



Sauk Valley Area  
chamber of commerce



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# Partnering for Success

JANUARY 2026



## Dinner Undercover SVACC Annual Meeting & Dinner

THE CEO CLASS PRESENTS A MYSTERIOUS TWIST ON LOCAL BUSINESS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30PM  
DINNER AT 6:00PM

McCormick Center  
205 E. 3rd St. Rock Falls, IL 61071



\$50/PERSON OR  
\$400 FOR A TABLE OF 8

Scan the QR code or visit  
<https://bit.ly/447lBxf>

Register by  
January 20, 2026

Join us for a review of the 2025 year, announcements of  
things to look forward to in 2026, and awards for Chamber  
Champion, Ambassador of the Year, and more!

Call 815-625-2400 or email Dallas at  
[director@saukvalleyareachamber.com](mailto:director@saukvalleyareachamber.com) for more information



### INTRODUCING STEVEN KIM, MD, FACS GENERAL & COLORECTAL SURGERY



Now accepting new patients! CGH Medical Center is pleased to welcome Dr. Steven Kim, FACS, to the General Surgery department. Dr. Kim is a board-certified general surgeon who specializes in robotic-assisted, laparoscopic and minimally invasive procedures, as well as colorectal surgery for cancers, inflammatory bowel disease and more. While some conditions do require a colostomy, Dr. Kim's advanced training often allows him to preserve bowel function and avoid a stoma when it's medically safe.



(815) 625-4790 • 101 E. Miller Road, Sterling • [www.cghmc.com](http://www.cghmc.com)

# January Meetings

- January 13 Exec
- January 8 Ambassadors
- January 20 Board
- January 20 Agri-business Committee
- January 15 Hispanic Business Leaders

## Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Directors & Staff

### Executive Committee

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

### Term Ends January 31, 2026

- Pam Fluck, Sauk Valley Bank
- Sandi Cavazos, US Bank
- Tim Determan, Pinney Printing
- Lance Buser, Wal-Mart DC #7024

### Term Ends January 31, 2027

- Ryan Olson, 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 Career Center
- Dr. Jon Mandrell, SVCC
- Rebecca Munoz-Ripley, YWCA

### Staff

- Dallas Knack—Executive Director
- Ronda Borgmann—Financial Specialist

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

Happy New Year!

As we welcome 2026, we are filled with gratitude for the opportunities and connections that made 2025 a memorable year. Your support, collaboration, and dedication to our shared vision have been invaluable, and we thank you for being an essential part of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the possibilities this new year brings. Together, we will continue to strengthen our community, foster business growth, and create meaningful connections. Whether through innovative programs, impactful events, or new partnerships, 2026 is poised to be a year of progress and success!

Cheers to embracing new beginnings and making this our best year yet! We look forward to working together and achieving great things for the Sauk Valley area.

With best wishes for a prosperous New Year,



# Investor Update January 2026

## NEW INVESTORS

**ZenBusiness**  
844-493-6249  
Zenbusiness.com

## INVESTOR RENEWALS

Behrz Bloomz  
Brent's Upholstery & Auto Accessories  
Campos Construction Inc  
Cora Physical Therapy Sauk Valley  
Happy Tails Animal Shelter  
McDonald Funeral Home & Crematory  
Menk USA, LLC  
NICIL  
Planet Fitness

Sauk Valley CPR  
Sterling Commercial Roofing, Inc.  
Sterling Public Schools  
Whiteside Area Career Center  
Whiteside County Senior Center  
XGolf 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% Club

Helm Civil  
Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.  
Lance's Plumbing  
LK Design Source  
Loescher HVAC  
M5 Industries, LLC  
Mattox Insurance Agency

RE/MAX Sauk Valley  
Reagan Mass Transit District  
Rock River Hospice & Home  
Select Employees Credit Union  
Stratus Networks  
Surf Internet  
United Craftsmen

### 110% Club

Allure of Sterling  
Altran Magnetics  
Astec Industries  
Bargain Exterminators  
Best Cob  
Bollman Auto Center  
Brown Construction Company

Bushel Basket Candle Co., Inc.  
Compeer Financial  
Dennis Electric of Tampico, Inc.  
Gold Star Cleaning LLC  
Hollyhock Hill Farms  
Kiwanis Club of Sterling  
Rock River Lumber & Grain  
Scholl Insurance Agency, Inc.

