



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

MAY 2025



BUSINESS After Hours

Join us!

THURS

MAY 15

5:00 - 6:30 p.m.

**NETWORKING
DOOR PRIZES
FOOD + MORE!**



LEO'S MARVELOUS BITES
221 W 1ST ST, DIXON



INTRODUCING IAN BEHR, MD, MS, FACS GENERAL & ENDOCRINE SURGERY

Now accepting new patients! CGH Medical Center is pleased to welcome Dr. Ian Behr, MS, FACS, to the General Surgery department. Experienced in performing appropriate surgical and non-surgical procedures for disorders of the thyroid, parathyroid, and adrenal glands, Dr. Behr is board certified by the American Board of Surgery and specializes in endocrine, trauma and general surgery.

He sees patients at the CGH Main Clinic, 101 E. Miller Road in Sterling. To make an appointment, please call (815) 625-4790.



May Meetings

- May 8 Ambassadors
- May 13 Exec
- May 20 Board of Directors
- May 20 Agri-business Committee
- May 22 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, Self Help Enterprises
Sandi Cavazos, US Bank
Kristina Kaecker, Kunes RV

Term Ends January 31, 2027

Tim Determan, Pinney Printing
Lance Buser, Wal-Mart DC #7024
Ryan Olson, Ward Murray Pace & Johnson
Bailey Schneiderbauer, Sauk Valley Bank
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

Because of *you*, local students are heading into their next chapter with confidence, support, and opportunity. These students—our future business owners, manufacturers, and ag leaders—have earned scholarships through the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce thanks to your generosity and commitment to our community.

You helped make this possible in so many ways.

Whether you:

- Played in the Charles Farnham Golf Outing,
- Sponsored the Fiesta Day Parade,
- Attended the SVACC Manufacturing Dinner or the Steak Fry in the Country,
- Or bid on a dessert for far more than it was probably worth...

...you didn't just show up for an event. You showed up for a student. Those moments raise real dollars that fund our scholarship program and workforce development initiatives—and they send a powerful message to our young people: *this community believes in you.*

A special thanks also goes to those who reviewed and scored the 2025–26 applications. Your time, thoughtfulness, and careful consideration make a lasting impact.

This year, we're proud to continue offering scholarships in Business, Agribusiness, and Manufacturing/CTE. We're also excited to once again include scholarships through the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee—now an established and important part of our scholarship program.

At a time when the next generation is looking for direction and support, your involvement helps guide the way. Thank you for investing in the future of Sauk Valley.



Investor Update May 2025

NEW INVESTORS

Elston Psychotherapy

402 2nd Ave Suite 1, Sterling
815-535-6041

Main Squeeze

1741 Industrial Dr, Sterling
815-499-0245

Stateline Solar

310 W Main St, Lena
815-580-3011

Granny Rose Animal Foundation

613 River Lane, Dixon
815-288-7387

St. John's Lutheran Church

703 Third Ave., Sterling
815-625-2634

INVESTOR RENEWALS

4-D Farms

Advocare Independent Distributor

Angelo's

Bardier & Ramirez Real Estate

Blackhawk Hills Regional Council

Brent's Upholstery & Auto Accessories

Brown Construction Company

Christ Church Sterling

Clinton LumberKings

Days Inn Rock Falls

Downie & Associates, CPA's, PC

Edward Jones—Mike Loos

Exceptional Care & Training Center

Folsom's Bakery

Fringe Co Salon & Western Boutique

Girl Scouts of Northern IL

HB Wilkinson Title Company

Helm Civil

Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.

Hope Cancer Wellness Center

Lil Smoked Bar + Grill

Majeski Motors

Marv Lofgren & Son Contractors

Mike Sprague State Farm Insurance

Nasos Salon

Northern IL Home Medical Supply

Reagan Mass Transit District

Rise Broadband

RRCA Accounts Management

Sandrock Farms

Sauk Valley Bank

Select Employees Credit Union

ServiceMaster

Sinnissippi Centers, Inc.

Slim-N-Hank's Auto Body Shop

Sterling Federal Bank

Sterling Noon Rotary

Sterling Optimist Club

Sterling Park District

Sterling Schools Foundation

Sterling Systems & Controls

Sterling Woodworks LLC

Wilco Rental, Inc.

Winter Construction, Inc.

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

Altran Magnetics

Helm Civil

Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.

Lance's Plumbing

LK Design Source

Loescher HVAC

M5 Industries

Mattox Insurance

McDonald's

PC Tech 2U

RE/MAX Sauk Valley

Reagan Mass Transit

Select Employees Credit Union

Sterling Commercial Roofing

Surf Internet

United Craftsmen, Ltd.

110% Club

Adobe Acrobat

Best Cob

Bollman Auto Center

Bushel Basket Candle Co.

