



Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED



**IN THIS
ISSUE:**



PAGE 4



PAGE 5



PAGE 6

Partnering for Success

OCTOBER 2024



STERLING WOODWORKS
CUSTOM KITCHEN AND FURNITURE BUILDERS

After Hours

cheers
COME ~~BUILD~~ WITH US



*Hor dourves and
21+ martinis
provided by
The Factory*

Sterling Woodworks

10•17•2024
5-6:30PM

1307 W. 4th St.
Sterling, Il.



An event by Sauk Valley Area
chamber of commerce

EXPLORE



MONDAY, OCT. 14
10 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.

Riverview
Conference Room
SVCC

RSVP svcc.edu/visit
or Call 815.835.6266

October Meetings

- October 10 Ambassadors
- October 15 Ag
- October 17 HBLC
- October TBD Board Retreat (exec + BOD)

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, 2025

- 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

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

Staff

- Executive Director—Dallas Knack
- Kris Noble

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

I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who participated in and supported the 2024 Fiesta Day Parade! Whether you were a sponsor, volunteer, participant, or spectator, your support is what made this celebration so special. The excitement and dedication displayed by the local community is what make events like this possible and memorable for everyone.

Community support is the backbone of the SVACC. Together, we create opportunities that enrich the lives of everyone in our area. The Fiesta Day Parade is just one example of how we can come together, celebrate our vibrant culture, and foster connections that contribute to the economic and social vitality of Sauk Valley.

As we look ahead, I'm excited to invite you to our upcoming **Manufacturing Dinner on Thursday, October 10**. This annual event is a great chance to recognize the incredible impact our manufacturing industry has on the community, connect with key players, and share ideas. Plus, it's all for a good cause—funds raised from the dinner will go toward scholarships for local students and the SVACC's workforce development initiatives. Please come out and have a great time while supporting local industry while investing in our community's future.

Please reserve your ticket by October 3 by visiting bit.ly/3M7tvxn or emailing me at director@saukvalleyareachamber.com. See you there!



Investor Update October 2024

New Investors

B&D Supply
201 W. 14th St., Rock Falls
815-626-0897

Valor Support Project
valorsupportproject.com

INVESTOR RENEWALS

7:24 Fitness on the Rock
Air Play Espresso & Bakery
Altorfer Inc.
Autism Center of Sauk Valley
Bugsy's Arcade and Gaming
Cornerstone Credit Union
Dairy Queen Brazier
Deer Valley Golf Club
Edward Jones / Lareau
Edward Jones/Tom Gleissner
Ellie's Gaming Cafe
Frantz Manufacturing

Fringe Co Salon & Western Boutique
Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois
Grace Point Church
House in the Country
Jake Gerdes - State Farm Agent
Kunes RV
Northern Illinois Veterinary Services
OnCall Imaging LLC
Sauk Valley CPR
Shelly Dambman, CPA
The Salvation Army
Tri-County Opportunities Council
University of Illinois Extension

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
Bushel Basket Candle Co.
Helm Civil
Hill's Electric Motor Service, Inc.
Illinois American Water
Lance's Plumbing
LK Design Source
Loescher HVAC

Micron
NICIL
PC Tech 2U
RE/MAX Sauk Valley
Rise Broadband
Sterling Commercial Roofing
The Cornerstone Agency
United Craftsmen, Ltd.

110% Club

1st Gateway Credit Union
Bollman Auto Center
Dennis Electric of Tampico
Frantz Manufacturing
Grace Point Church

Hollyhock Hill Farms
James S. Ferris DDS, PC
Kelly's Restaurant
Kiwanis Club of Sterling
McCormick's Nursey
Mertes & Mertes

New Millenium Directories
Rock River Energy Services
Rock River Lumber & Grain
Servicemaster
ServPro of Sterling
Showplace Antiques

Sinnissippi Centers
St. Vincent DePaul
Trinity Insurance
Twin Cities Sunrise Rotary

Chamber Ambassadors

Allie Johnston – University of Illinois Extension

Brian Hawkins—Brian Hawkins Insurance

Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank

Carmina Lopez—Shay Brown State Farm

Cassandra Salmon – OnCall Imaging

Chandra Meyer – Re/Max Sauk Valley

Christina Bystry – House in the Country

Esther Salazar – CGH Medical Center

Hannah Krahn—Sauk Valley Bank

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—Exquisite Floral and Party Decor

Ambassador Spotlight

Cael Sanders—Sterling Federal Bank

My name is Cael Sanders, I have been with the Chamber just over a year now as an ambassador. I currently work at Sterling Federal Bank as a Commercial Loan Officer. I'm truly blessed to have an opportunity to make an impact on the new and existing businesses in the community that I was born and raised in. I strive to be very active outside of the bank through community involvement. In the last year I have joined the Economic Vitality committee with Sterling Main Street and was recently given an opportunity to serve on the board with Hope Cancer Wellness Center. In my free time I enjoy being outside of the house whether it be golf, pickleball, or the occasional skiing in the wintertime.

