



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

OCTOBER 2023

PLOTNER
INSURANCE CONSULTANTS LLC

**Join us for
Business After Hours**

From 5pm-630pm

Thursday-October 19th-Champs on Light Street

Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

EXPLORE SAUK

October 9

Learn more about
SVCC programs of study,
financial aid and more!



RSVP @ SVCC.EDU/VISIT

October Meetings

October 5 Executive Board
October 10 Board of Directors
October 11 Sights and Sounds
October 12 Ambassadors
October 17 Ag
October 19 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
Violet Nava, Sauk Valley Bank

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

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

On Saturday September 16, 2023 the 70th Annual Fiesta Parade and Celebration was held. It was a day to celebrate Hispanic Heritage in the Sauk Valley and I hope everyone enjoyed the day.

I took some time over the past few weeks to reflect on this event and wanted to share my gratitude. Events like this do not just “happen.” People do the work, people meet and discuss ideas, people take action. I am grateful for the people who helped make the Fiesta Parade happen, including members of the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee: Mary White, Community State Bank; Mimi Hicks, CGH; Sherry Dewalt, CGH Foundation; Violet Nava, Jose Barrientos, and Arnulfo Valdivia, Sauk Valley Bank; Cilvia Rivera and Melisa Vlakancic, YWCA; Jennifer Alvarez, Surf Internet; Sandi Cavazos, US Bank; Michelle Martinez Frank, Ellie’s Gaming; Bobbie Bardier, Bardier and Ramirez; Janell Loos, Heritage Woods, Tygen Bausman, and Ana Salgado, SVCC. I am truly grateful to all of their employers who believe in the work we do, and allow their staff to dedicate time to our efforts.

Thank you to the cities of Sterling and Rock Falls. From securing road closures, setting up, ensure the community’s safety, and so much more, I thank you for your guidance and patience. Often, what a city does to help an event happen goes unnoticed, but we noticed and are grateful.

To all of the event sponsors: your contributions made it possible for us to have this event and offer the community an opportunity to celebrate.

Thank you also to The Sterling Rock Falls Jaycees, SVCC Impact Program, Rock Falls Jr. Optimists Club, and SVCC Men’s Basketball team. These groups volunteered their time to help in so many ways. You are all truly a testament to volunteerism and the importance of collaboration and working together.

I want to thank the vendors and parade participants. Organizing and implementing a parade from registration to line up takes a lot of work and time. I thank you all for your patience and support and understanding.

We are grateful for the Don, Donas, and Fiesta Queens that served as Grand Marshals for the 70th Annual Fiesta Parade. It was an honor to celebrate past and current Fiesta Royalty.

Thank you to this community. Thank you for attending the parade and attending the celebration event. I am truly overwhelmed by the support and positive feedback we received about this day.

Lastly, thank you to Dallas Knack - you are truly a gift to this organization.

We know there are some areas to improve and will continue to work to make the Fiesta Parade an amazing event for all.



Investor Update October 2023

NEW MEMBERS

Jake Gerdes—State Farm
3307 Lincolnway (Ste 1), Sterling
815-625-5012

Warehouse 301
301 W. Third St., Sterling
815-415-0015

Saged Souls
1510 Prophetstown Rd., Rock Falls
815-535-3510

Treja Management LLC
114 E. Everett St (Ste 118)
815-625-1115

INVESTOR RENEWALS

Castor Home Nursing Inc
Chuck Wagon Saloon
ComEd
Dairy Queen Brazier
Edward Jones / Lareau
Edward Jones/Tom Gleissner
Ellie's Gaming Cafe
Frantz Manufacturing
Goodwill Industries of Northern IL

House in the Country
Jake Gerdes - State Farm Agent
Lundstrom Florist Inc
McDonald Funeral Home & Crema-
tory
Nasos Salon
Phillip Vasquez Agency - Shelter In-
surance
Rotary Airlock

Shelly Dambman, CPA
Sterling Chevrolet
The Barkery
The Salvation Army
Tri-County Opportunities Council
University of Illinois Extension
US Bank

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 Employees 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
Farmer's National Bank
Hawkins-Cassens Insurance

Hill Fastener
James S. Ferris DDS, PC
Jim Prescott's BBQ Shop
Kelly's Restaurant
Kiwans 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

Cassandra Salmon – YWCA

Chandra Meyer – Re/Max Sauk Valley

Christina Bystry — House in the Country

Janell Loos — Heritage Woods

Jennifer Alvarez — Surf Internet

Karen Voss – Morningside of Sterling

Mary White – Community State Bank

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— Stepheni Chandler, Hughes Resources

At Hughes Resources, we stand firm in our commitment to core values that define who we are and how we make a difference in our community. Our bedrock principles include knowledge, respect, professionalism, and active community involvement. These values are not just words; they are the pillars upon which our locally owned staffing company in Northwestern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin was built.



