

Who Will It Be This Year? Breakfast Reveals Next Honorary Irish Person

Last year after the Chamber's St. Patrick's Day breakfast, Elliott Auerbach smiled all the way as he drove to his job in Albany.

That's because he got the surprise of his life that morning: Auerbach was named the 2022 Peter B. Mathews Honorary Irish Person of the Year at the sold-out breakfast—the first in-person breakfast since the pandemic.

"I was totally blown away, and I say that with the utmost sincerity," said Auerbach, the former Ulster County Comptroller, who now works for the New York State Comptroller's office. "I didn't expect it at all, and quite honestly, I felt like we were having a COVID-coming out party, so I was basking in that, and all of a sudden, the selection came out, and I was totally in shock."

That same sense of excitement will permeate this year's Peter B. Mathews Honorary Irish Person of the Year Breakfast on March 17 at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus in Kingston. As in past years, The Reis Group is sponsoring the event from 7:30-9:00 a.m. Back by popular demand, The T McCann Band will kick it up a notch with lively Irish music.

Expect the 'green' orange juice to overflow,

along with jolly St. Paddy's Day ditties, limericks, sing-alongs, and a parade of past honorees—some of Ulster County's most distinguished citizens.

The annual breakfast feels like an early morning Irish pub (minus the Guinness) as attendees join in the fun, trying to guess the next honoree from among the 300 or so attendees. Not even Chamber President Ward Todd knows until that morning after he scans the room and spots a worthy soul.

Credit for Ulster County's beloved Irish tradition goes to the late Len Cane, the Chamber President from 1969 to 2003. He intended to bring the community together to have a little fun on St. Patrick's Day.

Anthony Pizzarelli, the President of Ulster Tool and Die Corp., was named the first Honorary Irish Person of the Year in 1970. Since then, bank presidents, restaurateurs, hospital administrators, gym owners, roofers and other prominent people have earned the title.

"It's humbling to know the people—most of them notable Ulster County folks—before me," Auerbach said. "I felt like I was in a fraternity. I was filled with emotion. Maybe it was because it had been two years of not being able to see people and get out, and now it all came together in that single moment."

Auerbach served four terms as Ulster County's first elected Comptroller, a position he held from 2009 through 2019 when state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli appointed him Deputy Comptroller for the Division of Local Government and School Accountability. Earlier in his career, Auerbach had served as a three-term mayor of the village of Ellenville and as Village Manager.



Elliott Auerbach and Ward Todd

Over the years, he also co-founded and served as the Director of Run Like the Wind. The proceeds from the 5K race go to local charities. Additionally, he was a member of STRIVE (Society to Revive Interest In The Village of Ellenville) and served on the boards of the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce and the SUNY Ulster Foundation.

He continues to give back as a board member of the Ulster Chamber Foundation and the Commission of Forward Facing Ellenville. During the holidays, he delivers meals to shut-ins for the Aroma Thyme Christmas Day Soup Kitchen and the Ellenville Noonday Club.

The energetic and affable Auerbach, who has seven grandchildren, always makes it a point to spend time with his family, even while serving his community.

Looking back to last year, Auerbach said while he was honored to be named Irish Person of the Year, he was woefully unprepared for that moment in the spotlight. His advice to every person sitting in that room this March 17: Carry a speech in your pocket.

"I stood up there totally unprepared and caught by surprise," he said. "I am usually very meticulous about preparing my notes, and here I was caught off guard. As I'm walking to the podium and recovering from the initial shock, I realized what this moment meant."

March Breakfast
March 17
7:30-9:00 am
 The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
 503 Washington Ave.
 Kingston, NY

Featuring
T. McCann Band

Sponsor:

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"What I said was from the heart. I shared my love for the people of Ulster County and specifically, for the people in that room that morning. I came to my role as County Comptroller in 2009, and to me, this was like the cherry on top—the culmination of a beautiful love relationship between me and the people of Ulster County," he said.

Chamber Breakfasts are a great way to stay on top of current events and connect with other local business leaders. 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.