If you are interested in learning more about how Sterling Federal Bank can help you with your business, please contact me at 815-622-3355 or csanders@sterlingfederal.com."



Welcome to the SVACC Ambassadors: Hannah Krahn!

Hannah is a universal banker with Sauk Valley Bank.



Business After Hours

September's Business After Hours was a fiesta at YWCA of the Sauk Valley. Thank you, YWCA for hosting a great event for our members! Please join us on October 17 at Sterling Woodworks for our next BAH.



Government Affairs



Illinois Pay Transparency Mandates

Starting January 1, 2025, employers with 15 or more employees must include pay ranges in postings for jobs in Illinois. This new requirement, an Amendment to the Illinois Equal Pay Act, was signed into law by Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker on August 11, 2023. Employers will be required to provide the “pay scale and benefits” for each job posting.

Is your business ready?

Join the Illinois Chamber for a webinar on November 14 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to learn more about this legislation, and prepare your business for 2025. Attorney Jeff Risch of Amundsen Davis will summarize employers’ obligations under the new changes to the law. Strategies and ideas on how to keep your organization compliant will be shared.

As a member of the SVACC, you can sign up for this event under the discounted “member rate” of \$145 by emailing jvancil@ilchamber.org and say the SVACC sent you.

Workforce Development

Welcome, Lindsay!

Lindsay Stumpfenhorst is excited to join Whiteside Area Career Center as the new building Principal. She is stepping into the role previously held by the Student Service Coordinator, Ken Burn, and will be assuming many of his responsibilities. Lindsay is WACC alumni, who earned her CNA certification as a junior in the Health Occupations class. Previously, Lindsay spent ten years as a Principal with Sterling Public Schools. Lindsay lives in Sterling with her husband Kyle, her son Cole, and daughter Chloe, who both attend Sterling High School.



Ribbon Cutting

CGH Dixon Ready Care

1321 N. Galena Ave
Dixon, IL
815-564-1999



Congratulations to Fine Line Engraving for receiving the Customer Service Award!

Congratulations to Mary from Fine Line Engraving for receiving a Customer Service Award! The nominator said "They are fast, efficient, and reasonably priced. Mary is a pleasure to work with on all projects. She goes above and beyond and makes the process as painless as possible. We have worked with them on several occasions and the service and quality is always spot on - even when we make last minute orders. Mary is always kind and professional." Call 815-535-0629 for Fine Line Engraving.



CSA Sponsored by:



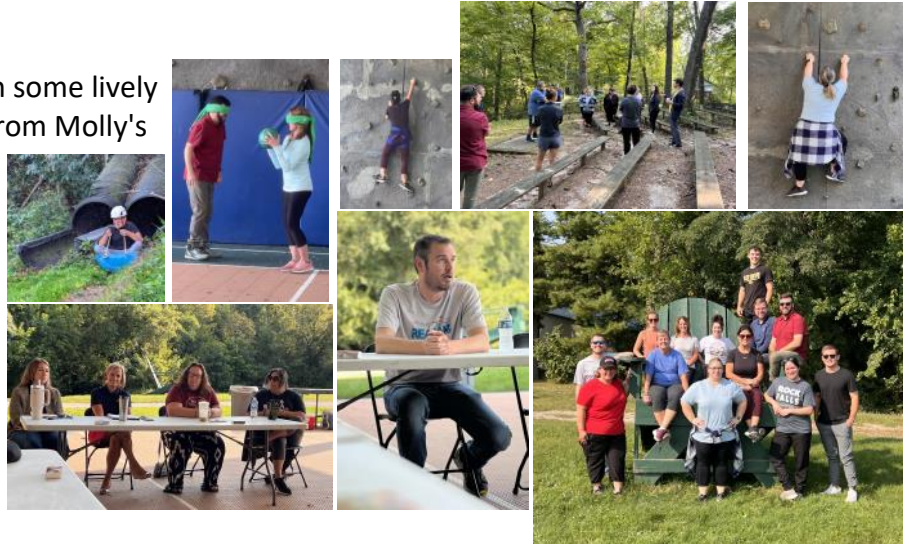
Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program



The Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program cohort gathered on a sunny September 11, 2024, at YMCA Camp Benson's beautiful campus for an all-day learning opportunity. Tanner, director of camping services, and "Freight Train," operations director, gave the cohort a tour of the camp and discussed the camp's philosophies of inclusion, self-acceptance, and independence.

A talented panel of experts focused on leadership within volunteerism. Ashleigh Sorenson, Impact Coordinator, SVCC Impact Program; Paige Toms, Sauk Valley Bank COO; Heather Waninger, Elevate Youth Center Sterling IL director; and Sam Smith, Rock Falls Chamber director, related their own experiences as volunteers, recruiting and maintaining volunteers, and now leading their essential Sauk Valley organizations.

YMCA counselors then led students in some lively team-building activities. After lunch from Molly's of Mt. Carroll, the cohort shared a 3-minute "What's Your Story?" speech, which helped us learn about one another and understand each other's journey to the Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program. In the final activity of the day, SVCLP members challenged themselves to the "Twilight Zone" slide and/or the wall climb. Interested in joining us next year? Look into joining us next year! svleadership.org



71st annual Fiesta Day Parade

The 71st annual Fiesta Day Parade was a wonderful community celebration! Thank you to all who joined us in the parade, watching the parade, and at the celebration afterwards!

We are excited to announce this year's parade winners:
 1st Ay! Jalisco
 2nd(tie) Rancho Santa Rosa
 2nd(tie) Ruffit Park
 3rd Marching Warriors



CEO Program

Written by: Kevin Marquez, Sterling High School

Reflecting on Leadership and Resilience

On September 11th, we had the privilege of meeting with State Representative Li Arellano. I feel like I can say this for certain that his story left all of us in the CEO Program with a profound impression. Mr. Arellano spoke with high levels of confidence and such clarity that really showed us his deep understanding of the issues at hand, but also his commitment to service and leadership.



One of the most touching moments in the session was when he shared his experience during the tragic event of 9/11 which shaped his decision making him want to join the military. During the Army, Mr. Arellano witnessed the harsh realities of war and death, which sadly left him with PTSD. What was really remarkable is his ability to speak so briefly and open about a traumatic chapter of his life. That was really a demonstration of his resilience and strength that he could be so open to share with us, even if it was for a short period of time.

In addition to his background, Mr. Arellano told us about his life as a successful entrepreneur and investor. Many of us were struck in awe by his story of how he invested enough money into not just one, but two companies. As for those who are unfamiliar with the whole world of investing, his accomplishments seemed unbelievable, but his ability to be able to navigate the financial market and make investment is something that many of us aspire to learn or understand.

Lastly, as a former mayor of Dixon, Mr. Arellano spoke candidly about the \$53 million fraud scandal that occurred directly before his leadership. His efforts to address the situation and help the people of Dixon spotlighted this dedication to the public and despite the challenges, he came out a leader determined to improve and restore trust in the community.

Meeting with Li Arellano reminded us of the resilience and determination it takes to be a leader in times of crisis and times of growth. Mr. Arellano's story is one of tenacity, whether through his hardships in the military service or the complication in public office. I left with a profound respect for his path and a renewed curiosity about the valuable lessons he shared.

Written by: Ryan Gebhardt, Sterling High School

On September 10th, we had the pleasure of speaking with Ashley and Ryan, who are soon to open The Mercantile Ballroom & Cocktail Lounge. Their energy and passion for their business venture left a lasting impact on all of us in the CEO Program. One of the key messages they shared was the importance of passion in business. They highlighted how focusing on what you love and doing it well will naturally bring financial success. This idea really struck a chord with me, as it served as a powerful reminder that true success comes from genuine dedication to what you're building, not just chasing profits. They also spoke about the need for openness in leadership. Being willing to listen to everyone's thoughts and ideas, whether they come from employees or customers, can lead to better decisions and a stronger business. Their collaborative mindset stood out to me as a great leadership quality. Ashley and Ryan also stressed the importance of recognizing your worth as a business owner. They explained how critical it is to understand the value of your time, skills, and knowledge. This advice was especially valuable for those of us still figuring out our own potential in the world of business. Finally, they encouraged us to take risks and try new things, emphasizing that stepping outside of your comfort zone can lead to unexpected growth. Their journey of creating The Mercantile, filled with new challenges, was a perfect example of how venturing into the unknown can sharpen your skills and help you grow. Speaking with Ashley and Ryan was an inspiring reminder of how important passion, openness, and self-confidence are in entrepreneurship. Their story of creating The Mercantile left me and my classmates motivated to pursue our own dreams and take on new challenges with confidence.