DeJonge Tax

Dennis Electric of Tampico

Farmer's National Bank

Frantz Manufacturing

Gold Star Cleaning

Grace Point Church

Hollyhock Hill Farms

McCormick's Nursey

Mertes & Mertes

New Millenium Directories

River Ridge Animal Hospital

Rock River Energy Services

Rock River Lumber & Grain

Scholl Insurance

ServPro of Sterling

Showplace Antiques

St. Vincent DePaul

Trinity Insurance

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension

Brian Hawkins—Brian Hawkins Insurance,
The Cornerstone Agency

Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank

Chandra Howard – RE/MAX Sauk Valley

Christina Bystry – House in the Country

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

Pam Fluck – Self Help Enterprises

Sami Wiggins – Castor Home Nursing

Sherry DeWalt – CGH Health Foundation

Tygen Bausman—Sauk Valley Bank

Ambassador Spotlight: Tygen Bausman, Sauk Valley Bank

Hello, my name is Tygen (Teagan). I am a Small Business Specialist at Sauk Valley Bank, where I bring 18 years of banking experience—nine of those dedicated to the Commercial Banking field. In my role, I’m passionate about helping local businesses achieve their goals by providing tailored banking solutions that meet their unique needs.



I am proud to have served the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce as an Ambassador for three years and currently hold the role of Ambassador Co-Chair. I am a member of the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee, the Agribusiness Committee, and the Sights and Sounds Committee.

As a Sterling native and current Rock Falls resident, I’m deeply invested in our community. I live here with my husband and three children. It is my goal to actively give back to our community by supporting local businesses and initiatives.

Connecting with local business leaders, welcoming new enterprises to our area, and fostering growth within our community is not just my job—it’s my passion. I am honored to contribute to the success and growth of our businesses and community, helping them thrive and achieve their aspirations.

Monthly Ambassador Meeting

Good conversation and great food! This month our ambassadors met at Lil Smoked to touch base on updates at the chamber and in our community.

Thank you for hosting us, Lil Smoked!



Ribbon Cuttings

Morningside of Sterling
2705 Ave E, Sterling
815-622-2800



Raising Hope, Erie
715 Main Street, Erie
815-656-0356

Elston Psychotherapy
402 2nd Ave, Ste 1, Sterling
815-535-6041



Congratulations to The Fitting Room the Customer Service Award!

Their nominator said "The owner is such a wonderful person, who treats everyone with kindness and respect. She fixed my item right on the spot and I'm sure she had a million other things to do. She's amazing and saved me so much time!"

CSA Sponsored by:



Written by: Brooklyn Thoms, Fulton High School Junior

“Don’t let fear stop you. Do it afraid,” said Christy Pipes. “Comfort is not key,” stated Bailey Russell, and “Strike while the iron is hot,” advised Katie Clark. These are just a few of the most memorable and impactful quotes I've encountered in the CEO program this year. They will guide me throughout my business ventures after high school. With only three weeks left in the CEO program, I reflect on how these quotes have motivated me and helped me step out of my comfort zone, especially during the creation of my micro-business, B.Positive.



Focusing on these quotes was beneficial as I prepared to pitch my business idea to bankers. I committed to giving my all, despite my fears, in the local and national pitch contests we entered. I placed third in the local pitch contest, and I often think back on these quotes while selling my product to customers. They serve as a reminder to demonstrate my passion for advocating mental health and spreading positivity through my products. Currently, I am using these quotes to aid in enhancing my public speaking and communication skills, which are my biggest challenges in the business world. I plan to use the profits from my micro-business, after donating to NAMI for mental health initiatives, as seed money to start my own healthy smoothie and food business after this summer.

In the future, as a business owner and employer, effective communication and public speaking will be essential. The practice I’m gaining now, along with the encouragement from these quotes, will be invaluable. I am deeply grateful for the CEO class, where I developed not only hard skills but also soft skills, reinforcing the importance of “striking while the iron is hot” and stepping outside of my comfort zone.

Written by: Ari Reyna, Rock Falls High School

CEO is one of the best classes I have ever taken, but it is a hard class. There are things I love and there are things I really do not want to do. Some things I love about CEO are all the lessons about life we learn, all the amazing speakers we get to hear from, and all the opportunities we are given when being in CEO, including growing my business Knots and Lots Crochet. But as I said not everything in CEO is fun. Each of us was challenged to come up with a pitch for our business, which again, was a fun thing about CEO. But then we had to perform said pitches in front of the class which was very awkward. After all the help from speakers, my pitch got top ten in our local pitch contest of both East and West WACC CEO students. And with that pitch I entered the National Pitch contest which is sponsored by Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship. Students from all over the nation submit a 30 second pitch for judging. I was dreading taking a video of myself and entering it, but with Le reminding us and most of the class submitting them, with two hours to spare from the deadline I sent mine in. When it was done, I knew I overreacted because it was not bad at all and then I forgot about it. The week of the trade show Le told us one of us got top 18 out of over 450 entries. We watched a live Zoom call with the winners announced and I ended up being the one that got top 18! I could not be happier. Because of the amazing opportunities CEO has given me, the connections with so many speakers, my mentor Suzy Perino, and the support of my class, I have learned so many things that will help me throughout life.



