



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce



IN THIS ISSUE:



PAGE 4



PAGE 6



PAGE 7

Partnering for Success

SEPTEMBER 2025

YWCA of the Sauk Valley
Presents
**Fiesta
Before
the
Fiesta**

Sept. 4th, 2025
412 1st Ave.,
Sterling, IL
YWCA Courtyard
5pm-6:30pm

**Business
Afterhours**
Join us for music, food, and drinks



YWCA of the Sauk Valley is a United Way Agency



MyChart is **Epic**



CGH Medical Center is excited to introduce our new **Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, Epic**, known for its user-friendly patient portal, **MyChart**. This system will provide a seamless, integrated experience for both our healthcare teams and, most importantly, our patients.

Patient sign up for your new CGH MyChart account begins October 20, 2025!

The full launch of our Epic EHR system will follow on November 2. With MyChart, you'll be able to message your care team, schedule appointments, view test results, link health accounts, request prescription refills, and much more!

Learn more about Epic MyChart and its benefits at www.cghmc.com/mychart or by scanning the QR code above.



September Meetings

September 3 Exec
September 9 Board of Directors
September 9 Education
September 11 Ambassadors
September 16 Agri-business Committee
September 18 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 Board of Directors

The SVACC Board of Directors is aware of the recent media attention the chamber has received and would like to shed light on the situation for our members.

We remain dedicated to our mission of enhancing the economic climate and quality of life in the Sauk Valley area that serves the entire community without bias or affiliation to any specific political party or religious denomination.

As a civic and economic development organization, the Chamber exists to support local businesses, foster community engagement, and promote inclusive growth across all sectors. We welcome individuals and organizations of all backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions, and we strive to create an environment where everyone feels valued and represented.

Recent discussions have prompted questions regarding the Chamber's position on religious affiliation. The Sauk Valley Area Chamber does not endorse, promote, or align itself with any religious denomination. Our programming, events, and partnerships are designed to reflect the broad and diverse makeup of the community we serve, and we remain committed to ensuring that all voices are heard and respected.

We appreciate the continued support of our members and the community at large. Thank you for allowing us to continue our work in representing our local workforce, supporting economic development, and striving for a welcoming community for all.

- SVACC Board of Directors

Investor Update September 2025

NEW INVESTORS

College Street Creations
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
collegestreetworks.biz

Leigh Alan Design
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
leighalandesign.etsy.com

Paper & Hide Co
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
Paperandhideco.com

Pirate Mom Soapworks
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
Piratemomsoapworks.com

The Midwest Mercantile
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
Themidwestmercantile.com

Parker Valdez—The Boat House
Individual investor

Scouting America
blackhawkscouting.org

INVESTOR RENEWALS

B & D Supply
Bard Optical
Brothers Flooring
Christ Lutheran School
Citadel of Sterling
Days Inn Rock Falls
Grummert's Hardware
Hawkins-Cassens Insurance A Division of Assured Partners
Lance's Plumbing
Lifescape Community Services
Moeller, Myers & Associates

Northern IL Cancer Treatment Center
Northern Illinois Veterinary Services
Raynor Garage Doors
Sauk Valley Pest Control
Sedona Staffing Rock Falls
Showplace Antiques & Treasures
Sterling Chevrolet
Take 5 Oil Change
Turnroth Sign Company, Inc.
Whiteside County Genealogists
YWCA of the 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

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

Chandra Howard – RE/MAX Sauk Valley

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

Business After Hours

Thank you, RiverWorks Coworking for hosting this month's Business After Hours! Our members had the opportunity to mix and mingle while touring the wonderful coworking space in Dixon.

We look forward to seeing everyone at Fiesta Before the Fiesta Business After Hours at the YWCA of the Sauk Valley on

September 4 as well as at Chamber Week Celebration on **September 11** at Champs Banquet!



Hot Dog Day

August 1 was a lively day downtown Sterling with the annual Hot Dog Day event organized by Sterling Main Street. The SVACC hosted a family fun fair at the Sterling Marketplace which was full of free games and activities for kids. Thank you to the SVCC Impact Program for sponsoring, as well as our local businesses and organization who provided lots of fun for the kiddos!



