



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



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Partnering for Success

FEBRUARY 2025

STERLING MAIN STREET

Inspired.

Involved.

Invites you to a

BUSINESS AFTER HOURS



Join us for networking, drinks & appetizers. Learn about Sterling Main Street's plans for 2025, the 20th anniversary of the Twin City Farmers Market, updates on the Shoppes at Grandon Plaza and other downtown Sterling happenings!



FEBRUARY 20, 2025
5:00 - 6:30 PM



SANBORN BUILDING
15 E 3RD ST, STERLING




CHOCOLATE
Rendezvous
02.15.25
SVCC.EDU/CHOCOLATE



February Meetings

- February 6 Golf Committee
- February 11 Education Committee
- February 11 Exec
- February 13 Ambassadors
- February 20 Hispanic Business Leaders
- February 18 Board of Directors
- February 18 Agri-business Committee

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

January has been an incredible start to the year for the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce! We've kicked off 2025 with enthusiasm, connection, and meaningful engagement, setting the stage for an exciting year ahead.

We began the year with our Annual Dinner, a wonderful evening celebrating the achievements of our business community, recognizing our Chamber Champion and Ambassador of the Year, and looking ahead to the future. It was inspiring to see so many members come together to support and celebrate the success of our region.

The Keystone event brought individuals under the age of 40 together for a speed networking event in which they made new connections and learned about opportunities in our community.

Additionally, the Professional Women's Network kicked off the year with an empowering event bringing like-minded individuals together to learn, grow, and engage.

With such a strong start, we're keeping the momentum going! We have a full year of exciting events ahead, including the Golf Outing, Fiesta Day Parade, Steak Fry, Manufacturing Dinner, and many more networking and educational opportunities.


Your engagement is what makes these events so impactful, and we encourage you to stay involved!



SVACC EVENTS

JAN	23	ANNUAL DINNER
JUNE	13	GOLF OUTING
AUG	1 7	HOT DOG DAY STEAK FRY
SEPT	11 20	CHAMBER WEEK CELEBRATION FIESTA PARADE
OCT	9	MANUFACTURING DINNER
DEC	5	SIGHTS & SOUNDS

MONTHLY BUSINESS AFTER HOURS
 February 20, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 19, July 17,
 August 21, October 16, November 20, December 19

saukvalleyareachamber.com
815-625-2400 

Investor Update February 2025

NEW INVESTORS

Gold Star Cleaning
1102 Arland St., Rock Falls
815-499-3841

INVESTOR RENEWALS

Arthur's Garden Deli
Bard Optical
Birkeys Farm Store
Candlelight Inn Rock Falls
D & E Furniture
Exclusive Style and Protection
Gold Star FS, Inc.
Healthcare Plus Senior Care
IL 22mohawks
Illinois American Water
Ken Nelson Auto Group
Knie Appliance & TV, Inc.
Kreider Services
Lil Smoked Bar + Grill
Mattox Insurance Agency
Nasos Salon
NCI Works/BEST, Inc.

Newman Central Catholic High School
Peabody's Inc.
Pillion Realty Group
RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Representative Ryan Spain
Roger A. Colmark, CPA PC
Sauk Valley Food Bank
Selmi's Wedding & Events
St. Mary's School
State Representative Bradley J. Fritts
Sterling NAPA Auto Parts
Sterling Steel Company
The Cornerstone Agency, Inc.
The Factory
The IFH Group
Thompson Truck & Trailer
United Way of Whiteside County
Willett, Hofmann & Associates, Inc.
Wipfli LLP

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
The Cornerstone Agency
United Craftsmen, Ltd.

