulster County is a great county."

When Village Apothecary, the only independent pharmacy in town closed recently, Nekos made the most of the opportunity.

"When I had the chance to come up to Saugerties, I jumped at the chance," he said. "It's a beautiful little spot. Everybody and their brother asked me to put an independent pharmacy here."

"There are a lot of young people opening businesses. It's a young and growing town. It's moving. It's a lot like what Uptown Kingston was years ago. All the storeowners know each other. It's a young crowd."

Nekos should know. He got his start at his family's famous Nekos Luncheonette, an Uptown Kingston institution that closed in 2010 after more than 100 years. His uncles started that business, a combined luncheonette and drugstore, in the 1940s.

Nekos was there for 18 years before a friend asked him to put a pharmacy in the Boiceville Supermarket 25 years ago. Nekos still owns that business.

The new Saugerties Pharmacy is similar to the one in Boiceville and features durable medical supplies like braces,

walkers, wheelchairs and canes. You also can find cards, gifts, vitamins and other pharmacy staples.

It's also easy to transfer your prescriptions from another pharmacy. All Nekos needs is your prescription information and he and his staff take care of the rest.

If you need the popular compounding prescriptions of the Nekos family, Saugerties Pharmacy can hook you up with the Kingston store at 86 North Front St. That store is run by Nekos' brother George and partner Maryann Sheeley.

Nekos said business for the pharmacy, which has six employees, has been "great" since opening with a Chamber-sponsored ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"It takes a year to really get flowing," he said. "We're getting to know everyone. It's going to be great."

It also appears the Nekos name is going to be around for a while. Nekos said one of his sons, Nicholas, is in pharmacy school and will someday carry on the family business.

"My job is to set the family up so that they can continue doing what we do," Nekos said.

Saugerties Pharmacy, located at 250 Main St. in Saugerties, can be reached at (845) 246-5649 or www.saugertiespharmacy.com.

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Hop On Over For Easter Treats

Michael's Candy Corner Celebrates 100 Years

Michael's Candy Corner will be full of chocolate crosses and praying hands this Easter, but that's only the beginning.

"This place will look like a chocolate zoo soon," says owner Michael Briglia. "The Easter Bunny is king so we have more shapes than you can imagine.

"Everything goes on Easter. We have dogs, cats, baseballs, dinosaurs, basketballs, cars, jet planes—you name it. Easter is huge. We make every shape practically that you can think of on Easter."

Easter is the second busiest time of the year for Briglia, behind only Christmas. Valentine's Day is third and Briglia recently offered heart-shaped boxes of candy, lollipops, cherry hearts and giant California chocolate-dipped strawberries for the holiday.

Of course, nothing can top Christmas for Briglia, who makes candy canes for The Walt Disney Co. right here in Kingston. This year promises to be sweeter than usual as the business marks 100 years.

The history of Michael's Candy Store is pure Americana. The business was started in 1917 by, coincidentally, another Michael. His name was Michael Altamarie.

The founder sold candy canes and other hard candy such as peanut brittle at Kingston Point when that area of the city was booming. While people came to ride the carousel or paddleboats, Altamarie would sell candy, soda and ice cream.

He decided to stray from soda and ice cream during the sugar shortage of World War II.

"He stuck with candy and the rest is history," Briglia said. "This is now 100 years. We're still going strong and we still do it exactly the way [Altamarie] did it."

It's all produced out of the company's building at 773 Broadway in Midtown Kingston. Briglia, a former news photographer, bought the business in 1980.

"I took it to the next level when we added on chocolate back in the early '80s," he said.

Briglia said customer service is the linchpin of his business. For example, if you want a limited number of a certain candy or require special ingredients, Michael's Candy Corner will accommodate you.

"When we get a request, I say,

MEMBER PROFILE

"There is no customer too small. If you're a 5-cent customer or a \$5,000 customer, you're treated the same way."

— Michael Briglia

'Absolutely. That's what we do.'

We not only have a good blend of chocolate, but I feel our customer service, as far as catering to people's needs, is good," he said.

"There is no customer too small. If you're a 5-cent customer or a \$5,000 customer, you're treated the same way. We try to fit you in. Everyone has their need."

Briglia calls his profession a "happy business." He once employed a florist, but didn't enjoy dealing with the unhappiness of funerals. When the florist retired, Briglia didn't replace him.

"People are happy to be here," he said. "That's what makes it nice. They're here because they can't wait to surprise somebody with a gift from here or they like a particular thing they're buying for themselves.

"I love that part of the business."

The Chamber played a huge role in Briglia's success and landing contracts such as the one with Disney.

In 1995, the Chamber sponsored sight-seeing tours to Kingston. One of the visitors was a semi-retired reporter for the New York Times who interviewed Briglia and prominently featured Michael's Candy Corner in a story about candy canes.

"That was the beginning," Briglia recalls. "That was when the phone started to ring."

After sharing the headlines in the New York Times with Rudy Guiliani, Briglia's little candy store was soon appearing on television with Robin Leach and Fox News and in magazines such as Better

Homes and Gardens.

That kind of publicity helped him connect with Disney, which for the last three years has featured Michael's Candy Corner's candy canes in Christmas stockings depicting Mickey and Minnie Mouse.

"They want everything in house by Oct. 15 every year," he said. "Then they can do whatever they have to do with it and it's on the market in early November."

Briglia said word of mouth and the digital age have helped his business explode. People call him from all over the country to order candy.

"We grew with the Internet," he said. "When the Internet was young, so were we and we picked up customers in pockets around the country."

Briglia said someone will hear about his product from friends or family and before

long, they call to order 140 candy canes for their church.

"Before you know it, it becomes a family tradition and they send us little notes," he said. "A lot of people take the time to let us know how much they love our product and we're very happy about that."

Briglia said the Chamber is "extremely helpful" to his business by listing Michael's Candy Corner on its website.

"I think the Chamber is very valuable to me," he said. "People find us. They will browse the Chamber website from out of town. They may never have heard of me, but they see we're a chocolate shop and they stop in."

Michael's Candy Corner, located at 773 Broadway in Kingston, can be reached at (845) 338-6782 or www.candycornerusa.com.

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