

Building Bridges To Business *SUNY New Paltz On Breakfast Agenda*

You’ve heard of town and gown, but what about gown and business casual?

SUNY New Paltz President Dr. Darrell Wheeler and Kristin Backhaus, the college’s Dean of the School of Business and Director of Economic Development & Community Engagement, will speak at the Chamber’s next breakfast on Dec. 11 and discuss the college’s desire to grow closer to the business community.

The breakfast, scheduled for 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus in Kingston, is sponsored by Rondout Savings Bank. The Kingston City School Choir will help kick off the season with a special selection of holiday favorites.

“The opportunity is one for us to continue a dialogue that we started maybe two years ago, and now it’s about the role of SUNY New Paltz within the greater Mid-Hudson region and wanting to uphold our two pillars—one of educational excellence within the region and the other being a value within the region and beyond,” Wheeler said.

Wheeler and Backhaus will discuss SUNY New Paltz’s strategic plan implementation, current collaborations with the business community and the university’s commitment to fostering new ideas and partnerships in areas of critical inquiry, innovation and community impact.

“That includes businesses and organizations in the Mid-Hudson region,” Backhaus said. “That’s one of my key areas of responsibility in conjunction with the strategic plan—to carry out an expansion of outreach and partnerships so that we can be better partners with businesses in trying to spur innovation, business growth and economic development.”

Backhaus said the expanded partnerships could involve SUNY faculty and students helping businesses promote a technology or idea. She also wants to make sure SUNY New Paltz is offering

the right curriculum to prepare graduates with the right skills and abilities needed by Hudson Valley employers.

“It could be internships and that’s certainly one good way, but that’s not the only way we would try to interact with businesses,” she said. “It could be different consulting projects we could do with them.”

Wheeler, who is addressing the Chamber for the second time, also mentioned internships.

“SUNY as a system, championed by John King the chancellor, is very interested in all SUNY students, before they graduate with a four-year degree, having a paid internship as a critical component of their academic portfolio,” he said. “SUNY New Paltz, because of the array of degrees we offer, we’d certainly be open to partnering with businesses in the region to help flesh out and have all of our students to engage in internships and also reinforce opportunities for career development in the region.”

Wheeler said he also plans to discuss many of SUNY New Paltz’s innovative programs, including the Hudson Valley Venture Hub, which announced the appointment of Bailey Burke as its new interim director over the summer.

The hub partners with entrepreneurial support organizations in the Hudson Valley to organize and lead workshops, networking events and events that help business founders gain the skills and traction they need to be successful. Over the past two years, SUNY New Paltz said the hub has had a multi-million-dollar economic impact in the state through new investments, job growth and



Dr. Darrell Wheeler



Kristin Backhaus

increased sales.

The president’s remarks is also expected to provide an update on the Hudson Valley Additive Manufacturing Center, also known as HVAMC. The center provides expert advice on 3D printing process and materials and designing for additive manufacturing to the SUNY New Paltz and Hudson Valley business community.

Wheeler, who was appointed the ninth president of SUNY New Paltz in July 2022, served in the U.S. Air Force and earned degrees from the University of Pittsburgh, Howard University and Cornell College. Before coming to SUNY New Paltz, he held various positions at Iona University, the University at Albany, Loyola University Chicago, Hunter College, CUNY, Columbia University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

December Breakfast

December 11

7:30-9:00 am

The Venue Uptown at the

Best Western Plus

503 Washington Ave.

Kingston, NY

Sponsor:



Backhaus has served as the Dean for the School of Business since 2015 and has held various positions since joining SUNY New Paltz in 1986.

Chamber Breakfast Meetings are a great way to stay on top of current events and connect with other local business leaders. Reservations are required. Tickets are \$35 in advance and \$40 at the door for Chamber members (\$45 for non-members.) For more information, contact the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 or go online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

Rondout Savings Bank is December’s Breakfast Sponsor

Rondout Savings Bank: The Bank That Grows With Your Business

For generations, Rondout Savings Bank has stood as a constant in a changing world—quietly helping build businesses, strengthen families, and support the growth of Ulster County and the Mid-Hudson Valley. Since 1868, we’ve done more than open accounts and process loans—we’ve built relationships that last. And today, when banks are merging, moving, or shifting focus, Rondout Savings Bank remains right here—local, independent, and entirely committed to the success of the community we call home.

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Time For Mistletoe and Holly

The Cornell Restaurant + Bar Was Buzzing With Holiday Cheer

Dave Amato and his crew at The Cornell Restaurant and Bar rolled out the red carpet and dazzled fellow Chamber members at the Dec. 3 holiday Mixer.

