



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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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



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

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

**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 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

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 ,



SVACC EVENTS

Month	Date	Event
JAN	29	ANNUAL DINNER
JUNE	12	GOLF OUTING
AUG	7	HOT DOG DAY
SEPT	10	CHAMBER WEEK CELEBRATION
SEPT	19	FIESTA PARADE
OCT	8	MANUFACTURING DINNER
DEC	4	SIGHTS & SOUNDS

MONTHLY BUSINESS AFTER HOURS
February 19, March 19, April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20, October 15, November 19, December 17

saukvalleyareachamber.com
815-625-2400



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/



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
or scan the QR code



Questions? Email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com



DR. SARA DAIL

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.

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/4pjDHVj>



Questions? Call the SVACC 815-625-2400