



Sauk Valley Area  
chamber of commerce

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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[saukvalleyareachamber.com](http://saukvalleyareachamber.com)



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Five-Star Distinction

Accredited



# Mission

The chamber of commerce exists to be a **catalyst** for business growth, a **convener** for leaders and influencers, and a **champion** for stronger communities.

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

# Guiding Principals

Enthusiasm  
Leadership  
Integrity  
Honesty  
Commitment

# Values

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

# Strategic Priorities

## A letter from the Director:

Thank you for investing in the SVACC. This organization exists because you, as investors, believe in and allow us to work on your behalf to fulfill our mission: "To Enhance the Economic Climate and Improve the Quality of Life in the Sauk Valley Area". Your financial resources, guidance, engagement, time, and commitment help us to address key strategic priorities with the goal of helping your business/organization and the Sauk Valley thrive.

This past year we had an increase in member engagement as attendance at our Business After Hours events, Annual Dinner, PWN Workshops, and Steak Fry in the Country all increased from prior years. We focused on issues such as workforce, childcare, the Sterling Riverfront Reimagined project, and provided resources and advocacy regarding local, state, and federal topics as well as legislation that impacted our members. In November we were awarded a **5 Star Accreditation** from the United States Chamber of Commerce, putting the SVACC in the top 3% of Chambers in the country!

In 2024, we will prioritize engaging our members; providing information, resources, and support in regard to legislative issues; providing professional development; and working to help your business or organization. We will continue to ensure the business community is part of key conversations and action planning regarding Sterling Riverfront Reimagined, Workforce Development, childcare discussions, and continue to promote **shop local** throughout the year.

**-Kris Noble, Executive Director**

# LEADERSHIP

## A Letter from the Board President:

Thanks to the continued support and loyalty of our members and the community, the Sauk Valley Area Chamber celebrated many successes in 2023. With over 400 members, your businesses and organizations play a vital role in the progress and advancement of the Sauk Valley. As we embark on 2024, which is off to a great start, we eagerly anticipate another year of growth, opportunity, and collaboration. We wish you all the best in the year ahead.

Dr. Jon Mandrell  
SVCC

## 2023 Board of Directors:

- Lance Buser - Walmart DC #7024
- Sandi Cavazos - US Bank
- Tim Determan - Pinney Printing
- Pam Fluck - Self Help Enterprises
- Ryan Olson - Ward Murray Pace & Johnson
- Josh Johnson - Whiteside Area Career Center
- Kristina Kaecker - Kunes RV
- Dave Knie - Knie Appliance and TV
- Rebecca Munoz-Ripley - YWCA of the Sauk Valley
- Steve Munson - retired
- Violet Nava - Sauk Valley Bank
- Jon Mandrell - Sauk Valley Community College
- Alejandro Rivera - RE/MAX Sauk Valley
- Geoff Wright - CGH Medical Center
- Katie Whitehead - HALO Branded Solutions





# SVACC

your chamber by the numbers

## Membership at a glance:

**410** members representing **13,424** employees in **30** cities

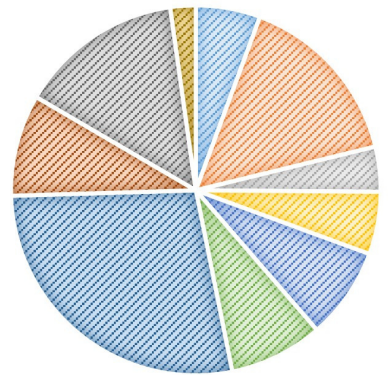
**92%** retention rate

**36** New Members in 2023

**50** Ribbon Cuttings celebrating new members & landmark occasions

**13** Customer Service Awards given to members

- Education
- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Professional & Personal Services
- Retail
- Not for Profit
- Health Care
- Finance
- Restaurants
- Recreation & Tourism



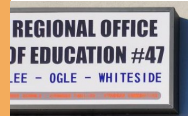
## COMMITMENT & ENTHUSIASM

The SVACC committees are made up of individuals representing our membership. These individuals donate their time, talent, and energy to “do the work” of the Chamber. They help make connections, build relationships, and implement events to enable the Chamber to better serve our members.