Sauk Valley Under 40 (formerly Keystone)

This year our group of individuals under the age of 40 has been trying new things and forging new paths.

With that comes an exciting announcement! The Keystone group will be rebranding to better align with their vision for the group moving forward. They have decided to rename the group **Sauk Valley Under 40** and will continue to offer a platform for young individuals to get involved and make a difference in the Sauk Valley area.

Keep an eye out for more upcoming events and offerings from the Sauk Valley Under 40 group. We are excited to see where this leads!



Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program

The '24-'25 SVCLP cohort spent the morning of April 2, 2025, with Dr. Tad Everett, Superintendent of Sterling Public Schools, learning about "The Red Circle," Brian Shaw, the power of mistakes, buckets, ABC calendars, All-Stars, ORID, and so much more! Ninety minutes of fantastic leadership content.

Ben Sondgeroth, Lead Regional Educational Technology Coordinator, for Learning Technology Center then stepped in to check our "homework" and left many of us speechless with the capabilities of new AI tools.

El Tapatio of Rock Falls provided a delicious taco bar with all the fixings. Yum!

On Wednesday, April 16, 2025, The Mercantile, Sterling, was the place to be. We began with a Q & A with The Mercantile owners and entrepreneurs, Ashley and Ryan Nares, who also have a successful photography and videography company, TIL DEATH PHOTO & FILM. Ashley and Ryan discussed their journeys, inspirations, and pivots as they worked to create a beautifully unique restaurant and event venue.

Four valuable Economic Development leaders of the Sauk Valley area then joined for a panel discussion on the future of the Sauk Valley area and what it takes to bring some of the area's amazing projects to completion: Kim Ewoldsen, Director of Regional Economic Development and Illinois Small Business Development Center, Sauk Valley Community College; Tom Demmer, Executive Director, Lee County Industrial Development Association; Robbin Blackert, Rock Falls City Administrator; and Heather Sotelo, Executive Director, Greater Sterling Development Corporation.



The chefs of The Mercantile served us a delicious lunch. If you haven't tried their food, please do!

Interested in joining Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program next year? Click here: svleadership.org

Guest Editorial

Written by: Nora Reuter, Sterling Park District



The Sterling Park district is buzzing with excitement as it unveils its **Summer Activity Guide** full of programs and events designed to engage the community in fun and fitness. Whether you're a seasoned athlete or someone who simply wants to increase your activity level, there's something for everyone.



At the Westwood Sports Facility, the Warehouse offers a variety of group fitness classes such as Unicus Functional Fitness, Steps for Today, and Total Body Toning, ensuring options for all fitness levels. For older adults, specialized classes like Fit for Life and Senior Fitness provide tailored workouts. A new addition at the Duis Center is the **"Have a BALL" class** with Diane, which uses stability balls to enhance balance and core strength. For those who enjoy aquatics, the Strength, Stretch, and Balance class offers a refreshing swim-based workout.

Our diverse selection of youth sports programs offers an exciting summer for your children. Encourage them to dive into Tennis or Swimming lessons, or explore the dynamic worlds of Tae Kwon Do, Ninja, or Gymnastics and Tumbling. For those seeking a shorter commitment, our specialized camps such as Dive Camp, Cheer Camp, Tumbling Camp, Soccer Camp, and Football Camp are perfect options. Don't miss out on our **FREE Tennis week in July**, featuring expert instruction from our Director of Racquet Sports, Chris Dudley, and a complimentary racquet and more. Additionally, our Basketball Skills Clinic and Speed and Agility Class are great for honing athletic prowess. Mark your calendars for our School's Out Swim Party on May 23rd, a splashy celebration to kickstart the summer fun!

The Westwood Wellness Center is dedicated to enhancing your health and well-being with a variety of innovative services. Among its offerings, you'll find Hydromassage, Red Light Therapy, Compression Therapy, and Salt Therapy, which are designed to promote relaxation and recovery. Recently, the center introduced the much-anticipated Cryotherapy, a cutting-edge 'Cold' therapy that involves spending 1-3 minutes in a **Cryotherapy Chamber**. This treatment is renowned for reducing pain and inflammation, improving joint function, enhancing exercise recovery, aiding in weight loss, and alleviating stress and anxiety. In addition to Cryotherapy, the center now offers Theraguns, providing a targeted massage solution to relieve tight muscles and improve overall muscle health.