SERVPRO of Sterling  
Showplace Antiques & Treasures  
Smeltzer Insurance Agency  
St. Vincent DePaul Society  
The Mertes Law Firm, P.C.



# Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension  
Brad Lucas—Rouse Consulting Group  
Brian Hawkins—Brian Hawkins Insurance,  
The Cornerstone Agency  
Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank  
Cassi Pistole—Allure Healthcare  
Ethan Harrington—Ken Nelson Auto Group

Esther Salazar —CGH Medical Center  
John Kelly—Culver's of Rock Falls  
Karen Voss – Morningside of Sterling  
Lyndsey Kelly—Sauk Valley Community College  
Mary White – Community State Bank  
Sami Wiggins — Castor Home Nursing  
Sherry DeWalt – CGH Health Foundation  
Tygen Bausman—Sauk Valley Bank

## Congratulations to Kristy from JJM Printing for receiving November's Customer Service Award!

JJM is a wonderful asset to Sterling; providing top-notch screen printing and more. Her nominator specified saying, "Kristy is extremely patient and kind. We stopped by JJM multiple times to see various shirts, colors, and sizes. Each time Kristy was patient while we asked lots of questions and debated between options. She was professional and made the process quick and easy."

Congratulations Kristy and JJM Printing!



## Congratulations to Lundstrom Florist for receiving December's Customer Service Award!

To summarize, their nominator said: Ashley Zell, the owner at Lundstrom, is always so great to work with and always helps bring our vision for events to life. She generously donated her time and supplies to help create the backdrop for our Girlfriend Gala event. Even with her busy schedule she is always willing to lend a hand and is so generous with her time and resources. I always enjoy working with Ashley and Lundstrom because she always is willing to work with us and takes the time to give back even when I know how busy they are! We are so grateful for their generosity and the wonderful services they provide to us and to those in the community!



CSA Sponsored by:



## Ribbon Cutting



**The 9th Hole Mini Golf & More**  
2900 E. Lincolnway, Sterling  
815-499-3819



**Braden Counseling Center**  
2308 E. Lincolnway, Ste D, Sterling  
815-984-0184



**OSF Saint Katharine Medical Center**  
**Sterling office**  
1840 1st Ave., Sterling  
779-251-6100

## Sights & Sounds

Sights & Sounds on December 5 was a great way to kick off the holiday season! Thank you to our businesses and organizations that participated in Sights & Sounds, whether at Santa's Workshop or throughout downtown Sterling. The hop-on, hop-off trolley spread people throughout downtown giving families a chance to explore all of our great local businesses and restaurants.



## Written by: Paige LaShelle, Morrison High School

Over the course of the first semester in CEO, I've grown so much. I came into CEO wanting to learn new skills, but I never knew how possible that would become. CEO has taught me so many things about myself. Part of this comes from hearing all of the advice our guest speakers share. It allows me to think deeper, asking myself, "How does this apply to me? How can I improve this about myself?" My favorite part about CEO has been watching myself and my classmates grow. Starting this year, being able to communicate and hold a conversation was very difficult for me, but now it's something I can do a lot easier. This is because the class has pushed me out of my comfort zone in the perfect way. I've also been able to take on important leadership roles that I never would be able to do. Part of our class business, which is coming up on February 12, requires each of us to go out into the community and talk about our business and ask for sponsorships. This was something that ordinarily would have terrified me, but I am actually excited. CEO has also taught me that I am a leader. A leader can take all shapes and forms. Some of us are quiet, some of us are straight forward, some of us are loud, and all together we make a team. I didn't know that just because I wasn't the loudest person in the room, that my skills would be valuable to a team as well. CEO has been a great opportunity for me thus far, and I can't wait to see where the rest of the year takes me.



