



Sauk Valley Area  
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**ACCREDITED**



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# Partnering for Success

OCTOBER 2025



Join Rock River Human Resource Association Professionals, Reagan Mass Transit, and Whiteside County Transportation & SVACC for

## BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16  
5:00 – 6:30 P.M.

WHITESIDE COUNTY  
SENIOR CENTER  
1207 W 9th St. Sterling

DOOR PRIZES, APPETIZERS, BEVERAGES



## OPEN HOUSE

TUES., OCT. 7, 2025 • 4:30 – 6:00 P.M.  
LEARN MORE AT [SVCC.EDU/OPENHOUSE25](https://svcc.edu/openhouse25)

## October Meetings

October 8 Professional Women's Network  
October 9 Ambassadors  
October 14 Exec  
October 14 Agri-business Committee  
October 16 Hispanic Business Leaders  
October 16 Business After Hours  
October 21 Board Retreat

### 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

#### **Term Ends January 31, 2027**

Tim Determan, Pinney Printing  
Lance Buser, Wal-Mart DC #7024  
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 last quarter of 2025 and look ahead to the opportunities of 2026, the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce is beginning the important work of shaping our next Strategic Plan. Our current plan concludes in December 2025, and we are seeking input from our members to guide the development of the Chamber's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

This plan will serve as a roadmap for how the Chamber supports our business community over the next three years.

Although the plan covers 2026–2029, our Board of Directors evaluates it annually to ensure it continues to reflect the evolving needs of our members and the Sauk Valley region. Your feedback through this survey will provide valuable insight into the opportunities, challenges, and priorities that matter most to your business.

The information gathered will be used alongside other data sources to shape the Chamber's goals, programs, and initiatives.

Your input is greatly appreciated!

Take the survey:

[surveymonkey.com/r/ChamberMember25](https://surveymonkey.com/r/ChamberMember25)



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**Nominations are now being accepted for the 2026 SVACC Board of Directors.**

**We're seeking dedicated leaders who are ready to invest their time, energy, and expertise to make a lasting impact.**

**Nomination deadline is October 20.**

Please email nominations to  
[director@saukvalleyareachamber](mailto:director@saukvalleyareachamber)

# Investor Update September 2025

## NEW INVESTORS

### **doughmama**

815-535-7025

doughmama3@gmail.com

### **Blain's Farm & Fleet**

3913 E. Lincolnway, Sterling

815-625-9028

### **The Next Picture Show Community**

#### **Arts Center**

113 W. First St., Dixon

815-284-4924

### **Thrive Works Consulting**

815-543-8194

thriveworksconsulting@gmail.com

### **Toast and Plate**

1741 Industrial Dr., Sterling

adrian@toastandplate.com

## INVESTOR RENEWALS

7:24 Fitness on the Rock

Altorfer Inc.

Astec Industries

Cornerstone Credit Union

Dairy Queen Brazier

Edward Jones - AJ Sharp

Edward Jones - Tom Gleissner

Ellie's Gaming Cafe

Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois

Kreider Services

OnCall Imaging LLC

Savant Wealth Management

The Barkery

The Salvation Army

Tri-County Opportunities Council

### 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

PC Tech 2U

RE/MAX Sauk Valley

Reagan Mass Transit

Rock River Hospice & Home

Select Employees Credit Union

Sterling Commercial Roofing

Surf Internet

United Craftsmen, Ltd.

### 110% Club

Adobe Acrobat

Allure of Sterling

Bargain Exterminators

Best Cob

Bollman Auto Center

Bushel Basket Candle Co.

DeJonge Tax

Dennis Electric of Tampico

Frantz Manufacturing

Gold Star Cleaning

Grace Point Church

Hollyhock Hill Farms

Kiwanis Club of Sterling

McCormick's Nursey

Mertes & Mertes

New Millenium Directories

River Ridge Animal Hospital

Scholl Insurance

ServPro of Sterling

Showplace Antiques

Smeltzer Insurance

St. Vincent DePaul

Trinity Insurance

## 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: Cael Sanders, Sterling Federal Bank

My name is Cael Sanders, I have been with the Chamber as an ambassador for two years. I currently work at Sterling Federal Bank as a Commercial Loan Officer. I'm truly blessed to have an opportunity to make an impact on the new and existing businesses in the community that I was born and raised in.



