



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

APRIL 2025



APRIL 17
5:00 - 6:30 P.M.

1801 Plant Drive
Sterling

Learn more about the Sauk Valley Foodbank while networking and making meaningful connections with like-minded SVACC members.



April Meetings

- April 8 Exec
- April 8 Education
- April 10 Ambassadors
- April 15 Board of Directors
- April 15 Agri-business Committee
- April 24 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 Director

Spring is finally here, bringing with it longer days, warmer weather, and a renewed sense of energy. Just as the season invites us to refresh and refocus, it also marks the start of many exciting events and initiatives for the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce.

Over the next few months, we look forward to connecting with you through annual favorites like the Golf Outing, Fiesta Day Parade, Steak Fry in the Country and the Manufacturing Dinner, as well as opportunities to engage in workforce development, business networking, and community collaboration. These events not only celebrate our region's strengths but also provide ways of supporting local students through the SVACC's various scholarships in addition to ways to support local businesses and organizations.

Behind the scenes, our committees and initiatives continue to evolve, guided by fresh perspectives and a commitment to serving our members. As always, our goal is to strengthen the business community and enhance the quality of life in the Sauk Valley. Whether you're looking to get more involved, grow your network, or simply enjoy all that spring has to offer, we encourage you to join us. Our committees are open to all staff and employees of SVACC members; from CEO to summer interns, and we encourage you to take advantage of the following:

- Ambassadors
- Agribusiness
- Education
- Golf Outing
- Hispanic Business Leaders
- Keystone; Sauk Valley Under 40
- Professional Women's Network
- Sights & Sounds Christmas Walk

If you have questions regarding the mission and meeting time of any of the above, please reach out to me at 815-625-2400 or director@saukvalleyareachamber.com.

Thank you for your support and dedication. Here's to a season of growth, opportunity, and success!



Investor Update April 2025

NEW INVESTORS

Leo's Marvelous Bites
221 W. 1st St., Dixon
815-677-9017

Miranda's Dog Grooming
2303 Beach Rd., Ashton
630-673-8371

Raising Hope, Erie
715 Main Street. Unit F, Erie
815-656-0356

INVESTOR RENEWALS

Altran Magnetics
American Red Cross-Northwest Illinois
Best Cob
Brent's Upholstery & Auto Accessories
First Christian Church of Sterling
Franklin Creek Conservation Association
Johnson Oil Company
McFalls Berge & Associates
Morrison Institute of Technology

N & C Cleaning Service
NAMI Sauk Area
Paul Bonnell Creative Studio
Pizza Ranch
Russ & Carol Siefken
St. Vincent DePaul Society
Sterling Rock Falls Child Care
The Fitting Room
United Craftsmen

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

Micron
PC Tech 2U
RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Rise Broadband
Sterling Commercial Roofing
Surf Internet
United Craftsmen, Ltd.

110% Club

Adobe Acrobat	Frantz Manufacturing	Mertes & Mertes	Showplace Antiques
Best Cob	Gold Star Cleaning	New Millenium Directories	Sinnissippi Centers
Bollman Auto Center	Grace Point Church	River Ridge Animal Hospital	St. Vincent DePaul
Bushel Basket Candle Co.	Hollyhock Hill Farms	Rock River Energy Services	Trinity Insurance
DeJonge Tax	Kelly's Restaurant	Rock River Lumber & Grain	Twin Cities Sunrise Rotary
Dennis Electric of Tampico	Kiwanis Club of Sterling	Scholl Insurance	
	McCormick's Nursey	ServPro of Sterling	

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension

Brian Hawkins—Brian Hawkins Insurance,
The Cornerstone Agency

Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank

Chandra Howard – RE/MAX Sauk Valley

Christina Bystry – House in the Country

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

Pam Fluck – Self Help Enterprises

Sami Wiggins – Castor Home Nursing

Sherry DeWalt – CGH Health Foundation

Tygen Bausman—Sauk Valley Bank

Ambassador Spotlight: Allie Johnston, University of Illinois Extension

Allie Johnston is the 4-H Program Coordinator for Whiteside County. She holds a BA in Business Administration and Marketing, and a minor in Art, from Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. She likes to be involved in her community and is a member of a few different groups. She serves as a Sauk Valley Area Chamber Ambassador, and on the Chambers Education and Sights & Sounds committee. She is also part of the Sauk Valley Keystone Group, a member of the Sterling Kiwanis Club, and volunteers as a mentor through the Sterling Public Schools mentor program.