BREAKFAST Meeting



T. McCann Band

The Reis Group Is the Saint Patrick's Day Breakfast Sponsor

The Reis Group, an independent full-service insurance agency with offices in Kingston, Saugerties, New Windsor, and Latham, has a new President, Owen McKane. Owen stepped into the role in September, when Louis and Frank Casciaro retired as partners in the company, according to Paul Casciaro, the company's Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board.

Owen succeeds Lou Casciaro as President. While Lou is still managing his clients, Paul described him as semi-retired. In September, Frank Casciaro Jr. also stepped down from his roles as chief financial officer and IT manager. He remains onboard as a part-time consultant, his brother said.

Owen has been a partner with The Reis Group since December 2016. Before that, he owned his own business, The McKane Group. "We started with Owen 11 years ago to work collectively, and about six years ago, he decided to merge in with us, so we've been working with him for a number of years," Casciaro said.

Owen, who is from Orange County, has worked for various brokers over the years and was the owner of The McKane Group

in Pine Bush from 2010-2016. Early on in his career, he worked for Liberty Mutual.

With the new leadership in place, The Reis Group is poised for solid growth, Casciaro said, adding that the company signed aggregation agreements in recent months with the DeForest and SAN groups to increase independence, while taking advantage of the opportunities afforded only to large, regional agencies.

"We now have additional carriers we're bringing on, and we have resources we didn't have before, and it gives us the same resources as billion-dollar agencies," Casciaro said. "Businesses evolve or they die, and we continue to evolve and offer a wider array of products and services. We have full-time loss control now, and a lot more services, but we're still a boutique firm. We're not a gigantic firm that's publicly traded. They tend to lose focus on that interpersonal relationship."

Another exciting development for The Reis Group is partnering with a local IT Company to deliver Cyber Security and Cyber Risk Management Services to our clients. In addition, The Reis Group will be opening up an office in Naples, Fla.,

Casciaro said. Paul and Lou own property in Florida, and it's a natural extension of their business as so many New Yorkers are moving to Florida. Paul said they are looking for space and expect to be up and running there shortly.

While the company's history goes back to the 1800s, Paul and his brothers bought the Casciaro Insurance Agency from their father, Frank, in 1997. They then merged with The Reis Group in 1999.

The Reis Group has 47 employees and thousands of customers throughout the Northeast as well as other parts of the United States and Canada. Paul said the company is experiencing tremendous growth right now and it's very exciting as a business owner to be part of so many exciting opportunities.



Celebrating Women In Leadership Next Mixer March 8 At Kingston City Hall

International Women's Day is March 8 and the Chamber Foundation has a special networking Mixer planned to debut a new initiative showcasing women leaders and their contributions to Ulster County.

"This event is to celebrate women in leadership and to inspire and encourage," says Jess Davis, the Chamber's Director of Membership. "We feel that women in leadership in Ulster County were so invested in the county's resiliency during the pandemic. We feel that women in leadership are such a major force in rebuilding the leadership pipeline."

The Mixer, scheduled for 5:00-7:00 p.m. at Kingston City Hall, will be hosted by the Chamber Foundation, which is unveiling a new program called "Ulster Women in Leadership." Masa Midtown and We Got The Juice will provide complimentary refreshments with beverages from Boulevard Wine & Spirits and Keegan Ales.

MGI Construction, owned by Susan Wright, is the Mixer sponsor. It was Davis, Wright and Ingrid Kulick, Executive Director of the Chamber Foundation, who conceived of Ulster Women in Leadership about a year ago and planned the Mixer.

Ulster Women in Leadership will host programs and events to "engage aspiring and experienced women leaders in supporting, empowering and connecting each other through sharing," Davis said. The program will include round table discussions, guest presentations and panel discussions throughout the year.

The inaugural Mixer will feature presentations from Kate Waage of MVP, the Chair of the Ulster Foundation Board; Crystal Jacob of Ulster Savings Bank, the Chair of the Chamber's Board of Directors; Ulster County Commissioner of Health Tara McDonald; and Maria Cabrera, the owner of Maria Cabrera Bridal.

