



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

September 2026



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

Cheers to you,
SVACC
MEMBERS!

Celebrate with us!

Join us as we say cheers to our business community, with networking and refreshments celebrating you and your investment in the SVACC.

**Thursday,
September 17**

The Foundry
201 W 1st St,
Rock Falls

**5:00 -
6:30 p.m.**

Food will be provided by various SVACC members.

RSVP not required but greatly
appreciated by **September 10** at
bit.ly/4gcSAqI
or scan the QR code



Questions? Call 815-625-2400



Opening late September!

Monday-Friday: 9 am to 7 pm
Saturday and Sunday:
10 am to 6 pm

We know that quality care doesn't end when a patient leaves the hospital or one of our clinics. That's why we're proud to open CGH Hometown Pharmacy!

- Full-service pharmacy with drive thru
- Prescription transfers
- 90-day supplies (for qualifying medications)
- A selection of over-the-counter medications, vitamins, supplements, first aid supplies, and more!
- Immunizations/vaccinations
- Auto-refill and medication synchronization programs

4 W. 3rd Street, Sterling (next to the CGH Vision Center) • www.cghmc.com/pharmacy



September Meetings

September 8 Exec Committee
September 8 Sights & Sounds Meeting
September 10 Ambassador Meeting
September 15 Board of Directors
September 15 Agribusiness Meeting
September 17 HBLC Meeting
September 23 PWN Meeting

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 CareerCenter
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, CastorHome Health Solutions

Staff

Dallas Knack – Executive Director
Chrissy Palacz – Office & Member Relations
Tori Beirdman – Finance Specialist
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

As we celebrate Chamber Week on September 17, 2026, we're taking a moment to recognize the businesses, organizations, and professionals who make the Sauk Valley such a great place to work, live, and grow.

Chamber Week is all about celebrating YOU — our members. Your ideas, investments, and connections help strengthen our business community every day, and we want to celebrate with you!

Join us for an exclusive members-only Chamber Week Celebration at The Foundry in Rock Falls on Thursday, September 17. We're bringing our members together for an evening of good food, great connections, and a whole lot of local flavor. We've invited several of our restaurant and catering members to showcase their menus and offerings, with free samples and appetizers for you to enjoy throughout the evening!

There is no cost to attend, but RSVP is requested. Reserve your spot online at bit.ly/4gcSAql or call the Chamber office at 815-625-2400.

We're grateful for everything you bring to the Sauk Valley business community — and we can't wait to celebrate with you!



Investor Update September 2026

NEW INVESTORS

Serenity Hospice & Home

1658 IL-2, Oregon
815-732-2499

INVESTOR RENEWALS

Allure of Sterling
Brent's Upholstery & Auto Accessories
Brothers Flooring
Citadel of Sterling
Edward Jones - Todd Haas
Girl Scouts of Northern IL
Hawkins-Cassens Insurance A Division of Assured Partners
House in the Country
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
Menk USA, LLC
Northern Illinois Veterinary Services
Rock River Ready Mix, Inc.

Sedona Staffing Rock Falls
Sherwin Williams Paint Store
Showplace Antiques & Treasures
Spotlight Media
Sterling Commercial Roofing, Inc.
Sterling Rock Falls Historical Society
Take 5 Oil Change
The Next Picture Show Comm
US Bank
Whiteside County Genealogists
Winning Wheels

Over \$1000 Invested

Central Bank Illinois
CGH Medical Center
Community State Bank
Farmer's National Bank
Midland States Bank
Sauk Valley Bank
Sterling Federal Bank
The IFH Group
US Bank
Wahl Clipper Corporation
Wal-Mart D.C. #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

Altran Magnetics	Loescher Heating & Air Conditioning
Bargain Exterminators	Mattox Insurance Agency
Helm Civil	RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.	Reagan Mass Transit District
Lance's Plumbing	Sauk Valley Community College
LK Design Source	Stratus Networks