Today we are highlighting an Ambassador who embodies these values, Stepheni Chandler. With a diverse background that includes experience in early education, printing, and supply chain management, Stepheni brought a wealth of knowledge to Hughes Resources when she joined in 2015. Her journey began with opening the local staffing office. She spent years filling thousands of critical industrial and clerical job openings in the Sauk Valley as a recruiter and Branch Manager before she transitioned to the Sales and Marketing team at Hughes. Stepheni now plays a crucial role in candidate recruitment for all five branches as well as work on the client side of the business.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Stepheni's zest for life shines through always. She loves spending time with family and seizes every opportunity to travel and make cherished memories. While she enjoys boating and kayaking, her heart is happiest when spending time with all her kids; including her older children in Texas and Oklahoma!

Stepheni is a true people person and dedicates her time and expertise to several local impactful roles, including serving as Dixon Rotary Board Secretary, a member of the Dixon Chamber Board of Directors, as well as her role as Sauk Valley Area Chamber Ambassador. Stepheni's passion for her community aligns perfectly with Hughes Resources' mission of bettering the communities we serve by connecting local businesses with hardworking employees and helping job seekers find meaningful employment opportunities.

Congratulations to Selmi's Floral, Weddings & Events for receiving the Customer Service Award!

Their nominator said: "From design and creativity to effort and communication, they totally exceeded every expectation."

Visit them at 223 1st Ave., Rock Falls or call at 815-632-3186.



CSA Sponsored by:



Ribbon Cuttings



Autism Center of Sauk Valley
1319 N. Galena Ave., Dixon
815-440-6134.



Hill Fastener
1602 McNeil Rd., Rock Falls
815-625-6600



Saged Souls
1510 Prophetstown Rd, Rock Falls
815-535-3510



Rooted Wellness Center
3101 Freeport Rd., Sterling
815-590-5483



New Life Lutheran Church
702 W. Lynn Blvd, Sterling
815-499-6552

Guest Editorial

Written by Susan A. Swegle, RRHRPA Communications Chair

Do you have employees? Then you should consider joining Rock River Human Resource Professional Association (RRHRPA).

Whether you are new to the HR field or have many years of experience, we are a local starting point for networking, information, professional development, and continued support of excellence in Human Resources. We also encourage small business owners who may not employ a Human Resource Professional to join and take advantage of our frequent educational opportunities.

We hold seven monthly meetings per year with speakers, sponsor a summer half-day seminar, and we even treat our members to a couple of free meals each year! Most of our monthly meetings and our summer seminar award recertification credits for certified HR professionals.

Our membership application can be found at rrhrpa.shrm.org. You can also contact us at rrhrpa@gmail.com with questions. Dues are very inexpensive when you consider all the incredible information and advice you can receive by being a member. We hope you'll join us soon!



Chamber Week Celebration

It is so great to see so many of our members come together! It is because of our members and their belief in what we do that we are able to continue to enhance the economic climate and quality of life in the Sauk Valley. As a means of saying "thank you", we celebrated our members as part of Chamber Week 2023 on September 14.



70th Annual Fiesta Day Parade

Saturday, September 16 the Sauk Valley celebrated the 70th annual Fiesta Day Parade! The parade concluded with a fabulous celebration at Grandon Civic Center. Thank you to all who participated, and to the community who came out to support!

