



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

DECEMBER 2023



**STERLING
MAIN STREET**
Inspired. Involved.

Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

Proudly present

Sights & Sounds

*Downtown Sterling
Christmas Walk*

*This Downtown Sterling
event is sponsored by*



CASTOR HOME NURSING • COMCAST
 GOLD RUSH GAMING • JOHNSON OIL COMPANY
 ROCK FALLS TOURISM • STERLING CHEVROLET
 WHITESIDE COUNTY HEALTHIER
 COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP
 WILLETT, HOFMANN & ASSOCIATES
 Castor Home Medical Supply • Illinois American Water
 Lundstrom Florists • Martin & Co. • Midland States Bank
 McCloud & Associates Architecture • Showplace Antiques & Treasures



WWW.STERLINGMAINSTREET.ORG

FRIDAY DEC 01



Timeline of Activities

5:00 PM til Late
*Downtown businesses open
late for Shopping, Dining,
Entertainment & Activities*

5:30 PM
Tree Lighting

5:45-7:30 PM
*Santa's Workshop
Horse & Carriage Rides*

8:00PM
Fireworks



REGISTER NOW SVCC.EDU

December Meetings

- December 7 Executive Board
- December 12 Board of Directors
- December 14 Ambassadors
- December 19 Ag
- December 21 HBLC

Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Directors & Staff

Executive Committee

- President: Dr. Jon Mandrell
- First Vice President: Pam Fluck
- Second Vice President: Tim Determan
- Treasurer: Geoff Wright
- Past President: Lance Buser

Term Ends January 31, 2024

- Dave Knie, Knie Appliance & TV
- Tim Determan, Pinney Printing
- Steve Munson, Retired, The Medicine Shoppe
- Lance Buser, Wal-Mart DC #7024
- Ryan Olson, Ward Murray Pace & Johnson

Term Ends January 31, 2025

- Alejandro Rivera, RE/MAX Sauk Valley
- Geoff Wright, CGH Medical Center
- Josh Johnson, Whiteside Area Career Center
- Dr. Jon Mandrell, SVCC
- Rebecca Munoz-Ripley, YWCA

Term Ends January 31, 2025

- Pam Fluck, Self Help Enterprises
- Sandi Cavazos, US Bank
- Katie Whitehead, HALO Branded Solutions
- Kristina Kaecker, Kunes RV

Staff

- Executive Director—Kris Noble
- Marketing Coordinator — Dallas Knack
- Office Manager/Financial Specialist—Janie Fisher

The views expressed by any member of the Chamber do not represent the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce in any official endorsement or support of any specific elected official or political party. Any products, events, statements, views or opinions offered or expressed by members are not the products, events, statements, views or opinions of the SVACC, nor endorsed by the Chamber or its membership at large.

A Message from the Director

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has awarded the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce with its designation of Accredited with 5 Stars for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community.



“Having been awarded a 5-Star Accreditation rating by the USCC validates to our members, and the community, that our chamber follows best practices, continues to be pro-growth and forward thinking, and works to serve and engage our members at a high level,” said Kris Noble, SVACC Executive Director. “It is through the hard work of our dedicated board, ambassadors, committee members, and countless volunteers that we are able to continue to fulfill our mission of enhancing the economic climate and quality of life in the Sauk Valley.”

This designation sets the SVACC in the top 3% of chambers across the nation.

Thank you to all of you that have made our 5 Star Accreditation status possible. We appreciate your dedication to the SVACC and to making our community a better place.

Kris



The SVACC is seeking nominations for an individual or group to receive the 10th annual Sauk Valley Area Chamber Champion Award.

The Chamber Champion Award will be given to an individual or group who "goes above and beyond" to improve the quality of life for the people of the Sauk Valley. This award recipient can be someone who has made an impact through his/her/their work as an individual, organization, or business to make a positive difference in the community either through volunteer efforts or outstanding contributions through their business efforts.

Click [here](https://bit.ly/3RkjjVG) to make a nomination by January 5.

Investor Update December 2023

NEW MEMBERS

EnerNova Partners
1301 Solana Blvd. Building 4
West Lake, TX
(309) 230-2272

P & P Industries, Inc.
2100 Enterprise Drive
Sterling
(815) 632-3297

Sauk Valley CPR
PO Box 451
Sterling
(815) 564-8766

INVESTOR RENEWALS

Air Play Espresso & Bakery
Creative Cuisine Catering, Inc.
DeJonge Tax & Accounting, Inc.
Destinations Travel Services, Inc.
Duncan Land and Auction
Fraternal Order of Eagles #2783
Fringe Co Salon & Western Boutique
James S. Ferris, DDS, PC
NICIL

NRG Media
Raymond James & Associates
Savant Wealth Management
SBM
Sterling Rock Falls Family YMCA
The Wellspring Medical Spa
Whiteside County Healthier Communities Partnership
Willy's Restaurant

We would like to give special recognition to the following groups who provide extra support to the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce. This extra effort and support is truly appreciated. If you have the opportunity to express your sincere appreciation to these members, please do so!