## Written by: Brecken Hayden, Eastland High School

Coming into CEO, I knew it was going to push me, but I didn't fully understand how much it would challenge the way I think, communicate, and work with others until we were deep into planning our class business. This experience so far has shown me that building something meaningful is not just about having good ideas, but about learning how to bring those ideas together as a team. One of the biggest lessons our class has learned is that communication is absolutely key when trying to plan something on a large scale. Early on, we had strong ideas but struggled to move forward because we weren't communicating effectively. Different perspectives, opinions, and expectations often left us stuck in the same place for longer than we wanted. Once we started listening more intentionally, speaking more clearly, and truly working together, everything changed. Since improving our communication, we have made huge progress in the learning and planning stages, and our class business has finally begun to take shape. Planning our class business has required much more than I originally expected. It has involved brainstorming, decision-making, problem-solving, and learning how to compromise while still moving toward a shared goal. Through mentor visits, class discussions, and honest feedback, we refined our vision into something that represents our class and what we have learned throughout the program. Our class business will be a Global Gala-themed event. The event will include live entertainment performed by CEO students, a nice meal, and gift basket raffles. It will be held on February 12th at the McCormick Event Center in Rock Falls. Doors will open at 5:30 PM, and the event will run from 6:00–8:00pm.



# Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program (SVCLP)

Written by Laura Carbaugh, SVCLP Facilitator

What a great morning of learning for the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program cohort and the WACC CEO Class. We shared some quick introductory discussions before diving into thoughtful, small-group discussions with the following state and local government representatives: State Representative Bradley Fritts; State Senator Li Arellano, Jr; Mary Oros, City of Dixon, and Josh Johnson, City of Sterling alderpersons; Brent Reuter, Dixon Illinois Township Supervisor; and Nancy Naylor, Lee County Board chairperson.

The Dixon Park District Facility staff members were gracious hosts again, and Basil Tree Ristorante catered the most delicious lunch to share after we laughed our way through the "Favorite Things Swap."

You can learn more about the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program at [svleadership.org/](http://svleadership.org/)



## Save the Date

Thursday, January 29: Annual Meeting & Dinner

Wednesday, January 14: Sauk Valley Under 40 Networking Event (details on page 8)

Tuesday, February 3: Professional Women's Network Event (details on page 9)

## Business After Hours

Business After Hours was a wonderful time of networking and getting in the festive spirit! Thank you to Ward Murray Pace & Johnson for organizing and hosting the event at The Rusty Fox, which is always a great venue!



You're  
invited!



YOUNG LEADERS  
**Connect** and  
→ **Cultivate**

Hear from your peers! Discover social clubs and leadership opportunities in the Sauk Valley at an engaging "speed networking" mixer event.



505 W. Lynn Blvd  
Sterling  
**Elevate Youth Center**

**14** January  
6:00-7:30 p.m.

No cost to attend, but **RSVP is required:** [forms.gle/8Pz5nmxvitsyVqJK6](https://forms.gle/8Pz5nmxvitsyVqJK6)  
or scan the QR code



**Questions? Email Dallas at [director@saukvalleyareachamber.com](mailto:director@saukvalleyareachamber.com)**

Dr. Sara Dail has been employed by Sterling Public Schools in Sterling, IL during her entire career. She started in education as a Kindergarten teacher, a 5th grade teacher and a literacy coach. She obtained her administrative and doctoral degrees and moved into positions such as Director of Student Services, Principal, and currently serves in the role of Assistant Superintendent and will move to the role of Superintendent for the 2028-2029 school year.

Dr. Dail works for the Illinois Fire Service Institute and the University of Illinois to travel throughout the Midwest to meet with local law officials, fire officials, and local school district staff in order to continue to revise and better their emergency management plans. She is an adjunct professor for the Western Illinois University and teaches courses in the Educational Leadership department. Dr. Dail has presented at IASPA in 2019 on Difficult Conversations and served as the IASPA Conference Planning Committee Chair for the 2022 and 2023 conferences. Dr. Dail also was the recipient of the IASPA Mentor of the Year in 2023.



**DR. SARA DAIL**

## THE HIDDEN DYNAMICS OF DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Difficult conversations often feel overwhelming—not just because of the topic, but because of the unseen dynamics beneath the surface. In this session, you'll uncover what really makes these conversations so challenging and leave with practical strategies to navigate them with greater confidence, clarity, and success.



**Tuesday,  
February 3**



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



**Bethel Church**  
230 E 23rd St, Sterling

**\$25 members**  
**\$45 non-members**  
Includes lunch.

Register by 1/27/26 at  
<https://bit.ly/4pjDHV>



Questions? Call the SVACC 815-625-2400