

County Exec Pat Ryan Breakfast Guest Looking Forward To A Brighter 2022

Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan will be the guest speaker at the Feb. 24 Ulster Chamber Breakfast from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus at 503 Washington Ave. in Kingston. Herzog's Home and Paint Center and Kingston Plaza are sponsoring the event.

Ryan will look back on the year characterized by the ongoing pandemic, his efforts to tackle it and other key developments such as the recent sale of TechCity (now iPark 87) to the Connecticut-based National Resources.

With the rise and fall of COVID-19 cases in 2021, Ryan stepped up efforts last winter to encourage county residents to get vaccinated. As part of that, the county opened vaccination sites at the former Best Buy in the Hudson Valley Mall as well as SUNY Ulster and SUNY New Paltz in March to address the winter surge and in August as cases of the Delta variant continued to climb. He even opened a pop-up vaccine site at the Ulster County Fair in August.

Early on, he partnered with Village Apothecary in Woodstock to ensure that vulnerable populations had access to the



Pat Ryan

vaccine by holding clinics at local churches, synagogues and senior centers in Kingston and Saugerties and established the Ulster County Vaccine Distribution Coalition, led by infectious-disease specialist Dr. Marc Tack, with the goal of educating the public about the vaccine and its distribution process.

As soon as COVID-19 boosters became available last fall, Ulster County began administering them, and as cases once again began climbing in December, he secured 33,000 rapid at-home test kits and distributed them at no cost to county residents at various drive-thru sites.

All Ryan's efforts paid off. By the end of last year, close to 140,000 COVID-19 vaccines were administered to 78 percent of all Ulster County, making it one of the most vaccinated in the state, according to the county website.

But as much as COVID dominated the news in 2021, other big developments happened under Ryan's watch.

Most notable was the sale of TechCity, the former IBM site, to National Resources, which

has pledged to invest \$200 million to improve and revitalize the site and within five to 10 years create upwards of 1,000 high-paying jobs in areas such as manufacturing, food, agriculture, film and the arts.

"We all know that this site was once the center of Ulster County's economy during IBM's tenure, and under National Resources' future stewardship, I'm optimistic that the site will come back to life as the center of our county's new economic future," Ryan said.

"The vision laid out by National Resources is exciting not only because it promises to create good new jobs and generate significant new economic activity, but also because it's a monumental step toward realizing the bold vision we outlined in our Ulster 2040 strategy."

Ryan, a tech entrepreneur, U.S. Army combat veteran and graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, became Ulster County Executive after a special election in May 2019 and was reelected in November to a full four-year term.

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.

February Breakfast
February 24
7:30-9:00 am
 The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
 503 Washington Ave.
 Kingston, NY

Sponsor:

The February Breakfast Sponsors Will Be The Kingston Plaza and Herzog's Home Center

The Kingston Plaza and Herzog's Home Center have been pillars in our community for generations. The Herzog and Jordan families have catered to their customers and earned their loyalty. Businesses just don't survive for over a hundred years without adapting and evolving with the changing consumer marketplace. Herzog's opened its doors in 1909 on Wall Street in Uptown with only one employee. Today they employ more than 100 residents. In the early 1950's Robert Herzog purchased Kingston Lumber Company and the adjoining cornfields. Within the next decade he created the Kingston Plaza; currently a 39-store open air shopping center, which contains a healthy mix of national chains, professional offices, and local businesses.

Kingston Plaza is the only shopping plaza within Kingston city limits. It's the primary shopping destination for consumers that include local neighborhoods and the growing influx of New York City weekenders and second homeowners. Today it attracts over 80,000 shoppers per week.

Since the pandemic started the Hudson Valley customer has changed. With more customers moving from NYC and surrounding states seeking a small-town lifestyle inclusive of locally owned businesses, beautiful landscape and an abundance of outdoor activities. These new consumers want to shop in an open environment and spend their money buying local and

supporting communities.

For decades Kingston Plaza and Herzog's Home Center have faithfully been committed to giving back to our community. They are proud sponsors to many non-profit, youth and church organizations in our area. In addition, the Plaza kicks off the St Patrick's and Children's Day Parade each year.

