

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED®



2020

Annual Report



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

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Our Mission:

To Enhance the Economic Climate and Quality of Life in the Sauk Valley Area.

Strategic Priorities:

- Provide Value to Membership
- Strengthen the Local Community
- Enhance Community Leadership

What. A. Year. As I reflect on 2020 my first thoughts are about how it was such a year of the unknown. I remember the day, March 16th, that I realized that the Coronavirus would have huge implications not only on the health of our community, but also impact the business community in a way we could not ever predict. I then recall how, through our board, committees, and member input, we developed alternative events and new initiatives to support the community. At the onset of the Pandemic, the SVACC made a commitment to be a resource to you, our members, and worked diligently to gather the information and resources available at the local, state, and national level and then continued to pursue ways to help access these resources. We spent hours seeking information from the SBA, United States Chamber of Commerce, our local, state, and national officials about financial resources available, sharing information about the State of Illinois Restore Illinois platform, and sharing messages from IDPH and WCHD. We developed a COVID 19 resource page on our website and continue to provide updates to this site as resources become available. As we move into 2021 our commitment to you remains strong. We will continue to seek out resources and information, we will continue to be a convener for leaders and influencers, we will continue to advocate for our members at all levels, and will continue to be a champion for the Sauk Valley.

Thank you for your support this past year; Thank you for your investment in our work and Thank you for being part of the SVACC.

Kris Noble

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lance Buser~ Walmart DC #7024

Jim Cesarek ~ RE/MAX Sauk Valley

Tim Determan ~ Pinney Printing

Pam Fluck ~Sauk Valley Bank

Brian Hawkins ~ Hawkins-Cassens Insurance

Josh Johnson ~ Whiteside Area Career Center

Dave Knie ~ Knie Appliance and TV

Mike Loos ~ Edward Jones Investments

Jon Mandrell~ Sauk Valley Community College

Ryan Olson~ Ward Murray Pace & Johnson

Sheila Martinez ~ US Bank

Rebecca Munoz~ Ripley ~ YWCA of the Sauk Valley

Steve Munson ~ The Medicine Shoppe

Claudia Sauer ~ CGH Medical Center

Rick Turnroth ~ Turnroth Sign Company

One year ago, when we all gathered at Deer Valley for our Annual Dinner and I became President of the Board no one could predict what this last year would entail. I recall saying I was looking forward to continuing with all the great things we and you as Chamber members had accomplished. As I reflect on what has happened this past year, I believe we served our members well. Through all of the uncertainty the Chamber was a resource for information and will continue to be. Many events were cancelled but that only led us to be more creative to new ways of doing what we do to support you, our members. I am not sure what 2021 will bring but will guarantee we will continue do everything possible to make the Sauk Valley a great place to live, work and shop local.

Lance Buser, Board President

Your Chamber: By the Numbers

382 members representing 12,022 employees in 27 cities

Membership Breakdown



- Agriculture
- Financial/Investment
- Health Care
- Retail
- Service Business
- Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Non-Profit Organization
- Education
- Restaurant/Bar/Lounge

21 New Members in 2020

92% retention rate

12 Customer Service Awards Given to Members for outstanding service

12 Ribbon Cuttings Celebrating new members, grand openings, expansions and landmark occasions



SVACC COVID 19 Initiatives

Throughout 2020 we collaborated with many partners to provide support and resources locally. listed below are a just a few of the projects.

SaukValleyStrong

An initiative started by a local business man, Dr. Joe Schneiderbauer, Sauk Valley Strong, a T-Shirt Campaign, raised over \$6600.00 and awarded \$5000.00 to local businesses through mini grants; and used \$1600.00 to purchase gift cards from local businesses to give out throughout the community. The SVACC partnered with SMS and other local businesses to implement this campaign.



Tying the Community Back Together-Ribbon Tying Event

In July 2020, the SVACC invited chamber members to participate in a ribbon tying event. With over 70 member businesses and organizations participating; it was testament to the resilience of our community.