Written by: Wyatt Widolff, Newman Central Catholic High School



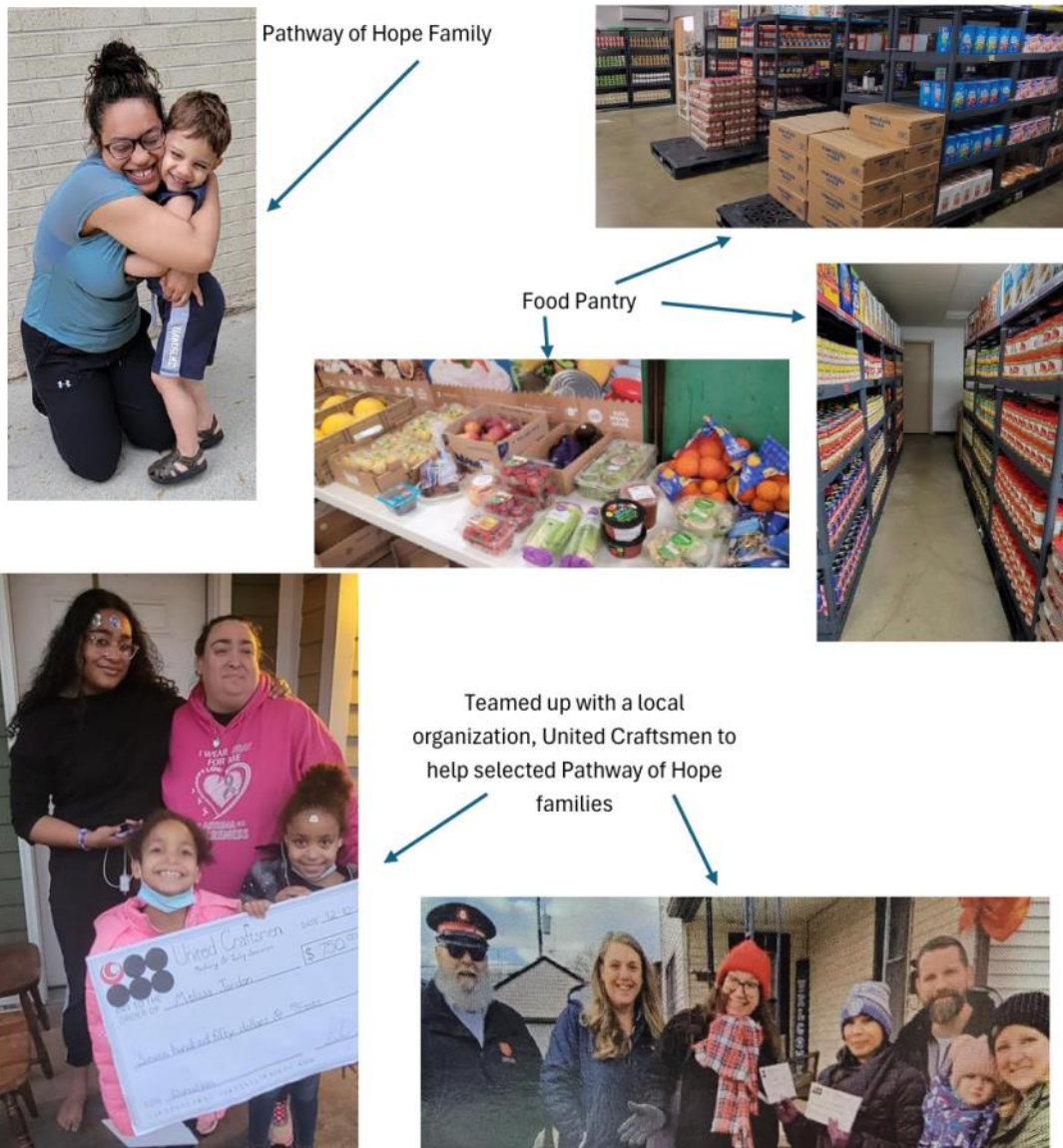
My name is Wyatt William Widolff, and I am here to write a unique, honest letter. I assume that after a while, these newsletters start to all sound pretty similar. I have had my ups and downs as a student in CEO. I applied to the class with the hopes of meeting and learning from our local business owners, and these dreams surely have been reached! Although, what caught me off guard is that I did not exactly enjoy every aspect of CEO. Sure, I may not always enjoy speaking in front of the whole class, and sure, I may get bored or tired at times during class. Nonetheless, this does not give me any reason to slack off. I quickly realized that you need to apply yourself to every single slice to really become whole as a student; this is exactly the same concept at school. To respect my admittance to this class, I am going to seize every opportunity available to me. We are only human after all, but to excel in the business world, you need to beat everyone else. That is my goal!

