

## An Update From The Congressman Rep. Ryan Speaks At January Breakfast

It's been a year since Congressman Pat Ryan (D-18) was sworn in at West Point as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and this month, he'll report directly to the business community on what he's accomplished on their behalf since going to Washington, D.C.

Ryan will be the featured guest speaker at the Jan. 24 Breakfast at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus Kingston Hotel at 503 Washington Ave. in Kingston. The breakfast, which runs from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. is sponsored by Ulster Savings Bank.

Specifically, Ryan said he plans to brief Chamber members on legislation he voted for to improve the local economy and quality of life for his constituents.

Ryan, a 2004 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, will also share what he has done to equip veterans with the tools they need to start a business and how he has drawn upon the partnerships he forged while serving as Ulster County Executive from 2019-2022. In that role, he worked with the business community, other local elected officials from both parties, and many other stakeholders to push forward critical projects like the establishment of the Cresco Labs facility in Ellenville and the redevelopment of the former Kingston IBM Campus, now known as iPark87.

"In Congress, I'm continuing to build on my efforts as County Executive, partnering with local and state government, as well as the private sector, to drive our Hudson Valley

economy into the 21st Century," he said. "That means prioritizing investments that allow our economy to grow over the long term, including more affordable housing and investing in public education and workforce development programs. Ultimately, we need a Congress that listens to the needs of the community and actually gets things done."

To that end, Ryan said he helped pass crucial legislation that "delivers for our small and local businesses," including the Investing in Main Street Act to increase access to capital for small businesses; the Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act, which teaches veterans and their families the fundamentals of business management; and the Improving Access to Small Business Information Act to help the government access better information on the challenges facing small businesses and reduce red tape.

In September, Ryan met personally with 25 business leaders representing thousands of Hudson Valley employees at a small business roundtable in Poughkeepsie, where he discussed jobs and economic growth in the region. At the event, Ryan pledged to partner with business leaders from across his district to cement the Hudson Valley's position as a hub for renewed American manufacturing.

Ryan, a former businessman from Gardiner, initially won a seat in Congress in the summer of 2022 in a special election to complete the term of former U.S. Rep. Antonio Delgado, who resigned to become New York's

Lieutenant Governor. The congressional district was redrawn, and Ryan then defeated Republican Colin Schmitt for that seat in the November general election.

He is the first West Point graduate to represent the United States Military Academy's district in Congress.

New York's 18th Congressional District includes the city of Kingston and the towns of Rosendale, Marletown, Rochester, Gardiner, Lloyd, Esopus, Marlborough, Plattekill, Shawangunk in Ulster County, along with the village and town of New Paltz, parts of the town of Wawarsing and village of Ellenville. Orange County and a sliver of southern Dutchess are also in the district.

*Chamber Breakfast Meetings are a great way to stay on top of current events and connect with other local business leaders and*

## BREAKFAST Meeting

**JANUARY BREAKFAST**  
 January 24, 2024  
 7:30 - 9:00 am  
 The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus Kingston Hotel  
 503 Washington Ave. Kingston, NY



U.S. Congressman Pat Ryan

*are open to Chamber Members as well as the general public. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 at the door for Chamber members, \$40 for non-members. Reservations are required. Call (845) 338-5100 or register online at www.UlsterChamber.org.*

## January Breakfast Sponsor - The Ulster Savings Bank

January is a time to reflect on the impact made in 2023 and the new opportunities that lie ahead in 2024. We always look forward to sharing the beginning of a new year with our friends at the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce.

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## \$10K Hot Off The Griddle

### Phoenicia Diner Raises Funds For YMCA Cooking Crew

The pancake-o-meter at the Phoenicia Diner kept ticking upward over the summer until it hit the \$4,000 mark. The thing was it had nothing to do with the restaurant's glorious golden griddle cakes.

Instead, it was a fundraising campaign launched in May by owner Mike Cioffi and his staff, inviting customers to round up their spare change for the YMCA's Winter Cooking Crew program—an offshoot of the YMCA Farm Project that teaches youth a variety of lessons, including culinary skills and teamwork.