Parade winners for the
70th annual Fiesta Day Parade:

- 1st place:** YWCA of the Sauk Valley
- 2nd place:** Ay Jalisco
- 3rd place:** Rancho El Murallense

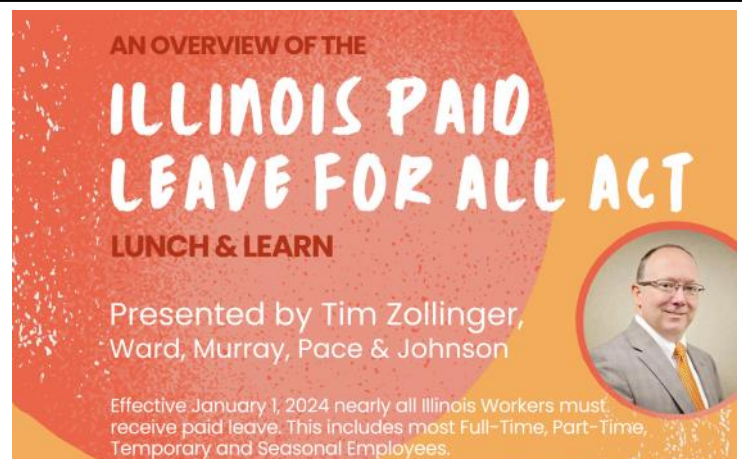


Government Affairs

Illinois employers need to be aware of a major change to employment law. The Illinois Paid Leave for All Workers Act mandates paid leave for ALL employees for any reason beginning January 1, 2024. Now is the time to review your current policies and practices to consider what you will need to do to be in compliance with this new law. Among other things, this new law raises a number of questions for employers, including:

1. What does the new Illinois law on paid leave require?
2. Does my organization fall into any exceptions?

Join us on Tuesday, November 14 for an overview of the Illinois Paid Leave for All Act presented by Tim Zollinger of Ward, Murray, Pace & Johnson. The session will be held 11:45 a.m.—1:30 p.m. at RRCA Accounts Management (201 E. 3rd St., Sterling). [Click here](#) to register by November 7.



Workforce Development

Written by US Chamber of Commerce



5 Tips for Boosting Employee Morale

A study from Oxford University found that happy employees are 13% more productive. Employees who feel satisfied with their work make more calls each hour and convert more leads into customers. Here are five ways to boost employee morale.

Promote work-life balance

Over 80% of polled employees agreed that flexible working arrangements were important to them. Employees want to have a say regarding where and how they get their work done. If full-time remote work isn't an option, you might consider offering hybrid schedules or unlimited paid time off.

However, flexible working arrangements only go so far if your employees are buried under an unmanageable workload. Regularly review the work you've allocated to your employees and make note of anyone who seems overly stressed. That way, you can identify anyone who seems overworked.

Encourage communication

Workplace conflicts arise for a variety of reasons, but poor communication is usually at the root of the problem. When people don't communicate at work, they often start to form assumptions about someone else's expectations and actions. This causes distrust and can lead to a poor work environment.

One way to encourage open communication is by scheduling weekly team meetings. A scheduled weekly meeting gives your employees more opportunities to talk openly and create more transparency.

One-on-one meetings are another way to foster better workplace communication. If you meet with someone individually, they'll share things they wouldn't be willing to share in a group setting. Create an open-door policy with your employees and encourage them to share their insights.

Invest in employee development

Employee development combines formal training and relationship building to help employees advance in their careers. It's the best way to ensure you're attracting and retaining top performers in your company. Investing in employee development also drives more creativity and innovation in your business.

You can invest in employee development by creating mentorship opportunities within the company. Roughly 70% of Fortune 500 companies offer a formal mentorship program. Mentorship programs can be structured or unstructured and take place in a group or one-on-one.

You can also look for opportunities to send your employees to conferences or other events. They'll learn about upcoming trends in your industry, network with other professionals, and show up as a representative for your business.

Ask for employee feedback

If you want to create a healthy work environment, you need to ask for employee feedback routinely. Let employees know they can speak openly and honestly, and ask them direct and future-focused questions.

For example, ask employees what they think the company can do better moving forward. When they answer, ask specific follow-up questions to show that you're listening. And always allow employees to think your questions over and come back to discuss them once they're ready.

Create an employee recognition program

Employee recognition can help your business retain top talent and attract qualified workers to your company. Employees who feel seen at work are more innovative and willing to exceed expectations.

But recognition must be done consistently to be effective, so it's a good idea to create an employee recognition program. A structured program operates from the top down and ensures employees are regularly recognized for their efforts.

Peer-to-peer recognition programs can also be effective, which is why companies like Google implement them. These programs empower employees to appreciate their coworkers for large and small achievements.

