



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

AUGUST 2026



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

Together with the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce,
Sauk Valley Bank invites you to

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Thursday August 20

5:00pm - 6:30pm



Appetizers and Drinks

Catered by Creative Cuisine



Sauk Valley Bank
201 West 3rd Street
Sterling, IL

Join us for an evening of networking,
drinks, appetizers, and door prizes.



Customized Training Services

Skilled expertise catered to fit your workforce needs.

- Computer Skills
- OSHA, PLC, and Sigma Six Training
- Supervisory/Leadership Skills
- Fire Safety/Flashover
- CPR, AED, First Aid, Food Sanitation
- and so much more!

Visit svcc.edu/customizedtraining to get started.

August Meetings

August 11 Exec Board

August 13 Ambassadors

August 18 Board of Directors

August 20 Hispanic Business Leaders

August 20 Business After Hours

Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Directors & Staff

Executive Committee

President: Alejandro Rivera

First Vice President: Geoff Wright

Second Vice President: Josh Johnson

Treasurer: Dr. Jon Mandrell

Past President: Pam Fluck

Term Ends January 31, 2027

Emily Buikema, Ward Murray Pace & Johnson

Mike Ceruzzi, Moore Tire

Josh Knie, Knie Appliance & TV

Term Ends January 31, 2028

Alejandro Rivera, RE/MAX Sauk Valley

Geoff Wright, CGH Medical Center

Josh Johnson, Whiteside Area CareerCenter

Dr. Jon Mandrell, SVCC

Rebecca Munoz-Ripley, YWCA

Term Ends January 31, 2029

Pam Fluck, Sauk Valley Bank

Sandi Cavazos, US Bank

Cael Sanders, Sterling Federal Bank

Sami Wiggins, CastorHome Health Solutions

Staff

Dallas Knack—Executive Director

Chrissy Palacz—Office & Member Relations

Sarah-Beth Haenitsch—Marketing

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

August is here, and we're in the full swing of event season at the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce! This time of year is always busy and exciting, as we come together to support our community, celebrate local businesses, and build connections across the region.

We're kicking things off with our Sauk Valley Under 40 Summer Networking event on August 5. Whether you're looking to expand your network, meet other young professionals, or simply enjoy an evening of great conversation, it's a fantastic opportunity to make new connections and strengthen our local community.

Then, on August 7, join us for the Family Fun Fair, during Hot Dog Day! This free community event brings families together for games and activities while exploring the Hot Dog Day cooking sites throughout downtown Sterling.

Looking ahead, preparations are well underway for the Fiesta Parade returning to downtown Rock Falls and Sterling on September 19. This vibrant community tradition highlights the rich culture and spirit of the Sauk Valley, and we're excited to welcome families, businesses, and organizations to be part of the celebration. Register to participate in the parade at saukvalleyareachamber.com/fiesta by September 1!

And mark your calendars; our Manufacturing Dinner is coming up this fall. This event honors the critical role of our manufacturing sector and brings together industry leaders, educators, and partners to recognize excellence while celebrating one of the region's biggest industries.

As always, thank you for your continued support of the Chamber. Your participation and enthusiasm help create meaningful experiences that strengthen our business community and make the Sauk Valley an even better place to live, work, and grow. If there's anything we can do to support you or your business, please don't hesitate to reach out.



Investor Update August 2026

NEW INVESTORS

Love's Travel Stops

2801 Hoover Rd, Rock Falls
779-245-6670

The Foundry

201 W First St, Sterling
815-535-0633

Mexicali Rose Banquet Hall

1409 Eighth Avenue, Rock Falls
815-590-3110

INVESTOR RENEWALS

Action Powersports
Bargain Exterminators
Carpetland USA
Christ Lutheran School
Compeer Financial
Farmer's National Bank
Loescher Heating & Air Conditioning
McCormick's Nursery & Landscaping
Melissa Reyes and Associates - American Family Insurance
Mike Sprague State Farm Insurance
Raynor Garage Doors

Rock River Hospice & Home
Sauk Valley Community College
Select Employees Credit Union
Smeltzer Insurance Agency
Sterling Township
The Mertes Law Firm, P.C.
The Midwest Mercantile
The Wellspring Medical Spa
US Postal Service
YWCA of the Sauk Valley

Over \$1000 Invested

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

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!