Over \$1000 Invested

Central Bank Illinois
CGH Medical Center
Community State Bank
Farmers National Bank - Morrison
Midland States Bank
Sauk Valley Bank
Select Employees Credit Union
Sterling Federal Bank
US Bank
Wahl Clipper Corp.
Wal-Mart DC #7024
Ward, Murray, Pace & Johnson

150% Club

Altran Magnetics
Bushel Basket Candle Co.
Candlelight Inn
Helm Civil
Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.
Illinois American Water
Lance's Plumbing
LK Design Source
Loescher HVAC
Lutheran Social Services of IL
Mattox Insurance Agency
McDonald's

Moore Monument & Granite Co
NICIL
PC Tech 2U
RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Rise Broadband
Rock River Hospice & Home
Select Employee Credit Union
Sterling Commercial Roofing
Sterling Rock Falls Child Care
Sterling Township
Surf Internet
United Craftsmen, Ltd.

110% Club

1st Gateway Credit Union
Astec Mobile Screens Inc
Bardier & Ramirez Real Estate
Bollman Auto Center
Compeer Financial
Dennis Electric of Tampico
Hawkins-Cassens Insurance

Hill Fastener
James S. Ferris DDS, PC
Kelly's Restaurant
Kiwanis Club of Sterling
Marv Lofgren & Sons
Contractors
McCormick's Nursey
Mertes & Mertes

NAMI Sauk Area
New Millenium Directories
Rock River Lumber & Grain
Rock River Ready Mix
Scholl Insurance Agency
Servicemaster
ServPro of Sterling
Showplace Antiques

St. Vincent DePaul
Sterling Chevrolet
The Factory
Trinity Insurance
Winter Construction

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension

Arnulfo Valdivia—Sauk Valley Bank

Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank

Cassandra Salmon – OnCall Imaging

Chandra Meyer – Re/Max Sauk Valley

Christina Bystry — House in the Country

Jennifer Alvarez — Surf Internet

Karen Voss – Morningside of Sterling

Mary White – Community State Bank

Nicci Wright—Rock River Hospice & Home

Nicole Bollman - CGH Medical Center

Pam Fluck – Self Help Enterprises

Rene Betts—Plotner Insurance Consultants

Sherry DeWalt – CGH Health Foundation

Skip Dettman—LSSI

Stepheni Chandler—Hughes Resources

Ambassador Spotlight— Mary White, Community State Bank

In 1975, fresh out of High School, I started in the Finance Business. I have enjoyed 48 years of servicing the people of the Sauk Valley area and making peoples' dreams come true. Whether it was financing their new home, financing that new car, or taking the stress off by helping with many financial struggles that life brings. It is very rewarding to me to start assisting my 4th generation with their financial needs. Also being able to service the Hispanic Community as I am bi-lingual.



I joined Community State Bank in 2007 and have been so blessed to be working for a community bank that prides itself in customer service. I have built so many relationships with people of the Sauk Valley by assisting with their financial needs. I have always been proud of the community I live in and service. My father was my role model and lead by example. He always said, "If you want to make a difference, get involved!" I have been an Ambassador for the SVACC for the last 18 years. I also served 9 of those years on the Chamber Board and was a founding member of the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee. The Sauk Valley area has had to jump many hurdles over the past two decades and I am proud to be part of an organization that has been such an important part of keeping our community alive.

I also serve as the Chairman of the Sterling Fire and Police Commission and sit on the board of the Illinois Fire & Police Commission. I must say that I am very proud of the outstanding men and women who are serving you at the Fire and Police Departments. With all of the adversities in in the world right now, I assure you that you are being protected by the best men and women out there, both at the Fire and Police departments. It's great to feel safe.

I also serve on the Board at the YMCA. Again, so proud to be part of such a caring and well run organization that has the community's best interest in mind. Through all the trials of Covid, the staff worked endlessly to make sure they serviced the community. Providing meals for children, after school care, exercise, and still running a camp that children needed to cope with the frustrations of Covid. *Youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility*

The Sauk Valley is blessed to have all the support and organizations we have that support our community, and I'm proud to be a part.

Ambassador Spotlight— Cael Sanders, Sterling Federal Bank

Hi, my name is Cael Sanders, I am a Commercial Loan Officer with Sterling Federal Bank and have only been with the chamber for a few months. The reason I joined the Chamber was to give back and become more involved in the community that raised me. My favorite aspect of being an ambassador is getting to see the expansion and continued success of the new and existing businesses in our area. With an ever-changing world for rural areas, small business development and success is pertinent to small communities.