CEO Program

The 11th WACC CEO class is off and running. With a little over two weeks under their belts, students have been getting to know one another and experience their first, of many, business visits and speakers. They are working on their personal bios for the webpage (wacc-ceo.com) and will soon have professional headshots added. You can also sign up for our weekly newsletter there. We welcome the 33 students from 10 area high schools!



East Class:

Mason Weigle, Emma Smith, MyKaylah Kirby, Tyler Zepezauer, Makenzie Toms (Dixon), Autum Pritchard (Forreston), Jason Prowant, Kennedy Burkholder (Eastland), Alease McLain, Rivers Schafer, Eryn Carreno (Oregon), Kale Grobe, Kameron Grobe (Polo)

West Class:

Ana Jungerman, Olivia Clark, Madelynn Taylor-Steffens, Destini Chambers, Lucas Schaab (Newman) Rylan Shenefelt, Lili Drinkall, Olivia Schurman, Kylee Jensen, Maliah Grenoble, (Milledgeville), Makaylee Pipes, Nora Turedson, Samantha Knox, Jimmy Wadsworth, Josh Minor (Sterling), Olivia Purvis, Owen Farral, Avery Olinger (Prophetstown), Braeden Thome, Body Van Weelden (Rock Falls)



"This class stands out to me because the emphasis is no longer on the grade itself, but rather directly investing into us students to not only succeed in this course, but in life entirely after high school. This perspective that the program has taken has already given me a sense of value as a student and belonging." - 2023 student

"If I would have to leave CEO with one fleeting thought it would be that I'm thankful. Apart from all of the amazing tours, people, and experiences CEO has presented to me, I am thankful for the fact that this experience has shaped my life and transitioned me into a different more mature young adult. CEO has truly been hands down the single most influential aspect of my life thus far" - 2023 student

Written by: Lili Drinkall, Milledgeville High School

"Tell me your story." During my second week of CEO I had the opportunity to go to Sauk Valley Community College where Dr. David Hellmich, President of SVCC spoke to us CEO students. The first thing he said to us was, "Tell me your story." When I think about my story I can make a list of everything that shapes me: my family, my friends, sports, school, and so many other aspects that make up my daily life. However, at the very top of my list right now, I would rank CEO.



Ever since I walked into CEO the first day feeling very uneasy and timid, my story has changed. The first day I wasn't pushed, rather I was launched out of my comfort zone. I walked into a room where I was expected to act like, and be treated as, an adult and a leader. I was supposed to do all this while being with 15 people I had never met before. This type of setting was very different from the typical small town environment that I was used to at school. This made me feel very uncomfortable for the first few days. After that though, everything seemed to fall into place. I started to branch out and make friends with kids from other schools, started to feel more comfortable in the business-like environment, and I even started to enjoy getting to dress up every day.

CEO isn't easy, but neither is our story. If everything is easy, I can't learn anything which is why this class helps me achieve so much. I am constantly being put into situations I haven't been in before. I also am forced to face challenges where I sometimes have to fail and try again which can be super hard. At the end of the day though, it is all worth it. I am able to network and learn things in this class in a way that I can't in a typical school setting. Since the beginning of the year, this class has helped build my character in so many ways and opened up opportunities that I wouldn't have gotten before. So, overall CEO has really influenced my story and I can't wait to see what more is to come!

Written by: Destini Chambers, Newman High School

"Good. Better. Best. Never let it rest. 'Til your good is better and your better is best."
—St. Jerome.



This quote explains what I hope to take away from the CEO program. One of the things I have been looking forward to is learning from your failures.

First, CEO has been a wonderful experience so far. Some days have been more challenging than others. In my opinion my favorite part of CEO so far is when we visited Jakob's Brothers Farm. This day was an eye opening experience for me because I didn't know I knew that much about farming until that day. When we got there I expected the day to be a time where we just sat and talked. In the end we got to visit the farm and see how they are trying to take farming to a greener level. Next, I would like to talk about one thing I have learned from being in the class, time management. I learned that I really need to work on my time management. Especially when it comes to turning things in on time. Lastly, I would like to talk about my intentions after CEO. I plan to graduate from Newman High School then go to Sauk Valley Community College to complete my general education. After SVCC, my goal is to go to a university like Louisiana State University or even University Of Alabama. I believe that CEO will help me achieve my goals in an even better way. In conclusion, I highly recommend the class, it's been a blast so far. I'm looking forward to a great experience and hopefully you are too!