Ribbon Cuttings

Melissa Reyes—American Family Insurance
2308 E. Lincolnway Suite A, Sterling
815-280-6317



Busy Bee Drone Company
309-738-1486
Busybeedroneco.com



Cornerstone Special Care
815 W. 23rd St., Sterling
81-626-5820



Leigh Alan Design
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
leighalandesign.etsy.com



College Street Creations
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
collegestreetcrations.biz



Pirate Mom Soapworks
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
Piratemomsoapworks.com



The Midwest Mercantile
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
Themidwestmercantile.com



Paper Hide & Co
310 2nd Ave, Sterling
Paperhideandco.com

Written by: Brady Berlin, Sterling High School

Over the past two weeks in the West CEO class, one thing has become very clear, growth doesn't happen in your comfort zone. Every day, we are challenged to try something new. Whether it's introducing ourselves to a business owner, asking questions during a tour, or presenting ideas in front of the class. These moments can feel uncomfortable at first, but they are where the most learning happens. CEO gives us opportunities that push us to develop skills we might not have discovered without it. By stepping out of our comfort zones, we gain confidence, build connections, and learn how to handle real-world situations. It's not always easy, but each time we take a risk, we grow a little more prepared for the future. If we stay where things feel safe, we limit ourselves. But when we embrace challenges, we open the door to endless possibilities. CEO is teaching us to take that step forward and it's making all the difference. "Start being comfortable being uncomfortable"

Written by: Samara Bielenberg, Fulton High School

Over the past two weeks, the West CEO class has been told the same phrase by almost every speaker. "You get out what you put in." This is a simple phrase, but it can be applied to almost anything in our lives, including CEO. In CEO, the opportunities we are given are endless. We are constantly meeting new business owners, touring companies, and hearing from amazing speakers. But what we gain from these experiences is based on the effort each student brings to the table. You get out what you put in. If we fully engage ourselves by asking questions, building relationships, and stepping outside of our comfort zones, we will walk away with new connections, skills, and confidence that will help us in the future. Even in school, work, or relationships, the outcome is consistent with the amount of effort you give. You get out what you put in. For example, sports. The athletes who don't show up or put in very little effort may only improve their performance a small amount. But the athletes who consistently work hard, practice, and push themselves end up showing the most improvement. Those who invest themselves in what they are doing usually find the most success. The meaning is clear. Whether in CEO, in business, or in life, what you put in is exactly what you will get out of it.

In August, the CEO East class visited the SVACC office for a tour of the Sterling Riverfront area and conversation with Josh Johnson, WACC Director and member of the SVACC Board of Directors. The class had the opportunity to hear more about the process of a project this size including the struggles and opportunities.

The SVACC is excited to welcome new East facilitator, Grace, to the CEO program!



Guest Editorial

Written by: Jennifer Slaney, Sterling Public Library Director

Exciting News: A Book Van Is Coming in Fall 2026 to Sterling Public Library!

We're thrilled to announce that a new mobile library service is coming to a location near you! In 2026, the Sterling Public Library will launch its very own Book Van, designed to bring library materials directly to those who may not have easy access to our physical locations. We understand that transportation and mobility can be barriers for many community members. That's why the Book Van will offer lobby stops—a convenient service where carts of books and other materials are brought into building lobbies, allowing residents to browse and borrow items on the spot. The Book Van is expected to visit a variety of community hubs, including Sterling's senior housing, the YMCA, Woodlawn Arts Academy, local band concerts, and the farmer's market. It will also support homebound delivery, ensuring that even those who cannot leave their homes can still enjoy library services. Stay tuned for more updates as we get closer to launch!

Sauk Valley Under 40

Sauk Valley Under 40 (formerly Keystone) hosted a summer networking event at Emerson's Pub. The event featured opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals, make new connections, and enjoy a lovely evening on the patio with yard games and great conversation.

"What's your why" was one of the questions of the evening. Responses included:

- Be the change I'd like to see in the world.
- Bringing pride back to our community
- If not me then who?
- Leave the Sauk Valley a better place to live & work.

As Sauk Valley Under 40 grows, the steering committee is trying new events and offerings such as a professional development lunch and learn on October 15. "Workplace Wellbeing"

is a panel discussion focused on topics such as burnout, company culture, and how to approach difficult conversations. For more information, and to register for the event, visit bit.ly/3I94kfe or view the flyer on page 11.



Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program (SVCLP)

The Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program's first class session for 2025-26 was held August 6, focusing on the topic of Community Problems and Solutions. The class met at Elevate Youth Center Sterling IL.. First, Heather Waninger, Program Director for Elevate gave us a tour and explained the mission and vision for the youth center. Dallas Knack, Executive Director of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, and Dawn Castillo, AVP Business Services Manager of Sauk Valley Bank, and Jon Mandrell, Vice President of Academics and Student Services of Sauk Valley Community College told stories of their leadership journeys, the cohort's first assignment for our day at YMCA Camp Benson.

The cohort then participated in a discussion with a panel of local leaders. The panel included Heather Sotelo, Executive Director, GSDC; Chief Alex Chavira, Sterling Police Department; and Mary Oros, City of Dixon council member. Afterwards, the class visited Pam Martinez for a tour of the Sauk Valley Foodbank. The cohort learned more about the vital work the foodbank does for our community, including serving over 700 families every Saturday and providing food pantries with resources.

On August 20, Nik and Alex Jakobs, partners, Jakobs Brothers Farms, and Katie Pratt, Lee County Farm Bureau Agriculture Literacy Coordinator, led a fantastic morning of learning for the cohort.

Nik and Alex Jakobs started off by discussing the beef cattle industry and how each family member involved in the operation brings a unique perspective and asset to the business. Katie then led discussion on the need for understanding the realities of farming today. Her apple presentation will stay with us for a long time.

Nik and Alex led us on a tour of their amazing farm, some of us climbing up in the tractors, imagining what it would like to drive a giant machine. We came back to another Q & A with Katie, Alex, and Nik. There wasn't anything they couldn't answer. Jim Morse grilled us a lunch that will not soon be forgotten.



40th Annual Steak Fry in the Country

This year marked the 40th Annual Steak Fry in the Country, which was held on Thursday, August 7! Thank you to all who came out to celebrate ag in the Sauk Valley, including our scholarship recipients for the 2025-26 school year, the sponsors listed below, and our dessert donors. Mark your calendars for the 41st Steak Fry on Thursday, August 6, 2026!





Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce
invites you to

CHAMBER WEEK CELEBRATION

Thursday
September 11

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Champs Banquet
11 E 3rd St, Sterling

SVACC members are invited to celebrate
Chamber Week! We want to celebrate you – our members!
Join us for door prizes, drinks, and
food provided by various SVACC members.



Questions? Email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com



Professional Women's Network



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

WORDS AT WORK

Words matter. They shape trust, influence morale, and can either strengthen relationships or create division, depending on how they're used. This presentation will focus on how tactfully choosing the right words can engage others, drive change, and build rapport. You'll leave with tools and language you can use to begin transforming your organization today!

WITH DR. JON MANDRELL

Dr. Jon Mandrell serves as the Vice President of Academics and Student Services at Sauk Valley Community College, where he is the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Chief Student Services Officer (CSSO). In this role, he provides leadership to the college's academic departments and Student Services. His previous roles include serving as the Dean of Instructional Services and Criminal Justice faculty member at SVCC. Prior to his community college career, he served as a police officer in Oregon, Illinois. He holds an Ed.D. in Community College Leadership from Ferris State University and a Master of Arts degree in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration from Western Illinois University. He and his wife, Kelly, live in Polo and have two daughters, Laynie and Macie.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2025

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DILLON MALL & MATHIS THEATRE

173 RT 2, DIXON, IL



\$25 members | \$45 non-members

Lunch Included

Register by 9/17/25

at bit.ly/4keeYyB or scan the QR code

Questions? Email Dallas at
director@saukvalleyareachamber.com



PWN series sponsors



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

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

**SAVE
THE
DATE!**



THE 72ND ANNUAL

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

PRESENTED BY THE
SVACC HISPANIC
BUSINESS LEADER
COMMITTEE

1PM | SATURDAY
PARADE STARTS IN ROCK FALLS
& ENDS IN STERLING

CELEBRATION AT STERLING MARKETPLACE

3:00 - 6:00 P.M.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT, FOOD VENDORS, KIDS ACTIVITIES & MORE!
VISIT SAUKVALLEYAREACHAMBER.COM/FIESTA
FOR MORE INFORMATION