I strive to be very active outside of the bank through community involvement. Outside of my involvement with the SVACC, I am the acting president of the Sterling-Rock Falls Jaycees, treasurer with Hope Cancer Wellness Center, and involved with Sauk Valley under 40. In addition, I am proud to say I had the honor of participating and graduating from the Sauk Valley Community Leadership class to better understand the Sauk Valley community's needs. When I am not working or volunteering in the community, you can find me either golfing, playing pickleball, or enjoying time with family and friends.

If you are interested in learning more about how Sterling Federal Bank can help you with your business, please contact me at 815-622-3355 or [csanders@sterlingfederal.com](mailto:csanders@sterlingfederal.com).

## Chamber Week Celebration

The SVACC celebrated Chamber Week in September. Our members came out to socialize, try yummy food, and connect. Thank you to Sterling Mayor, Diana Merdian, for joining us and presenting a proclamation for Chamber Week. Thank you to four of our members who provided food stations at the event: House in the Country, Toast and Plate, Leo's Marvelous Bites, and DoughMama.





## Ribbon Cutting



### Toast and Plate

1741 Industrial Dr., Sterling  
(in the Kitchen Incubator)  
[Toastandplate.square.site](http://Toastandplate.square.site)

### Congratulations to Elevate Youth Center for receiving the Customer Service Award!

Elevate Youth Center is a wonderful addition to our community. They provide much needed services to the youth of our area through both their afterschool and youth center programs for middle school and high school students. Additionally, Elevate Youth Center has a lovely facility that they share with the community for events such as ROE 47's Grandma Bonnie's School Supply Drive. We are thankful to have a resource like Elevate Youth Center in our community!



CSA Sponsored by:



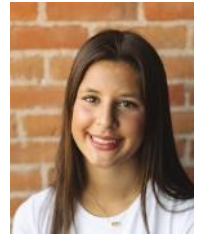
## Business After Hours

On September 4, the YWCA hosted Business After Hours. Thank you, YWCA of the Sauk Valley, for a wonderful kick off to Hispanic heritage month!



### **Emmaline Burger - Newman Central Catholic High School**

"There is an opening in every community that needs filling." This quote, a core idea from the C.E.O. West Class has seen through many successful local ventures. From Evan Ernst at R.T.Q. Fitness, to Nik and Alex at Jakobs Brothers Farm, to Pam Martinez at the Sauk Valley Food Bank, and beyond; each of these businesses has created a new entrepreneurial opportunity that has not only grown but has also benefited the area. The Sauk Valley is home to countless opportunities for those who call it home. Its diverse environment encourages anyone to pursue their passion, knowing they have a supportive community behind them, wanting to help them succeed. I've seen firsthand how welcoming the people here are to new businesses, and it's been incredible to witness the positive impact these ventures have had. Sauk Valley offers so much to each individual, fostering an atmosphere where people are valued, and where everyone has the chance to thrive.



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### **Rebecca Boesen - Newman Central Catholic High School**

From the past month in CEO we have been talking about leadership and how our individual personalities play a role in working as a team and being a leader. We took the DISC profile quiz. After we got our profiles back we went over them and talked about how it blends in with our personalities. Recently, a speaker challenged us with a variety of activities. One being a logical activity and another to build the tallest structure out of spaghetti noodles with a marshmallow on top. At one point, the leader was instructed to not speak while other teammates worked on the project. As the leader for my group, it was not fun! The point of it was to show what happens when you don't have someone taking charge and giving input. It also illustrated what it is like to not be heard in a group when you have ideas to share.



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In September the CEO West class visited the SVACC office for a tour of the Sterling Riverfront area and conversation with Sterling Alderman, Josh Johnson. The class had the opportunity to hear more about the process of a project this size including the struggles and opportunities.





## 72nd annual Fiesta Parade

The SVACC's Hispanic Business Leaders Committee was honored to host the 72nd annual Fiesta Day Parade to celebrate Hispanic heritage in Sterling and Rock Falls. It was a great day filled with creative floats, smiling faces, and lots of community pride!



The 72nd annual Fiesta Parade grand marshal was the staff and board of the YWCA of the Sauk Valley. We had the privilege of celebrating the YWCA's staff and board for their dedication to our community and its residents. We are proud to celebrate the tremendous work you do. Thank you!



Congratulations to our top parade entries!