Our committees include:

- Ambassadors
- Agri-business
- Education
- Golf
- Hispanic Business Leaders
- Professional Women's Network
- Sights & Sounds

More information on each committee can be found at [saukvalleyareachamber.com](http://saukvalleyareachamber.com)





## Community Investment:

Community Investment **\$68,924.00** given back, including:

- \$21,750.00 for scholarships
- \$47,174.00 to education, non profit organizations & service clubs

**122 Individuals Volunteered on a chamber committee in 2023.**

**263 members volunteered at community events.**

## In the Community:

The SVACC works to impact change as part of these initiatives

- Certificate of Employability Workshop
- Child Care Task Force
- NCI Works Local Workforce Board
- Sauk Valley Keystone Group
- Sauk Valley Leadership Program
- Sterling Riverfront Commission
- Regional Manufacturing Group
- WACC CEO program
- Whiteside County Healthier Communities Partnership



# SVACC

highlights from 2023



## 57th annual Charles Farnham Golf Outing.

Thanks to the incredible support of sponsors and 128 golfers, this event raised funds for business scholarships and supports local workforce development efforts.

The **Education Committee** continued to develop the chamber's Certificate of Employability workshops. Focusing on essential skills and career pathways in the Sauk Valley this initiative continues to grow and bridge the gap between education and employers. This year, 100 high school students completed the program.



## 70th annual Fiesta Parade & Celebration.

Over 4,000 people enjoyed a day of celebrating Hispanic heritage in the Sauk Valley at the Fiesta Parade and Celebration at Grandon Civic Center.



## Steak Fry in the Country.

Held in August, this event welcomed over 380 supporters, and raised over \$40,000 to support Ag education in the Sauk Valley.



## Manufacturing Dinner.

Over 180 supporters of the manufacturing industry joined together at the fifth annual event to celebrate manufacturing in the Sauk Valley.

The **Professional Women's Network** organized two incredible workshops in 2023.



In 2023 the SVACC provided value to membership through opportunities:

- **TO CONNECT** through Business After Hours, the Annual Dinner and Meeting, Golf Outing, Agribusiness Steak Fry in the Country, Manufacturing Dinner, and various committee participation.
- **TO LEARN** by attending two Professional Women's Network workshops, Legislative Updates with the United State Chamber of Commerce and Illinois Chamber of Commerce, and a Lunch & Learn on state legislation impacting our members.
- **TO ENGAGE** through getting involved and impacting change by participating on one of the Chamber committees, the Childcare Task Force, Manufacturing Virtual Roundtables, Sights and Sounds, and Hot Dog Days.
- **TO PROMOTE** their business or organization through ribbon cuttings, adblasts, the SVACC Newsletter, and participating in new resident information packets.

We continued to advocate for our members at the local, state, and national level on relevant business issues. Organizing local candidate forums for elected officials, supporting the WCHCP legislative luncheon, and hosting workshops on state and federal legislative issues are a few of the ways we advocated for our members in 2023.

### Strengthen the Local Community

The Chamber worked diligently to keep the Sauk Valley moving forward and ensuring the business community was part of community initiatives. over the past year.

- Workforce Development initiatives continued to make an impact, connecting the business community and education, employers and students. 100 students from local high schools participated in the SVACC Certificate of Employability Workshop to gain information on local career pathways and essential skills needed in the workplace.
- Over \$21,000 in scholarships was allocated by the SVACC to local students pursuing careers in agriculture, business, or manufacturing. Scholarships were also allocated for a student of Hispanic heritage.
- The SVACC convened key community partners as part of the Childcare Task Force to address local childcare challenges and develop solutions by engaging employers, education systems, childcare providers, and organizations working with job seekers. The Chamber engaged elected officials in this initiative and participated in conversations with DCFS and IDHS.
- As part of the Sterling Riverfront Commission, the Chamber collaborated with the City of Sterling for continued progress on the Sterling Riverfront Reimagined project.

### Enhance Community Leadership

The Chamber continued to promote and support leadership initiatives throughout the Sauk Valley.

- Now in its 8th year, the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program continues to provide incredible opportunities for professional and personal growth. The 2022-23 cohort graduated 21 participants and the fall of 2023 welcomed 15 new participants to the program.
- In its 11th year, the WACC CEO program continues to provide area high schools students a unique experience to explore entrepreneurship, learn more about career pathways in the Sauk Valley, and meet key community leaders.
- Sauk Valley Keystone Group is an initiative that brings together Generation Z and Millennials interested in getting involved in the community. In 2023 topics of interest included housing, livability/quality of life amenities, and the Sterling Riverfront development.