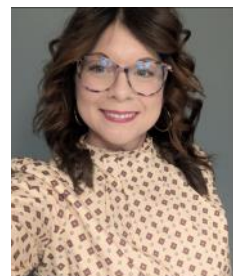


In her role as 4-H Program Coordinator, she is responsible for implementing 4-H youth development programs designed to foster the acquisition of knowledge and the development of individuals and communities in Whiteside County. With the help of her co-workers, they identify critical priority needs and issues to be addressed throughout the Carroll, Lee, and Whiteside counties, primarily the 4-H Community Club. She works to develop plans to involve volunteers in specific educational activities, which include identifying roles, recruitment, training, and recognition.

Johnston joined University of Illinois Extension in January 2013, and in 2018 received the Interdisciplinary Unit Team Excellence award from University of Illinois Extension. Allie is passionate about her position in the 4-H Program. She believes 4-H is for everyone and has loved watching firsthand the youth who have come and gone from 4-H and all that it taught them about life. Allie has strived to meet the needs of the community and all of her 4-H members. She is all about “making the best better.”

Ambassador Spotlight: Sami Wiggins, Castor Home Nursing Solutions

My passion and purpose in life is serving our community. I am the Director of Community Relations for a local home health care agency. I am proud to sit on the board of the Lee County Council on Aging, The Goodfellows of Lee County, and the YWCA of the Sauk Valley. I co-host a monthly support group for caregivers of individuals affected by Dementia that is sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association and am part of the Professional Women of the Sauk Valley Committee.



I am married to my best friend and together we have four daughters. In my free time I enjoy working out, reading, doing puzzles, and cheering at my daughters' sporting events.

Ribbon Cuttings

M5 Industries
407 E. 7th St., Rock Falls
815-590-3114



Rouse Consulting Group
422 16th St., Moline
309-762-3589



Ascendance Trucking Center
23940 Moline Rd., Sterling
815-625-7798

Congratulations to House in the Country for receiving the Customer Service Award!

House in the Country and Simply 2 IRZSTBL were nominated for They were nominated for catering luncheons for a local non profit. The nominator said: "Each time has been an amazing experience. Christina works hard to address special diet requests and does not disappoint. She delivers the most delicious custom food with professionalism. Every time we order lunch and treats from Christina our volunteers feel special. That is probably the best part!"

CSA Sponsored by:



Written by: Paezleigh Hudgin, Prophetstown High School

The past few weeks we have been working hard on our business plans and we just turned in our final drafts Sunday! When we went into our business pitches with the bankers, we knew our business plans would be critiqued again. Some people were told they had a very good heart and meaning behind their business, some were told they had the best numbers and financials in theirs, and some of us were told that we just had an overall well formatted plan. There were no poor business plans, yet everyone can always improve on something and still be successful. I was very proud of our class as a whole when it came to hearing this. Talking with the bankers upfront on what they thought we could improve on or what was done just right was helpful. To me this is what CEO is all about, we're a very strong class, quick to notice our faults and instead of dwelling on them we improve on them. This always reminds me of when one of our speakers Bailey Russell quoted Craig Lindvahl saying "life ain't no laser beam" this means that success doesn't always follow a straight line, but instead it means mistakes are going to happen and you can learn something new from every mistake and find a new path.



Written by: Carolyn Masini, Rock Falls High School

These past few weeks in CEO have certainly kept me busy. Lately, we have been focusing on our business plans and preparing ourselves for the upcoming trade show. There are so many decisions to make, and I have realized that every choice and every decision that goes into creating and preparing my business for the trade show is one hundred percent my own. This is my project, so I am the only one who can make the final decisions, which leaves me with a lot of pressure. Thankfully, we have been going on tours and listening to influential guest speakers who have aided me in many of my decisions. One of the most important lessons I have learned from CEO is how to utilize my resources and make the most out of every opportunity.