To support a culture of bicycling in our city, covered bike racks have recently been installed at the Plaza. This location connects cyclists to the Linear Park and new parts of Kingston Greenline. In keeping with its reputation for maintaining an immaculate presence from sidewalks to landscaping, snow removal, signage, and seasonal decorations, the locally owned and operated Kingston Plaza has recently completed further enhancements. Modernized storefront facades, parking lot re-pavement project and newly constructed landscaping beds further beautify the popular shopping plaza locally owned and operated by Herzog's Supply Company.

For over a century the Herzog family philosophy has stayed the same, but their businesses have continued to change with the times. Herzog's Home Center and the Kingston Plaza provide character and individuality to our community. Locally owned businesses are where neighbors shop together, and dollars are put back into the community.



There's Always Snow At Belleayre Upgrades Lead To Record Ski Season

The Belleayre Mountain Ski Center in Highmount has had one of the best seasons in years, due in large part to significant upgrades in producing the white stuff.

Joe McCracken, Belleayre's marketing manager, said the ski center added 235 energy-efficient snow guns over the summer, along with a new snowmaking pumphouse and 13,000 feet of new snow pipe to be ready for ski season.

"Our biggest thing this year is our snowmaking upgrades and our ability to get the snow out of the trails and make the experience the best that we possibly can," McCracken said.

Belleayre, which averages between 130,000 and 160,000 visitors to Ulster County each year, has sold a record number of season passes this year.

"The numbers for visitors are pretty much on par for what we had last year," he said. "We are a little bit ahead right now and hopefully with the cold weather and more snow, it will help bump up those numbers even more."

That would certainly be good news for the economy of northern Ulster County. McCracken said for every \$1 taken in at Belleayre, another \$13 is spent in the surrounding community on lodging, dining, gas and other travel expenses.

McCracken said the visitors keep coming because Belleayre appeals to families and skiers of all levels, most notably beginners. Belleayre offers 64 trails, parks and glades on a varied terrain, along with eight ski lifts, including the only gondola in the Catskill Mountains.

"The way our mountain is laid out and our family-friendly atmosphere is really what sets us apart," McCracken said. "We're known for a little bit of everything. We have steeps, we have bumps, we have groomer trails and we're

very beginner-friendly. Whatever your family needs, we kind of have what you're looking for. When you come up with the family, everyone can kind of find something to ski on.

"If you need to have a lesson or practice your skills, our ski school kind of stands out above the rest."

The ski center, which also offers snowboarding, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, has a long and rich history in Ulster County. The site was declared "Forever Wild" by the New York State Forest Preserve in 1885. Skiers would initially hike to the top of the mountain, but pressured lawmakers in the 1940s to develop the area. Construction began in 1949 and Belleayre began its premier winter season with just five trails.

Belleayre, which also offers three lodges, is owned by the state and operated by Olympic Regional Development Authority, which oversees Belleayre, Gore, Whiteface Mountain, and the Olympic venues in Lake Placid.

In the summer, visitors can lounge on Belleayre beach and partake of scenic Gondola rides, mountain biking, hiking and disc golf.

McCracken said the Chamber has been immensely helpful to Belleayre by providing "business-to-business contact" through its networking events, publications and social media.

"We get to talk to people in the community and I think word of mouth travels the best," he said. "The Chamber really helps in promoting that and putting everybody together to make those relationships happen."

Belleayre Mountain, located at 181 Galli Curci Road just off state Route 28 in Highmount, N.Y., can be reached at (845) 254-5600, or belleayre.com.



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 Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce **Expo 2022**

Wednesday
September 14, 2022
 Noon - 5:00 pm

ULSTER COUNTY
BUSINESS RECOGNITION
AWARDS 2022

Thursday
October 27, 2022
 5:30 pm Cocktails | 6:00 pm Dinner & Awards

Kickin' It Up A Notch

Keith Bennett's Karate Academy Thriving At New Location

Keith Bennett is writing a book. That shouldn't come as a surprise to those who know the 8th-degree martial arts master, who has been studying karate since 1976.

He has seen and done it all in his career as an esteemed martial artist, including traveling the world to open karate studios, training with the best practitioners and operating one of the biggest karate schools in the country back in the early 1990s.

While the book, entitled "Do You See?" is still in the works, the latest chapter in his life is all about his new location at 618 Ulster Ave. in Kingston. Keith Bennett's Karate Academy opened in recent months at the 3,000-square-foot space after moving from its previous location at TechCity.