"This is the first time that a restaurant came to us and said, 'We're interested in and love what you do,'" said KayCee Wimbish, the director of the YMCA Farm Project. "They approached us, which was amazing. They visited the farm. They liked the idea of the Cooking Crew and started to raise money for the program. For someone to come to us and say, 'We want to do this for you' was just outstanding."

Even more outstanding was the fact that Cioffi threw in another \$6,000 to fund the program from November through March. The money will cover the costs associated with the program, particularly the youth employees' paychecks, according to Wimbish.

Cioffi added that the fundraiser was not only well received by his customers but aligned perfectly with his business values.

"We were extremely excited to participate in making a substantial contribution this year," he said. "Our management, our staff and our guests were all involved. It's part of our mission to give back to the community... (and) we could not have found a better way than in support of the YMCA Farm Project. They have a community garden, and they teach the kids how to utilize the vegetables they grow by showing them how to harvest and cook them. It was a perfect match."

The Farm Project, now in its 10th year,

focuses on community food production, farm-based education, youth employment and community-based farm stands, Wimbish said. It typically employs between 20 and 30 Kingston High School students each year.

"They do everything," Wimbish said. "In the spring, they plant seeds in the greenhouse, prepare the beds for planting, and as the season progresses, they transplant and then they harvest, wash and sell what they grow at our farm stands. During the off season, the Cooking Crew uses produce from the winter farm stand and meets weekly to cook multi-course meals from scratch and then sits down to enjoy them together. They also donate meals to Kingston Community Fridges to combat food insecurity."

In addition, the Cooking Crew developed a bilingual cookbook in 2021 and the following year, operated a popup restaurant in the lobby of the Fuller building on Pine Grove Avenue in Kingston.

Wimbish added that the program passes on lifelong lessons to the teens, particularly how to work in the kitchen together as well as recipe reading and math skills.

Shama Davis, operations manager at the Phoenicia Diner, said the staff was so impressed by the overall operation that it couldn't wait to drum up support for the program.

"We make a lot of charitable donations



throughout the year, but we were looking for one cause to get behind. Our brand philosophy is really about promoting and using local food and celebrating the Catskills, and we really liked the idea of youth empowerment in the Farm Project," she said.

"They learn how to cook food and donate what they make to the community and get paid a wage to do it. What we love so much about it is they're helping make fresh fruit and vegetables—home-grown, healthy food—accessible to those who don't usually have it."

As a bonus, the Cooking Crew team was invited to the Phoenicia Diner in the fall to get a tour of the award-winning restaurant off state Route 28, meet the staff and have breakfast.

"The kids we met seemed really empowered by it," Davis said. "A lot of the kids who have been in that program have continued on with an interest in farming and cooking. It's about confidence and motivation."

*The Phoenicia Diner is located at 5681 state Route 28 in Phoenicia. For more information, go to [phoeniciadiner.com](http://phoeniciadiner.com) or call (845) 688-9957. To learn more about the Winter Cooking Crew, visit [kingstonymcafarmproject.org](http://kingstonymcafarmproject.org).*



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# A Zest For Living And Giving

## Ulster Italian American Foundation Nurtures Community

Tony Marmo and Nina Postupack had always admired Kingston's annual Hooley on the Hudson and the way their Irish friends from the Ancient Order of Hibernians pulled it off so splendidly year after year.

The two community leaders were so impressed that they met after the 2014 Irish festival to brainstorm ways to form a group for the Italian Americans of Ulster County to preserve their culture.

"Tony and Nina were sitting at a table at Frank Guido's Little Italy, saying, 'We represent the largest ethnic group in Ulster County. Why can't we do something like this for the Italians?'" said Anthony Tampono, the newly elected President of the Ulster County Italian American Foundation. "They wrote a bunch of notes on napkins, and the next thing you know, more people gathered in March to talk about it some more."

