



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce



IN THIS
ISSUE:



PAGE 5



PAGE 7



PAGE 8

Partnering for Success

NOVEMBER 2025

Join
Castor Home Health Solutions
and SVACC for an evening of
connections, conversations,
appetizers, and giveaways!

Business After Hours

Thursday, November 20th
5-6:30 pm

Castor Home Health Solutions
417 E. 3rd St Sterling IL



MyChart is Epic



CGH is excited to introduce Epic, the new billing and Electronic Health Record (EHR) system that unites our hospital and clinic systems into one integrated platform. As part of this new system, patients can now sign up for a **CGH MyChart** account - your new, secure patient portal!

Through CGH MyChart you can:

- Easily message your care team
- View test results
- Link your health accounts
- Schedule appointments
- Request prescription refills
- Make payments online and more!

Sign up today at www.cghmc.com/mychart or scan the QR code above!



November Meetings

- November 11 Exec
- November 13 Ambassadors
- November 18 Board
- November 18 Agri-business Committee
- November 19 Professional Women's Network
- November 20 Hispanic Business Leaders
- November 20 Business After Hours

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

As we enter the holiday season, let's come together to support our community by shopping small and local. This season, when you shop with local businesses, you're doing more than finding unique gifts—you're investing in our local economy, supporting jobs, and contributing to the unique character that makes our community such a great place to live.

By shopping local, you're helping sustain these businesses so they can continue serving us all year long. This holiday season, we encourage you to explore our local shops, restaurants, services, and organizations that call the Sauk Valley area home. Let's make an impact by supporting small businesses and spreading holiday cheer right here in town.

Thank you for your continued support, and let's make this season one to remember!



Nominations are now open for the 2025 Chamber Champion

The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce is now accepting nominations for the **Sauk Valley Area Chamber Champion Award**—the region's highest honor recognizing exceptional leadership, service, and community impact.

This distinguished award celebrates an individual or group whose dedication, vision, and actions have made the Sauk Valley a better place to live, work, and thrive. The Chamber Champion is someone who truly *goes above and beyond*—whether through professional accomplishments, volunteer service, or extraordinary efforts that strengthen the fabric of our community.

If you know someone whose commitment and contributions embody the very best of the Sauk Valley, we invite you to nominate them for this prestigious recognition.

Submit a nominations by 12/4/25: bit.ly/3LejBNg

Investor Update October 2025

NEW INVESTORS

Roberts Counseling PLLC

1503 1st Ave, Unit B
Rock Falls, IL
563-293-6917

Spartan Truck Center

1080 S 7th St
Rochelle, IL
847-989-2955

INVESTOR RENEWALS

A1 Autos & Boats
Abiding Word Church
Air Play Espresso & Bakery
Alternative Ag Services & Consultants
Birth to Five Illinois Region 47
Bradford Supply Company
Bushel Basket Candle Co., Inc.
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP
Comcast Rock River Lumber & Grain
Creative Cuisine Catering, Inc.
Culver's of Rock Falls
DD Homes Network
DeJonge Tax & Accounting, Inc.

First Onsite Property Restoration
Greencastle of Sterling
Heritage Woods of Sterling
Hollyhock Hill Farms
House in the Country
Hueber/Dekalb Feeds
IL 22mohawks
Imprintable Memories
JJM Printing, Inc.
Midland States Bank
PC Tech 2U
Pinney Printing
Rock Falls High School
Regional Office of Education

Sauk Valley Media
Shelly Dambman, CPA
Sterling Fence Company
TBK Bank
University of Illinois Extension
US Postal Service
Ward, Murray, Pace & Johnson
Woodlawn Arts Academy

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

McDonald's
RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Reagan Mass Transit District
Rock River Hospice & Home
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
Compeer Financial
Dennis Electric of Tampico
Gold Star Cleaning LLC
Hollyhock Hill Farms
Kiwanis Club of Sterling

Rock River Lumber & Grain
Scholl Insurance Agency
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

Christina Bystry — House in the Country

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

Ambassador Spotlight: John Kelly, Culver's of Rock Falls

Hello, I'm John Kelly. I'm 27 years old, just celebrated my first year of marriage with my wife, and have been part of the Sauk Valley community all of my life. I started working at Culver's when I was 16 and have really enjoyed getting to know so many great people through the years. I'm excited to serve as a Chamber Ambassador and continue giving back to the community that has given me so much.