110% Club

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

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension
Brian Hawkins—Brian Hawkins Insurance
Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank
Carmina Lopez—Shay Brown State Farm
Chandra Meyer – Re/Max Sauk Valley
Christina Bystry – House in the Country
Esther Salazar – CGH Medical Center

Jennifer Alvarez — Surf Internet
Karen Voss – Morningside of Sterling
Lyndsey Kelly—Sauk Valley Community College
Mary White – Community State Bank
Pam Fluck – Self Help Enterprises
Sami Wiggins — Allure Health Care
Sherry DeWalt – CGH Health Foundation
Tygen Bausman—Sauk Valley Bank

Ambassador Spotlight

I am Jennifer Alvarez, Regional Business Development at Surf Internet. I am currently in my fourth year with the Sauk Valley Area Chamber, serving as an Ambassador and now as a Co-Chair. I joined Surf Internet in 2020 to address the rural deployment of fiber-to-the-home in Illinois, motivated by a desire to work more closely with the community I live in and interact with the most. Additionally, I serve on various chamber committees, including the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee, Golf Committee, and the Sights and Sounds Committee. I am also a board member of Latinx Digital Leaders Now, where we strive to bridge the gap between language and technology. Surf Internet has been awarded grant funding to expand fiber-to-the-home connectivity to underserved areas outside of Whiteside, Lee, Grand Detour, Ogle, Stevenson, and many other counties in Illinois. We have recently launched services in Polo, Freeport, Harvard, and Capron, IL, delivering fiber-to-the-home and community connectivity.



At the SVACC Annual Dinner, we had the privilege of recognizing and celebrating the incredible work of our Ambassadors!

A heartfelt thank you to our outgoing Ambassador Co-Chair, Chandra Meyer-Howard of RE/MAX Sauk Valley, for her dedication and leadership over the past two years—your impact has been invaluable! As we look ahead, we're excited to welcome Karen Voss of Morningside of Sterling, who will step into the co-chair role in February.

We were also honored to present the **Lavonne Colloton Ambassador of the Year Award** to Tygen Bausman—congratulations on this well-deserved recognition! Read more on page 5.

Additionally, we celebrated several dedicated individuals for their **outstanding years of service**:

- Allie Johnston, University of Illinois Extension – 10 years
- Mary White, Community State Bank – 20 years
- Karen Voss, Morningside of Sterling – 25 years

Your unwavering commitment to the Chamber and our community does not go unnoticed. Thank you for your passion, dedication, and the countless ways you contribute to making the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce stronger than ever!



Annual Meeting & Dinner

The SVACC Annual Meeting & Dinner on January 23, 2025, was a lovely evening hosted by the CEO West class! They provided a masquerade for this year's annual dinner, providing an opportunity for our members to gather, connect, and celebrate the accomplishments of our community in 2024.

Thank you to our members who joined us for the event; CEO for planning and executing the evening; Walmart DC for sponsoring the CEO class's meals; and Deer Valley Banquet for being a wonderful host.

We celebrated incredible individuals who have gone above and beyond for our community, including Chamber Champion, Brent Reuter, and Ambassador of the Year, Tygen Bausman.

Chamber Champion: Brent Reuter

Brent's dedication to mentoring young professionals, leading community initiatives, and supporting local charities makes him a true force for good. His passion for community shines through his incredible work with Rock River Disc Golf where he has spearheaded the development of local disc golf courses, hosted leagues and tournaments, and led outreach efforts that bring people together through the sport. His efforts have raised thousands of dollars for causes like the Honor Flight, Sauk Valley Foodbank, and Rock River Hospice and Home. Congratulations, Brent, and thank you for everything you do!

Ambassador of the Year: Tygen Bausman

Tygen's commitment to connecting with members and fostering relationships has made a lasting impact. She is always willing to lend a hand and regularly steps up to assist in Chamber and community events. Tygen is an active member of the Hispanic Business Leaders Committee where she is driving new projects to create new partnerships to provide resources to local students. Thank you for your enthusiasm and dedication, Tygen!



Keystone Group



2025 is a year of re-vitalization for the Keystone group. They are working to establish a steering committee to help guide the group forward and find new and innovative ways to pull together individuals under the age of 40 in the Sauk Valley.

