

A Renewed Gathering

Chamber's 25th Buy Local Expo Will Be In-Person

The way John Burlingham sees it, the time has come to get out there and be seen.

"We've been stuck in the closet long enough," he said. "It's time for us to see each other again and find ways to help each other in the marketplace."

Burlingham, the Chairman of the Chamber's Board of Directors, sums up the very essence of the Buy Local Expo, especially since last year's COVID-19 restrictions and shutdowns. Though the Expo did happen virtually in 2020, nothing can compare with an in-person event, Burlingham noted.

"I'm an old-school sales and marketing guy. I like to get out and see people. We're all pretty social beings, so to see each other in person certainly is an advantage," he said.

That will happen this year on Sept. 15 as the Expo, the premier networking event in the region, marks its 25th anniversary live at Diamond Mills Hotel and Tavern from noon to 5 p.m.

"It's been tough this past year trying to do everything on Zoom and not really getting a feel for your customers," said Burlingham, a distributor for American Solutions for Business, which sells marketing, printing and promotional products. "This Expo is exciting because we will again be able to connect after 18 months of doing everything virtually."

Tamara Murray, Marketing and Sales Director at the Emerson Resort and Spa in Mount Tremper, couldn't agree more.

"We'll all be thrilled to present our booths in person," she said. "We all take such pride in our businesses, and I personally have missed mingling with people face-to-face to share everything that makes the Emerson special."

The award-winning Emerson Resort and Spa will be one of the welcoming sponsors at the Buy Local Expo happening in Diamond Mills' banquet space, which annually becomes a one-day conference center and showcase for close to 100 Chamber exhibitors.

The Expo, open free to the public, is the ideal event for businesses to crow about their goods, products and services to those passing in and out throughout the day and to make connections with neighboring businesses, according to Murray.

"We've done business with a variety of people that we originally met through the Expo—everything from radio ads to printing needs. We've also welcomed Expo participants and guests to the Emerson, many of which have now become familiar faces," she said.

It also translates into a glorious opportunity to once again be together in one setting and get caught up with neighbors after a long separation.

John Naccarato said he expects a good turnout and renewed vigor among attendees for that reason.

"Let's face it. It's going to be refreshing to get together again instead of watching it all online. The Chamber did a remarkable job last year livestreaming the Expo and spotlighting the businesses with videos, but the in-person event feels much better. We'll get to look in the eyes of potential customers and even shake their hands this year.

"Our family has always believed the Ulster Chamber's Expo is something worth supporting and coming out to," said Naccarato, whose business, Naccarato Insurance, will again be the Presenting Sponsor. "There's just something about our Chamber and this event that is so warm and engaging. Our Chamber is like one big, happy family, and the Expo feels like a family reunion."

Chamber President Ward Todd said he is always pleased with the turnout and participation by local businesses.

"Consistently, the Buy Local Expo has met or exceeded our expectations, in terms of the number and the quality of business leads for our members," he said. "We are delighted to see our members doing business with other local businesses and organizations and making valuable connections."

There is bound to be a lot of catching up to do post-COVID, Burlingham said.

He said American Solutions for Business was able to pivot adroitly as needs changed during the pandemic. The company started selling personal-protective equipment like masks, gloves, signs, banners and sanitizing supplies and tailored those products for its customers.

"It created a whole new market for me because I had never dealt with those products before," he said, adding that he was one of the lucky ones to make it through the pandemic.

Burlingham noted that the Expo will provide businesses the opportunity to announce that they are alive and well and ready to move forward as COVID passes into the rear-view mirror.

"You've got to come out and say, 'I'm still here.' We went through a year and a half of not really knowing what businesses were still out there, so this is the time to say, 'Here I am. We're ready to do business, so let's start the discussion.'"

To become an exhibitor or sponsor of the Buy Local Expo, register online at www.UlsterChamber.org or call the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 to speak with President Ward Todd.





Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce

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There's No Place Like Home

Phoenicia Voice Festival Returning to Hamlet

If the stage has taught Maria Todaro anything, it's to pivot quickly when unexpected doors swing open, especially when they lead homeward.

The co-founder and director of The Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice recognized that moment in mid-June when she heard that most COVID 19-related restrictions in the state, including limits on public gatherings, had been lifted.

From that point, Todaro made the bold decision to move this year's festival back to Phoenicia, even though plans were in the works for a second-year drive-in opera at TechCity in the town of Ulster.

"Phoenicia is our home. It's our base. It's our heart. It's our community," Todaro said just days after announcing the shift. "We were committed to doing it at TechCity, but we realized there was an opportunity to change our minds, and we really had to seize the opportunity."

