

ExpoMixer Is Best Of Both Worlds!

Premier B2B Event in Hudson Valley

A 30th anniversary is one of those milestones that calls for something dynamic, fresh and exciting. That's just what Chamber members will find at this year's Buy Local ExpoMixer on Sept. 16 from 4:00-7:00 p.m. at Diamond Mills in Saugerties.

The rebranded ExpoMixer is just what the name implies—a combined business exposition and Chamber Networking Mixer, all under one roof.

It was given a refresh in recognition of its 30th year and is expected to be the "largest B2B event in the Hudson Valley." Chamber members are invited to meet up, check out the exhibits and make connections.

Chamber President Ward Todd added that the overall changes were made to keep things relevant and strictly business focused.

"Our goal is to improve every event we host," he said. "So, this year, with the support of Diamond Mills, our ExpoMixer will feature nearly 100 local businesses and organizations, displaying their goods, products and services, along with complimentary food and drink for all exhibitors and attendees from the BLACKBARN Hudson Valley.

"The Chamber wants to sincerely thank Tom Struzzi and his fantastic team at Diamond Mills," Todd noted. "Our exhibitors and those who attend the event have told us that Diamond Mills is the perfect location for this event. The Conference Center is warm, bright and inviting. The attractiveness and the openness of the event space help our members feel welcomed. It is a wonderful atmosphere to talk business. We have always believed that the venue played an important role in the success of the Expo. Our expectation is that the new ExpoMixer will be even more successful and more enjoyable for everyone."

"Our members are getting the best of both worlds this year," said Chamber Vice President Jess Davis. "The Buy Local Expo has always been one of our signature events, and our

networking Mixers are consistently among our most popular. By bringing them together, we're creating even more opportunities for meaningful connections."

A ceremonial Chamber Ribbon Cutting with local elected officials will open the ExpoMixer at 3:45 p.m. After that, Chamber members can expect non-stop networking until the event closes at 7 p.m., giving exhibitors a chance to pitch their products and services to an even bigger, after-work audience.

Jonathan Beever, owner of PuroClean, has made it a point to participate in the Expo for more than a decade. He called it one of the "most valuable networking events" on his calendar each year.

"The Expo consistently delivers meaningful face-to-face connections with fellow business owners, potential clients and community partners that simply can't be replicated online," he noted. "If you're a Chamber member on the fence about exhibiting, we can't recommend it highly enough. It's been a cornerstone of our local growth."

Other area business leaders echo that sentiment. Taylor Craig, Assistant Vice President-area retail leader for Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union's Northern market, said the event is "one of the best ways to meet the who's who of Ulster County."

"As a business, we are able to get in front of a variety of different people that we don't normally get to see. This event is invaluable for our presence in Ulster County and fun to boot," she said.

Another improvement at this year's ExpoMixer is the shuttle transportation being provided by Sawyer Motors, a Principal Sponsor. Chamber Members attending the Mixer will be directed to park at the Waterside Spa at Diamond Mills, 2 Ferry St., Saugerties. Shuttle service will begin at around 3 p.m.

Owner and President Bob Siracusano said getting exhibitors and Chamber members



to and from the event will make it easier for attendees to come and go, while freeing up parking spaces at Diamond Mills.

"It's our privilege to work with the Ulster Chamber and help make the new ExpoMixer not only an enjoyable experience, but a convenient one," he said. "This event is remarkable because it brings us all together and helps us reconnect with old friends while seeing all that our local businesses have to offer."

The booth setup will remain the same as previous years, courtesy of Jeff Siegel from SDA Events. The cost for a booth is \$395. It includes standard color draping on a booth, a table and two chairs and a listing in the Expo brochure, which is given to all attendees. Premier booth sponsorships are \$1,500; platinum booth sponsorships, \$995 and

diamond booth sponsorships, \$595.