"We thought we should bring women and leadership together in Ulster County," Davis said. "We built a little roadmap from there, but it took us some time to launch it. We're really excited. This is the first meeting and we're planning on having one per quarter on a smaller scale over the course of the year."

Davis said smaller, more intimate events will be held throughout the year to hear from more women.

"We want to hear from these women in leadership and how they got where they are, what challenges they've had and how they navigated through the pandemic," she said.

Kulick agreed and said the concept of Ulster Women in Leadership was "born out of a desire to showcase the many women leaders we have in Ulster County."

regional organizations.

"Our initiative, beyond the debut at the March 8 mixer, will be to host meetups, panels and round-table discussions focused on key issues of strengthening and growing leadership abilities."

Leadership development is a hallmark of the non-profit Chamber Foundation, which boasts a vision of talented leaders of various backgrounds, identities and life experiences contributing to the quality of life in the Hudson Valley. The Foundation accomplishes this vision by inspiring individuals to lead and mentor within our region's businesses and community organizations.

Cornerstone programs include the Ulster Leadership Development Institute, the Youth Leadership & Career Development Program, the ULDI Alumni Association and now the new Ulster Women in Leadership.

For more information about the Ulster Chamber Foundation, please visit www.UlsterChamberFoundation.org or contact Kulick at (845) 338-5100, x 6 or Ingrid@ulsterchamber.org.

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 at (845) 338-5100 or by registering online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

Mixer
 Wed., March 8
 5-7 pm

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 Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation

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Worthy Of Honor

Black Business Achievement Award April 26

Six luminaries who have enriched the local business landscape, driven change and advanced racial equity will be in the spotlight on April 26 at the second-annual Ulster County Black Business Achievement Awards at Ulster Savings Bank at 180 Schwenk Dr. in Kingston.

The Ulster Chamber is co-hosting the event with Black History Month Kingston and Ulster County Tourism. Doors open at 4:00. The awards ceremony begins at 5:00 p.m. and a Community Connect follows from 6:00-8:00 p.m. The Presenting Sponsor is Ulster Savings Bank, and the Welcoming Sponsor is Go Beyond Greatness.

This year's honorees include:

Black Business Excellence Award

Blue Byrd's Haberdashery & Music is co-owned by John and Maureen Byrd-Blue, who opened the combined hat and music store at 320 Wall St. in Uptown Kingston in 1992. As such, it is the oldest Black-owned business in Kingston and a longstanding institution with a unique presence known for its high-quality headwear and hard-to-find blues on CD and vinyl. John is one of the region's preeminent blues experts and serves as the host and program director of the weekly "Blues People" on Radio Kingston. He and his wife are pillars in the community, serving on numerous boards, including the YMCA, Ulster County Workforce Development, Midtown Arts District, Kingston Uptown Business Association and the Boys and Girls Club.

Sojourner Truth Award

Candice Van Dyke is SUNY Ulster's Chief Diversity Officer and the chair of the English Foreign Languages and Philosophy department. She leads the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts at the Stone Ridge campus and the Kingston Center of SUNY Ulster. In addition, she has led Implicit Bias Training programs for numerous organizations, including libraries and local colleges and participated in Kingston's Community Policing Panel. She has been recognized for her efforts with SUNY Ulster's inaugural Distinguished Alumni Award in 2022 and the Krembs Innovation Award in 2018.

Black Business Leadership Award

Joseph McDole Jr. is the owner of J's Painting Service, a Kingston-based business that specializes in construction and painting. McDole established the company 19 years ago with one employee. Today, he has six people on his payroll and is a mentor to at-risk youth, teaching them the skills of the trade as well as providing support and guidance. J's Painting Service is responsible for rehabilitating many run-down properties in Kingston and sprucing up others such as the Everette Hodge Community Center and the Lace Mill. His company also is restoring an old home on the property of the Pine Street African Burial Ground in Kingston. McDole serves as the chair of the Kingston Housing Authority and has been a part of the Riverview Missionary Baptist Church's feeding program for low-income families.