150% Leadership Investors

Altran Magnetics	Conditioning
Bargain Exterminators	Mattox Insurance Agency
Helm Civil	Reagan Mass Transit District
Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.	RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Lance's Plumbing	Sauk Valley Community College
LK Design Source	Select Employees Credit Union
Loescher Heating & Air	Stratus Networks

110% Investors

Allure of Sterling	McCormick's Nursery & Landscaping	Showplace Antiques & Treasures
Astec Industries	N & C Cleaning Service	Smeltzer Insurance Agency
Bollman Auto Center	PC Tech 2U	St. Vincent DePaul Society
Bushel Basket Candle Co., Inc.	Rock River Lumber & Grain	The Mertes Law Firm, P.C.
Compeer Financial	Sauk Valley CPR	The Wellspring Medical Spa
Dennis Electric of Tampico, Inc.	Scholl Insurance Agency, Inc.	
Hollyhock Hill Farms		
Kiwanis Club of Sterling		

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension

Breanne Hunter—CGH Medical Center

Brian Hawkins—Brian Hawkins Insurance,
The Cornerstone Agency

Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank

Danny Hartz—Central Bank

Erik Eaglin—Sauk Valley Bank

Esther Douglas —CGH Medical Center

Ethan Harrington—Castor Home Health Solutions

John Kelly—Culver's of Rock Falls

Karen Voss – Morningside of Sterling

Keenan Dickman—TBK Bank

Lyndsey Kelly—Sauk Valley Community College

Mary White – Community State Bank

Mindy Wallin—WSI Wallin Group

Sami Wiggins — Castor Home Health Solutions

Tygen Bausman—Sauk Valley Bank

Ambassador Spotlight: Sami Wiggins, Castor Home Health Solutions

Sami Wiggins believes that communities are strongest when people feel seen, valued, and empowered to live with dignity, purpose, and connection at every stage of life. As the Director of Community Relations for Castor Home Health Solutions, she has the privilege of turning that belief into action by building meaningful partnerships, strengthening communities, and connecting individuals and families with the care and resources they need. She is a Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program (SVCLP) graduate and the first recipient of the Hellmich Community Leadership Award.

She will be able to continue her SVLP journey by serving on its Board of Directors. She also serves as the Chair of Professional Women of the Sauk Valley, a Board Member and Ambassador for the Sauk Valley Chamber of Commerce, a Board Member of the YWCA of the Sauk Valley, and the 2025 Chamber Ambassador of the Year. Her commitment to older adults includes hosting a dementia support group and helping to launch the Dementia-Friendly Sterling initiative.

Outside of work, Sami is a proud homebody. She's happiest being "boring" at home with her husband and four daughters-reading, cooking, cleaning, and gardening. She believes leadership isn't just about being busy; it's about setting healthy boundaries, living with intention, and making time for what matters most.



Welcome to our new ambassador!

We are excited to welcome a new Ambassador to our team!



Danny Hartz, Central Bank

Ribbon Cuttings



Ashton North, LLC
(262) 212-7507
ashtonnorth.net



DD Homes, new group home
206 N Dixon Ave, Suite 4, Rock Falls, IL
(815) 535-0762

Peggy Peugh has been an outstanding partner, providing exceptional service and high-quality products for several community events. She and her team helped prepare items for the Northwestern Steel and Wire Park Grand Opening and the 60th Annual Charles Farnham Golf Outing – making quick work of the request and generously stepping in to help in the process. Peggy consistently delivers with creativity, professionalism, and quick turnaround times. She is always willing to lend a hand and goes above and beyond to ensure every project is a success.

HALO Branded Solutions
1500 Halo Way, Sterling
815-625-0980

Congratulations to Peggy Peugh for receiving June's Customer Service Award



Congratulations to Brad Schrader for receiving July's Customer Service Award



Brad Schrader was nominated for his excellent service to Sterling businesses, residents, and the community at large. Multiple businesses have cited his quick response time and the level of care he puts into addressing concerns, whether it's litter in front of their businesses or torn flags over the 4th of July. He listens, he cares, and he always follows through on what he says he will do. The amount of care he puts into his work for the city, most of which is behind the scenes and never done for recognition.