110% Investors

Allure of Sterling	Kiwanis Club of Sterling	Scholl Insurance Agency, Inc.
Astec Industries	McCormick's Nursery & Landscaping	Showplace Antiques & Treasures
Bollman Auto Center	N & C Cleaning Service	Smeltzer Insurance Agency
Bushel Basket Candle Co., Inc.	Northern Illinois Veterinary Services	St. Vincent DePaul Society
Compeer Financial	PC Tech 2U	The Mertes Law Firm, P.C.
Dennis Electric of Tampico, Inc.	Rock River Lumber & Grain	The Wellspring Medical Spa
Hollyhock Hill Farms	Sauk Valley CPR	

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension
Breanne Hunter – CGH Medical Center
Brenda VanHorn – CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)
Brian Hawkins – Brian Hawkins Insurance,
The Cornerstone Agency
Cael Sanders – Sterling Federal Bank
Danny Hartz – Central Bank
Erik Eaglin – Sauk Valley Bank
Esther Douglas – CGH Medical Center

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

Welcome to our new ambassador!

Brenda VanHorn
CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen LLP)

Ambassador Spotlight: Mary White, Community State Bank

In 1975, fresh out of high school, I started in the finance business. I have enjoyed 51 years of servicing the people of the Sauk Valley area and making people's dreams come true. Whether it was financing their new home, financing that new car, or taking the stress off by helping with the many financial struggles that life brings. It is very rewarding for me to start assisting my fourth generation with their financial needs. I am also proud to serve the Hispanic community, as I am bilingual.

I joined Community State Bank in 2007 and have been blessed to work for a bank that prides itself on customer service. I have built many relationships in the Sauk Valley by assisting with their financial needs. I have always been proud of the community I live in and serve. My father was my role model and led by example. He always said, "If you want to make a difference, get involved!"

I have been an Ambassador for the last 20 years, serving on the Chamber Board for nine of those years. In 2007, I was a founding member of the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee. The Sauk Valley area has had to jump many hurdles over the past two decades, and I am proud to be part of an organization that has been instrumental in keeping our community alive.

I am Chair of the Sterling Fire and Police Commission and sit on the Board of the Illinois Fire and Police Commission. I am proud of the outstanding men and women who serve you in the fire & police departments. With all the adversity in the world right now, I assure you that you are being protected by the best there is. It's great to feel safe.

I am so proud to be on the Board of the YMCA. The Y is such a caring and well-run organization that puts the community's best interests first. Through all the trials of COVID, the staff worked tirelessly to ensure they continued to serve the community. They provided meals for children, after-school care, exercise, sports, and swimming, and still ran a camp that helped children cope with the frustrations of socializing brought on by COVID.

The Sauk Valley is blessed to have all the organizations we have that support our community, and I'm proud to be a part of it.



Ambassador Spotlight: Lyndsay Kelly, Sauk Valley Community College

Hi, I'm Lyndsey Kelly, and I'm a Student Recruitment and Impact Program Coordinator at Sauk Valley Community College. I've been part of SVCC for 15 years, with the last two years spent in my current role. I love working in higher education and believe that SVCC is such an asset to our community.

Other than spending 10 years living in the Chicagoland area, Dixon has been home for most of my life. It's so exciting to see the growth happening in the Sauk Valley area. I love shopping, dining, and exploring locally, and I'm always happy to support the small businesses that help make our communities so special. I enjoy serving as a Chamber Ambassador and can't wait to connect with more people and businesses that make the Sauk Valley such a great place to live!



Ribbon Cuttings



Love's Travel Stops
2801 Hoover Rd, Rock Falls
779-245-6670



The Foundry
201 W 1st St, Rock Falls
815-499-6169

Nominations are now being accepted for the

2027 SVACC Board of Directors

The nomination deadline is September 30, 2026.

Please email nominations to Dallas at
director@saukvalleyareachamber.com.

Guest Editorial

Written by Rob Gieraltowski, Marketing and Development Manager



For more than 40 years, Serenity Hospice & Home has provided compassionate, nonprofit hospice and palliative care to patients and families throughout Northwest Illinois. Patients receive care wherever they call home—including private residences, assisted living communities, skilled nursing facilities, and our dedicated eight-suite hospice home in Oregon, IL. Serenity is proud to provide specialized pediatric hospice care and is the only hospice in Northwest Illinois with both a hospice home and pediatric hospice services.