Maude Bruce Award

Christina "Nina" Dawson is the director of the Ulster County Youth Bureau and former human rights commissioner, who has worked hard to make life better for Kingston residents. She served two terms on the Kingston Common Council and has been an adviser to many community initiatives, including the Boys and Girls Club of Kingston, YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County, Center for Creative Education, New Paltz Youth Center, My Brothers Keeper and the Kingston Police Commission. During the pandemic, she led "Hope and Healing" discussion groups to help youth overcome mental health struggles. Dawson also is the director of The Brighter Futures Initiative, a

county-based program that aims to break the cycle of generational poverty.

Everette Hodge Award

Paula Childs Perez

is an author and adjunct professor at SUNY New Paltz. She was the founder of King's Kids and the King's Kids Early Child Development Center. Additionally, she was an educator in the Kingston City School District for 30 years. She served as the principal at John F. Kennedy Elementary School as well as the former Sophie Finn and Meagher elementary schools. Childs, who earned her doctorate in education from Seton Hall University, currently serves in full-time ministry with her husband, John Perez, at Faith Temple Church in Beacon.

Young Black Leader of Tomorrow

Alonzo Jordan, is a rising star at Rough Draft Bar & Books in Kingston. He started out as a dishwasher in 2020 at Kingston Bread & Bar, which closed during the pandemic and reopened as Rough Draft Bar & Books. The owners were so impressed with Jordan that they enticed him to return to their new venture, where he has worked his way up to one of the top-producing baristas at the popular coffeehouse. Jordan also is involved in the YMCA Farm Project, Radio Kingston and HUDSY, where he has honed his video and photography skills.

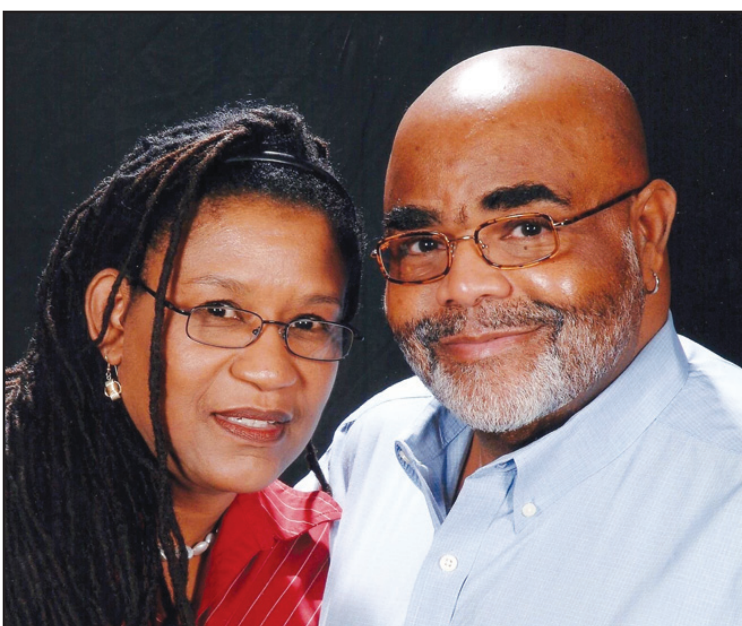
Dawson applauds the Chamber of Commerce for recognizing the accomplishments of local Black leaders, and on a personal level, she said the Maude Bruce Award is close to her heart. Bruce, a longtime civil rights activist and president of the Ellenville Chapter of the NAACP, is someone she regards as a role model and champion of the disenfranchised.

"This award is most meaningful to me because I tried to support the advancement of everyone equally wherever I worked," Dawson said. "At Kingston Hospital, I worked for 15 years in the capacity of human resources and physician credentialing personnel. I always saw the need for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. There still is a high level of unawareness, and it means a lot to me that everyone has the same opportunities."