The ExpoMixer will be open exclusively to members of the Chamber of Commerce and their guests—another benefit of Chamber membership, Todd noted. There is no admission for Chamber members to attend, and parking is free.

Davis said she expects the new ExpoMixer to lead to new partnerships, more success stories and stronger relationships among the region's businesses.

"At the end of the day that's what the Ulster Chamber is here to do—help businesses connect, collaborate and grow," she said.

For more information on exhibiting, sponsoring or attending, go to ulsterchamber.org.

New Roles, New Faces

Chamber Announces Staff Changes

The summer of 2026 has turned out to be an especially active one for the Ulster Chamber of Commerce and the Ulster Chamber Foundation, which is a subsidiary of the Chamber of Commerce.

Effective July 1st, Chamber Vice President Jess Davis has taken on the added responsibility as Executive Director of the Chamber Foundation, replacing Su Marcy. The Foundation's signature event is Leadership Ulster, a program run by the Ulster Chamber since 1993, a program that Jess herself graduated from 10 years ago.

Meanwhile, the Chamber has hired Michelle Hodge, former Executive Assistant for the Tonner Doll Co., who will serve as the Chamber's Membership Engagement and Events Coordinator.

Additionally, former educator and world traveler Anna Brett has been named Chamber Group Travel Coordinator, replacing Carol Ricken, who retired on June 30.

Davis joined the Chamber staff in 2019 as Director of Membership Engagement and was named the Vice President in 2023. She is known for her gregarious personality, community mindedness and efforts to promote and support Chamber businesses.

In her new role, Davis said she is looking forward to building on the Ulster Chamber Foundation's strong legacy and cultivating the next generation of community leaders.

"While it's a new title, it builds on many years of involvement with the Foundation and the Leadership Ulster program," said Davis, a 2022 Leadership Ulster Hall of Fame inductee. "I've had the opportunity to work closely with the organization in a variety of capacities, so stepping into this role feels natural."

Davis said an immediate goal is to deliver

an "exceptional experience" for this year's Leadership Ulster class, which begins with a 2-day Retreat Sept. 22-23 at Mohonk Mountain House.

"We're also strengthening our curriculum, enhancing engagement with alumni and modernizing... through streamlined communication via the Ulster Chamber website and refreshed marketing efforts," she said. "The Foundation has an incredible reputation and impact, and I want to continue honoring that while making sure we're meeting the needs of today's and tomorrow's leaders."

Davis said she expects the leadership change to be seamless due to her already strong connection with the Ulster Chamber Foundation Board of Directors and her function as Chamber Vice President.

"The Chamber and the Foundation are closely connected, so these roles really complement one another," she said. "My experience with both organizations allows me to create stronger connections and opportunities that ultimately benefit our members, our Leadership Ulster participants and our community."

The Ulster Chamber conducts over 30 events annually and planning for some of them takes several months. In her new role, Michelle Hodge will assist with the coordination of those events, while also assisting members and prospective members.

Hodge spent the bulk of her career as Robert Tonner's Executive Assistant. Over the years, her position morphed into other areas such as social media, sales, marketing and



Jess Davis

coordinating travel for doll shows and conventions. She later worked for the Catskill Animal Sanctuary as a manager and events director.

"That foundation with the Tonner Doll Company gave me a love for local businesses," Hodge said. "Being connected is very important to me, and working with Ward and Jess is such an honor and a privilege. It just feels right. I love where I am right now."

Meanwhile, Anna Brett, who retired from public education 18 years ago, said she can't wait to meet more Chamber members and stir excitement for upcoming Chamber trips.

"I'm looking forward to being around people who also enjoy traveling and giving them an experience they will remember the rest of their lives," said Brett, who has traveled the globe with her husband, Ken.

Brett, the former Principal at Chambers Elementary School in Kingston, started her career in 1973 as a health teacher and later



Michelle Hodge



Anna Brett

became Assistant Principal at Kingston High School. She said her experience with people, combined with her love for travel, should be an asset to her new role.