1st: Rancho el Copricho

2nd: Grupo Ay Jalisco

3rd: Community State Bank



## Guest Editorial

*Written by Rock River Hospice & Home*

Rock River Hospice & Home, your local non-profit hospice, is located at 2706 Avenue E in Sterling. We are across from Morningside and just down the street from the YMCA. We continue to care for all ages, your neighbors, your friends, and community, addressing the complicated needs during this stage of life. We have a beautiful six-room in-patient unit, and we can also offer in-home care and in-patient respite care. The need for hospice services continues to grow in our communities. Supporting Rock River Hospice & Home ultimately supports you in your time of need. We are grateful for the support of the community and would be honored if you would consider supporting our efforts.



Here are some of our upcoming events:

### **Spaghetti Dinner** - November 1, 2025

4:30–7:00 p.m.

Whiteside County Senior Center Enjoy a delicious spaghetti dinner while supporting Rock River Hospice and Home. The evening will also feature a 50/50 raffle and a coloring contest for the children. Space is limited to the first 100 guests!

### **Festival Soirée Kickoff** - November 8, 2025

4:00—7:00 p.m.

McCormick Event Center Be among the first to see the trees at this fun evening kickoff event. Tickets are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration details will be announced soon—so plan to reserve your spot early!

### **Festival of Trees – “Sparkling Spruces”** - November 9–15, 2025

McCormick Event Center

A beloved tradition returns, featuring beautifully decorated trees and plenty of holiday spirit.

## Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program (SVCLP)

Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program cohort gathered on a beautiful sunny day, September 10, 2025, at YMCA Camp Benson for an all-day learning opportunity. Tanner from Camp Benson gave the cohort a tour of the camp and discussed the camp's philosophies of inclusion, self-acceptance, and independence.

On this day, a panel of experts focused on leadership and volunteerism. Ashleigh Sorenson, SVCC Impact Program Executive Director of Student Recruiting and Impact; Paige Toms, Sauk Valley Bank Chief Risk Officer; and Sam Smith, Rock Falls Chamber; and Heather Waninger, Program Director for Elevate Youth Center Sterling IL, related their own experiences as volunteers, recruiting and maintaining volunteers, and now leading their essential Sauk Valley organizations.

Tanner and Marissa, Camp Benson staff, then led students in some lively team-building activities.

After lunch from Molly's of Mt. Carroll, members shared their 3-minute "What's Your Story?" talks, which helped us learn about one another and understand each other's journey to the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program. Then, on to more fun activities to round out the day! Want to learn more?

Look into joining us next year!  
[svleadership.org](http://svleadership.org)



## Professional Women's Network

"Words at Work" lunch and learn on September 24 was a great time - thank you to everyone who joined us, engaged, and brought great energy to this networking event. We are especially grateful to Dr. Jon Mandrell for sharing his expertise on how the right words can foster trust, resolve conflict, and drive positive change.

Professional Women's Network would like to thank our event series sponsors:  
H.B.Wilkinson Title Company, The Wellspring Med Spa, Whiteside County Senior Center, and Whiteside County Transit. Your support empowers us to bring meaningful learning opportunities to our community.





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## Workforce Development



Our Child Care Taskforce joined the conversation with Birth to Five Illinois and 4-C during a "Bridging the Gap: Child Care & Workforce Solutions" meeting in September. This session included information on the Child Care Toolkit, a Q&A session with 4-C, and a conversation with local employers and early childhood providers focusing on bridging child care gaps in our community. Employers left with information to share with their employees on what is quality childcare, how to find it, and various resources for parents in our community.

## Reminder to Businesses

The SVACC office has received questions regarding the new sales tax rate passed for Whiteside County this summer. As a reminder to our local businesses, Whiteside County implemented a new sales tax rate of **7.75%**. We encourage all businesses in Sterling and Rock Falls to review their point-of-sale systems, online platforms, and invoicing practices to ensure the correct rate is being charged. Applying the accurate tax rate not only keeps your business compliant with county requirements but also helps avoid potential issues during audits or with customer transactions. Taking a few minutes to double-check your systems now can save time and prevent headaches down the road.

## Government Affairs

*From the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)*



In a move to strengthen domestic supply chains and support small business growth, the U.S. Small Business Administration has unveiled the [Make Onshoring Great Again Portal](#), a searchable tool designed to connect small businesses with verified American manufacturers, producers, and suppliers. The onshoring portal gives businesses the tools to lead the industrial comeback. The tool makes it easier to find U.S. organizations, reduce overseas exposure, and support American workers, revitalizing local communities, and rebuilding our economic independence.

This initiative complements the SBA's broader [Made in America Manufacturing Initiative](#), which aims to cut \$100 billion in red tape, expand access to capital, and accelerate onshoring efforts nationwide.