Resources, Resources, Resources

Through webinars, zoom meetings, adblasts, emails, and the website we provided up to date information on resources such as the Hospitality Grants, PPP loans, EIDL loans, BIG Grants, Tax Credits, Unemployment, and more to help address COVID 19 challenges.

**United Way Food Gift Cards
Local Farmers Grain to Cash
Sauk Valley Taking Care of our CareTakers**

Community Investment:

\$18,900.00 given back; including:

\$12,000.00 in Scholarships

\$2,000.00 to education

\$4,900.00 to not for profit organizations/service clubs

Your Chamber: Making It Happen

Committees and Collaborations do "the work" of the chamber.

Collaboration and Partnerships- It is through building relationships that communities will impact change. We exist to be the voice for your business/organization and worked on your behalf to be part of conversations relevant to business growth and issues impacting the Sauk Valley. Some of our local partners include Sterling Main Street, Greater Sterling Development Corporation, Sterling Today, The City of Sterling, The City of Rock Falls, Whiteside County Economic Development, Whiteside County Healthier Communities Partnership, Rock Falls Tourism, Sauk Valley Community College, Morrison Institute of Technology, Sterling Public Schools, Rock Falls High School, Newman Central Catholic High School, and CGH.

111 Individuals Volunteered on a Committee in 2020 .



Ambassadors

These are our members in **RED** that act as the public relations arm of the SVACC. They give their time and energy to welcome new members and assist at Chamber Events, Ribbon Cuttings, and Customer Service Awards. In April and May 2020 as a response to the COVID 19 pandemic, the ambassadors worked to connect with all SVACC members to check in and see how they were doing, answer questions they had, or what resources they needed .



Agribusiness Committee

The Agribusiness committee is one of the chambers longest standing committees; with over 35 years of supporting the Agribusiness community in the Sauk Valley. Since the Annual Steak Fry in the Country could not be held in 2020, the Agribusiness committee organized and implemented the "Steakless Fry Event" to raise over \$14,000.00 for the Agribusiness Scholarship Fund and to support Ag Education.



Education Committee

This committee continues to grow in members, as it provides a platform for Workforce Development Initiatives. Our members make connections and develop strategies and action plans to bridge the gap between education and employment while providing real life experiences for career pathways exploration. In January 2020 we worked with Freshmen students at Fulton High School and provided a 6 week workshop on essential skills needed in the workplace. We continued to be actively engaged with the CEO program as the class of 2020 partnered with the Chamber at the 2020 Annual Dinner, we are an investor of the CEO program, continued in conversations with the students about businesses in the Sauk Valley. We again partnered with ROE 47 to participate in Workplace Wednesdays, held virtually, to provide connections between educators and employers. This committee also supports the local BLIND program offered through 5 high schools in Whiteside County.

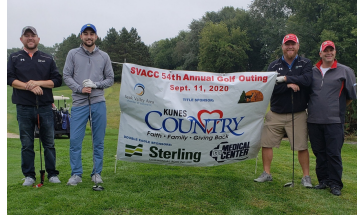


Workplace Wednesdays 2020

Whiteside County Economic Development continues to be a proud partner of the SVACC. This summer, we again partnered with ROE 47 to provide diverse internships, bringing educators and employers together to discuss career pathways for students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the format was set up virtually and we were able to have great conversations about opportunities locally for students and the various career pathways in the Sauk Valley.

We would like to thank the following employers for participating in this program:

Your Chamber: Making It Happen



Golf Committee

Persistent and Committed are words to describe the Golf Committee. Made up of 14 individuals representing chamber businesses and organizations the golf committee organized and implemented one of the Chambers signature events. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic the event was postponed until September and yet our members supported this event through sponsorships and participation to raise funds for the Charles Farnham Business Scholarship.