Emerald Hill Golf Course boasts meticulously maintained bentgrass greens alongside Kentucky bluegrass tees, fairways, and rough, creating a stunning backdrop for your golfing adventure. Beyond its 18 picturesque holes, the facility features a self-service driving range, three practice greens, and a dedicated practice chipping area to hone your skills. Before or after a day on the course, the **NEW Clubhouse Grill** awaits with a tempting menu that caters to all tastes, offering a variety of delicious dishes and a selection of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Book your tee time online and learn more at www.EmeraldHillGolfCourse.com.

Whether you're interested in sports, or outdoor adventures, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Be on the look out mid-May, when the new Summer Activity Guide will be released or visit www.Sterlingparks.org to access the guide online and explore all the options that will keep you and your family active, entertained, and safe throughout the summer months.

Business After Hours

Business After Hours was at Sauk Valley Foodbank this month, and we celebrated with a check presentation from the SVACC Ag Committee to the foodbank!

Thank you to all who joined us to network and learn more about the Sauk Valley Foodbank.

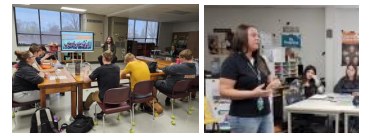
We look forward to seeing you on May 15 at Leo's Marvelous Bites.



Workforce Development

The SVACC has completed three sessions of Certificate of Employability this spring. Thank you to our members who spent time at Rock Falls and Milledgeville high schools talking to students about soft skills in the workplace and career exploration. This program is a 6 session program to help connect students with life skills as well as opportunities for careers right here in the Sauk Valley. We are excited to continue this program into the fall semester and hope you will join us in the classroom!

Contact Dallas, director@saukvalleyareachamber.com, if you would like to participate in a session.



Government Affairs

Written by: U.S. Chamber of Commerce



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Tariffs are having a real and devastating impact on thousands of small businesses across the nation as uncertainty, rising costs, and cancellations are hitting home.

In a recent special event for small business owners, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President, Chief Policy Officer, and Head of Strategic Advocacy Neil Bradley and Senior Vice President, Head of International, John Murphy, shared the latest on tariffs and how they are impacting small businesses.

The duo broke down trade tariffs, what is tariffed, what is not, and what might happen next.

Bradley explained that these tariffs differ from other previous tariffs. "We're used to some level of tariffs in history and commerce," Bradley said. "The tariffs that are being imposed this year fall under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The benefit from the administration's perspective is that it doesn't require notice or public comment to make changes."

Click [here](#) to watch the full session.

Professional Women's Network

Professional Women's Network hosted Emotional Intelligence and Leadership by LeAndra Hartman on April 30. The turnout for this presentation was incredible and the content was even better. Le hosted an enlightening discussion and allowed time for reflection to personally tie this to our roles and organizations. We were blown away by the response and feedback we received from this wonderful event, and hope to continue providing affordable, high-quality, professional development opportunities for our members and the community.

We are looking forward to hosting a free summer networking event on June 26 at Bartini's. Please email director@saukvalleyareachamber.com to RSVP or visit saukvalleyareachamber.com/pwn.



Agribusiness Committee

In April the SVACC Agribusiness Committee met with students from Challand Middle School to learn more about their experience at the Middle School Agriculture Conference which they attended this spring. The committee was proud to provide a check to sponsor the students' attendance at the conference and was happy to hear what the students took away from the day.



SVACC executive director, Dallas Knack, had the honor of attending the Women to Watch conference as a guest of Representative Brad Fritts. It was remarkable to be surrounded by incredible women from across the state of Illinois!

SVACC members can use code SVACC to receive
\$10 off the ticket price of their choice!

THE MIDWEST SUMMIT ON LEADERSHIP

LEADING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

15
MAY

The Dixon: Historic Theatre • 114 S Galena Ave.

2025 KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**Jean Marie
DiGiovanna**

Jean Marie, leadership expert and best-selling author, helps shift the way leaders think, lead, and communicate, fostering a culture of trust, collaboration, and innovation.



Nick Kittle

An award-winning innovator and best-selling author, Nick Kittle will leave attendees empowered, inspired, and ready to tackle powerful challenges with new vigor!



**Tamara
Ghandour**

Tamara Ghandour's groundbreaking work in human-centered innovation has been featured on the TODAY show, New York Times, Fox News, and more!

Tickets still available for Guided Networking Lunch with Karla Belzer, University of Illinois Extension County Director. Collaborate within your group, and expand your network and meet other professionals!



midwestsummitleadership.com