"It was a small and stunning place, but in August, I got notice that they were shutting down the building," Bennett said. "Within 30 days, I found this place, and it's perfect for what we do."

What he does is teach adults and children traditional Tang Soo Do karate, a Korean martial art known for its kicking artistry, rhythmic movements and hand strikes, but Bennett's students learn a great deal more than just self-defense. Through their training, they not only acquire poise and confidence but learn awareness about themselves and their surroundings as well as respect for others.

Bennett, the head instructor, is the ideal role model and a local icon known for his altruism, quiet strength and ability to see what others are likely to miss.

"The philosophy of the martial arts, for me, is to stay close to God and nature," he said. "Something as simple as a flower or animal will teach you so much, and every style of martial arts is wrapped around nature. I feel that our world is disconnected from nature, so I try to teach people to get connected and look at the beauty."

Keith Bennett's Karate Academy debuted at its original location on Albany Avenue in September 1990 while IBM was still thriving in the town of Ulster. The school became an overnight success, and at one time, Bennett taught upwards of 600 students. His Kingston school was highly regarded and one of the nation's largest.

Then, the unthinkable happened. IBM closed the plant in July 1994. That really hit Bennett below the belt, causing him to lose everything.

"I call it my fall from financial grace," he said. "Enrollment at the academy dropped to 65 students within a month. I lost my house, my cars and my wife. I



Keith Bennett

didn't know how I was going to do it. I dropped to my knees and cried out to the Lord, and day by day, I got through it. I could have run. I could have gone anywhere in the world and made tons of money, but I stayed here. I believed Kingston needed me now more than ever, so I stayed in the fight. It was the worst and best thing that could have happened."

That fall from grace opened many doors for introspection and new direction. Bennett began moving beyond just teaching students kicks and punches.

Known for his charitable endeavors almost as much as he is known for his martial-arts discipline, Bennett became a huge supporter of nonprofits such as Family of Woodstock, People's Place and dozens more.

His soft side began to show through his widely known Teddy bear ministry, TAGS, or Teddy Bears Always Give Smiles. Shortly after IBM's exit and his financial fall, Bennett would visit sick patients at the former Kingston Hospital and comfort them with stuffed animals—an idea he said popped into his mind.

"I ended up handing out thousands of Teddy bears altogether. That was one of my greatest accomplishments," he said. "While I was doing that, I would often sit with dying patients, and that made me grateful for life and taught me to never take it for granted."

Over the years, Bennett also got heavily involved with local veterans. Himself an Army veteran, Bennett has served as the deputy director of the Ulster County Veterans Service Agency, and as a chaplain.

The 63-year-old Bennett still works out every day and regularly counts his blessings, which include his wife Kim, his children and the community that has supported him through the years.

And while challenges like COVID-19 restrictions and shutdowns brought about new concerns, Bennett said he never lost faith that God would turn it around for him.

"I don't live in fear. It cripples you," he said. "I didn't know IBM was going to pull out. I didn't know I was going to lose everything. You just have to learn to live with it moment by moment. My example is to walk forward and live in the moment."

For the rest of Bennett's story, stay tuned for his book, which he hopes to release within a year, or so.

"Most people don't see the beauty of a rose," Bennett says. "They don't



see what life has to offer. It's a little history of what I've been through and the lessons I've learned throughout the years. There's so much more to write about."

Keith Bennett's Karate Academy, located at 618 Ulster Ave. in Kingston, can be reached at (845) 331-0009 or kingstonmartialarts.com.

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UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

Thursday February 3 | 9:00 - 10:30 am

Business Card Exchange

Holiday Inn Express & Suites - Kingston
1835 Ulster Avenue | Lake Katrine NY
Space is limited. Reservations are required.

Sponsor: Hudson Valley Credit Union

Wednesday January 26 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan

The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$25 Members-Advanced Pay • \$30 Members-At The Door
\$35 Non-Members

Sponsors: Kingston Plaza / Herzog's Home & Paint Center

Thursday March 17 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

St. Patrick's Day Breakfast

The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$25 Members • \$35 Non-Members
Featuring the T. McCann Band

Sponsor: The Reis Group

**THIS EVENT HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED TO
Wednesday June 15 | 5:00 - 8:00 pm**

Inaugural Ulster County Black Business Achievement Awards and Mixer

Ulster Savings Bank
Corporate Headquarters Main Conference Rooms
180 Schwenk Drive | Kingston NY

There is no charge for admission but space will be limited.
Reservations are required.