While the location has changed, the artists and performances for this year's music festival have not.

Organizers are teaming up with Teatro Grattaciolo to present Pietro Mascagni's "L'amico Fritz," on Aug. 27 and the New York City Opera, which will be performing a 90-minute version of Giuseppe Verdi's "Rigoletto" on Aug. 29.

Sandwiched between these two performances is the festival's own production of Ruggero Leoncavallo's classic "Pagliacci" on Aug. 28 with a star-studded cast, including Metropolitan Opera tenor Errin Brooks, international soprano Marcelina Beucher and veteran baritone Troy Cook.

All three performances are scheduled for 8:30 p.m. at Parish Field in Phoenicia.

Todaro, who will be serving as stage director for "Pagliacci," said while she is overjoyed to be back in Phoenicia, she considers last year's fully staged and socially distanced drive-in performance of "Tosca" a monumental feat pulled off at a time when stages across the world were darkened by shutdowns.

"We were the second in the world (next to Denmark) to do a drive-in opera and the first in the United States, so it really was an innovation when the arts world was decimated," she said.

After the success of last year's "Tosca,"

which had to be rescheduled a day later due to rains from Hurricane Laura, Todaro counseled other companies like the San Diego Opera on how to organize a COVID-friendly drive-in.

"A lot of people followed our lead," Todaro said. "It was very complex. We worked very hard to make all the pieces come together. The technology invested in the project was crazy. The opera was filmed and projected onto four jumbotrons and the sound was truly innovative. My team further created sound integration so there was no delay from the car radio signal and stage if people felt safe enough to roll down their windows."

At last year's production, Todaro tried her hand at virtual directing with the aid of Jason Weible of Mixed Space Studios. As the character Baron Scarpia performed the aria "Te Deum," he was transported into a computer-generated backdrop that had the visual appeal of a video game.

"We plunged him from a green screen into this virtual world that captured his every angle," she said. "No one has ever done it before. We wanted to see how people would react."

Todaro said she hopes to work with Weible on similar projects.

"We want to create a new industry within the industry, where you can watch a singer in the safety of your home. It would offer everything a video game does experience-wise and open up a whole new way to view performances."

Aside from all her work as stage director, stunt artist, writer and conductor, Todaro continues to train a new generation of singers and stagehands through the many programs

offered by the Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice.

She and her husband, Louis Otey, the festival's artistic director, are themselves acclaimed opera singers with impressive worldwide credentials. Though they have both retired from the stage, they continue to share their passion for music and making opera more accessible to the public.

"We believe in the power of beauty and the transformative power of music, and we believe it is our mission to bring it forth," Todaro said.

Since beginning as a fundraiser for the Parish Field playground in 2009, the festival has grown spectacularly and cultivated a new appreciation for opera as an art form. By virtue of their social circles, Todaro

and Otey have been able to lure top-notch talent to the festival, putting Phoenicia on the artistic map.

The same can be said for this year, according to Otey.

"As we were planning this year's festival in the midst of COVID, Maria came up with this brilliant idea of sharing our stage with some very fine companies. They've all been terrific to work with. The New York City Opera, where I made my debut in 1982, is a great American company, which gave a lot of people their start, including Beverly Sills and Plácido Domingo.

"All of this is once again Maria's idea. I get the artists, but she's the brilliant one with these innovative thoughts. I just kind of boost from the bottom," he said.

The Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice, located at 90 Main St. in Phoenicia, can be reached at (845) 586-3588 or www.phoeniciavoicfest.com. For tickets or to learn more about the COVID-safety measures in place at this year's festival, call (845)594-8201.

Melting Hearts In Kingston

Benny's Tropical Ice Vendor A Sensation

Kamir Jackson is like a rock star on the corner of Grand Street and Smith Avenue in Kingston. Car horns honk at him. Heads crane to get a glimpse. People wander over to his cart just to high-five him. Lines of people form to buy his product and heap praise on the young entrepreneur.

This is what life has become lately for the 14-year-old Kingston sensation since he joined the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce. Word quickly spread that he is the youngest member ever in the 118-year history of the business organization.

Sure, Kamir has been selling frozen treats from his mobile pushcart known as Benny's Tropical Ice for years now, but the recent publicity has boosted profits and catapulted him into the hearts of Kingston residents.

"It's always been pretty busy, but since I joined the Chamber, it's been so much busier," Kamir said on a hot and humid afternoon. "It was Miss Jess (Davis) who convinced me to



join. She has a good vibe."

The recent M. Clifford Miller Middle School graduate could hardly finish a sentence before his next customers approached. Like any good businessperson would do, he halted the interview to take care of their needs.