She noted that the next Chamber trip to Italy's Piedmont region is sold out but said people can start planning for the next destination—the South of France and Provence—April 8-16, 2027 with a 2-day extension. The trip includes hotels, meals, day trips and airfare from New York. Plans are also being finalized for another exciting trip to Europe in the fall of 2027.

For anyone interested in being added to the Chamber's VIP Travelers List, or for more information about upcoming trips, contact Anna Brett at Anna@UlsterChamber.org or call the Chamber Offices, (845) 338-5100, ext. 7. There's more information on upcoming trips on the Chamber website: UlsterChamber.org.

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Rocking The House

Berardi Realty Shines For Expertise, Hustle & Client Satisfaction

Berardi Realty may be relatively new on the local real estate scene, but the Kingston-based firm already is a powerhouse in the Mid-Hudson region and beyond.

That’s due in large part to the man behind it. Greg Berardi not only stands out for his deep knowledge of the local market and proven track record of helping clients buy or sell properties successfully, but for his 27 years of experience.

Before launching Berardi Realty in March 2021, he achieved remarkable success at Win Morrison Realty. He began working there at the age of 19, and through the years, boasted gross closed sales far exceeding \$400 million.

In 2016, he was recognized as Ulster County’s Top MLS (Multiple-Listing Service)

Real Estate Broker from among 600 agents. Then, in 2020, just before starting his own firm, he closed more than 80 transactions with gross sales exceeding \$30 million.

Today, he operates a boutique firm with a 10-member team, including six top-rated agents, whom Berardi has personally trained. They all live in Ulster County and have knowledge of local neighborhoods, schools, zoning regulations and market conditions.

Berardi, a Rosendale native with deep roots in Ulster County, is widely regarded as an expert in both residential and commercial transactions and handles properties across all price ranges from cozy cottages to commercial giants.

He and his team also specialize in property management, fix-and-flips, land subdivisions, new construction and even the planning and

execution of new development projects. Berardi says he oversees everything to ensure client satisfaction.

“We not only do everything and handle every aspect of real estate, but we care about what we do,” Berardi said. “I treat everybody like they’re a friend or family member. The last thing I worry about is a commission or making money. It’s all about customer satisfaction.”

Berardi also has a keen understanding of the local market and its strengths and weaknesses. At a glance, he said the housing market is relatively strong and is being fueled by demand and limited inventory in some areas.

Over the past few years, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, people from the New York metropolitan area and out-of-state

buyers looking for second homes have been drawn to Kingston for its unique mix of urban revival and small-town charm, he said.

“Prior to COVID, a lot of people who came up from the city, didn’t have a car. They’d ride the train or take the bus up here, but since the pandemic, a lot of people wanted more independence, so they started buying

cars,” Berardi said.

“Most of the time in the past, we’d have to pick them up at the train or bus station, but now, they’re able to come here on their own. That’s one of the reasons why Ulster County is booming. We have a lot of fun, great little towns like Saugerties, Rhinebeck, Woodstock and New Paltz, and they’re all close to each other. Plus, there’s a lot to do here. There’s hiking, biking and the rail trails. We have so much to offer here, and more people are discovering us.”

Berardi added that the rental market in Kingston is growing steadily, driven by year-

round residents, transient visitors and remote workers.

He also noted that the demand for commercial spaces is on the rise. Retail storefronts, office buildings and mixed-use properties are hot right now.

“There are a lot less vacancies,” Berardi said. “We’ve leased up a lot of spaces, so even though there’s some uncertainty in the economy at the moment, people are coming up here and opening businesses.”

Berardi Realty closed over \$80 million in sales for 2025 and currently has 83 active listings and 108 sold listings so far this year. For more information, call (845) 201-1111 or go to berardirealty.com.



Greg Berardi

SAVE THE DATE!