City of Sterling
212 Third Ave, Sterling
815-632-6621

CSA Sponsored by:



Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Establishes Sauk Valley Chamber Foundation to Expand Community Opportunities

STERLING, III.—The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the creation of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the economic vitality, educational opportunities, and quality of life throughout the Sauk Valley region.

The formation of the Foundation represents a significant step forward in the Chamber's commitment to serving the region. While the Chamber will continue its mission of supporting and advocating for local businesses, the Foundation will provide new opportunities to secure charitable funding, build strategic partnerships, and expand programs that benefit individuals, businesses, and the broader community.

The Foundation's mission is "to support and advance the economic vitality, educational opportunities, and quality of life in the Sauk Valley region through leadership development, workforce initiatives, and community-focused programs. "

"Its vision is a thriving Sauk Valley region where individuals, businesses, and communities reach their full potential through access to opportunity, education, and collaboration," said Kim Ewoldsen, Sauk Valley Community College and chamber foundation board president.

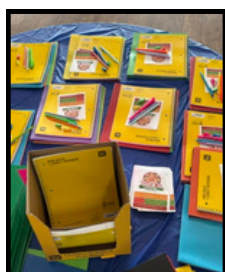
Along with Kim Ewoldsen, the board is comprised of Bailey Schneiderbauer, Sauk Valley Bank, and Brian Hawkins, The Cornerstone Agency, Brian Hawkins Insurance.

"The creation of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber Foundation allows us to broaden our impact and invest even more deeply in the future of our region," said Dallas Knack, Executive Director of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce. "By establishing a charitable foundation, we can pursue new funding opportunities that will help us grow workforce development programs, strengthen leadership initiatives, support educational opportunities, and create lasting community impact."

As a 501(c)(3) organization, the Foundation is also positioned to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions and pursue grant funding that will further enhance efforts to provide training, scholarships, and programming.

Additional information about the Sauk Valley Area Chamber Foundation, including future initiatives and opportunities to support its mission, will be announced in the coming months. For more information, please call Sauk Valley Area Chamber at 815-625-2400 or visit saukvalleyareachamber.com/foundation.

Hispanic Business Leaders Committee



The Hispanic Business Leaders Committee (HBLC) donated and handed out folders to local students during Grandma Bonnie's School Supply Drive at Elevate Youth Center. It was a fun morning meeting kids and parents and helping them get ready to head back to school! Thank you to our committee members for taking time out of their day to engage with local students and prepare them for the upcoming school year!

Currently, HBLC is working hard to prepare for the 73rd annual Fiesta Day Parade on Saturday, September 19. The parade will step off at 1:00 p.m. in Rock Falls.

Members in the News

SERVPRO of Clinton Earns BBB's Highest Honor: 2026 Torch Award for Ethics

Clinton, IA - June 2026 - SERVPRO of Clinton & Sterling has been honored with the 2026 Better Business Bureau Torch Award for Ethics, the BBB's highest recognition for integrity, ethical business practices, and outstanding service to the community. This award celebrates organizations that demonstrate exceptional character, transparency, and trustworthiness in every aspect of their business.



SERVPRO of Clinton & Sterling earned this distinction through its long-standing commitment to doing the right thing for customers, employees, and the communities it serves. From rapid disaster response to compassionate customer care, the team consistently upholds the values that define ethical leadership in the restoration industry. Their dedication reflects the BBB's mission to highlight businesses that set the standard for trust.

"For us, ethics isn't a slogan; it's how we operate every single day," said Nichole Gauf, Owner, SERVPRO of Clinton & Sterling. "We are honored to receive the BBB Torch Award and proud of our team for living out our values with every job, every customer, and every community partnership."

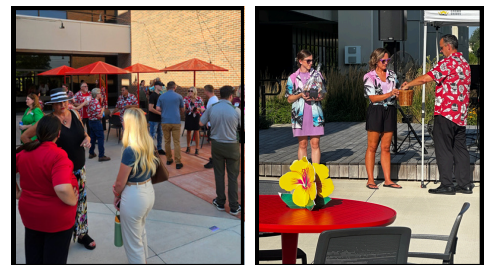
A panel of independent judges selected SERVPRO of Clinton & Sterling based on criteria including clarity of purpose, ethical culture, customer engagement, and community impact. The Torch Award underscores the company's reputation as a trusted leader in restoration and cleaning services across the region.