PRESS RELEASE - Ashlee Alber is now the official Owner and Operator of Culver's of Rock Falls, IL and business partner with Jason Roe.

Jason Roe, current owner, says, "Ashlee has always put others above herself. She is successful because she sincerely loves her crew, guests, and community. She has been running Culver's of Rock Falls as if she has owned it for years. I'm excited to formally give her the reigns to see where she takes the restaurant. She is respected by our extended team and inspires them to exceed expectations. Ashlee is on fire for Culver's and the Rock Falls community will surely benefit from her ownership."



Culver's of Rock Falls, IL was Ashlee's first job in high school. She says through Culver's she has learned about teamwork, customer service, and taking care of others with your actions. Every day she looks forward to coming to work because of the people she is surrounded by and the new connections she's made in the community.

Under Ashlee's leadership, Culver's of Rock Falls has been recognized nationally on an annual basis. They won the coveted Ruth Hospitality Award and the Commitment to Excellence Award for the region three years in a row. Jason says, "She has always exceeded the expectations placed on her." Ashlee was promoted to shift leader as a teenager up to General Manager eight years ago and most recently served as Regional Manager to eight different Culver's restaurants.

Ashlee says, "I look forward to expanding the legacy of positivity, guest focus, and community outreach that has been at the heart of what we do since we opened our doors in 2001. I have been fortunate to be a part of that legacy for the last 18 years. I look forward to making Culver's the go to place in Rock Falls for generations to come!"

Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program

The Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program cohort gathered on September 13, 2023, at YMCA's Camp Benson for an all-day learning opportunity. "Freight Train" gave the cohort a tour of the camp and discussed the camp's philosophies of inclusion, self-acceptance, and independence.



On this day, a panel of experts focused on leadership and volunteerism. Ashleigh Sorenson, Impact Program Director, Sauk Valley Community College; Paige Toms, COO, Sauk Valley Bank; and Sam Smith, Executive Director, Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce, related their own experiences as volunteers, recruiting and maintaining volunteers, and now leading their essential Sauk Valley organizations.

YMCA counselors then led students in some lively team-building activities.

After lunch from Molly's of Mt. Carroll, the cohort shared a 3-minute "What's Your Story?" speech, which helped us learn about one another and understand each other's journey to the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program.



In the final activity of the day SVCLP members could choose to hike to the grotto, make candles, or learn how to throw a spear from an Atlatl.





ACTIVE LISTENING

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

11:45 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

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MEMBERS \$20
NON-MEMBERS \$25

RSVP BY 11/20 AT
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OR CALL 815-625-2400

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BROTHER DARYL'S INCLUDED



KIM PURVIS

Kim Purvis earned her undergraduate at the University of Illinois and her Master's in Educational Administration through WIU. She served as Sterling High School Associate Principal for 3 years, Assistant Director of the Whiteside Area Career Center for 4 years, and the Director of the Whiteside Area Career Center for 4 years. Kim's career highlight was program development at WACC. During her time at WACC, she played a crucial role in starting the CEO and Allied Health programs and revamping the Manufacturing, Early Childhood, and Commercial Food Service programs. Kim retired from Education in 2015 to become more involved with her family farm.



Join Us For The 1st Annual

Sterling's Halloween Town

**October 26th
5PM-9PM**

Throughout Downtown Sterling

EVENT ACTIVITIES

**Spooky Corn Maze
Business Vendors
Product Vendors
Food Trucks**

**Kids Activities
Trick or Treating
Costume Contest**

50/40/10 Raffle

50%-Winner, 40%-YWCA, 10%-Event Fund

We Will Have Maps With Activity Locations & Trick or Treating Routes.

Follow Us For The Most Up To Date Information On Facebook Under:

Sterling's Halloween Town

**Current
Sponsors:**





Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce invites you to an evening of celebration for the manufacturing industry

5TH ANNUAL MANUFACTURING DINNER

Thursday, October 12
5:30 p.m. social hour | 6:00 p.m. dinner

Join us at:
Sauk Valley Community College
173 IL Rt 2., Dixon
Tours of the SVCC manufacturing area will be available.

\$40 per person
Buffet & Cash Bar
Register at
saukvalleyareachamber.com/manufacturing-dinner
or call 815-625-2400
to reserve your tickets by **October 6.**

Thank you to our sponsors:

