



Sauk Valley Area  
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**ACCREDITED**



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# Partnering for Success

JULY 2026

Together with the area Chambers of Commerce, Sauk Valley Community College invites you to

# BUSINESS *After* HOURS

**THURSDAY, JULY 16  
5:00 - 6:30 P.M.**

**ROTARY PLAZA  
SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
173 IL ROUTE 2, DIXON**

Grab your Hawaiian shirt and hula over to SVCC for an evening of networking, drinks, appetizers, and door prizes.

**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!**

The Area Chambers of Commerce & Sauk Valley Community College



**\$25** *Get ready, get set... give back!*  
**SPORTS PHYSICALS**

**\* Available through August 31!**

Give back to your child's school by taking advantage of **\$25 sports physicals\*** at participating CGH Clinics and the CGH Ready Care Clinics in Dixon and Sterling. **CGH will donate \$5 from each exam to support your child's school.** It's a win-win for your family and your community!

*All locations, excluding Ready Care, appreciate appointments made in advance. Your child does not need to be an established patient. Payment is due at time of service (cash or card). This offer is for sports physicals only; for well-child exams or immunizations, please contact your child's primary care provider.*

Visit [www.cghmc.com/sports](http://www.cghmc.com/sports) for a complete list of dates and locations!



## July Meetings

July 9 Ambassadors

July 14 Exec Board

July 16 Hispanic Business Leaders

July 16 Business After Hours

July 28 Board of Directors

July 28 Agri-business Committee

### 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 Career Center

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, Castor Home 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

Summer has a way of reminding us just how much there is to enjoy right here in the Sauk Valley. Longer days invite us to slow down, explore a little farther, and rediscover the businesses, restaurants, and events that make our community such a special place to live and work.

Whether it's trying a restaurant you've never visited, stopping into a locally owned shop, or attending a community event, every visit makes a difference. Our local businesses are the heart of our economy, and summertime is the perfect opportunity to experience all they have to offer while creating new memories with family and friends.

One of the most exciting things happening this summer has been watching our next generation of entrepreneurs discover what's possible. Our inaugural Sauk Valley Young Creators Camp has brought together middle school students from across the region to transform creative ideas into real businesses. Through hands-on activities and business planning, these students are learning firsthand what it takes to become entrepreneurs and community leaders.

This program wouldn't be possible without the incredible partnership we have with Whiteside Area Career Center, the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College, and the University of Illinois Extension 4H Program. Together, we're investing in the future of our region by helping young people build confidence, develop practical business skills, and see themselves as future innovators.

I encourage everyone to come out and support these talented young entrepreneurs at the Sauk Valley Young Creators Pop-Up on Saturday, July 11, during Chalk the Walk. You'll have the opportunity to shop student-created products and learn about their businesses. Your encouragement could be the spark that inspires the next generation of business owners in the Sauk Valley!

As you enjoy everything this summer has to offer, I hope you'll make it a point to connect with the people who make our community thrive. Thank you for being part of our Chamber community, and I look forward to seeing you out and about this summer!



# Investor Update July 2026

## NEW INVESTORS

**Ashton North LLC**  
Oregon, IL  
262-212-7507

**Heroes of Hope of the Sauk Valley**  
Rock Falls, IL  
815-535-3082

**Sterling Films LLC**  
Elburn, IL  
224-688-1407

## INVESTOR RENEWALS

Bethel Reformed Church  
Bonnell Industries  
Castor Home Nursing Inc  
Central Bank Illinois  
Esthetics by Darla White  
Kiwanis Club of Sterling  
Kunes Auto Group  
Marv Lofgren & Son Contractors  
NAMI Sauk Area  
Open Door Community Church

Poolside Pools & Spas  
RiverWorks Coworking LLC  
Sauk Valley Bank  
Sinnissippi Centers, Inc.  
Total Construction Services  
Wal-Mart Supercenter #891

### 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

Helm Civil  
Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.  
Lance's Plumbing  
LK Design Source  
Loescher HVAC  
Mattox Insurance Agency  
RE/MAX Sauk Valley  
Reagan Mass Transit District  
Rock River Hospice & Home  
Select Employees Credit Union  
Stratus Networks

### 110% Investors

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

# 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

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

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## Ambassador Spotlight: Esther Douglas, CGH Medical Center

My name is Esther Douglas, and I joined the Chamber as an Ambassador in 2024. I work for CGH Medical Center in the Auxiliary department and the Marketing department.



In the Auxiliary department, I work with CGH Auxiliary volunteers. The volunteers give their time to help with a variety of tasks at CGH. They provide wheelchair transport, help people find where they need to go, assist at fundraisers, blood drives, and more. I help make sure the volunteers have what they need to be successful. Every day they inspire me with their hard work and generosity. If you’re interested in volunteering for CGH you can call 815-625-0400 ext. 5727.

In marketing, I work with my department to promote CGH services and the new developments happening at the hospital. Just recently, CGH completed its cafeteria renovation. I highly encourage everyone to take a look inside if you have the time. Besides a beautiful new cafeteria and dining space, the menu has also been expanded with more delicious food options. Watch out for our next HealthLines newsletter for all the newest information on upcoming things for CGH Medical Center.

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## Welcome new ambassadors!

We are excited to welcome two new Ambassadors to our team!



Mindy Wallin, WSI Wallin Group



Breanne Hunter, CGH Medical Center

# Ribbon Cutting



**Northwestern Steel & Wire Park**  
201 Wallace St, Sterling



**Azul Cantina**  
3920 E Lincolnway, Sterling  
(779) 297-7014

## Professional Women’s Network

Thank you to everyone who joined us for PWN Summer Networking! We loved spending the evening connecting, creating vision boards, sharing laughs, and celebrating the incredible women who make our community stronger.

A huge thank you to The Rusty Fox Alehouse & Wine Bar for a great venue. Thank you to our event series sponsors helping make the event possible: HB Wilkinson Title Company, Inc., Invenergy, Sauk Valley Bank, Thrive Works Consulting, The Wellspring

We are grateful for your support and for the amazing women who continue to show up, engage, and encourage one another.



## Guest Editorial

Written by: Brenda Helms, Director of Community Education & Alumni Engagement, SVCC

### Lifelong Learning and Alumni Engagement at Sauk Valley Community College

Learning doesn't stop after graduation, and at Sauk Valley Community College, we believe education should be available at every stage of life. One of the College's hidden gems is the Community Education Department, which offers a wide variety of lifelong learning opportunities for adults and youth. Whether you're looking to advance your career through CDL, phlebotomy, or food sanitation training, explore a personal interest such as languages, writing, or line dancing, or travel with us on a day trip or international adventure, there truly is something for everyone. Our College for Kids program also provides engaging educational experiences for students entering grades 3 through 8.

The impact of Community Education continues to grow. Last year, more than 1,040 students took part in Community Education programs, discovering new interests, enhancing career skills, and building connections throughout the Sauk Valley region. This fall, Community Education will continue expanding opportunities for learners of all ages. Through funding from the Illinois Community College Board's Noncredit Strategies at Work grant, SVCC will offer a free Welding for Veterans and Active Military class on August 13. Participants will receive all required safety equipment and hands-on training at no cost. Programs like this help remove barriers to education while supporting workforce development throughout the region.

We are also excited to launch a new initiative focused on partnering with local businesses to offer experience-based classes to the community. These partnerships provide an opportunity to showcase local expertise while creating unique learning experiences. Imagine taking a pizza-making class at a local restaurant, learning floral design from a florist, exploring automotive maintenance with a local mechanic, or participating in a mixology or food-pairing workshop. We invite businesses interested in sharing their skills and passion with the community to contact us.

In addition to lifelong learning, SVCC is breathing new life into its Alumni Association by creating new opportunities for alumni to connect and engage. Through alumni spotlights, newsletters, and alumni receptions, we are celebrating the accomplishments of our graduates and strengthening relationships with former students. Following a successful Health Professions Alumni Reception this spring, we look forward to hosting another alumni reception this fall.

The Fall 2026 Community Education catalog is available online and will be mailed to area residents in early August. To learn more about Community Education opportunities, visit [svcc.edu/ced](http://svcc.edu/ced).

Alumni can stay connected by visiting [svcc.edu/alumni](http://svcc.edu/alumni) and following SVCC Community Education and SVCC Alumni on Facebook.



*Sauk Valley Community College is dedicated to teaching and scholarship while engaging the community in lifelong learning, public service, and economic development.*



## Member Spotlight

*Sterling Park District*

Clean Eatz meals are now officially available at the Sterling Park District inside Building 1 at the Westwood Fitness & Sports Center. Partnering with the Westwood Smoothie Company, this new addition brings macro-friendly, dietitian-approved meal prep right to the heart of the community's premier fitness hub. Whether you are trying to lean out, build muscle, or simply save time on busy weeknights, these grab-and-go options eliminate the stress of grocery shopping and meal preparation.



### Convenient Grab 'N' Go Fueling

Fitness enthusiasts no longer need to rush home to cook a healthy post-workout dinner. Located directly inside the facility's smoothie bar, the dedicated Clean Eatz freezer section features an array of pre-portioned, fully prepared single-serving entrees.

- **Rotational Varieties:** The available menu updates frequently, keeping your diet interesting with dishes like the Mandarin Orange Chicken, 5-Cheese Chicken Parm, and Mango Jerk Beef Bowl.
- **Macro-Friendly Metrics:** Every single package explicitly states its exact calorie, protein, carbohydrate, and fat counts. This transparency provides complete control over your nutritional goals without any of the traditional guesswork.
- **Quick Preparation:** These entrees are crafted to be fast and efficient—simply heat them up in a microwave for 3 to 5 minutes right at the center or take them home for an effortless dinner.

## 60th Annual Charles A. Farnham Golf Outing

Friday, June 12 was a beautiful day to celebrate the 60th Annual Charles Farnham Golf Outing! Members joined us on the course for a round of golf to raise funds for the Charles Farnham Business Scholarship and our workforce development initiatives at the Chamber. A big thank you to all of our generous sponsors, Annie and the team at Deer Valley, and all of the golfers that joined us!

We had a three-way tie for first place.

Congratulations to X-Golf Sauk Valley, Edward Jones - Tom Gleissner, and 7:24 Fitness on the Rock!



# STERLING Street Fest LING

MUSIC, MAKERS & MORE

**SATURDAY  
JULY 25  
2 - 8 PM**

**FREE  
ALL AGES**

*Downtown Sterling*  
3RD STREET & LIGHT STREET ALLEY

★ *Music*

- 2:00 PM The Solution
- 4:30 PM Loess Hills
- 6:00 PM The Breakfast Club

*Celebrating!*



★ *Makers*

Vendors  
2:00 - 6:00 PM

★ *More*

Local Restaurants & Bars  
Food Trucks  
Kids Activities

*Signature Sponsors*



*Cornerstone Sponsors*

*Community Builders*

*Media Partner*



[WWW.STERLINGMAINSTREET.ORG](http://WWW.STERLINGMAINSTREET.ORG)

Program presented by:



# SAUK VALLEY YOUNG CREATORS CAMP

## VENDOR POP UP AT



# SATURDAY, JULY 11 11AM-2PM

## Grandon Civic Center, Sterling

Support the next generation of business owners! Shop from local youth entrepreneurs as they showcase their ideas, sell their products, and gain real-world experience running their own businesses.

### Thank you to our program sponsors!





**FREE WORKSHOP**

# Marketing Essentials For Small Businesses

Social Media, SEO & Your Website

**Thursday, July 16 from 3:00-4:30 p.m.**  
**Hellmich Riverview Conference Center at SVCC**

Learn practical, low-cost strategies to help your small business stand out online. This workshop will cover the fundamentals of organic social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO) and website best practices that can help you attract customers, increase visibility and strengthen your online presence. Whether you're just getting started or looking to improve your current efforts, you'll leave with actionable ideas you can put to work right away.



Presenter Janel Stahr is the owner and chief operating officer of Stahr Media in Rock Falls. The company has helped hundreds of clients locally and across the United States with both digital and print marketing since 2005. Since 2023, she has also owned and operated AroundPtown.com and The Radar Free Press, not only giving the public free, local news, but also offering new ways to market small businesses to the local population. She works side-by-side with her husband of nearly 27 years, Nathan. The couple have two adult children and recently welcomed their first grandchild.

**Free to attend, but please RSVP by July 9 by scanning the QR code or visiting [forms.gle/twxtBtfbqzZVEHMw6](https://forms.gle/twxtBtfbqzZVEHMw6).**



Co-Hosted by Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College, 173 IL Route 2, Dixon.  
**Questions? Contact SVACC Executive Director Dallas Knack at 815-625-2400.**



SATURDAY,  
JULY 18  
8AM-12PM

SVACC AGRIBUSINESS

# YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE MARKET DAY

TWIN CITY FARMERS MARKET  
106 AVENUE A, STERLING

Join the Sauk Valley Chamber Agribusiness Committee for a special pop up at Twin City Farmers Market celebrating the next generation of agriculture leaders, makers, growers, and entrepreneurs!