"Maude Bruce is not afraid to speak up for others. She was encouraging Diversity, Equity and Inclusion long before the terms were so lightly tossed around," Dawson added. "We must be about it and not just talk about it."

Perez likewise expressed gratitude to the Chamber for the Black Business Achievement Awards and honoring her with the Everette Hodge Award. The late Hodge had operated a funeral home at 21 Franklin St. (now the site of the Everette Hodge Community Center) in Midtown Kingston and was the founder and president of the Newburgh branch of the NAACP and longtime president of the Ulster chapter.

"This award means a lot to me because I had the joy of meeting Mr. Hodge as a child," Perez said. "I remember when the funeral home was on the lot where the community center is



Maureen and John Byrd-Blue



Paula Childs Perez

now. I want to live up to the legacy that Mr. Hodge lived. He was determined to make sure that those less fortunate were treated—even in death—with respect and dignity."

This event is free and open to Chamber members and non-members. Reservations are required and can be made by calling the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 or by registering online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

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Wednesday March 8 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer
Celebrating Ulster Women In Leadership
 Kingston City Hall | 420 Broadway, Kingston, NY
 There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members.
 Reservations are required.
Sponsor: MGI Construction

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

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
St. Patrick's Day
Featuring T. McCann Band
 The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
 503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
 \$30 Members-Advanced Pay • \$40 Non-Members
Sponsor: The Reis Group

Wednesday April 12 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
U.S. Congressman Marc Molinaro
 Diamond Mills Hotel & Tavern
 25 S. Partition Street | Saugerties, NY
 \$30 Members-Advanced Pay • \$35 Members-At The Door
 \$40 Non-Members
Sponsors: Sawyer Savings

Wednesday April 26 | 5:00 - 8:00 pm

2023 Ulster County Black Business Achievement Awards and Community Connect
 Ulster Savings Bank Corporate Headquarters
 180 Schwenk Drive | Kingston, NY
 Registration is required.
 There is no charge for admission but space will be limited
Sponsor: Ulster Savings Bank

More Info and Registration UlsterChamber.org
Questions (845) 338-5100

Ulster County

Black Business Achievement Awards

& Community Connect

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DAILY FREEMAN

SPCA Dealing With Rising Costs

Pet Adoption Fees May Go Up

Like every other non-profit and business, the Ulster County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) is seeing rising costs during these days of raging inflation.

"Sometimes people don't understand how much it costs a nonprofit to be able to do business," says Gina Carbonari, the SPCA's Executive Director. "By virtue of us being called non-profits, most people think that everything should be free and that there's no cost for the organization when in reality there are huge costs for organizations to be able to provide services that we give to the community."

Carbonari said "pretty much everything across the board" has gone up in the last few years, including the cost of food and water and propane and electricity to keep the shelter on Wiedy Drive in Kingston lit and warm. The animals are also spayed and neutered, vaccinated and microchipped prior to adoption.

"There is a daily care cost," she said. "We have to be able to provide a roof over their head and all of those things have a true dollar cost associated with them."

While volunteers do much of the staffing, Carbonari said the shelter also has professionally paid staff.

"Someone has to be here to take care of the animals," she said. "It's nice to think that everybody is just a volunteer, but they're not volunteers. This is an industry that requires education and experience in how to care for and handle animals. These are professionals that are working here. They aren't just people who love animals. We must have paid staff here, too."

Carbonari said the SPCA is calculating new rates for adoptions and other services and trying to keep any increases as affordable as possible.

"We are trying to keep everything as minimal as we can because we also understand a lot of our clientele are potentially lower income," she said. "We want to stay as low-cost as we possibly can. We are trying to make sure we are minimizing what those increases are going to be."

The SPCA, founded in 1891, houses 100-125 animals at any given time, mostly a wide variety of dogs and cats, but also smaller species like rabbits, Guinea pigs, reptiles and even farm animals.

About 1,000 animals are adopted from the SPCA each year and find "forever homes," Carbonari said.