In January, Keystone hosted a speed networking event where participants had the opportunity to network among the group while also learning more about Professional Women's Network, Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program, Kiwanis, and Sterling Rock Falls Jaycees.



Government Affairs

SVACC, Discover Dixon, Ready Nation Meet with Elected Officials



State Senator Li Arellano, Jr. and State Representative Bradley Fritts recently met with SVACC, Discover Dixon, and Ready Nation to discuss the critical connection between Illinois' early childhood programs and a strong economic climate.

The Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce was proud to be part of this important conversation, as we aim to support our workforce and their child care needs. Dallas Knack, representing the Chamber, joined Amanda Wike of Discover Dixon and Kris Noble from the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship in sharing the impactful efforts underway to strengthen early childhood care in our region.

We appreciate Representative Fritts and Senator Arellano for their leadership and commitment to this issue. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure a thriving workforce by improving early childhood care and education in the Sauk Valley!

Ribbon Cutting



Solstice Salon & Scalp Spa
17 E. 3rd St., Sterling
309-752-3218



Culver's of Rock Falls—Grand reopening!
1901 Harley Davidson Dr., Rock Falls
815-535-9401

Congratulations to Sterling Fire Department for receiving the Customer Service Award!

Their nominator said: "Sterling Fire Department exemplifies outstanding service, responding to calls at all hours and all weather conditions - especially earlier this month during the terribly cold temperatures. In addition to serving our community, they also help educate and inform. Recently, the Sterling Fire Department partnered with Rock Falls to host an event at the mall to bring awareness to our community and keep our towns and families safe."



CSA Sponsored by:



Workforce Development

IRIS Business Pilot:

What is IRIS?

IRIS is a comprehensive online resource and referral system that connects individuals and families to vital community services.

How it benefits your business:

- **Streamlined HR Support:** When employees face challenges like childcare, housing, transportation, or mental health, your HR department can easily access and refer them to appropriate community resources through the IRIS platform.
- **Increased Employee Well-being:** By supporting employees with their social determinants of health, you foster a healthier, happier, and more productive workforce.
- **Improved Retention:** Addressing employee needs proactively can significantly improve job satisfaction and reduce turnover.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** We will collect anonymized usage data to understand how businesses like yours can best utilize IRIS to support employee well-being.

Pilot Program Includes:

- 6 months of full access to the IRIS platform
- Dedicated support from our Coordinated Intake Navigator
- Valuable insights and data analysis at the conclusion of the pilot

Interested in learning more?

Contact Aimee Howard at ahoward@roe47.org to schedule a brief introductory meeting.

This program is ideal for manufacturing businesses seeking to enhance their employee support programs!

Agri-business Committee Spotlight

In January, the Agri-business Committee presented checks to Whiteside County Farm Bureau Foundation, Whiteside County 4-H, and Morrison FFA to support ag students, education, and initiatives in the Sauk Valley area. Additionally, the committee has opened **scholarship applications** for local students. The application deadline is March 1. More information can be found at saukvalleyareachamber.com/scholarships

All are welcome to join the Agri-business Committee; call 815-625-2400 for details on the next meeting.



Written by: Blake Huizenga—Morrison High School



With the first semester ending, the CEO class has opened my eyes to the world of business. Through seminars, tours, and student interaction, I have learned countless skills, such as the importance of communication, the power of a handshake, and the importance of first impressions. So far this year, the class has done two projects, the first being a 2 to 100-dollar business, which was our first step toward learning about a company. Following that, the 2025 class got an opportunity to be a vendor at the Festival of Trees, where, as a class, we managed funds and operations and learned how to work as a team to set us up for success for our class business. Recently, I have been managing our class business, Horses and Hats, which will be a good event to support the CEO class. It will include a dinner, silent auction, dessert dash, horse racing game, and hat contest. So we hope to see you February 6th at Deer Valley!