By the spring of 2015, the Ulster County Italian-American Heritage Society, as it was known in its early stages, had been born and was growing by the month.

"The whole thing was getting the word out. In early June, they were at the city of Kingston's Multicultural Festival, handing out cookies. They said they were starting this Italian group, and my wife, Debra, and I said, 'We're in.'"

"By the time we were at the first large meeting of 70 or more people at Mirabella's in late June, we were ready to reignite the former Taste of Italy Festival on the Rondout into a full-blown Ulster County Italian Festival.

Debra and I presented a list of ideas to then President Tony Marmo, and it was a go from there," Tampono added. "Today, we've got 400-plus members, and we're starting to see younger people—those in their 30s and 40s—join," Tampono said.

The purpose of the group is to preserve, promote and celebrate the Italian culture. Tampono noted that members regularly travel to regional museums and ethnic neighborhoods like Arthur Avenue in the Bronx or Rossville in Staten Island.

They go by the busload each year to festivals such as the Giglio Feast in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and they take part in wine-and-pasta-making workshops as well as Italian language classes offered throughout the year. They also hold a community picnic each year at Robert Post Park in the town of Ulster to play bocce and schmooze over dishes made by the members.

But the biggest day of the year for the foundation is the Ulster County Italian Festival (the renamed Taste of Italy festival) held at T.R. Gallo Park on the Sunday of Columbus Day weekend.

"The festival is where we show all the things that we do and how much we care about our organization, our culture and our community," said Tampono, who has chaired the festival committee for the past two years. "Each year, we say it can't get any better than this, and we're wrong because it does."

The festival, which drew close to 10,000 people last year, features dozens of food and

craft vendors as well as historic exhibits, authors, storytelling and Italian language classes at the Hudson River Maritime Museum's Clearwater barn.

Spectator favorites include a spaghetti-eating contest, wine tastings and cooking demonstrations. The waterfront bursts with colorful street performers, dancers, children's activities and all-day live music on two stages. In recent years, national recording artist Louis

Prima Jr. and the Witnesses have closed the festival in dazzling fashion.

Each year, the organization honors its distinguished members at the festival, recognizing a "Signora" and "Signora" of the Year as well as spotlighting others for the Italian Pride and Community Service awards.

"People who come see the love we have for our family, our culture and our community,"

(Continued on next page)



**Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce**  
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**Thursday January 11 | 9:00 - 10:30 am**

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 Reservations are required.

**Sponsor: Hudson Valley Credit Union**

**Wednesday January 24 | 7:30 - 9:00 am**

**Chamber Breakfast Meeting  
 U.S. Congressman Pat Ryan**

The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus  
 503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY  
 \$30 Members-Advanced Pay • \$35 Members-At The Door  
 \$40 Non-Members

**Sponsor: Ulster Savings Bank**

**Wednesday February 7 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm**

**Networking Mixer  
 @ YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County**

507 Broadway | Kingston, NY  
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 Reservations are required.

**Sponsor: Bank of Greene County**

**Wednesday February 21 | 7:30 - 9:00 am**

**Chamber Breakfast Meeting  
 Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger**

The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus  
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**More Info and Registration [UlsterChamber.org](http://UlsterChamber.org)  
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36 St. James Street, Kingston NY  
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## Italian American Fest

(Continued from previous page)

Tampone said. "Someone once told me this is the best festival because you can feel the love here."

In addition, UCIAF gives back to the community in a big way by awarding \$1,000 scholarships to 10 high school seniors in nine school districts as well as \$1,000 community grants to outstanding nonprofits.

Tampone also noted that the Community Care Fund and

Outreach Program, born out of the pandemic, gives back in other critical ways. Headed by Mary Tuma and a 40-member volunteer team, the program provides gift cards, clothing and household items to those in need. It also holds food drives to help agencies like People's Place restock their shelves, participates in a highway cleanup project and serves at monthly veterans' lunches.

Tampone said it's all rooted in the Italian tradition of caring for others and building a circle of deep and lasting friendships.

