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Commerce 2021

2021

Annual Report



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

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Our Mission:

To Enhance the Economic Climate and Quality of Life in the Sauk Valley Area.

Strategic Priorities:

- Provide Value to Membership
- Strengthen the Local Community
- Enhance Community Leadership

As I reflect on 2021, it is the Sauk Valley's resilience and support of each other that defines 2021. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, it continued to be a year of uncertainty.

Yet, despite this pandemic, we moved forward. "Shop local" became intentional as we realized the vital importance of supporting our retailers, restaurants, and professional service providers. After a year with very few activities, 2021 saw the return of our Chamber events: Golf Outing, Manufacturing Dinner, Fiesta Parade, and Seasonal Sights and Sounds. You, our members, showed incredible support of these events through your volunteer hours, sponsorships, and attendance. Your belief in, and commitment to, the SVACC is greatly appreciated. With your feedback and guidance, we continued to make advocacy and information dissemination a priority. We worked to ensure that our members were being heard at the local, state, and national levels in regard to issues that were relevant to you. We continued to bring together our members from all industry sectors to listen to your challenges and to assist in creating solutions that will help your business or organization move forward. Our commitment to you, members of the SVACC, remains strong. We will continue to develop innovative ways to help our members, we will continue to listen and learn, and we will work diligently to help your business/organization and the Sauk Valley thrive.

Kris Noble

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lance Buser - Walmart DC #7024

Pam Fluck - Sauk Valley Bank

Josh Johnson - Whiteside Area Career Center

Dave Knie - Knie Appliance and TV

Mike Loos - Edward Jones Investments

Jon Mandrell - Sauk Valley Community College

Ryan Olson - Ward Murray Pace & Johnson

Sheila Martinez - US Bank

Rebecca Munoz-Ripley - YWCA of the Sauk Valley

Steve Munson - The Medicine Shoppe

Alejandro Rivera - Re/Max Sauk Valley

Tim Determan - Pinney Printing

Rick Turnroth - Turnroth Sign Company

Amy Williamson - Holiday Inn Express and Suites

Geoffrey Wright - CGH Medical Center

Last year I said I was not sure what 2021 would bring but that the Chamber will do everything possible to support our members. As I look back I truly believe we did. We did ribbon cuttings, customer service awards, held our annual Golf Outing, Manufacturing Dinner, Steak Fry in the Country, Fiesta Parade, Hot Dog Days, Seasonal Sights and Sounds. I believe the Chamber is as strong as ever and more creative in meeting the needs of our members. Thank you for your investment and support.

Lance Buser, Board President

Your Chamber: By the Numbers

385 members representing 12,543 employees in 28 cities

34 New Members in 2021

92% retention rate

12 Customer Service Awards given to members for outstanding service

36 Ribbon Cuttings celebrating new members, grand openings, expansions & landmark occasions

295 Chamber member volunteers throughout the year

MEMBERSHIP BREAKDOWN

■ Agriculture ■ Financial/Investment ■ Health Care
■ Retail ■ Service Business ■ Insurance
■ Manufacturing ■ Non-Profit ■ Education
■ Restaurant/Bar/Lounge



Community Investment
\$22,150.00 given back, including:
\$14,750.00 for scholarships
\$3,000.00 to education
\$4,400.00 to not for profit organizations/service clubs

Collaborations: Impacting Change for the Sauk Valley

- **Regional Manufacturing Group-** Roundtable virtual meetings were held three times in 2021. Members of the manufacturing industry were able to network, share ideas, discuss the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and workforce challenges. Information was shared in regard to resources and initiatives offered through the partners of this group: Small Business Development Center at Sauk Valley Community College, Dixon Chamber and Main Street, and SVACC. Updates about local, state, and national strategies were given as well.
- **Welcome Home Campaign-** In partnership with Sterling Main Street, Sauk Valley Community College, Sterling Schools Foundation, and the Whiteside Area Career Center Digital Media Arts Program, the welcome home campaign continues to develop a platform to promote the Sauk Valley as an opportune place to live and work. A newsletter and website, with video testimonials, information about the area, and employment opportunities, will be launched in 2022. (Due to challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, this project was delayed.)
- **Friends of the River Front Task Force-** Led by the SVACC Board of Directors and Sauk Valley Community College, this task force is comprised of 25 community members committed to the growth of the riverfront. This initiative's goal is to work with the City of Sterling to maintain commitment of the Riverfront Development as a city priority and allocating resources to move forward. A riverfront survey received over 1000 responses. Next steps include reviewing the survey and developing a list of priorities for the 3 segments of the riverfront (Lawrence Brothers Property, Stanley National Property, and the Riverfront Park Area) to share with the Sterling City Council.

Your Chamber: Making It Happen

Community Leadership-

Sauk Valley Leadership Program
Whiteside County Healthier Communities partnership
NCI Works
Sauk Valley Keystone Group



Committees do "the work" of the chamber.