Shimmering trees, food fit for royalty, live seasonal music and a festive atmosphere set the tone for the end-of-the-year business gathering. Normann Staffing sponsored the networking event at 100 Rondout Landing.

“We always go all out,” said Amato, owner of The Cornell and The Brickman Kitchen + Bar. “It’s always great to see everybody and get together for the holidays. This is really how we kick it off with the Chamber Mixer.

“It was great for everybody to come out to see the newly renovated Cornell. I enjoy putting parties together for others to enjoy. For me, it’s really a passion. I enjoy pleasing people and giving them that ‘wow’ factor. That’s kind of what makes me tick.”

Amato opened The Cornell Restaurant and Bar on April 14 at the site of his previous restaurant, Ole Savannah. It was created to celebrate Kingston’s rich maritime history. The 19th-century building once served as the Cornell Steamboat Company’s boiler

shop and later became a steel fabrication shop for Millens Steel. The restaurant, with a sweeping view of the Rondout, honors that history, Amato said.

He hired Jackson Creative Group, a Rhode Island-based interior design firm, to redo the interior and exterior and give it a sophisticated and welcoming vibe, while retaining many of its original industrial features. The Cornell’s menu features innovative global fusion grounded in comfort food and inspired by contemporary flavors and techniques.

Because of its wide-open spaces, Amato said it’s always the perfect venue for big celebrations and events like the Chamber’s Holiday Mixer, which he’s hosted at Ole Savannah for several years.

With the Mixer behind, the stage is now set for holiday season at The Cornell. On Dec. 12, it will host the annual Christmas Spectacular and tree lighting, a family-friendly event complete with figure skaters at the Rondout Rink, a laser light show, live music and holiday characters.

That will be followed by brunch with Santa on Dec. 14 and a small business holiday party on Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. The Cornell



Jess Davis Ulster Chamber, Sponsor Tony Marmo Normann Staffing, Ward Todd Ulster Chamber and Host David Amato The Cornell Restaurant + Bar

will also be adding the traditional Feast of the Seven Fishes to its Christmas Eve menu and hosting a New Year’s Eve party.

Amato said he was pleased to see such a large crowd come out for the Chamber Mixer and even happier to have made it such a grand occasion.

“We had a blast. We always do when we get together as a Chamber family, especially during the holidays,” he said.

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Smooth Ride To Big Apple

Peak Engineering Plots Rockefeller Christmas Tree Route

Scott Davis and his team at Peak Engineering deserve a lot of credit for sprucing up midtown Manhattan for the holidays. While they are strictly behind the scenes, they are the engineering company that's responsible for transporting the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree from its origin to its final destination, and it couldn't have gotten there without their problem-solving expertise.

Like they have for the past 10 years, Davis and his engineers surveyed and identified the optimal route that would be used to haul this year's 11-ton, 75-foot Norway Spruce from its home in East Greenbush to 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

They worked jointly with the New York State and New York City departments of transportation, measuring every intersection along the 150-mile route to ensure the wide-load flatbed carrying the world-famous tree could make every turn cleanly and safely navigate construction routes, bridges, tunnels and roadblocks.

All of that played out successfully between Nov. 6 and Nov. 8 when a crew cut down the tree donated by the Russ family in Rensselaer County and loaded it onto a 100-foot-long tractor-trailer. Led by a New York State Police escort, the tree was then transported to Rockefeller Center and raised into place on Nov. 8. It was lit on Dec. 3 and will bring joy to an estimated 800,000 visitors this holiday season.

"For a long time, it was just one of the jobs that came through our office," said Davis, the owner of the structural and civil engineering firm in Stone Ridge. "It was something we talked about around the holiday table, but over time, it has become a bigger outside story. I think our office underestimated how important this was to the community. They want to know about this tree. It's a big deal in the Northeast, and it's become an important thing for us and our outreach. It is something that gets a lot of media coverage," he said.

This isn't the only headline-grabbing project his firm has been a part of. The Peak team was called on in 2009 to pull the "Miracle on the

Hudson" plane out of the icy Hudson River and ensure that it was safely transported to a warehouse in New Jersey. They were also involved in moving the original, weathered 3,600-pound Statue of Liberty torch to a museum in 2018.

In all, Davis said his firm handles between 50 and 100 route surveys each year—mostly involving heavy hauling and rigging—in New York, New Jersey, New England, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. Peak has extensive experience developing route surveying to ensure the safest and most economical route for heavy hauls, Davis said.

His team works routinely with state departments of transportation, townships and municipalities to ensure compliance while meeting deadlines and providing results on short notice.

In addition, Peak has designed and managed a variety of local projects, including small residential designs, retail spaces, event venues, seminar halls and catering establishments as well as more complex engineering solutions, working with contractors and public utilities, along with town, state and federal agencies.