On our business plan review day, Pam Clodfelter helped me review my business plan and gave me useful ideas and thoughtful insight on how I could improve it. Then, Aaron Flick gave our class a lot of good ideas on how to use social media to our advantage and some tips on how to market our business and stand out at the trade show. , Lastly, my mentor, Mark Humphreys, has been helpful since the beginning of the year. Be sure to check out the Bee-utiful Scents booth at the trade show on April 23rd and 24th!

Candidate Forum

In March, the SVACC hosted a candidate forum for the Alderman at Large and Sterling Public Schools school board candidates. It was a great opportunity to hear from those seeking to serve our community. Thank you to the community for submitting your questions, and thank you to Dr. Jon Mandrell, SVCC, for moderating the evening.

Alderman at Large (top picture; left to right): Jim Wise, Ryan Nares, Allen Przynsuka, Kaitlyn Ekquist (not pictured)

School Board (left to right): Pam Capes, Julie Aitken, Dr. Savannah Mussington, Tyler Holesinger, Dave Miller (not pictured)

The SVACC does not endorse any candidates.



Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program

On March 5, 2025, the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program began the morning with an eye-opening, powerful Q & A with a panel of local education leaders:

Lindsay Stumpfenhorst, WACC principal; Ron McCord, Superintendent, Rock Falls Township High School; and Sarah McFarlane, Program Director of SVCC Adult Ed and Project VITAL, Sauk Valley Community College. After the panel, Josh Johnson, Whiteside Area Career Center Director, gave the cohort a comprehensive tour of the incredible career and technical programs available to area students. Our speaker, Ben Sondgeroth, Lead Regional Educational Technology Coordinator, dazzled us with the newest uses for AI. WACC Culinary Arts students provided an impressive, delicious luncheon.



A tour of Raynor Garage Doors of Dixon began the morning for the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program on 3/19/25. Brent Reuter, Staffing Specialist for Raynor Garage Doors walked us through their new location.

Following the tour, local experienced professionals gathered to discuss leadership. The panel, which consisted of Gary Wedekind, Raynor's Product Engineering Manager; Tim Taylor, Raynor's Director of Purchasing, Steve Meiners, Vice President of Crest Foods of Ashton; and Luke Coers, General Manager of Sewer Equipment of Dixon, discussed leadership principles and gave advice that applies to all areas of life: "don't reinvent the wheel" and "make sure the broom still fits your hand."

We traveled 1/2 mile to tour Sewer Equipment's facility. Cody Coop, Sewer Equipment's Production Supervisor, gave us a behind-the-scenes look at the "most innovative sewer cleaning products" and so much more!



Leo's Marvelous Bites of Dixon provided us with a delicious, satisfying lunch after 3,000 steps through two impressive, innovative facilities, right here in our own backyard!

Want to know more? Join us as a member of the 2025-2026 cohort! For more information and to register, visit svleadership.org.

Guest Editorial

Written by: Carrie Melton, Executive Director, April House

Discover the Heart of April House: A Safe Haven for Children

Many of you have heard of April House, but may not fully know what we do. Since April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, it's the perfect time to share the important work we do as a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) serving Whiteside County and beyond.

As a nonprofit organization, our mission is to support children and families impacted by child abuse. Our small but dedicated team—a Director, Forensic Interviewer, and Advocate—works closely with law enforcement, prosecutors, DCFS, medical professionals, and therapists to coordinate child abuse cases, including child sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, risk of harm, child abuse materials, and youth witnesses to violence.



At April House, children and their non-offending caregivers find a safe, child-friendly space where they receive compassionate advocacy, forensic interviews, and referrals to vital support services.

Our Services

Forensic Interviews: Our highly trained forensic interviewer provides a safe, supportive space for children to share their experiences in their own words, at their own pace. These interviews play a critical role in investigations, often preventing children from being questioned multiple times or having to testify in court.

Advocacy & Support: Our dedicated advocate walks alongside families—connecting caregivers to trauma-informed therapy, forensic medical exams, and other vital resources to aid in the healing journey.