"What would you like?" he asked a father

and son. "Today, we've got cherry-mango, coconut, Swedish fish, pineapple-lemon and raspberry."

As the two decided, a neighbor dropped by to take a selfie with Kamir and give him a word of encouragement.

"I just always see him around," said Thomas Ector. "He's got a good thing going here. I bring kids like him out to cut grass with me, but this is a way better job."

After waiting on a few more customers, Kamir found a few minutes to share the history of the tropical-ice stand named after his great-uncle, who was a family role model. Grabbing a seat under the business' trademark rainbow umbrella, he explained that it was his brothers, Qumari and Kwaheri, who started Benny's Tropical Ice in 2010.

"While I was growing up, I'd watch them, and it always seemed like fun, so I started working with them in 2015," Kamir said. "Then, I worked with my older sisters and

started doing it by myself in 2017."

These days, it's Kamir's solo enterprise, although his whole family, including his parents, Karim and Qiwana, chip in on the weekends to make the frozen ices, which he also described as Italian ices, in batches from a fresh fruit puree. The flavors vary weekly and include everything from chocolate to green apple.

As Kamir finished the thought, an elderly lady approached and ordered a pineapple-lemon. She reached into her purse to give him \$2, but Kamir wouldn't take it.

"It's on me," he said.

"No, no, no," said the woman. "Please take it."

Kamir would have none of that.

"It's on the house," he said again.

But the woman persisted. "You are so sweet. I was going to give this to you and give you extra. It makes me so happy to see you out

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Local Company Is 'Your Partner When It Counts'

Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill CPAs

Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill CPAs may be one of the area's largest accounting firms, but you'll never feel like just another client. In fact, the company's motto is "Your Partner When It Counts."

"While we can do pretty much anybody's tax return, we separate ourselves by the specialized attention we can give clients, the one-on-one attention," says managing partner Craig Sickler.

The firm, with offices in Lake Katrine and Hudson, was started in 1984. It is a member of the BDO Alliance USA, a nationwide association of independently owned local and regional accounting and consulting firms.

"It's an alliance that allows smaller firms like ours to have the resources of the fifth-largest accounting firm in the world," Sickler said. "We can pretty much scale our services to handle anybody. If it's something that we haven't done before, we can call BDO and they probably have one person or 10 people that do just that. We have access to an enormous amount of specialized technical people that allow us to pretty much service any clients in any industry."

Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill, which currently employs 33 people, boasts close to 3,000 clients.

"Being a public accounting firm, we service almost all industries," Sickler said. "We do personal and business taxes, as well as nonprofit and government work including auditing. We can do pretty much everything. That's what a public accounting firm does."

"We have basically three specialized audit areas in the firm. We audit housing authorities, such as HUD organizations,



Robert Allen, Joe Montalto and Craig Sickler
Partners in the STAC Lake Katrine office

school districts, and state and local governments."

Sickler said the company does some advertising for new clients, but 95 percent of its business comes from referrals.

"We do get requests for proposal work in the government arena where we just get a request because they have to send it out to bid, but our private practice is pretty much word of mouth and other client referrals," Sickler said.

Sickler said Raleigh Green of Raleigh Green Inc., a local advertising and marketing firm, has encouraged the company out of its comfort zone to more actively advertise and be more involved with the Chamber. Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill

is currently a Corporate Sponsor of the Chamber.

"We've been presenting at the Buy Local Expo for years and years," Sickler said. "We like to support the Chamber. We don't really advertise a lot, but we feel that being involved in the Chamber is a good way to get in front of established and new businesses."

The company was founded 37 years ago by Donald Sperry when it was known as Sperry, Cuono, Holgate CPAs. The firm was rebranded Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill CPAs in 2006, two years after Sperry retired.

Sickler said the firm has six partners including himself, Michael Torchia, Robert Allen and Victor Churchill, Edward Gower II and Joseph Montalto.

Many of the firm's employees are now back in the office post-COVID after a year of uncertainty and changing tax deadlines.

Sickler likes to emphasize the local nature of Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill CPAs.

"Everybody that works with us and for us is local to the area, even though we're a larger firm," Sickler said. "We tend to rely on very close personal contact with our clients — it's like we run six practices under two roofs. Our clients get the personal attention we like to give them, and that's important for us."

Sickler, Torchia, Allen & Churchill, CPAs, located at 2215 Route 9W in Lake Katrine, NY 12449, can be reached at (845) 336-7183 or www.stac-cpa.com. The Hudson office is located at 4071 Route 9 and can be reached at (518) 828-4616.