In my role at the bank, I strive to provide timely solutions and guidance to our local businesses to further aid them in their financial aspirations. My diligent attitude to serve my customers is given to each of my customers no matter the size. I stand firm in my belief that strong community banks create strong communities and that is what Sterling Federal Bank represents.

Ribbon Cuttings



Avonlea Cottages Memory Care
2201 E. LeFevre, Sterling
(815) 626-5686



Regional Media—new location!
308 Locust St., Sterling
(815) 625-3400



Sterling Woodworks
1307 W 4th St., Sterling
(815) 426-9328



“passing of the torch”
Mattox Insurance Agency
208 E. Third St., Sterling
(815) 626-5751



Grace Point Church
1620 Sauk Rd., Dixon
(815) 288-1142



CGH Ready Care expansion
15 W 3rd St., Sterling
(815) 564-1999



Surf Internet—Dixon
(888) 274-6381



Regional Office of Education #47
2214 E. 4th St., Sterling
(815) 625-1495

Save the date!
Annual Meeting & Dinner

Chamber-opoly: Get Your Game On

Thursday, January 25

McCormick Event Center

Present by WACC CEO

Business After Hours

Thank you to Sterling Woodworks for hosting the November Business After Hours. It was a wonderful way to connect and network between members.



Lunch & Learn

SVACC Lunch and Learn presented by Tim Zollinger of Ward, Murray, Pace & Johnson on the **Illinois Paid Leave for All Act**. Thank you to all who attended and to RRCA Accounts Management for hosting this event!

Over 60 people attended the **PWN Active Listening Workshop** led by Kim Purvis. She provided great tips and ideas to become a better active listener.

Thank you to Bethel Reformed Church for hosting the event and Brother Daryl's for a great lunch.

For more information regarding the SVACC Professional Women's Network, please contact the Chamber at 815-625-2400.



Ag Committee

The SVACC Agribusiness Committee presented contributions to Amboy High School FFA Program, Lee County Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom, and Palmyra Hillbillies 4H Club. We are so proud of the work our Agribusiness Committee does to raise funds and support local ag students, initiatives, and education in the Sauk Valley.



Government Affairs

Information from the State of Illinois



Wage Transparency Act

Illinois law requires pay transparency in job postings. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed into law HB 3129, which, effective January 1, 2025, expands the Illinois Equal Pay Act (IEPA) to require that employers with 15 or more employees provide pay transparency in job postings.

Key information:

- Employers in Illinois with 15 or more employees must include the pay scale and benefits for a position in any specific job posting beginning January 1, 2025. This means providing the following:
- The wage or salary, or the wage or salary range.
- A general description of the benefits and other compensation the employer expects in good faith to offer for the position – including bonuses, stock options or other incentives.
- To satisfy this disclosure requirement, the job posting also can include a hyperlink to a publicly viewable webpage that includes the required pay scale and benefits information.
- Employers also must make promotion opportunities known to current employees no later than 14 calendar days after they post the position externally.

If a public or internal posting for the job, promotion, transfer or other employment opportunity has not been made available to an applicant, the employer must disclose to the job applicant the pay scale and benefits offered for the position prior to any offer or discussion of compensation and at the applicant's request.

Government Affairs

*Information from United States Chamber of Commerce
& The Partnership to Protect Workplace Opportunity*

Department of Labor Overtime Rule

The proposed regulation proposed by the Department of Labor, will raise the salary threshold, below which an employee is non-exempt (or eligible to earn overtime) by more than 50% from the current \$35,568/year (\$684/week) to \$55,068/year (\$1,059/week). The proposed rule also includes an automatic escalator clause to reset it every three years. This is a 69% Increase.

For an employee to be exempt from being paid overtime (i.e., not eligible) they must: 1) be paid a salary; 2) be paid a salary above a specified threshold; and 3) meet the defined duties of the specific exemption such as executive, administrative, or professional (often referred to as EAP, or white collar exemptions). Non-exempt employees must be paid time and a half for any time worked past 40 hours a week. This means that increasing the salary threshold will force employers to either increase an employee's salary to maintain their exempt status or reclassify that employee to being on the clock and non-exempt. Note that being eligible to earn overtime does not guarantee that the employee will actually earn any extra compensation through overtime. Instead, employers tend to manage these employees' hours very closely to keep at or below 40 hours per week.

According to the PPWO (Partnership to Protect Workplace Opportunity) there are several issues regarding this rule:

- Employees will have fewer opportunities for flexible and remote work and career development
- Employees will have fewer opportunities for part-time work
- Most employees will not receive additional compensation, and some employees may see a reduction in pay
- Businesses, nonprofits, schools, local governments and workers in rural and other low-cost areas will be hit the Hardest

The Department's proposed rule is unlikely to withstand judicial scrutiny. The final rule is not expected until May 2024.