Our Impact in 2024

254 children received services (64 physical abuse, 188 sexual abuse, 6 other)

141 forensic interviews conducted

390 family members received support

120 DCFS investigations assisted

75 children referred to counseling

Did You Know?

April House is one of 41 Child Advocacy Centers in Illinois. We host monthly case review meetings to address updates and barriers. Our funding comes from grants, United Way, fines, fees, fundraisers, and donations (all tax-deductible!) Every child who visits receives a new blanket and toy. We are nationally accredited by the National Children's Alliance. We offer presentations for organizations, workplaces, church groups, and more!

At April House, we believe every child deserves to be heard, supported, and protected. Thank you for standing with us in this mission.

Would you like to get involved? **Reach out today to learn more!**

Workforce Development

The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce was proud to participate in Whiteside Area Career Center's Manufacturing Day, engaging with high school students about the importance of soft skills in the workplace. During quick, interactive sessions, we highlighted how skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and creative thinking play a crucial role in future careers.

Through hands-on activities, students experienced firsthand how clear communication leads to better teamwork, how creative thinking can solve challenges, and how collaboration strengthens problem-solving. These essential skills are just as important as technical knowledge in any industry, helping students stand out to future employers.

This was a fantastic opportunity to highlight the SVACC's workforce development initiatives including our 6-week Certificate of Employability program where we dive deeper into soft skills work. We were able to connect with students and emphasize how strong soft skills can open doors to career success. We appreciate WACC for hosting this valuable event and look forward to continuing to support workforce development in our community!



Member Spotlight

Raising Hope seeks to support area foster families and children through much needed supplies at no-cost to them. Located above SB Floral & Design with The Corner Cafe in Erie, Illinois, Raising Hope supports foster families in Jo Daviess, Carroll, Ogle, Whiteside, Rock Island and Lee counties.

Raising Hope, One Child At A Time.

If you're a foster family in need, or a someone willing to partner in Raising Hope's mission, reach out to Raising Hope on Facebook by searching "Raising Hope, Erie" or by email at raisinghopeerie@gmail.com.





Bunny Kisses
and Easter Wishes

EASTER OPEN HOUSE

FRIDAY APRIL 4TH 2PM-5PM

SATURDAY APRIL 5TH 10AM- 2PM

**GET AN EASTER EGG FILLED WITH PRIZES, GOODIES,
OR DISCOUNTS**

PICTURES WITH THE EASTER BUNNY!!



Behrz Bloomz

**2503 N LOCUST ST
STERLING, IL**

815-625-5116



CONNECT & CULTIVATE SPEED NETWORKING

**FOR INDIVIDUALS UNDER
THE AGE OF 40**



Hear from your peers! Discover social/leisure activities, volunteerism, and professional development in the Sauk Valley at an engaging "speed networking" mixer event.

What to Expect:

- Meet new people
- Learn about area offerings
- Get involved in YOUR community!

Wednesday

April 16

6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Airplay Espresso & Bakery
115 E 3rd St, Sterling

More info

email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com

RSVP required for this free event.

Scan the QR code or visit
forms.gle/mLwyLvLGgXUPJ63C8





EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Join LeAndra Hartman as she reviews some of Daniel Goleman’s research on the topic. In this session she will describe five key components and give participants time to self-reflect and self-evaluate.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025
11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

CHAMPS BANQUET
11 E. 3RD STREET, STERLING, IL

REGISTER NOW

\$25 members | \$45 non-members
Nacho bar from El Jacalito included
Register by 4/23/25 at bit.ly/4gRHTa7
or scan the QR code



SPEAKER: LEANDRA HARTMAN

LeAndra Hartman has spent her entire career in the world of education starting at Lanark High School after her graduation from the University of Northern Iowa with a degree in Family and Consumer Sciences. She holds a masters in Curriculum Development. Retiring from Eastland School District (Lanark) in 2012, she quickly moved into the WACC CEO facilitator position in 2013. She is proud to have been at the ground level as the Sauk Valley introduced CEO to this area and became one of the first classes to join the nationwide initiative.

Questions? Email Dallas at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com

PWN series sponsors



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