Business After Hours

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our July Business After Hours at Sauk Valley Community College! We loved connecting with both new and established members and collaborating with our fellow chambers in Dixon and Rock Falls. Events like these are a great reminder of the value of building relationships and supporting one another across our business community.

A huge thank you to Sauk Valley Community College for being such a wonderful host and providing a great venue for the evening.

We are truly grateful for your support and for the amazing members who continue to show up, engage, and help make our chamber community stronger. We look forward to seeing you at the next Business After Hours in August at Sauk Valley Bank!



Agri-Business Committee — Youth in Agriculture Day

The SVACC Agri-Business Committee hosted a special pop-up at the Twin City Farmers Market to celebrate the next generation of agriculture leaders, makers, growers, and entrepreneurs. Students from surrounding 4-H groups had the opportunity to showcase the projects they have been working on throughout the year in preparation for their county fairs.

From horticulture to bread making, these 4-H members demonstrated the hard work, dedication, and skills they continue to develop. This was a great opportunity for the community to learn more about youth in agriculture, 4H, and to celebrate the bright future of agriculture in the Sauk Valley.



Marketing Workshop

Together with the Illinois Small Business Development Center at SVCC, a group of local business owners was invited to learn the basics of marketing from Janel Stahr of Stahr Media. Stahr's session included website upkeep, social media, and SEO tips, as well as debunking some marketing myths and how to curate marketing to a business' own needs. Thank you to Janel Stahr for providing this free educational piece for small businesses in the Sauk Valley.



Sauk Valley Young Creators Camp

The SVACC, in partnership with the Whiteside Area Career Center, University of Illinois Extension, and Illinois Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College, launched the Sauk Valley Young Creators program this summer. In five weeks, thirteen middle school students learned how to create and operate a business. During a vendor pop-up at Chalk the Walk, these young entrepreneurs launched their own small businesses, selling products they had created, including cookies, lemonades, dirty sodas, blind date with a book, and more.

Thank you to the generous sponsors: the Cornerstone Credit Union, the City of Sterling, HALO Branded Solutions, Sterling NAPA Auto Parts, Sterling Federal Bank, and Sauk Valley Bank.



Government Affairs

From the US Chamber of Commerce



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce **Technology Engagement Center** report, *Empowering Small Business: The Impact of Technology on U.S. Small Business*, examines the pivotal role that diverse technology platforms have in helping small businesses operate and compete.

Introduced in 2022, this nationwide analysis of U.S. small businesses continues to explore the various types and applications of technology used by small businesses, how these factors have changed over time, and the effects of these trends on these enterprises and the economy at large.

This new version of the report found the following:

- Nearly all small businesses are using at least one technology platform, and more small businesses are embracing multiple types of technology.
- 58% of small businesses self-identified they use generative AI—up from 40% in 2024 and more than double compared to 2023 (23%).
- Despite concerns about AI and jobs, 82% of small businesses using AI increased their workforce over the past year.
- 84% of small businesses plan to increase their use of technology platforms.
- 96% of small business owners plan to adopt emerging technologies, including AI and cryptocurrencies.
- 8-in-10 small business owners credit technology with helping them cope with inflation and supply chain disruption and improving access to capital.
- 7-in-10 small business owners indicate high interest in using cryptocurrency and stablecoins as part of their business in the future.



Summer

NETWORKING EVENT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

6:00 - 7:30 P.M. | **Palmyra Pub & Eatery**
628 Palmyra Rd, Dixon

FOR INDIVIDUALS UNDER THE AGE OF 40

*Invite a friend, neighbor, or coworker and join us for networking activities, outdoor games, food, and making new connections.
Cash bar and option to purchase dinner available.*

Free to attend*
RSVP required by **July 29**
forms.gle/62gjeMKqm8q7LedUA
or scan the QR code
*light bites available; cash bar.