Written by: Kylee Jensen, Milledgeville High School

I joined CEO looking for opportunities and to expand my knowledge. I knew that within the program I would get those experiences and opportunities, but what I didn't know was that I would gain something much more valuable in the process. I was lucky enough to get my CEO family.

My class is very close, and I know that all of us would do almost anything for each other. We've already gone as far as supporting each other during musicals or sports games. When I go to class every day, I am welcomed by a family of kids my own age. The bonds that I have gained from only a few months are unlike any other friendship I've gained in 18 years. Each student truly took time to get to know me without judgement. I've never felt more comfortable with a group of twenty people in my life.

We've heard from many different speakers and from our facilitator that we are a "different type of class, like nothing they have seen before." Now this is because we are all talkative and opinionated, but it's also because of how fast we bonded. Each one of us would be there for any class member. If someone needs something the class will go above and beyond to make sure that person gets what they need. We treat each other with respect but we also joke with each other daily. I believe that I am bonded with these students the same way I am with my family.

Family is one of my key values, so for me to compare something to my family it must be special. When I think of what a family has, I think of love, care, respect, and support. That is exactly what my class has, we all love and care for each other while supporting each thing that every person loves. I have never felt this much support in my life. For me having these extra people to rely on is really special, and it is something that I never would have come across if I had not joined CEO. I love my CEO family and wouldn't want to spend every early morning with anyone else.



Written by: Ana Jungerman, Newman High School

Joining CEO was something I always knew I wanted to do after I attended my first trade show, and here I am. Although the change was scary and something to adjust to, I could not be happier I took this chance. I have learned quite a bit from the class, but most of all, with each new experience CEO brings, I learn more and more about how to communicate in a respectful way. One of my biggest take aways is to always ask. Le, our facilitator, has genuinely been one of the best mentors and role models I have had in my life so far. She is the one who taught our CEO class that asking is the most important detail in most situations. You'll never know if you don't ask. It is a simple thought process if you really think about it. While meeting new business people and learning about the professional workforce almost everyday, I have easily gotten more and more comfortable with my communication skills. I personally am a talkative girl and have always been that way. I am outgoing and extroverted, and without even realizing it, I have adapted a sense of awareness when talking to anyone in and out of CEO. I know that the skills I have learned throughout the class will help me beyond high school and into my adulthood. My favorite days during class are when we have speakers who don't just talk about business, but also communication, listening, how the brain works, and how people work. In college I plan to major in human studies and family development. I truly went into CEO thinking I would major in business, but the class ended up showing me that I enjoy being with, around, and helping all people. I am forever grateful for what the program has taught me and continues to teach me everyday. I want high school students to know that joining this special program doesn't mean business must be your career path. CEO can be for anyone, and everyone, no matter what your route may be.



**Congratulations to
Wally's Playce
for receiving the
Customer Service Award!**



They were nominated for being a place where all are welcome. The nominator said: "The staff and owner are always coming up with new and fun ways to get people to gather. They are generous with contributions to support our community."

Wally's Playce is located at 6 S. Washington St., Milledgeville and can be reached at 815-631-0558.

CSA Sponsored by:



Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program



The '23-'24 SVCLP cohort spent the morning of 11/1 with Dr. Tad Everett, superintendent of Sterling Public Schools, learning about "The Change Process & the Leadership Needed to Implement It". We then took tours of the Rock Falls Police Department in Rock Falls, Illinois and the Rock Falls Fire Department. Thank you to Rock Falls Chamber for hosting us! Lunch from El Tapatio of Rock Falls was delicious!

Nik Jakobs of Jakobs Brothers Farms and Katie Pratt, The Illinois Farm Girl and Lee County Farm Bureau's Agriculture Literacy Coordinator, led an engaging and informative morning of learning for this year's Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program cohort. Together Nik and Katie presented on the agricultural issues that face today's farmers and the world. Nik then facilitated a discussion with a panel of ag experts that included Danelle Burrs, former manager of the Lee County Farm Bureau, now with the Illinois Farm Bureau; Kim Ewoldson, director of the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College; and Steve Sheaffer, local farmer and retired Financial Officer for Compeer Financial. Our final discussion included a panel of educational experts including Stacey Dinges, Digital Teaching and Learning Specialist for the Regional Office of Education #47; Stacey's daughter, Emma Dinges, senior at Amboy High School and Section 2 President of Illinois Agricultural Education (FCAE); and Kevin Larsen, professor of agriculture Sauk Valley Community College. The finale for the morning included a Precision Agriculture Demonstration by Larson who taught us the myriad uses for technology and drones in farming.

What an incredible day of learning!