103 Individuals Volunteered on a Committee in 2021.

Ambassadors:

Members of the Ambassadors Committee are individuals in **RED** who are committed to making our members feel welcomed and valued. They attend ribbon cuttings, Customer Service Awards, helped at the Golf Outing, Manufacturing Dinner, Fiesta Parade, and Seasonal Sights and Sounds. In 2021 the ambassadors spent time each month connecting with members who were celebrating their anniversary with the chamber to thank them and receive feedback about how the chamber can continue to serve.



Agribusiness Committee

After a one year hiatus due to the pandemic, the annual Steak Fry in the Country returned and was better than ever! 280 supporters of Agriculture gathered in early August to celebrate Agriculture as a key industry in the Sauk Valley and to raise funds for the Agriculture Scholarship Fund and Ag Education. Highlights of the evening included introduction of the 2021-22 scholarship recipients and the infamous Dessert Auction. The Agribusinesses committee's commitment to promoting the Ag Industry and supporting our students in Ag is to be commended.

Education Committee

The Education committee serves as our platform for Workforce Development and Career Pathways Initiatives. This committee brings together chamber members from the business community, education, not for profit sector to discuss, develop, and implement strategies to address workforce challenges. Members of this committee are engaged in a 6 week essential skills training: providing information on the many career pathways available in the Sauk Valley are and the specific essential skills needed in the workplace. Two classes of high school students from Sterling High School participated in the program in fall 2021. This committee also serves as a support and resource for the WACC CEO program, the Sauk Valley Leadership program, and the BLIND student Leadership program.



Your Chamber: Making It Happen

Golf Committee

In early 2021, the Golf Committee met to begin planning the annual Golf Outing. Meeting monthly, with a lot of planning and organization, the committee organized and implemented the 55th annual Charles Farnham Golf Outing, a fundraiser for the Charles Farnham Business Scholarship and general operations. Thanks to the incredible support of over 43 sponsors and 108 golfers; this event allowed us to continue to fulfill the mission of the chamber by funding scholarships for local students.



Hispanic Business Leaders Committee

Throughout 2021, HBLC worked to provide information and resources to Hispanic owned businesses as they worked to navigate the impact of the pandemic. Committed to celebrating the Sauk Valley's Hispanic heritage, HBLC planned and carried out The 68th Annual Fiesta Parade. This event returned with over 65 entries and over 1,500 spectators who joined in celebrating Hispanic heritage.

Professional Women's Network

The PWN committee met monthly to discuss topics important to women in their professional journey. Each meeting included discussion of specific issues or subjects that impacts women. In addition, PWN provided three opportunities to our members and community in 2021. Two workshops (Megan Sumrell and the DISC personality assessment) provided women an opportunity to gain information and ideas to develop both personally and professionally. One networking event was held which allowed members to connect with other women in the Sauk Valley. These events brought together over 90 women throughout the year.



Manufacturing Dinner

The 2021 Manufacturing Dinner confirmed the importance and relevance of manufacturing as a crucial industry in the Sauk Valley, as over 21 sponsors supported the event and 155 community members attended. This event brought several sectors including manufacturing, banking, accounting, staffing agencies, insurance, education and other supporters to engage in conversations and celebrate manufacturing in the Sauk Valley. Updates were provide by educational partners including Morrison Institute of Technology, Sauk Valley Community College and Whiteside Area Career Center. Funds raised support manufacturing scholarships for students following pathways at Morrison Tech and SVCC.



Your Chamber: Making It Happen

Seasonal Sights and Sounds

The Seasonal Sights and Sounds Committee partnered with Sterling Main Street to plan and implement a memorable holiday event. Downtown Sterling was busy as friends and families gathered to celebrate the holiday season. Highlights of the evening included the lighting of the Christmas tree with Mayor Lee, Santa and Mrs. Claus, horse and carriage rides, Santa's Workshop with 24 service organizations providing games and activities for children, and fireworks. Downtown Sterling businesses were open late offering activities, sales, and fun for the whole family. The finale of the evening was an extraordinary fireworks display. This community event was made possible due to the support of local businesses who provided financial support and volunteers willing to give their time and talents to make the event a success.



Marketing and Communications

Over 3,000 follows
on Facebook

Over 7k reach on
social media platforms

Adblast open rate of
28%
(industry average is 12%)

Adblasts sent to
1068 Emails

Information and Advocacy: Legislative and Governmental Affairs

In 2021 we continued to advocate for our members at the state, local and national levels regarding issues that impacted our members. In March we hosted a candidate forum that was viewed by over 2,000 people on Facebook. We are partnering with the City of Sterling, Sterling Main Street and the Greater Sterling Development Corporation to determine best use of the ARPA funds for the City of Sterling. Working with other chambers throughout the state we participated in the All In campaign, with a focus on advocating for the small business community in regard to use of COVID relief funds. In addition, a partnership with the Small Business Advisory Council allowed us to be a voice for rural Illinois small businesses in regard to various legislative issues. In August, Sterling Main Street and the SVACC hosted a downtown walking tour with Representative McCombie and Senator Anderson to give downtown businesses the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities they face. We continued to share information and resources provided by the United States Chamber of Commerce to address the COVID-19 pandemic, workforce development, infrastructure, and social issues.

SVACC Staff

Bailey Dorner- Office Manager and Financial Specialist
Dallas Knack ~ Marketing and Advertising Coordinator