I am currently taking the next steps to become a Culver's franchisee. My goal is not only to carry forward the high standards and friendly service for our community, but also to create the same opportunities for growth and development that I was given. I believe in nurturing talent, recognizing hard work, and helping others achieve their own success.

As I look ahead, I'm eager to lead with purpose, serve with heart, and make a positive impact, even if it's just one ButterBurger at a time!

Business After Hours

What a great time at business after hours! SHRM Rock River, Reagan Mass Transit District, and Whiteside County Transit hosted a fun time for our members to mix and mingle. Thank you to this month's hosts!



Ribbon Cutting



Roberts Counseling, PLLC
1503 1st Ave, Unit B, Rock Falls
563-293-6917

Aurelio's Cake Factory
New location - 2907 Locust St., Sterling
815-626-2253

doughMAMA
815-535-7025
hotplate.com/doughmama3



**CGH Medical Center
Lobby Renovation**
100 E LeFevre Rd., Sterling
815-625-0400



**CGH Medical Center
Health Foundation Donor Wall**
100 E LeFevre Rd., Sterling
815-625-0400

**Congratulations to
Sterling Public Library for receiving
the Customer Service Award!**

Beyond being a Carnegie Library, Sterling Public Library offers tons of activities and events for our community. From programs for all ages, to book clubs, writing clubs, and monthly craft nights the list goes on and on. They were nominated for this Customer Service Award for going above and beyond for patrons by making home deliveries when the patron could not drive themselves to the library to pick up books.

Visit Sterling Public Library at 102 W. 3rd St., Sterling.

CSA Sponsored by:

Haas
Gleissner
Edmund Jones
Larsen
Loos

MB
McFALLS, BERGE
& ASSOCIATES

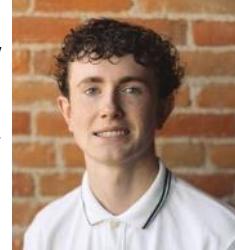
Sauk Valley
Bank

The CORNERSTONE
Agency Inc.
Brian Hawkins



Written by: Wyatt Carroll, Eastland High School

Taking CEO class has been one of the most impactful experiences in my academic journey so far this year. From the very first week, the course challenged me to think like a leader rather than just a student. One of the most valuable aspects of the class has been the key on critical thinking and decision-making. By analyzing the strategies and leadership styles of successful businessmen and women, I've learned how determination and communication play vital roles in effective management. It was eye-opening to see how even the smallest decisions can influence the overall direction of a company. Another major benefit has been the development of my teamwork and communication skills. Working collaboratively on business plans helped me understand the importance of collaboration in leadership. I also gained confidence in presenting ideas clearly and persuasively, skills that are essential not only in business but in any professional setting. Possibly the most inspiring part of the class has been the exposure to guest speakers and real-world entrepreneurs. Hearing their stories made the lessons feel achievable. It motivated me to start envisioning my own future in business. These first couple months in CEO class have done so much for me, especially in learning how to operate in the business world and what it takes to be successful.



Written by: Olivia Castillo, Sterling High School

Over these past couple months I have learned many lessons in CEO that I hope to carry with me in life, one of them being that we ourselves shape our destiny. Not those around, not what happens to us, but how we move on from what happens to us. Always remember you are the one holding the pen to your book. You can always end a chapter and start a new one. You can write in more pieces that bring you joy and peace in your life. You can leave behind things that don't serve you anymore. You can leave behind things that drain you. Your story isn't up to those around you, it's up to you. Decide your future and start writing your journey towards it. Find those that are meant to be a part of it, embrace those chapters that make you unsure of what's to come, and remember challenges lead to possibilities.



ROCK RIVER HOSPICE & HOME
FESTIVAL OF TREES
MCCORMICK EVENT CENTER
NOVEMBER 9-15, 2025
DAILY 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM
— * * —
COUNTRY STORE, SILENT AUCTIONS, RAFFLES, TABLE SETTINGS & MORE



Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program (SVCLP)

October's Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program first session began with a presentation and discussion of AI with Ben Sondgeroth of the Illinois State Board of Education's Learning Technology Center. Ben took us on a mind-blowing surface-level journey through the many uses for AI in the workplace and at home. Of course, we want more!

Dr. Lori Cortez, Vice President of Advancement, Sauk Valley Community College, then revealed her journey to SVCC, discussed the evolution of the SVCC Impact Program, and broke down the Organizational Frames model of leadership theory so that all of us could understand how to analyze and understand an organization's culture, behavior, and management through these lenses.