In August 2026, Serenity Hospice & Home was honored with the Hospice Honors Elite Award, one of the highest recognitions for family satisfaction and quality performance in hospice care. We are especially proud that only two hospices in Illinois received this distinction. Serenity is an independent, nonprofit hospice with a dedicated inpatient hospice home, serving patients across a large geographic region (nine counties including Whiteside County) while providing compassionate, specialized care to people of all ages and their families.

We were saddened to hear of the closing of Rock River Hospice. Over the years, our relationship with Rock River Hospice was one of partnership and mutual respect, particularly as fellow nonprofit organizations committed to serving patients and families with compassion and dignity. We are grateful for the opportunity, through the Sauk Valley Area Chamber, to continue building relationships and deepening our connection with the Sterling and Rock Falls communities.



Congratulations to Self Help Enterprises for receiving August's Customer Service Award

Self Help Enterprises staff displayed exceptional performance and dedication during a critical incident on August 7, when a fire broke out in the recycling area. Assistant Director Maggie Hofsommer and Director of Facilities, Sam Bushman, demonstrated calm leadership and quick decision-making, ensuring everyone was safely evacuated and accounted for while adhering to safety protocols.



Devon Wallace also showed remarkable initiative by responding to the first signs of smoke, retrieving a fire extinguisher, and attempting to contain the fire until the fire department arrived. The collective response of Maggie, Sam, Devon, and the entire Self Help team exemplifies professionalism, courage, and an unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of those they serve.

Well done, Self Help team, and thank you for all you do for our community!

Call 815-626-3115 to learn more about Self Help Enterprises.

CSA Sponsored by:



Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program (SVCLP)



The Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program welcomed 21 members for the 2026-2027 cohort at the orientation on July 29 at Sauk Valley Community College. The topic for the first session was Community Challenges and Solutions. We visited the Sauk Valley Foodbank for an impressive tour led by Pam Martinez, the Director of the Foodbank. Pam and her team of part-time employees and volunteers make a huge impact by providing food for the community. The cohort then traveled to The Elevate Youth Center to learn about its amazing facility, services, and community garden.



A panel discussion featured local leaders, including Teri Sathoff, City of Sterling; Brent Reuter, Dixon Township Supervisor; and Chief Bartel of the Sterling Police Department. We appreciate these leaders for leading the discussion and providing insight into the community challenges and solutions they face every day. The Factory Pub N Grub provided a fabulous lunch for us to enjoy.

On August 19, we had the honor of learning from two leaders in the agriculture industry: Nik Jakobs of Jakobs Brothers Farms and Katie Pratt of Grand Prairie Farms, as well as the Lee County Ag in the Classroom Coordinator. Their knowledge, experiences, and passion were evident as they shared their stories. Katie provided a fascinating apple presentation to explain the role of soil in today's farming. Nik, along with Ricky from Jakobs Brothers Farm, shared their calm approach with their cattle, their partnerships, and how the agriculture industry impacts many aspects of life. Nik also discussed the various factors that impact their business, from weather and resources to company closures. Nik led an amazing tour of Jakobs Brothers Farms, where we learned about their processes, sustainability practices, successes, and challenges. House in the Country provided a delicious lunch to wrap up the session.



Welcom to the 2026-27 CEO Class!

With 29 students from 10 different schools, the East and West CEO Classes are off to a great start this year. We look forward to seeing what they learn and how they grow this year!



Dean Geiger, Dixon High School
Brody Hopper, Dixon High School
Seth Shaffer, Dixon High School
Kaiden Eberle, Eastland High School
Delaney Mullen, Eastland High School
Nicole Sweitzer, Eastland High School
Lexi Kapple, Erie High School
Delaney Lewis, Faith Christian School
Brynley Wiersema, Milledgeville High School
Sophie Damhoff, Morrison High School
Lexy Ingram, Morrison High School
Aubrey Devine, Newman Central Catholic High School
Jameson Hanlon, Newman Central Catholic High School
Veronica Haley, Newman Central Catholic High School
Brooks Knudson, Newman Central Catholic High School
Roman Reynolds, Newman Central Catholic High School
Renner Rosengren, Newman Central Catholic High School
Anthony Selmi, Newman Central Catholic High School
Danny Welty, Newman Central Catholic High School
Trevor Simpson, Newman Central Catholic High School
Paizlee Williams, Newman Central Catholic High School
Elias Perez, Polo Community High School
Maddi Porter, Prophetstown High School
Argent Bajrami, Sterling High School
Braylen Grennan, Sterling High School
Gewelious Jenkins, Sterling High School
Aiden Lacy, Sterling High School
James Miller, Sterling High School
Denver Sandrock, Sterling High School