Sponsor: Ulster Savings Bank

Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce



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Questions (845) 338-5100**

Coffee For A Cause

Maeve's Place Sweet On Taste, Inclusion

Iva Walsh doesn't much care for coffee. For that matter, neither does her daughter, Maeve, but despite their disinterest in consuming it, the mother-daughter team has managed to open a divine spot for those looking to get seriously caffeinated and warmly cared for.

Maeve's Place on State Route 28 in Phoenicia is not only an aromatic cafe and airy community space that offers up a lot of lattes and mucho mochas, but artisanal sandwiches and creative sweets made from scratch.

Most importantly, the 2,400-square-foot shop, named after 23-year-old Maeve Walsh, brews coffee for a cause, according to her mother, who first opened the cafe in Pine Hill.

"We started this effort to create an inclusive working environment for people with disabilities," she said. "Maeve has Down syndrome. That's why we started this in the first place. I used to wonder what would happen after the school bus stopped coming. For us, the answer was to open a coffee shop, where she could learn and become the best version of herself."

Walsh goes out of her way to create a familial work environment, not only for her daughter, but all her staff. In fact, the three most important words at Maeve's Place are "respect, opportunity and inclusion," according to Walsh—what she calls her ROI mantra.

"That is 100 percent what everybody needs to succeed. It does wonders for Maeve, and that is how I want the rest of my staff to feel."

Maeve's Place also partners with other similarly minded companies nationwide like Reason to Bake, a small-batch bakery in North Carolina's Appalachian Mountains, and the Maryland-based Furnace Hill Coffee, which sells Buddy Walk coffee to benefit the National Down Syndrome Society. For every pound sold, Maeve's and Furnace Hill each donates \$2.50 to the nonprofit organization.

"Our dream is to provide more employment opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Having a job where they can learn and contribute is critical to their quality of life and increases productivity for the businesses that hire them. It has worked really well for us, and we hope to show other businesses how it can work for them as well," Walsh said.

Before moving from Pine Hill to the current location at the Phoenicia Plaza, Walsh had to renovate the spot, even though the business formerly occupying it was a bakery.

"There was really no kitchen here—only a tiny oven and electric griddle. We had to build one and put in a hood and sprinkler system and all new appliances, but it all came together," she said.

Maeve's place employs 12 people, including a chef and baker.

"Everybody is working shoulder to shoulder, and everybody is very happy," Walsh said. "That is a beautiful thing to see and what we envisioned before we opened. I really did this for my daughter and others like her."

Walsh has gobs of business experience, although this is her first time owning a restaurant. Years before opening Maeve's, she was a manager at the Bohemian Hall and Beer Garden in Astoria. She and her daughter also developed a line of skin-care products called Maeve's Pretty Face, which is available for purchase in the cafe gift store.

Once COVID-19 cases drop, Walsh has plans for Maeve's Place to become a hub for year-round social events, particularly for the disabled population.

Meanwhile, she and her daughter are focused on offering a stellar selection of coffees and teas and a menu that pairs well with the beloved brews.

Standouts include the "Backyard Cowboy," with house-made corned beef hash, a sunny-side-up egg, Hollandaise sauce on a bed of fresh spinach; Nutella Belgian waffles or classic Reuben sandwiches.

"We serve breakfast, lunch, afternoon snacks and baked goods that are as popular with locals as they are with tourists in the region," Walsh said. "Everyone can find something to enjoy here whether they eat in and browse or get takeout and buy online."

"It's been an intense and incredible first year, but so far, we have exceeded our wildest dreams, and I am deeply grateful to everyone who has supported us in any way."

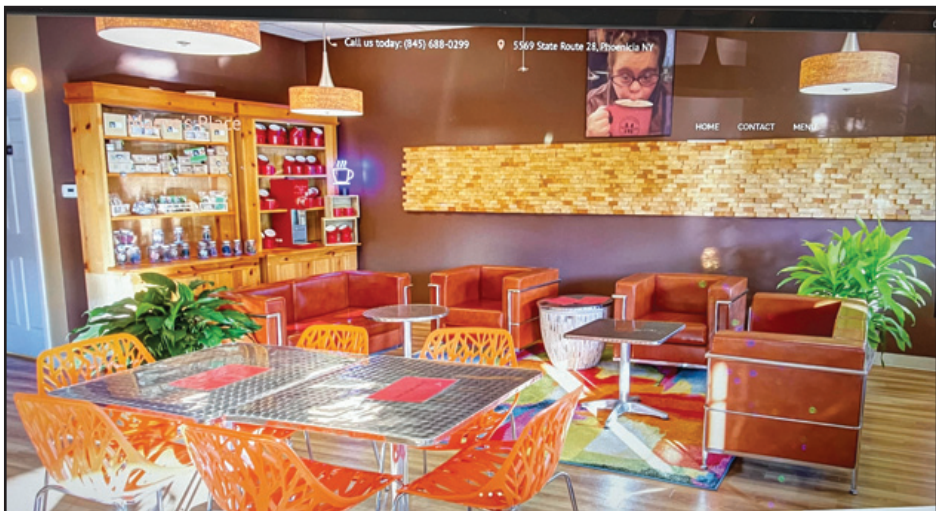
And just for the record, Walsh prefers strong, black tea to coffee. She laughs when pressed about her general distaste for java while running a cafe.

"I used to drink it when I was younger, but coffee didn't do me well. As they say, 'The best bartenders don't drink alcohol.'"

Maeve's Place, located at 5569 State Route 28 in Phoenicia, can be reached at (845) 688-0299 or maevesplace.com.



Maeve Walsh



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REMEDY SKIN STUDIO

25 Voorhees Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
 www.remedyskinstudio.square.site
Madison Dudek - Owner
 Category: Spas
 Description: *Remedy Skin Studio is a home-based spa located just five minutes away from historic Uptown Kingston. Remedy offers services such as facials, back facials, and waxing, as well as eyebrow and eyelash treatments. Dermaplaning, lash lifts and brow laminations are some of the most popular treatments offered. Along with each facial comes extensive massage, whether it be the neck and shoulders, hands, or arms. Remedy is owned by solo esthetician, 19-year old Madison Dudek, who graduated her esthetics program and continued furthering her education to become certified in even more treatments.*

ROBERT G. BAUM COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

79 St. James Street
Kingston, NY 12401
 www.rgbaum.com
Robert G. Baum - Principal Broker
 Category: Real Estate - Industrial/Commercial
 Description: *Commercial Real Estate, Property Development, Investment Property.*

RONDOUT LAUNDROMAT LLC

85 Murray Street - Suite 7
Kingston, NY 12401
Shadia Lee - Owner
 Category: Laundromats
 Description: *Brand new washer and dryers. Wash and fold clean.*

UPRIVER STUDIOS

1 Tomsons Rd. Suite 800
Saugerties, NY 12477
 www.upriverstudios.com
Beth Davenport - Co-Founder
 Category: Production - Entertainment
 Description: *A 101,000 SF climate-forward New York State Qualified Production Facility. A soundstage led by women cultivating local jobs in the Hudson Valley.*

VOLNA UNALIGN LLC

Hudson Valley, NY
 www.volnaunalign.com
Alejandro Duran Sanchez - Owner
 Category: Marketing
 Description: *Volna Unalign, where 'Volna' is defined by our team working to provide value and remembrance to the name. And 'Unalign,' where in order to stand out, to be remembered for something greater, we work to ensure our customers shine bright from the rest. Volna Unalign prides itself in saying, we are not 'experts.' As defined, experts are masters of a subject. They succeed at what they do, but by repeating their technique for everyone else. Undifferentiated work dictated by a cookie cutter process. As potential is limitless, Volna Unalign harnesses a 'think different' approach opening the door for evolution in the way of marketing and brand recognition. By developing original content mixed with captivating graphic designs, our customers can unlock their greater potential. If you want to 'unalign' your business, if you want to tell your story in the way you envision it, then we look forward to meeting you. Never settle for less, and always strive for more. Stay hungry, stay foolish.*

For information on
Chamber Membership,
 email Jess Davis at
Jess@UlsterChamber.org