LeAndra Hartman, facilitator of the WACC CEO Class West, helped us better understand our DISC profiles and recognize the importance of appreciating all personality types and why our differences help strengthen and build teams. Lunch by Angelo's was the perfect way to wrap up an intriguing day of SVCLP!

The SVCLP cohort began class on October 15th with an inspiring welcome from Kora Bajrami, our host at Salamandra's Gathering Place.

We then had an insightful Q & A with Dr. Bill Bird, CGH Medical Center Vice President and Chief Medical Officer; Dr. Joyce Johnson, family medical and obstetrics specialist at OSF Saint Katharine Medical Center and Clinical Assistant Professor for UIC; and Kim Gaffey, Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Gaffey Home Nursing and Hospice. They discussed quieting imposter syndrome, how to lead with compassion, and how, as leaders, to "embrace the suck" and know where to put our limited energy.

The SVCLP cohort then had an opportunity to learn from the following medical professionals: Dr. Linda Hellmich, licensed Clinical Psychologist; Dr. Kelly S. Flanagan, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Director of Florissa in Dixon; Valerie Kern-Lyons, Clinical Mental Health and Academic Counselor, Professor, and Coordinator of Academic Advising and Clinical Counseling at Sauk Valley Community College; and Natalie Moeller, Licensed clinical social worker, Certified Clinical Trauma Professional, and Executive Director of Moeller, Myers & Associates, PC.

Drs. Linda and Dave Hellmich then led a discussion on narcissism vs. healthy self-esteem in leadership. Salamandra's served us a delicious Mexican buffet for lunch.



Manufacturing Dinner

The 7th annual Manufacturing Dinner was a wonderful time! We celebrated manufacturing, made new connections, and raised funds for the SVACC's workforce development initiatives and manufacturing scholarships for students attending Sauk Valley Community College or Morrison Tech.

Thank you to our sponsors who made this event possible, our partners for providing educational updates, and all of the attendees who came out to celebrate with us!



Sauk Valley Under 40

Sauk Valley Under 40 packed the house for today's Workplace Wellbeing Lunch & Learn. Our panel discussion—led by Brent Reuter, Sarah Cleary, and Mercedes Mancera—offered valuable perspectives on mental health in the workplace, burnout prevention, cultivating strong organizational culture, and recognizing when it's time to make changes.

We hope attendees left with renewed insight, practical ideas, and confidence to prioritize well-being at work. We also can't wait to see you put your tools into action with your workplace wellbeing checklist!

Thank you to our sponsors CGH Medical Center, Culver's of Rock Falls, and Sauk Valley Bank for investing in the future leaders of our community. Thank you to our speakers for opening up and sharing personal experiences and insight. Let's continue to foster healthy, productive work environments together.



Workforce Development

This fall we provided our Certificate of Employability Program to three high school classrooms; one at Milledgeville and two at Rock Falls High School. Students walked through the five week program featuring soft skills and career exploration with local employers. We wrapped up the program with mock interviews in which employers provided feedback, encouragement, and helped build confidence. Thank you our businesses and organizations who take time to visit with students, share their career journeys, and guide activities focused on soft skills needed in the workplace.

We are currently working through the program at Ohio High School, and starting to line up spring class sessions. If you would like to visit a classroom with us in the spring, reach out to Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com



Lend a hand.



Save a life!



Upcoming November Community Classes

Tuesday 11/04 12:00p - 4:00p

Town Square Center 102 W 2nd St Dixon, IL

AHA BLS for Healthcare Workers (New Learner) - \$75/person

Wednesday 11/12 9:00a – 3:00p

Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce 211 Locust St Sterling, IL

Heartsaver CPR, AED, and First Aid - \$80/person

Friday 11/14 9:00a –12:00p

Town Square Center 102 W 2nd St Dixon, IL

AHA BLS for Healthcare Workers (Recertification) - \$70/person

Tuesday 11/18 1:00p – 4:00p

Town Square Center 102 W 2nd St Dixon, IL

AHA BLS for Healthcare Workers (Recertification) - \$70/person

Class fee includes your book, learning material, and a 2-year CPR certification card through the American Heart Association.



Don't have the time for an in-person class? Ask about the
blended online recertification option!

Please visit www.saukvalleycpr.com/calendar to enroll
or email info@saukvalleycpr.com for questions

CGHMC Sterling, IL



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Menopause The Musical®

2

Cruising Through 'The Change'



Nov 8th
3pm & 7:30pm

The Dixon
Historic Theatre
816-508-6324

BUY TICKETS
www.dixontheatre.com