BUSINESS RECOGNITION

AWARDS 2026

BUSINESS RECOGNITION AWARDS DINNER

Thursday, October 22, 2026

5:30 pm Cocktails | 6:30 pm Dinner & Awards

Diamond Mills Hotel & BLACKBARN Hudson Valley
25 S. Partition Street, Saugerties, NY

Tickets \$125 per person

Purchase Tickets & Sponsorship Opportunities

www.UlsterChamber.org | 845.338.5100

UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

Wednesday August 5 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer

@ WMCHealth HealthAlliance Hospital

75 Mary’s Avenue | Kingston, NY

There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members.
Reservations are required.

Sponsor: Bank of Greene County

SHOWCASE YOUR BUSINESS REGISTER NOW FOR THE EXPO!

Wednesday September 16 | 4:00 - 7:00 pm

Buy Local Expo Mixer

Diamond Mills Hotel & Conference Center

25 S. Partition Street | Saugerties, NY

Registration Form Online @ www.UlsterChamber.org

Presenting Sponsor: Naccarato Insurance

Principal Sponsors: Diamond Mills, Timely Signs
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Thursday September 24 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer @

The Twaalfskill Club

282 West O’Reilly Street | Kingston, NY

There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members.
Reservations are required.

Sponsor: Rebuilding Together Hudson Valley

Tuesday September 29 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting

Meet The Candidates for NYS Senate & Assembly

The Venue Uptown at the Kingston Regency Inn

503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY

Sponsor: Northwell Health

More Info and Registration UlsterChamber.org
Questions (845) 338-5100

ChamberNews

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Kevin Corrado, Publisher • Michele Sisco-Martin, Graphic Designer

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Sheer Deliciousness Fruition Chocolate Works Names No. 1 In N.Y.

Fruition Chocolate Works in Shokan is hands down, the best chocolate shop in New York State. That's not just a subjective opinion or one based on a single Yelp testimonial.

It is, according to a June 28, 2026 feature story in the publication Tasting Table, the result of detailed reviews, local and national press and industry rewards.

While the publication's ranking thrills Bryan and Dahlia Graham, co-owners of Fruition Chocolate, this is not their first claim to fame.

Since debuting Fruition Chocolate, at 3091 state Route 28, in 2011, the business has gotten gobs of recognition in the global chocolate community, including 75 prestigious awards.

Fruition Chocolate Works was also named among the top 10 chocolatiers in the nation by Dessert Professional just two years after the couple launched the business, and it's been featured in Bon Appétit magazine twice, USA Today, The New York Times and Washington Post.

Graham, a Culinary Institute of America graduate and bean-to-bar whiz, makes chocolate from scratch, beginning with the selection of raw cacao beans from the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Colombia, Madagascar and the Junin region of Peru.

The Grahams travel to the cocoa-producing regions themselves to scope out the farms to ensure they are working with places that employ organic and fair trade or direct trade practices.

Back in Shokan, Graham roasts the fermented, dried cacao himself at his 5,000-square-foot production facility. He then cracks and winnows them (to remove the husks), applies heat and airflow—a process known as conching—and grinds the crushed kernels with sugar to refine them.

"We then have our finished chocolate, and we move to bar molding or making bonbons, so it's both an art and a science,"

said Dahlia Graham, who left a career in film education to work alongside her husband.

"That's what's unique about us," she added. "The majority of chocolatiers work with chocolate that's already made and melted, but we're starting from the cocoa beans, so we have a lot of control over the process."

The result is a splendid array of products available at the retail store in Shokan, including the ever-popular brown butter milk chocolate bar and brown butter bourbon caramel bar—both of which Graham says have "stood the test of time."

Other products include the Hudson bourbon dark milk chocolate bar; cinnamon maple bourbon dark chocolate bar; assorted bonbons; passionfruit caramels; chocolate-covered nuts; milk chocolate caramel peanut butter cups; dark chocolate almonds with smoked sea salt and pecans with maple cinnamon milk chocolate.