To learn more about me, I am a senior from Morrison High School, an FFA president, and a young entrepreneur. Since the age of 9, I have run my own pumpkin business, which has grown to be around 5 acres. Throughout the years, I have designed two implements to lay and remove around 24,000 feet of plastic mulch yearly to ensure that my yield improves each crop. With my introduction to the business world at a young age, I found CEO to be very helpful in changing my mindset regarding changes in my own business, along with advancing my skills in finance and sales.

Overall, being in CEO is a great learning style that I have never seen before, which is having a facilitator to guide you but not tell you what to do. This learning style is very efficient at teaching you how to problem solve, along with great opportunities to self-reflect and ensure that you are your best self. I will leave you with a quote that has resonated with me so far in the year: "Get comfortable, being uncomfortable."

Written by: Hannah Thome—Rock Falls High School



The past few weeks at CEO, some of us have had our differences deciding things for our class business "Horses and Hats". Even though we do have our differences we have been able to look past those and agree on something for the event.

When we are deciding these big things we need to have people by our side to back us up. Sam Smith, head of the Rock Falls Chamber, Marissa Razo talked to us and said "If you don't support people then they will fall". This really stood out to me because when you don't have people by your side then you might not be able to get back up once you fall. Having this group of classmates that I call my friends really helps me to admit my mistakes in order for people to stand by my side. Once we admit our mistakes we can have people make sure we don't do that same mistake. Because we were admitting our faults we were able to make the right decisions for the class business.

We still have a lot more decisions to make before Feb. 6th but I am really thankful for everyone who bought a ticket and is coming to support us. We are going to have so much fun with you all!

CEO Program

Continued

Written by: Lucas Hacker—Rock Falls High School

As time has passed, the West CEO class has had the opportunity to go on many wonderful tours and had the chance to listen to tremendous guest speakers. Recently the CEO West Class went on a tour of Self Help Enterprises, which is a group of individuals that work with people with disabilities to help be more independent in society. Being in CEO allows us students to get the opportunity to see some of these local businesses that you never would have been able to know about just sitting in a traditional classroom. One guest speaker that stood out to me was R.J. GaBaldon, a financial advisor from Axiom Wealth Advisors LLC. Mr. GaBaldon really stood out to me because he is in a career that I want to pursue in being a financial advisor with a degree in business administration. Mr. GaBaldon manages stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc. Mr. GaBaldon pointed out lots of great tips to make your life easier such as, writing your day to day schedule out in a planner when in college, or keeping your mind, body, and soul strong. Mr. GaBaldon said a quote that stuck with me. He said "be the leader you would like to follow"(GaBaldon). This quote means you should actively strive to be the type of leader who will trust, respect, and inspire those around you.



For my individual business, I plan on doing chocolate covered strawberries, pretzels, and much more. I think selling these products would be a great Mother's Day gift for many to purchase. I hope to see many of you at the Trade Show on April 23 and 24.

Now onto some more personal information about myself. After only a short amount of time of being in CEO I have already seen a substantial amount of personal growth. Before CEO I used to feel uncomfortable getting up in front of a large audience of people and delivering a presentation. Being in CEO has allowed me to get outside of my comfort zone and develop that skill. I feel that being a CEO student has made me more productive. Dressing up everyday and speaking to entrepreneurs/business leaders has allowed me to carry myself in a more professional and productive manner. CEO is not just dressing up nice though. CEO is a unique class because instead of just sitting in a class for forty five minutes you are put into real life scenarios and are forced to work as a team, step up as a leader, and problem solve. CEO is also very exciting because our class gets to listen to extraordinary guest speakers and go on wonderful tours to learn more about the community around us. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be in such a professional class led by a wonderful facilitator in Le Hartman.

Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program

Dr. Sara Dail, Sterling Public Schools Assistant Superintendent, spent the morning with the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program cohort, hosted by Joanna Thiede, Human Resources Director of Walmart Distribution Center #7024. Dail's interactive "Difficult Conversations" presentation created thoughtful sharing and discussion. The cohort then toured the incredible Walmart facility. Rounding out the morning, a panel of human resource experts shared their leadership journeys, answered our burning questions, and gave us great advice. Thank you to Sandi Baylor-Schmidt of CGH Medical Center; and Joanna Thiede. A wonderful lunch from Emerson's Pub in Rock Falls deliciously finished off our morning of learning.



Professional Women's Network

On Wednesday, January 29 our members and the community came together to hear from Suzanne Ravlin about balancing time and money. A highly requested topic when kicking off the new year, we learned some quick tips for finding balance and sneaky time and money drains to be on the lookout for.

Join us for the next PWN event on April 30 to learn about Emotional Intelligence and Leadership from Le Hartman. For more information, and to register, visit sauvalleyareachamber.com/PWN



Guest Editorial

Written by Janna Groharing, Executive Director, Sterling Main Street



Sterling Main Street's Vision for 2025: Celebrating Community and Local Charm

As we welcome 2025, Sterling Main Street is excited to unveil a year filled with vibrant events, beautiful enhancements, and community-focused initiatives. Our goal is to continue making downtown Sterling a lively and welcoming place for everyone.

One of the highlights of this year will be our annual events programming. From our Car Show and Cruise Ins, Sip + Shop events, Pop Up Markets, Craft Beer festival, and everyone's favorite, Hot Dog Day, there will be something for everyone to enjoy. The **Twin City Farmers Market** will be celebrating 20 years of offering our community fresh, locally sourced produce and handmade goods every week. It's the perfect place to connect with neighbors and support local farmers and artisans.

In addition to events, we will continue to enhance the aesthetic appeal of our downtown with installation of our lamppost flower baskets, adding pops of color and a touch of natural beauty to our downtown district. We continue to need the community's financial investment in order to sustain the installation and maintenance of these baskets year-to-year.

The **Shoppes at Grandon Plaza** will also play a central role in our plans for 2025. This charming retail space will host a variety of Pop-Up events while we continue to grow our tenant base. Whether you're looking for a special gift or just want to explore, the Shoppes at Grandon Plaza will be a delightful destination.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we are committed to creating a downtown that reflects the spirit and charm of Sterling. We invite everyone to join us in celebrating our community, supporting local businesses, and enjoying all that Sterling Main Street has to offer.

Please join us on **February 20th** as we host the **SVACC's monthly Business After Hours**. Let's make 2025 a year of joy, connection, and local pride!



What's Up Downtown!

2025

EVENT SCHEDULE

MAR 27 *Sip into Spring*

APR 26 *Earth Day Bash @* 

MAY 4 *Main Street Car Show*

JUN 6 *Rally on the Rock Cruise-In*

JUN 12 *Dale Park Pop Up Market*

JUL 4 *Rally on the Rock Cruise-In*

JUL 10 *Dale Park Pop Up Market*

AUG 1 *Hot Dog Day*

AUG 1 *Rally on the Rock Cruise-In*

AUG 7 *Dale Park Pop Up Market*

SEP 25 *Sip into Fall*

OCT 11 *Hops on the Rock*

OCT 25 *Harvest Moon Festival @* 

DEC 5 *Sights & Sounds Christmas Walk*



WWW.STERLINGMAINSTREET.ORG

PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK

SAUK VALLEY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Learn from dynamic speakers, network, and engage!

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership presented by Le Hartman

Wednesday, April 30

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

\$25 for SVACC members, lunch included

Summer networking event

Thursday, June 26

5:00 - 6:30 p.m. - Bartini's, Rock Falls

FREE for SVACC members

Conflict Resolution presented by Dr. Jon Mandrell

Wednesday, September 24

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - SVCC Mathis Theatre

\$25 for SVACC members, lunch included

For more information
on PWN, or to register
for events,
scan the QR code
or visit



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Questions? Email Dallas at
director@saukvalleyareachamber.com
or call 815-625-2400