Hispanic Business Leaders Committee

Throughout 2020 the Hispanic Business Leaders committee collaborated with other community partners on the Complete Count Committee that was organized to promote and advocate for the 2020 Census. As the Fiesta Parade was canceled due COVID 19, HBLC promoted the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month and Fiesta week through a social media campaign #saukvalleyfiestamemories and awarded gift certificates from Hispanic owned businesses.



Professional Women's Network

PWN is a group that exists to provide resources, support, education, and networking for women. Pre COVID, PWN held its largest to date workshop **Find Your Flow**, presented by Natalie Moeller; Moeller, Myer and Associates with 73 participants attending. This committee also held a summer networking event and a Master Gardener's workshop presented by University of Illinois Extension. A portion of each PWN committee consists of information and discussion about a topic relevant to women in the workforce.



Manufacturing Initiative

Two scholarships were awarded in April 2020 to students from the Sauk Valley who committed to attending Morrison Institute of Technology in the Fall 2020. Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the 3rd Annual Manufacturing Dinner, originally scheduled for May, was cancelled. However, due to the generous support of our Manufacturing partners, the SVACC was able to raise \$5500 for the 2021-2022 scholarship fund.

Your Chamber: Making It Happen

Seasonal Sights and Sounds

The SVACC partnered with Sterling Main Street, Northland Mall, CGH Medical Center, and many local service clubs and organizations to provide Holiday events that followed the health and safety guidelines. An amazing fireworks display was lit over the Sterling/Rock Falls Riverfront for families to enjoy.

Santa on the Go; A drive through event to see Santa and Mrs. Claus (and get a photo) was a big success; with 525 children receiving goodie bags, 274 vehicles driving through, and 80 volunteers donating their time and talent.



Marketing and Communications

Website:
36,047 views
14,332 new users

23% increase in
Facebook
Followers

Adblast open rate of
27%
(industry average is 12%)

Adblasts sent to
1041 Emails

Community Leadership- The SVACC continued to participate in the Sauk Valley Leadership program as part of the Advisory board to plan and implement class sessions.

Critical Conversations...Taking Action

- **Industry Roundtables-** The COVID 19 Pandemic made it difficult to gather, network, share ideas and resources. The chamber organized and implemented a series of virtual roundtables by industry. In the spring 2020, the chamber offered 5 industry roundtables with 80 members participating in these discussions.
- **Regional Manufacturing Group-** In partnership with the SBDC at SVCC and the Dixon Chamber and Main Street, the SVACC developed a regional manufacturing group. Manufacturing is critical to the success of the Sauk Valley and as chambers and the SBDC, we must be advocates for our manufacturing partners. In October we held our first virtual regional manufacturing discussion. These meetings will continue quarterly.
- **Keystone Group-** This group of millennials, led by a 9 member steering committee and supported by the SVACC and Sterling Main Street, continued to impact change in 2020. Dogwood Acres Dog Park was a vision that came to life in 2020 due to the action of members of this group in a partnership with the Sterling Park District. As we move into 2021 this group will continue to be a voice for our community.
- **Welcome Home Campaign-** Collaborating with Sterling Main Street and the Sterling Schools Foundation and the Whiteside Area Career Center, this task force met throughout 2021 to develop a campaign aimed at promoting the Sauk Valley as a place to call home. This initiative will continue to move forward in 2021 with some promotional materials.

Legislative Advocacy- Throughout 2020 we worked diligently to keep our members informed and engaged in legislative issues as the state, local, and national level regarding the COVID 19 Pandemic and with updates about the Census 2020. Through our collaboration with the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, The Illinois Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, The United States Chamber of Commerce, and our local, state, and national legislators we provided opportunities for our members to access resources and information about issues impacting their business and organization.

SVACC Staff

Bailey Dorner- Office Manager and Financial Specialist
Dallas Knack ~ Marketing and Advertising Coordinator

Ronda Borgman- Consultant