The Grahams have further broadened their fan base by opening a second retail store in the Hudson Valley. In February, they introduced Fruition Chocolate to Poughkeepsie's Eastdale Village. The 400-square-foot shop carries a line of chocolate bars and confections and a selection of chocolates from around the world. It also serves coffee, hot chocolate and iced lattes.



Dahlia and Bryan Graham

Additionally, Fruition products are sold online at fruitionchocolateworks.com and to coffee shops, specialty food stores and high-end boutiques across the country and locally, including Adams Fairacre Farms.

The couple is getting set to mark Fruition's 15th anniversary with an open house at the Shokan location on Nov. 14 from 4-7 p.m. Guests will get behind-the-scenes tours of the facility, free samples and a chance to learn about new product releases.

Fruition Chocolate Works is at 3091 state Route 28, Shokan, and 42 Eastdale Ave. North, Poughkeepsie. For more information, go to fruitionchocolateworks.com or call (845) 657-6717.

**For information
on Chamber
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email Jess Davis
at
Jess@UlsterChamber.org**

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humaninterest.com
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WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS

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63 North Front Street
Kingston, NY 12401
Steffan Bailey - Owner/Chef
kingstonnord.com
Category: Restaurants
Description: *Kingston Nord is a new, Nordic-inspired farm-to-table restaurant and bar in Uptown Kingston, NY. Located in the historic Stockade District at the former Front Street Tavern space, the venue features a main tavern room, a seasonal menu rooted in Scandinavian traditions, and a highly anticipated rooftop space. The restaurant's design and hospitality are built entirely around the philosophy of hygge—the Danish and Norwegian concept of coziness, warmth, and feeling genuinely at home.*

SANTOS M LOPEZ MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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TIFFANY'S TABLE

Kingston, NY 12401
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Category: Caterers
Description: *Tiffany's Table brings people together with beautifully crafted charcuterie experiences designed to make every gathering memorable. Specializing in a unique mobile charcuterie cart as well as stunning custom charcuterie platters, we cater to bridal and baby showers, birthdays, corporate events, weddings, holiday parties, open houses, and celebrations of all sizes. From elegant grazing displays to individually prepared charcuterie cups, we make entertaining effortless. Choose from our customized menu options or let your guests have fun creating their own charcuterie cups at our interactive mobile cart. Whether you're hosting an intimate gathering or a large celebration, Tiffany's Table takes care of every delicious detail so you can relax and enjoy your event.*

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veteransresiliencycoalition.com/
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Description: *Veterans Resiliency Coalition (VRC) recognizes that every member of the military goes through a transition process as they first enter the service and then another transition from military to civilian life which is different. Veterans Resiliency Coalition is dedicated to assisting service members, veterans, and their families navigate the turbulence which often comes with transition. We can help by connecting with innovative, individualized services.*

WRITERS READ

193 Tillson Lake Road
Wallkill, NY 12589
Edward McCann - Founder / Executive Director
WritersRead.org
Category: Production - Entertainment
Description: *Writers Read is a premier literary arts nonprofit that brings true, personal stories to life. Founded in 2014 by Ed McCann, the organization curates and produces captivating, live spoken-word performances of talented writers reading their original work. These stories reach a global audience via a popular podcast, an active YouTube channel, and published anthologies. Proud Hudson Valley partners include CPW, Vassar, Bard, Marist, and SUNY New Paltz, while NYC partners feature Carnegie Hall, Bryant Park, and the National Arts Club. These engaging performances emphasize our shared humanity.*



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4:00 - 7:00 PM | FREE REFRESHMENTS | FREE ADMISSION | FREE PARKING

Diamond Mills Hotel & Conference Center

25 S. Partition Street, Saugerties, NY

Contact: Allison Costanzo | 845.338.5100 | Allison@UlsterChamber.org