"I would say that this is probably one of the most satisfying jobs that I've ever had," she said. "These animals don't ask for any of the situations that they can end up in. When they come to us, we're going to try to make sure that's the last option. If there's anything we can do to keep an animal in their home, that's what we're really trying to do. We have programs to do that as well."

One of those programs is a community food pantry that helps pet owners struggling to feed their animals. Some 4,000 animals were helped last year.

"It really is a tremendous resource to help people keep their pets in their home," Carbonari said. "There are people who

really have to come here every month to be able to do that. The alternative is they probably wouldn't be feeding themselves as much because they really love their pets and do not want to give them up.

"People look at their pets now as being family members. It's not just a dog. It's not just a cat. It's a family member."

Carbonari said 94 percent of the SPCA's funding comes from private donations. While some people think the SPCA is part of the county government or the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), it is not.

"All of the SPCAs are separate and distinct, they are not connected to each other," she said. "We do our own fundraising. We have a tremendous community of animal lovers that supports us."

Carbonari said local business can help by purchasing a variety of sponsorships.

"Those are generally all done by our local businesses," Carbonari said. "It helps them highlight what their goods and services are, and at the same time, you're helping the animals of Ulster County by providing that cash sponsorship and helping us do what we do here."

The Ulster County SPCA, located at 25 Wiedy Drive in Kingston, can be reached at (845) 331-5377 or www.ucspca.org.

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Brian Hutchins - President
 Category: Manufacturers
 Description: Community Metalworks (CMw), is a startup 15,000 sq ft. manufacturer in the Marlboro, NY, area. We have tube bending, forming, and tumbling capabilities. CMw is associated with the Bruderhof in Ulster County and the Mid-Hudson Valley. Community Metalworks aims to become among the best employers in the Hudson Valley.

DUGO REALTY

110 Partition Street
Saugerties, NY 12477
www.dugorealty.com
Jason Dugo - Principal Broker/Owner
 Category: Real Estate
 Description: A locally owned and operated real estate brokerage that focuses on exceptional customer service and a unique dedication to helping clients find their perfect home or property.

HUDSON VALLEY HOUSE WASH, LLC

99 Eagles Nest Road
Hurley, NY 12443
www.hvhousewash.com
Zak Fisher - Owner
 Category: Home Improvement
 Description: "We are the Hudson Valley's premier soft wash specialist for all of your exterior cleaning and restoration needs. Home, Office, or Store Front, We take care of it all!" Pressure / Power Washing, Roof Cleaning, Window Cleaning, Gutter Cleaning, Wood Cleaning & Restoration, Paver & Concrete Cleaning & Restoration, Surface Cleaning, Building Restoration, Cedar Roof / Siding Cleaning & Restoration, Residential & Commercial Snow, and Ice Management, Holiday Light Design Installation & Removal, Gum, Graffiti and Rust Removal, Play Ground Cleaning, Patio Restoration, and Fleet Cleaning Services.

JACER FUNDAMENTAL BEGINNINGS

13 Cathy Court
Walkkill, NY 12589
www.jacerfundamentalbeginningsllc.com
Jamala Spencer - Owner
 Category: Day Care Providers
 Description: JACER FUNDamental Beginnings, LLC is a home-based Group Family Day Care in the Walkkill area for children 15 months to 5 years old. Staff is CPR/First Aid certified. The program offers high-quality childcare services and is licensed by New York State Office of Children and Family Services. With the expertise of the director, children will engage in age-appropriate experiences that will further the development of each and every child.

KEY BANK MORTGAGE

PO Box 670
Saugerties, NY 12477
Daniel Gallagher - AVP, Senior Loan Officer
 Category: Mortgages
 Description: Residential Mortgage Lending.

KINGSTON CYCLERY

612 Ulster Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
www.kingstonscyclery.com
William Hadsel - Owner
 Category: Bicycles – Retail & Service
 Description: Bicycle sales and service, custom bikes, wheel building, car racks and plenty of accessories. We also have expanded our parts department for faster service.