Hot Dog Day

The Fun Fair during Sterling Main Street's Hot Dog Day is always a blast! Businesses and nonprofits came out to provide free games and activities for families. Thank you to all who participated!

Thank you to Farmhouse Bounce for providing bounce houses, Impact Program for sponsoring and providing great helping hands, and Extreme Dumpster for garbage removal. We are grateful for all of our awesome community partners!



Sauk Valley Under 40

Sauk Valley Under 40 gathered at Palmyra Pub for an evening of networking and connection during our annual summer event. The relaxed atmosphere provided an opportunity for local professionals and community members to meet new people, reconnect with familiar faces, and build relationships with others in the Sauk Valley area. With a mix of both first-time and returning attendees, the event sparked meaningful conversations and new connections throughout the evening. Events like this continue to provide an important space for young professionals and community members to expand their networks while becoming more engaged in the Sauk Valley community.



Business After Hours

Thank you to Sauk Valley Bank for hosting a wonderful evening for our members! Our monthly business after hours was full of great conversation and connections at their branch located at 201 W 3rd St., Sterling. Thank you to SBM for providing a great door prize in addition to Sauk Valley Bank's door prize!

Save the date for our Cheers to SVACC Members event on Thursday, September 17!



The Lighted Holiday Parade is Back!



The Lighted Holiday Parade is returning to downtown Sterling as part of this year's Sights & Sounds Holiday Walk on Friday, December 4. The parade will step off at 5:30 p.m., inviting businesses, organizations, clubs, families, and individuals to help light up downtown with festive golf carts, UTVs, trucks, trailers, floats, and more. Following the parade, the festivities will continue at Library Plaza, where Santa will help kick off the holiday season during the annual Tree Lighting. In addition to the parade, Sights & Sounds will take place from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. and will feature Santa, family activities, shopping, dining, and holiday festivities throughout downtown Sterling.

Parade registration details will be announced soon through the City of Sterling Facebook page. Sights & Sounds is presented by the City of Sterling, Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce, and Sterling Main Street.



Sauk Valley Grown

Farm Tours & Dinner

September 10, 2026

Join us for a day of farm tours exploring local agriculture and food systems. Then, visit Whiteside Area Career Center and enjoy a delicious meal curated by WACC's Culinary Arts Class, featuring local ingredients from the Sauk Valley.

Tours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Dinner: 5 p.m.

Tour Locations:

- JL Acres, Sterling
- Roots Market, Sterling
- Hohlen Homestead, Dixon
- S&J Hobby Farms, Amboy
- All Good Things Foster and Family, Amboy (Lavender Farm)

Contact SVACC with questions: 815-625-2400

\$50 per person
Limited seats are available.
Register by September 3 at
<https://bit.ly/4c70Ci5>



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES | University of Illinois | U.S. Department of Agriculture | Local Extension Councils
Cooperating University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need a reasonable accommodation to attend, call the registration office at 815-632-3611. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.



THE 73RD ANNUAL

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026

PRESENTED BY THE
SVACC HISPANIC
BUSINESS LEADER
COMMITTEE

1PM | SATURDAY

PARADE STARTS IN ROCK FALLS
& ENDS IN STERLING

VISIT SAUKVALLEYAREACHAMBER.COM/FIESTA
FOR MORE INFORMATION

2026 Parade Sponsors



*Those listed are sponsors of the parade. Any products, events, statement, views or opinions offered or expressed by the sponsors are not the products, events, statement, views or opinions of the SVACC, nor endorsed by the Chamber or our members.