# Mark your calendar!

Upcoming community events:





# Lunch & Learn

## Workplace Wellbeing



Join Sauk Valley Under 40 for an insightful panel discussion focused on Workplace Wellbeing. Designed for young professionals under 40, this event brings together experts from human resources and mental health fields to explore the challenges and opportunities of maintaining balance at work.

### Topics Include:

- Navigating mental health in the workplace
- Recognizing and preventing burnout
- Understanding company culture
- Knowing when it's time to make a change



**Brent Reuter**

former HR professional  
& current Dixon  
Township Supervisor



**Sarah Cleary**

Service Excellence  
Coordinator,  
Sauk Valley Bank



**Mercedes Mancera**

Behavioral Health  
Clinician,  
Sinnissippi Centers

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15**

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

Riverview Conference Room  
**Sauk Valley Community College**  
173 Rt 2, Dixon, IL

**REGISTER BY OCTOBER 8 | \$20/PERSON**

VIST [BIT.LY/3I94KFE](https://bit.ly/3I94KFE)  
OR SCAN THE QR CODE



sponsored by:



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





**YOU'RE INVITED!**

# **SHOPATIZER**

## **Open House**

**Thurs., Oct. 16 • 4 – 6 p.m.**  
**2600 N. Locust, Sterling**

Join us for a night of fun, flavor, and first dibs!  
Enjoy free cocktails & appetizers while getting an  
exclusive first look at this year's Delicious Designs  
auction baskets. You'll even get the chance to bid  
early — and maybe take a basket home that night!



(815) 625-0400 ext. 5672

**DELICIOUS  
DESIGNS** | **20  
25**

**Virtual Silent Auction:** The 12<sup>th</sup> annual  
event will be held 7 a.m. Fri., Oct. 17  
to 8 p.m. Wed., Oct. 22. Learn more at  
[www.cghmc.com/deliciousdesigns](http://www.cghmc.com/deliciousdesigns).

CGH HEALTH FOUNDATION

# DELICIOUS DESIGNS | 20 25

## VIRTUAL SILENT AUCTION

**Starts: Fri., Oct. 17 at 7 a.m.**  
**Ends: Wed., Oct. 22 at 8 p.m.**

**Auction Includes:** Gift baskets, desserts, experiences, services, gift cards and wish list items for CGH patients.

### Join us on October 16 for our Shopatizer!

Early bidding, appetizers and more!

For more information follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CGHHealthFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/CGHHealthFoundation)

#### ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THESE PROJECTS:

##### Oncology

###### Women's Health Program

Fund screening mammograms at no cost, plus assistance with other diagnostic testing.

###### Cancer Comfort Care

Provide patients with meals during chemotherapy, comfort bags, turbans, scarves, and post-surgical camisoles.

###### Oncology Care Coordinator

Sponsor a social worker who adds an extra layer of compassion, listening to patients' concerns, and help finding resources, such as transportation and medication.

##### Dementia Project

Sponsor Dementia Navigator position, Adult Respite center, support groups, sensory therapy program, and educational materials.

##### Pediatric Mental Health

Provide licensed counselors in local schools through our partnership with Sinnissippi Centers. These counselors help with anxiety, depression, and emotional stress, while making care more accessible.

*Your Health* ❤️  
**OUR CAUSE**

**Giving a boost to area cancer, dementia and mental health patients!**

**Sponsor a virtual table for \$300 at [www.cghmc.com/foundation](http://www.cghmc.com/foundation)**

#### Sponsorship includes:

**Your name displayed on a table during our Shopatizer event and a spotlight on our social media page!**



#### **Pink, Purple and Green Ribbon Tribute List on Website**

Submit a name in memory of/in honor of a loved one who has been impacted by cancer, dementia or emotional issues at [www.cghmc.com/tributes](http://www.cghmc.com/tributes).

Names will be displayed on a tribute page ([www.cghmc.com/2025tributes](http://www.cghmc.com/2025tributes)) on the CGH website.



#### **To Donate or Sponsor an Item Contact:**

**Event Co-Chair Lindsey Pistole:** (815) 878-7564 • **Event Co-Chair Lyndi LeMay:** (309) 371-3563  
**Event Co-Chair Meghan Edwards:** (815) 670-0838 • **Event Co-Chair Morgan Natsis:** (815) 670-2243  
**Executive Director Amanda Blaine:** (815) 671-1864, (815) 625-0400 ext. 5672 or [amanda.blaine@cghmc.com](mailto:amanda.blaine@cghmc.com)