

Buy Local Expo Sept. 14 At Diamond Mills

Participants Say Event Is A Winner

If you stick with something for more than 20 years, there's usually a darn good reason behind it. For Joe Beichert and his family at Timely Signs, the Chamber's Buy Local Expo has routinely opened the doors to relationship building, so they wouldn't miss it for anything.

"We've been doing it for 22 years since I've been at Timely Signs, and I know my father was a participant years before that," said Beichert, the company Vice President. "It's a great opportunity to meet new people and connect with existing clients and those we haven't seen in a couple of years and introduce new products. It's just nice because it's all under one roof and it's a great networking opportunity, and with the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us may have lost track of what other people are doing and their successes."

This year's Buy Local Expo is happening at Diamond Mills Hotel and Conference Center at 25 South Partition St. in Saugerties on Sept. 14 from noon to 5 p.m. The event generates buzz as the business community comes together to display their goods and services to the multitudes that attend.

Timely Signs is the Expo's new Principal and Corporate Sponsor, and the staff at the family-run business already is preparing to make a stellar impression.

"It's always a great opportunity to promote our new products like apparel and embroidery and vehicle wraps and wall murals," Beichert said. "We reinvent ourselves every few years. It's always good to stay fresh. We have about 1,700 clients, and the more that we're able to provide them, the more they will use us. This is our chance to get in front of these folks and show them how we can serve them."

Ulster Chamber President Ward Todd said one of the best things about the Buy Local Expo is the chance for area businesses to showcase their brand's personality in the flesh—something that has become even more valuable since the pandemic.

"This will be our second year back in person at Diamond Mills since COVID, and based on what we saw last year, it will be non-stop networking from the moment we cut the ceremonial Chamber ribbon at noon. We couldn't ask for a better venue than Diamond Mills and a better partner than Jeff Siegel at the Spencer Daniels Agency, our longtime Chamber member who transforms the banquet facility into an extremely attractive and inviting exhibit space."

Naccarato Insurance, the Expo's Presenting Sponsor, is sure

to get noticed on the Expo floor as in past years. John Naccarato and his family not only greet attendees with a warm smile and handshake but often with a seasonally themed booth that offers lip-smacking giveaways.

"People are still talking about the apple cider doughnuts from a few years ago," said Naccarato, President and COO. "We just can't resist going above and beyond to make people feel welcome. We love this event and the way that it brings all of us together. Throughout the year, a lot of us get caught up in our businesses, so this is a good reconnecting point. You not only have the potential to expand your customer base but strengthen your existing business relationships. It's definitely worth supporting and coming out to."

Tamara Murray, Marketing and Sales Director at the Emerson Resort and Spa in Mount Tremper, seconded that and said there is no other event that shines the spotlight so brightly on Ulster County businesses.

"It's one-stop shopping for those who are looking to network, build their business, share information or find out more about the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce," she said. "It's also a one-of-a-kind opportunity for attendees to become familiar with the wide range of friendly local businesses and their owners. The Emerson has hired a variety of local vendors as a result of the Buy Local Expo. Many of those vendors are now long-term and have become a part of the Emerson family."

Cynthia Marsh-Croll, Director of the Mid-Hudson Women's Enterprise Development Center, runs a booth every year because the Expo puts her in front of ideal clients.

"I use it as a lead generator, so it's been a good platform for us to meet businesspeople who didn't know about our organization and what we do," she said. "We provide counseling and advisory services for businesses, and the Expo really is an ideal place to meet up with those who could benefit from what we offer. The other thing is that it's really a nice mix of people coming through the doors. This Expo gets a lot of foot traffic, so the exposure is enormous."

Murray added that businesses will likely meet more potential clients in the Expo's five-hour block than they would the rest of the year.

"There's nothing better than face-to-face contact to help spread the word about your business. The Expo is the place to speak with hundreds of attendees and participants. My advice



is to be sure to bring plenty of water because I guarantee you'll spend the entire day talking."

For more information on exhibit space and sponsorship opportunities, contact Allison Costanzo at (845) 338-5100 ext. 7 or Allison@UlsterChamber.org.

Vintage Diner Heading To Ulster County

The Only Question Is Where?

First came the iconic Phoenicia Diner. Then the Dixon Roadside in Woodstock. Now, local restaurateur Mike Cioffi is planning on moving a historic New England diner to a yet-to-be-determined site in Ulster County.

Both the Phoenicia Diner and Dixon Roadside became instant hits, attracting both local diners as well as travel visitors from all over the world.

Late last year, Cioffi found out that another art deco-styled diner would be going up on the auction blocks in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. He drove over to check it out and came away with the winning bid of \$45,000.

Now all he has to do is find a site for it.