BUILD YOUR PERSONAL BRAND



Learn how to use LinkedIn to build your professional brand and grow your network. This session covers creating a strong profile, making meaningful connections, sharing valuable content, and engaging authentically—plus practical tips on what to avoid and how to stand out professionally.



Presented by
Dr. Jon Mandrell

Jon currently serves as President of Sauk Valley Community College. He serves on the board of the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and on the Advisory Council of the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program. He is also a member of the Dixon Rotary Club. He holds an Ed.D in Community College Leadership from Ferris State University and a master's degree in law enforcement and justice administration from Western Illinois University.

Tuesday, September 22

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

Hellmich Riverview Conference Center
Sauk Valley Community College
173 Rt 2, Dixon, IL

Guest Panelists



Gracie Young
SVU40 Steering Member



Karla Belzer
U of I Extension

**Hear tips and tricks
on in-person and digital
networking from area
professionals**



Aidan Schmall
Cintas

sponsored by:



REGISTER BY SEPTEMBER 15 | \$20/PERSON

VISIT [BIT.LY/3RDT9QQ](https://bit.ly/3RDT9QQ)
OR SCAN THE QR CODE



Questions? Email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com

How to Tame Your Stress

Join the Professional Women's Network for a Lunch & Learn led by Natalie Moeller.

Traditional gender roles, societal expectations, and the mental load of balancing work, family, and household responsibilities can create chronic stress and burnout, contributing to higher rates of depression and anxiety among women. These pressures can also fuel perfectionism, guilt, and diminished self-worth. **Let's spend some time together to see how you can realign your life** to feel more content and reduce the negative effects that accumulate over time, especially for women.

**Wednesday,
September 30**

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

Mexicali Rose
1409 8th Ave, Rock Falls



With Natalie Moeller

**Moeller, Myers &
Associates, PC**



Natalie J. Moeller, MSW, LCSW is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who has counseled children, adolescents, and adults for nearly 35 years. She is the owner and operator of the dynamic outpatient therapy group practice of Moeller, Myers & Associates, PC, in Sterling.

Natalie is a Certified Practitioner of the Traumatic Memories Protocol (fewer than 500 in the world), an Advanced Grief Counseling Specialist, and a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional. She provides individual, couples, and family counseling for a variety of issues. Her areas of expertise include trauma treatment, depression, anxiety, grief & loss, divorce/separation, parenting, children/adolescents, communication issues, and stress management.

REGISTER NOW

\$25 members | \$45 non-members

Register by 9/23/26 at bit.ly/457nBW5 or scan the QR code.

Lunch is included.

NEW! Write a letter to your future-self! We will be checking in with ourselves and setting goals in addition to this presentation.

PWN series sponsors



HB Wilkinson Title Company, Inc.

Invenergy
Services



Questions? Email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com

The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce
invites you to an evening of celebration for
the manufacturing industry.



8th Annual Manufacturing Dinner

Thursday, October 8
5:30 p.m. social hour | 6:00 p.m. dinner

Join us at
Sauk Valley Community College
173 IL Rt 2, Dixon
Tours of the SVCC manufacturing area will be available.
\$40 per person; buffet and cash bar

Sponsorship opportunities available now.

Includes business recognition at various levels. For details, please visit
saukvalleyareachamber.com/manufacturing.

Platinum - \$1,000, includes 8 tickets

Gold - \$500, includes 6 tickets

Silver - \$400, includes 4 tickets

Bronze - \$300, includes 2 tickets

Register by **September 3** at
bit.ly/44AVYot, scan the QR code,
or call 815-625-2400.



Questions? Email director@saukvalleyareachamber.com

Lunch & Learn: Legislative Updates



**Presented by the
Illinois Chamber of Commerce
& US Chamber of Commerce**

Thursday, October 1, 2026
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**Hellmich Riverview
Conference Center**

Sauk Valley Community College
173 IL Rt 2, Dixon

\$25 members

\$30 non-members

Lunch provided by Quest Food

Registration required by Sept. 24

Register online at bit.ly/45WFXd5

Scan the QR code
or call 815-625-2400



LEARN MORE ABOUT LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND HOW THEY APPLY TO YOU & YOUR BUSINESS



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