"I moved here in 1976, and my friend circle was small and basically business associates. Then I discovered UCIAF, and my circle of friends has grown tenfold. You come to love them immediately. It's filled a vacancy in my life, and I feel at home here with this group. We're one big, happy family," he said.

For more information on UCIAF, call (845) 594-2077 or go to [www.uciaf.org](http://www.uciaf.org).



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# Mixer



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**Southern Table & Bar**  
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**Tony Marmo (Normann Staffing), Joe LoSchiavo, Joe Famiglietti and Anthony Tampone (all with the Ulster County Italian American Foundation) with Ernie Germano (Mid-Hudson Photo ID).**



**Melinda Gillespie and Becky Dawes (both with Dawes Septic and Repair) with Danielle Marchisella and Karen Gilbane (both with Halter Associates Realty - Woodstock).**



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**Brian Berger** - Investor and Business Relationship Advisor  
 Category: Breweries  
 Description: *Kingston Standard Brewing Co (KSBC) produces small batch beers and is committed to sourcing the highest quality local malt and hops. The brewery and tap room also maintain high standards for the food produced, namely home-made sourdough pizza and pretzels, regionally sourced east coast oysters, fresh lobster rolls, and a variety of seasonal vegetable dishes. We also have a curated selection of wines and cocktails. If you're looking for a venue to host a private event, please give us a call.*

### QUEST VOYAGE

PO Box 131163  
**Carlsbad, CA 92013**  
 www.questvoyager.com  
**Ian Scott** - President and Chief Architect of Discovery  
 Category: Tour Operators  
 Description: *Business to business group travel tour operator.*

### RICE PLUMBING AND HEATING, INC.

338 Mettcahonts Road  
**Accord, NY 12404**  
 www.riceplumbingandheating.com  
**Aaron Rice** - Owner  
 Category: Plumbing  
 Description: *Look no further than Rice Plumbing & Heating for all of your plumbing, heating and air conditioning needs. Our team of highly skilled professional technicians at Rice Plumbing & Heating Incorporated has been serving the Ulster County community since 2001. We provide nothing but quality professional service to our clients and you can always count on our highly trained service technicians to be clean and courteous every time! We specialize in all Plumbing and Heating work and there is no job that is too big or too small for us. Whether you are a residential homeowner or a commercial business owner, we are always here for your plumbing and heating needs 24/7.*

### WOODSTOCK PLAYHOUSE

103 Mill Hill Road  
**Woodstock, NY 12498**  
 www.WoodstockPlayhouse.org  
**Randy Conti** - Executive Director  
 Category: Arts & Entertainment  
 Description: *A Landmark Playhouse in the pages of American Theatre & Music History, the Woodstock Playhouse was established in 1938 at the Gateway to Woodstock, NY. The Playhouse produces an acclaimed annual Summer Theatre Festival; earning it the title 'The Stepping-Stone to Broadway' due to its reputable offerings & launching of professional careers. Its intimate theatrical space has been reviewed as one of the best in the region in regard to listening & viewing pleasure. The venue, available to rent/independent producers, features 2 art gallery/reception spaces. An Historic Exhibit is open to the public & its singular content has earned its being named to the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area by Congress. Some historic highlights include having been the home to the 1968 precursor concert featuring Richie Havens which led to the Woodstock '69 Festival Concert, seasons led by acclaimed director/producer/actress Margaret Webster featuring the first professional performances of then apprentices Larry Hagman (Mary Martin's son) & Anne Meara, earlier apprenticeships & debuts of Ulster County's own Robert Hutton & Lee Marvin turned mega-movie stars, and so much more. The Woodstock Playhouse seasons include Woodstock's Film Festival, Symphony Orchestra & British Car Show, Concerts, Lectures, Theatre, Films, and Public & Private Events. Nestled at the Gateway to Woodstock at the foot of Overlook Mountain & Catskill region, the iconic Woodstock Playhouse is a jewel of Ulster County's Arts & Culture; an historic and present day destination. We look forward to your visit.*