Guest Editorial

Written by Trevor Belzer

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church. Its message is based on the Bible. Its ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination.

The Sterling Salvation Army is set on helping those in need. From our food pantry and social service programs to our Pathway of Hope and Kids' Night family programs, we are dedicated to making our community a better place.



Chamber Week

SVACC board of directors celebrated Chamber Week with a proclamation from Mayor Diana Merdian. Thanks for stopping by, Mayor Merdian, to recognize and celebrate the incredible community of businesses and professionals that make up the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce.

We also hosted a Chamber Week Celebration at XGolf. Thank you to all who came out! We love an opportunity to celebrate our members and thank them for their dedication to making the Sauk Valley a great place.



Guest Editorial

Written by Emily Witt, NICIL Executive Director

The Northwestern Illinois Center for Independent Living (NICIL) is a pivotal resource for individuals with disabilities across five counties in the region. Established in 1985 with the mission of promoting independence and self-sufficiency, NICIL offers a comprehensive range of services designed to empower individuals with disabilities to lead full, independent lives. Located in Sterling, Illinois, NICIL serves a broad community, providing essential core services such as advocacy, peer support, independent living skills training, and information and referrals. These services are tailored to meet the unique needs of every individual, ensuring that people with disabilities have access to the tools and resources they need to live independently and participate fully in their communities.

What sets NICIL apart is its dedication to a consumer-driven approach, where the individuals who use the services are also the ones who help guide the organization. More than 50% of the staff at NICIL, and the board of directors, are individuals with a disability. This reinforces the Independent Living Philosophy of “Nothing about us without us.” NICIL actively engages in community education and outreach, striving to raise awareness about disability rights and the challenges faced by people with disabilities. By working closely with local governments, businesses, and other community organizations, NICIL advocates for policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion. Through these efforts, the Northwestern Illinois Center for Independent Living plays a crucial role in fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with disabilities in the region.

NICIL offers a variety of support services to our community. NICIL is funded through the Department of Human Services to provide most programming for free.

The NICIL service area includes Lee, Ogle, Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Whiteside Counties in Illinois and is open Monday through Thursday from 8am to 4:30pm, with Fridays by appointment only. Call 815-625-7860 or email frontdesk@nicil.org for more information. Stay up to date about NICIL events and disability support by following NICIL’s Facebook and Instagram pages or check out our website at www.nicil.org. We are currently looking for people with a passion for helping persons with disabilities to join our board of directors, they meet once per quarter in a hybrid setting. Interested parties please contact us at our office!



NICIL

Northwestern
Illinois Center for
Independent Living

At NICIL, it is our mission to empower people with disabilities by supporting the individual and their community with the skills and knowledge to live independently.



How can we help you?

- accessibility assessments
- community reintegration
- disability sensitivity training
- education and advocacy
- locate local resources
- peer support groups
- personal assistant program
- wellness program
- youth transitional services

Our Independent Living Program helps people learn skills that are essential to every day living:

- access public transportation
- cleaning and organization
- employment skills
- money management
- navigating technology
- public benefit applications
- self-advocacy

CONTACT NICIL



1-815-625-7860



WWW.NICIL.ORG

**OPEN MONDAY TO THURSDAY
FROM 8:00AM - 4:30PM
ADDITIONAL HOURS AVAILABLE
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**

412 LOCUST ST., STERLING, IL 61081