Continued from page 4

doing something to make money. Now, won't you please take it just because I want to give it to you?"

Kamir finally acquiesced. "God loves you, and I do, too," she said, dipping into her treat.

While watching Kamir, it's easy to forget he's still a kid. He handles his customers like a true professional and is always courteous and attentive. His favorite things to do—when he's not conducting business—include riding dirt bikes, listening to pop artist Bruno Mars and watching soccer.

Kamir, who this year did his schoolwork remotely, typically finished up school at around noon and headed out for business shortly afterward. The self-professed history and chemistry buff said he is looking forward to attending Kingston High School in the fall.

Speaking of the future, Kamir has it pretty much mapped out way in advance. He plans to attend SUNY Ulster to study business and then follow his dream to buy a storefront. He already has a healthy stash saved up for a down payment.

"My goal, by the time I'm 25, is to have 20 to 30 stores," he said. "I want a franchise all over the Northeast and eventually throughout the country. I want to mass produce."

"I'd rather work now, so I don't have to work when I'm older. That way, I can enjoy the fruits of my labor."

Kamir credits his parents for the sterling work ethic.

"My dad always tells me to set a goal and work toward it," he said, adding that his parents also taught him how to treat people. "They always remind me to be polite. They say being kind and nice gets you far in life."

Kamir said that's one of the

keys to his success as a local vendor.

"It's not really the ice that makes us better than everyone else," he said. "It's more the personality of the business and how you make the customer feel. We want them to feel special."

In addition to being open weekdays, Benny's Tropical Ice is available for bookings at special events and has been spotted at area food-truck festivals.

Kamir said he is always thinking of creative ways to promote Benny's Tropical Ice and has no plans to slow down. However, if he ever gets a break this summer, he'd like to do that quintessential kid thing.

"I want to go to Six Flags Great Adventure in New Jersey," he said. "It's one of those cool things I've never done."

Benny's Tropical Ice is a mobile street cart and can be reached at (845) 943-0046.

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Michael Katz - Proprietor

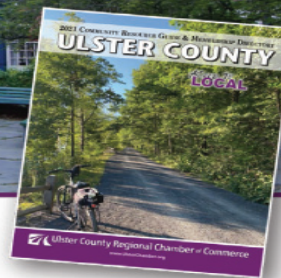
Category: Pizza

Description: *Pizza, Calzones, Wings, Hot & Cold Sandwiches, Fresh Baked Bread, Salads, Philly Steaks, Ice Cream, Coffee, Beer & Wine. Our menu has something for everyone! Featuring Vegan & Gluten Free options. Call or Order Online for Pick up or Delivery #itTakesAVillagePizza.*

Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce

Keep It LOCAL

Community Resource Guide & Membership Directory 2022



Build Your Business! Advertise in the Hudson Valley's Premier Business & Lifestyle Annual Guide

The **Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce** is pleased to announce that we will be producing the **2022 "Keep it Local" Community Resource Guide & Membership Directory** during the next few months.

Advertising opportunities are now available! Working in partnership with ColorPage Marketing & Publishing Services, the guide will be published and ready for distribution in December 2021.

To Reserve Your Ad Contact Tia Blaber

Email: directory@ulsterchamber.net

Phone: 845-331-7581 x10

To fill out form online: ulsterchamber.net

Take Advantage of Discounted Ad Rates NOW!

Mixer



July 26, 2021
Keegan Ales

20 St. James Street, Kingston, NY



Our Mixer Host, Keegan Ales (L) Lisa Hantes, Christy Keegan (Keegan Ales), (R) Keegan Ales Staff; with Mixer Sponsor Paul and Jen Beichert (Timely Signs).



Taylor Greaves (Hutton Brickyards), Danielle Freer, Jared Keplinger (both of Liberty Security Services), Miriam Gibbons (PuroClean Professional Restoration), Jeremy Robinson-Leon (Moonburger).



Christy Keegan (Keegan Ales), Tom Lindgren (Thomas F. Lindgren, CPA), Toni Roser (Keegan Ales), Tanya Garraghan (MAC Fitness), Tiffany Janasiewicz (Patty Conti Realty), Lisa Hantes (Keegan Ales).



Nicole Friedman (GlampStar), Mari Mulshenock (Evolved Interiors & Design Showroom), Jess Davis (Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce).



Joe Baganz (Joe Beez Famous Sandwiches), Lisa Hantes (Keegan Ales), Liz Baganz, Greg Maden (both from Joe Beez Famous Sandwiches).



Melissa Brown (Monkey Joe Roasting Co.), Jasmin Mitchell (Kingston Wire), Brittany Morton (Monkey Joe Roasting Co.).