QUESTIONS?
EMAIL DIRECTOR@SAUKVALLEYAREACHAMBER.COM



FAMILY FUN FAIR

Friday, August 7

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

STERLING MARKETPLACE
(BEHIND THE FACTORY PUB N GRUB)

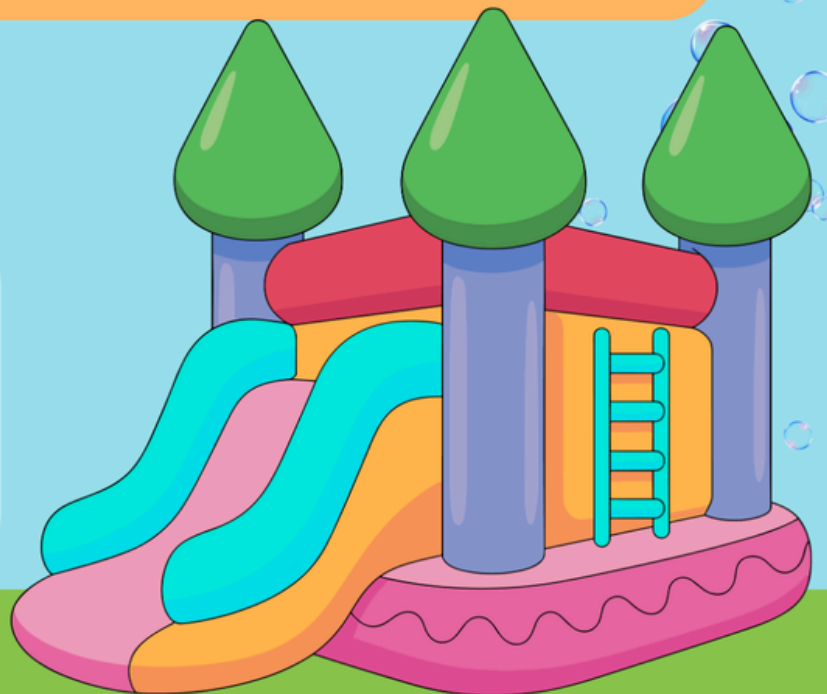
FREE
ENTRY

games, activities, & inflatables

Sponsored
by:



Thank you to the friends of the
Family Fun Fair!



For the full list of hot dog cooking sites, visit
sterlingmainstreet.org/events/hot-dog-day



THE 73RD ANNUAL

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

PRESENTED BY THE
SVACC HISPANIC
BUSINESS LEADER
COMMITTEE

1PM | SATURDAY

PARADE STARTS IN ROCK FALLS
& ENDS IN STERLING

VISIT SAUKVALLEYAREACHAMBER.COM/FIESTA
FOR MORE INFORMATION

2026 Parade Sponsors



*Those listed are sponsors of the parade. Any products, events, statement, views or opinions offered or expressed by the sponsors are not the products, events, statement, views or opinions of the SVACC, nor endorsed by the Chamber or our members.

How to Tame Your Stress

Join the Professional Women's Network for a Lunch & Learn led by Natalie Moeller.

Traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and the mental load of balancing work, family, and household responsibilities can create chronic stress and burnout, contributing to higher rates of depression and anxiety among women. These pressures can also fuel perfectionism, guilt, and diminished self-worth. **Let's spend some time together to see how you can realign your life** to feel more content and reduce the negative effects that accumulate over time, especially for women.

**Wednesday,
September 30**

**11:30 a.m. -
1:00 p.m.**

Mexicali Rose
1409 8th Ave, Rock Falls



With Natalie Moeller

**Moeller, Myers &
Associates, PC**



Natalie J. Moeller, MSW, LCSW is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has counseled children, adolescents, and adults for nearly 35 years. She is the owner and operator of the dynamic outpatient therapy group practice of Moeller, Myers & Associates, PC, in Sterling.

Natalie is a Certified Practitioner of the Traumatic Memories Protocol (fewer than 500 in the world), an Advanced Grief Counseling Specialist, and a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional. She provides individual, couples, and family counseling for a variety of issues. Her areas of expertise include trauma treatment, depression, anxiety, grief & loss, divorce/separation, parenting, children/adolescents, communication issues, and stress management.

REGISTER NOW

\$25 members | \$45 non-members

Register by 9/23/26 at bit.ly/457nBW5 or scan the QR code.

Lunch is included.

NEW! Write a letter to your future-self! We will be checking in with ourselves and setting goals in addition to this presentation.

PWN series sponsors



HB Wilkinson Title Company, Inc.

Invenergy
Services



Questions? Email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com