"The story has no ending yet," said businessman Mike Cioffi. "We still don't have a home for it. It's a little complicated because we have to identify a place and develop a site for this to sit back on. After we do that, we'll bring it to its final resting site. It was in Shrewsbury for 70 years, and hopefully, this will be its forever home."

Right now, he's eyeing municipalities from Kingston to Ellenville and is approaching it with an open mind.

"Everything in between is on our list," Cioffi said. "Basically, it will be somewhere in Ulster County, which is a large swath. Everybody has been so good to us here. I can't imagine bringing it anywhere else."

After Cioffi purchased the classic Fodero diner last winter, his first order of the day was to move it from the town-owned property, which was to be repurposed for municipal use.

"Like a lot of things, I jumped out of the flame and checked my power suit. I try to

find professionals to surround myself with, and I ended up finding a company that moves businesses with a niche for moving diners," he said. "We purchased it in the wintertime, but there were a lot of delays with the weather and moving it through state and town roads. It needs a police escort because the structure itself is wide and heavy."

Before all that could happen, Cioffi had to demolish the kitchen, an addition that was attached to the back of the diner. He said it took a couple of months, but once the structure came down, the diner was freed to be lifted off the ground, placed on a flatbed trailer and escorted to a protected yard nearby.

"It's sitting on blocks, waiting to be moved to the area," he said. "The most important thing is to find a location. My goal is to acquire a spot by the end of the year, so by the fall of 2023, we're hoping to have it up and running."

"Wherever it lands, we're going to need some help from the locality to make it happen. I spent a lot of time with Shandaken officials, and they were so incredibly welcoming. I want to have that same process at the next location. We're going to become part of the DNA of that area—hiring locally and sourcing locally, which is what we do at the Phoenicia Diner."

As for the Edgemere, Cioffi said the 42-foot-long, 16-foot-wide dining car is structurally sound and has a lot of original features such as the steel-trimmed stools and lunch counter.

"Everything from the waist up is original, and it's in really good shape. When we lifted it two feet off the foundation, the contractors and I were amazed at how well-built it is."

Cioffi, who once owned a company that constructed scenery for theater and TV shows in New York City, has plans to fully restore



the diner to its original aesthetic. He will be consulting with preservationist Richard Gutman, America's leading diner expert, as he brings it back to life.

"He was there when we moved it. Richard has a lot of knowledge of what would have been in there during its heyday," Cioffi said. "There was a clock inside that was associated with that make of diner. They pulled it out when it went vacant. It's now at the Shrewsbury Historical Society. We're going to try to replicate that as well as all the finishes."

The stainless-steel dining car lived out most of its life at 51 Hartford Turnpike in Shrewsbury. Prior to 1954, it operated near Boston and was known as the Englewood Diner.

"It's got a nice lineage. It was manufactured in New Jersey in the 1940s. It had a lot of incarnations over the years and was most recently leased to the operator but owned by the town of Shrewsbury. It ended up going out of business due to COVID, so when I saw the

ad for the diner, I was intrigued and showed up at the auction. I have such an affinity for these things."

Cioffi has a lot to think about as he firms up plans for the diner's new home. At the moment, he is unsure if he will keep the Edgemere name or call it something else. He also isn't certain about the menu, but it will offer a lot more sophistication than just burgers and shakes.

"We will feature locally sourced food, and we've distilled it down from a 40-page menu to a placemat. In my research growing up in Brooklyn and going to diners, you're handed the 40-page menu, but you really go to the top few things. There's so much access to high-quality and fresh ingredients in the Hudson Valley, and that will again be our signature. It's all about authenticity," he said.

For more on Mike Cioffi's current Ulster County restaurants go to phoeniciadiner.com and dixonroadside.com.



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A Red-Carpet Experience

VIP Winery Vacations Offers 5-Star Trips

There's a story in every pour of wine at Aroma Thyme Bistro in Ellenville. That's because owners Marcus and Jamie Guiliano know the unique character of the small family-run vineyards they do business with and the passionate people who tend them.

The restaurateurs have visited some of the most celebrated wineries around the planet and cultivated relationships with the vintners who work their magic from grapes to glass.

It all started in the early days of Facebook when the couple used to post photos of their trips to enchanting Italian vineyards. Many of their fans were so impressed that they begged them to go.

The couple responded in 2017 by forming VIP Winery Vacations, which offers red-carpet, boutique wine tours to Italy, Mexico, the Finger Lakes, Long Island and the Hudson Valley.

"All of our tours are to vineyards we personally know, so when you have relationships like that, it makes a huge difference," said Aroma Thyme Bistro co-owner Marcus Guiliano, an award-winning chef, author and "real food" activist.

"These trips are about more than just wine. They're also about the food, people and culture of the places we visit. We're showing you the backcountry and the real culture—not the tourist traps," he said.

Travelers who accompany the Guilianos are often greeted with a hug by the winery owners and invited into their homes to dine, meet their families and learn the history of the vineyards, which, in most cases, is generational.

It also means guests will walk the narrow streets and hill towns of medieval cities in Tuscany, Piedmont and Sicily or meander through wine caves in Valle de Guadalupe.

"It's very easy to go to a winery but hard to get that red-carpet tour," Guiliano said. "We go to every part of the winery. In Mexico, Sergio took us to the barrel rooms and filled our glasses with Rose straight from the tanks. One vineyard owner in Italy cooked dinner for us. He hunted, forged and grew everything that was on our menu. This is the kind of personal attention you get on our tours."

The Guilianos have traveled to every region of Italy and take their guests twice a year to their favorite wineries in Apulia (the "heel of the boot"), Sicily, Veneto, Campagna, Piedmont and Tuscany, the most popular tour.

A new favorite destination is Mexico, where the Guilianos bring their small group tours to wineries in Valle de Guadalupe, which Guiliano describes as one of the best regions he and his wife have visited.

"As restaurant owners and wine lovers, we fell in love with this part of Mexico. We have been to vineyards in every part of Italy, Spain, France, California and New York. Discovering wine country in Mexico was a game changer for us.

"It's not typically the first place you think of when you think of wine in general," Guiliano said. "The people in Mexico are so appreciative because they know you could have gone to a vineyard anywhere like Napa Valley. All these small wineries could never produce enough wine to be in all 50 states. Because they can't supply the big demands, the average person doesn't walk into a restaurant and see a Mexican wine on the list."

That's not to say there isn't a deep history of the grapevines in this dry Mediterranean climate. Spanish missionaries planted the first vines in the 1500s then moved northward to Baja and up the coast to San Diego and Santa Barbara, Guiliano noted.

Today, the Valle de Guadalupe region is a veritable vino hotspot, with 200 wineries. The Guilianos plan two yearly tours there—one in April and another in the fall.

The itinerary for this October's package includes stops in the village of Punto Nuevo for lobsters and margaritas overlooking the Pacific Ocean; Tahona Baja for Mezcal cocktails and a dozen of the best wineries, restaurants and boutique inns.

The Finger Lakes tours, tailored for weekends, include the Damiani Wine Cellars on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake, Finger Lakes Distillery, Hickory Hollow Wine Cellars, Nathan Kendall Finger Lake Wines and Point of the Bluff Vineyards in Hammondsport.

"The Finger Lakes region has well over 100 wineries and was named by TripAdvisor as the No. 1 Wine Trail in America," Guiliano said. "As restaurateurs, we have personal connections with the best wineries in that region."

Tours to Hudson Valley wineries go from Warwick and



north throughout Orange, Ulster, Dutchess and Columbia counties. Guiliano said VIP Winery Vacations features a "Your Car—Our Driver" designated driver option for groups of two or more.

"Other major wine regions like the Finger Lakes and Napa have that service, but we didn't have it in the Hudson Valley, so we saw it as an opportunity to expand the local part," he said. "It's really the most affordable way because the driver waits for you. We will map it out and plan everything for you. Our driver will take you to the local wineries, breweries and distilleries and wherever you want to go, even the dog park."

Guiliano said overall, the wine tours—whether they're at Caruso & Minini in Marsala, Sicily or Wild Arc in Pinebush—create lifetime memories.

"This is a 5-star experience. Everybody says they could have never done this trip themselves, and they're deeply appreciative of how we've opened their eyes. In fact, some who do the tours aren't necessarily wine lovers, but they want to learn about it and drink more wine. Those who don't have a lot of knowledge about wine often come back from these trips saying they can now order wine with more confidence."

For more information on VIP Winery Vacations and upcoming tours, call (845) 647-3000 or go to vipwineryvacations.com.

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

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DAILY FREEMAN

Community Says 'Thank You' To United Way President

Stacey Rein Retires After Nearly Three Decades

As Su Marcy takes over the helm of the United Way of Ulster County, accolades continue to pour in for Stacey Rein, who recently retired as United Way President after 28 years. She leaves behind a legacy of which she and the agency can be proud.

During her tenure at the United Way, the agency distributed more than \$21 million to local programs addressing everything from homelessness to substance abuse prevention. In her words, it took talent, a good supporting staff, a bit of luck and good timing to achieve all that she did over the years, and Rein will likely be remembered as one of the nonprofit's biggest stars, loudest cheerleaders and fiercest warriors.

Under her leadership, the Raising HOPE mentoring program was born, helping hundreds of women break the cycle of poverty, domestic violence and substance abuse. She also built a solid volunteer base, networked with the right people and created clever ways to fill the gap after corporate giving dropped in the 1990s.

That's really where Rein's story in Ulster County begins. The year was 1994 when she left her job as Executive Director at The Community Action Agency in Dutchess County to become President of the United Way of Ulster County. At the same time, IBM announced that it was pulling out of Kingston.

Rein, 66, remembers the initial shockwaves and aftermath like it was yesterday.

"I got a phone call from one of my colleagues, who said, 'What were you thinking? Are you crazy? IBM is leaving. Why would you take this job?'"

"I smiled. I like a challenge and felt I would be the right person to deal with that transition. The board wanted someone who would create a competitive grant process. I had done a lot of grant writing, so we were able to implement that process, and once we did, the agency's visibility and positive image increased."

That's not to say it was all smooth sailing. Rein said IBM's departure resulted in a "tremendous loss," especially in corporate giving.

"We've seen a dramatic change in corporate culture, across the board, that has prevented

United Way from being visible in the workplace. We went from partnering with 120 workplaces in 2000, where 95 percent of our income had come from, down to 50 in 2021."

To make up for the loss, Rein and her team worked tirelessly to attract new business support and began hosting special fundraisers like "Dancing With The Stars-Ulster Style," Day of Caring and "A Celebration of HOPE."

The United Way also picked up valued partners like the Bruderhof, Ulster Savings Bank and the Dyson Foundation. A real game-changer came in 2018 when the NoVo Foundation stepped in with significant funding, allowing the United Way to expand programs and services and hire three new employees, including a part-time marketing coordinator and two full-time Raising HOPE staff.

Helping others meant going the extra mile during the COVID-19 crisis. The United Way took a leading role by administering Ulster County's Project Resilience feeding and childcare programs.

The agency also partnered with other nonprofits such as the Worker Justice Center of New York and the Ulster Immigrant Defense Network to help immigrants who were not eligible for government benefits.

"Together, we developed applications in Spanish so they could access our emergency and homelessness prevention funds. The folks we were helping were working predominantly in restaurants, hotels, housekeeping and construction. All these industries were on pause, and there was no income coming into these households," Rein said.



While these highlights stand out in her career, Rein said she looks back at her overall role as a "true gift."

"I have met and worked with amazing people from all walks of life—those who are caring, compassionate and devoted to making the world a better place. I could not have asked for a better or more satisfying job," she said.

Yet it could have been a much different ending for the New Rochelle native, who once considered a career in show business. She had inherited the performance gene from her mother, Ruth "Rookie" Rein, and would often accompany the one-time entertainer to the theater while she was growing up.

With stars in her eyes, the young Rein landed roles in productions like "Fiddler on the Roof," "Peter Pan," "Bye Bye Birdie" and "Guys and Dolls" and could belt out a song and light up a stage like Ethel Merman.

As a 16-year-old, she even caught the eye of a New York agent while playing the role of Muriel Tate in "Plaza Suite" in the summer of 1972. Smitten by her acting chops and natural humor, he encouraged her to pursue comic theater.

After graduating from Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy, she turned down a position at the Cook County Juvenile Court in Chicago, where she had interned, and returned to New York City to see how far she could go in musical theater.

Rein got gigs at dinner theaters in Cape Cod and Nantucket, while studying voice and acting and working temp jobs in between.

Luckily for the untold thousands she would one day help, Rein found the stage unfulfilling

and set her eye on something more meaningful.

"I learned it wasn't for me. There was an emptiness to it. I didn't feel the emotional connections I had in my human service work," she said.

"As a young person growing up between the Bronx, one of the poorest communities in New York, and Scarsdale, one of the wealthiest, I was always struck by the disparities between the two and made a vow that I would do something about it. I wanted to level the playing field so that everybody had the same opportunities."

As she enters retirement, she spoke of the respect and admiration for her successor, former United Way Vice President Su Marcy, who she worked with for 18 years.

"We're very fortunate to have somebody who knows this agency inside and out. Our major contributors were all relieved that we were promoting from within. Everybody knows Su. She is highly respected and will continue the agency's legacy of compassion."

Since her recent retirement, she's had more time to read, care for her flower garden and take long walks. She even joined a women's golf league and has gone kayaking a time or two.

"I feel like a little kid with no responsibility," she said. "I have to admit that it feels a little strange."

Now that Rein no longer has the starring role at the United Way, she is enjoying more leisure this summer and plans to seek part-time work in a local human service agency this fall.

Asked if she has any regrets about not sticking with showbiz, Rein insists she made the right choice.

"Part of what I loved about this job was that I did get to perform occasionally, emceed for a variety of different events—the United Way's and others—and then, of course, there was my routine with Drew Andrews in this year's 'Dancing with The Stars.' I call it my 'swan song salsa.'"

The United Way of Ulster County is located at 450 Albany Avenue, Kingston. They can be reached at (845) 331-4199 or at ulsterunitedway.org.

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