"We do a lot of local work on subdivisions, septic systems, storm water management plans, house plans, structural plans and structural inspections," said Davis, who founded Peak in 2008 and now has a staff of 10.

The firm also played a crucial role in saving the Bridge Street bridge, one of two entrances to Phenicia from state Route 28, after it was severely damaged during Tropical Storm Irene in 2011.

Saving the bridge was such a big deal that he ended up giving a presentation on it in front of 500 of his peers.

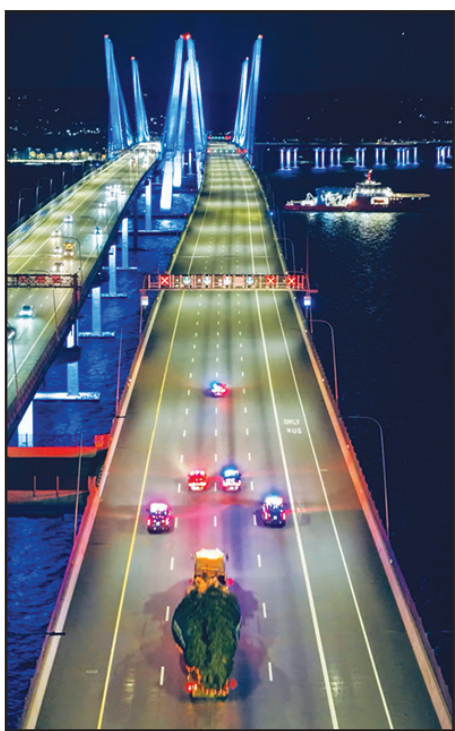
"We always pride ourselves on 'How can we make this work?' We don't often think of ourselves as being big contributors, but in the big picture, I guess we are," he said.

As for the Rockefeller tree, Davis said it's a source of pride to be involved in the carefully orchestrated process of moving it to New York City.

"We usually start two to three months in



advance. We know where the tree is coming from. We know everything about it before we move it," he said, adding he tries to visit



Rockefeller Center every holiday season. "This year, we went on Dec. 6th, to look at it as a family."

SHOP LOCAL

5 Great Reasons to Shop in Ulster County This Holiday Season

1 By shopping locally, you help keep local people employed.

2 These people then in turn spend their paychecks on local goods and services. Each dollar is circulated 7 times through the community.

3 The money you spend locally helps create new jobs.

4 Increased revenue from sales taxes helps hold down property taxes.

5 Your merchants are here for you 12 months of the year, with helpful, courteous service that you'd expect from friends and neighbors. To ensure that they'll be here for you next year, do ALL your Holiday Shopping in Ulster County.



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UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

Thursday December 11 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
SUNY New Paltz President Dr. Darrell P. Wheeler and School of Business Dean Kristin Backhaus
The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$35 Members-Advanced Pay • \$40 Members-At The Door
\$45 Non-Members
Sponsor: Rondout Savings Bank

Thursday January 22 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
NYS Senator Michelle Hinchey
The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$35 Members-Advanced Pay • \$40 Members-At The Door
\$45 Non-Members
Sponsor: Ulster Savings Bank

Wednesday February 25 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger
Wiltwyck Golf Club
404 Steward Lane | Kingston, NY
\$35 Members-Advanced Pay • \$40 Members-At The Door
\$45 Non-Members
Sponsor: Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley

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Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce



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Hats Off To Local!

Local Merchants: Buying Locally Keeps Communities Strong

Got a music lover on your gift list this year? Maybe you're on the hunt for something unusual like a shiny harmonica or debonair hat.

No worries. John Blue, co-owner of Blue-Byrd's Haberdashery and Music at 320 Wall St. in Uptown Kingston, has your back (and your head).

"We have some of the top names in hats like Stetson, Bailey, Scala, Toucan, Hollywood and Dorfman-Pacific," said Blue, who's been operating the store with his wife, Maureen Byrd, since 1992. "We also have clothing items such as Boho ponchos, scarves, sunglasses, insulated vests and a unique line of men's shaving items and collectibles."

The shop, known widely for its extensive selection of rare blues vinyl records and CDs, also sells harmonicas, making it the "only game in town" when it comes to carrying the wind instrument, according to Blue.

As the gift-buying season ramps up, he and other small business owners urge shoppers to consider buying locally to keep the dollars in Ulster County and contribute to a stronger community.

"Every time I go to a local event, I always look at the programs to see who is supporting those Little League teams, the YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club. That's who you should give your money to. You don't see any of the big-box stores supporting them. You see the small-town guy," Blue said.

To cap it off, local businesses stand behind their products and services, going the extra mile for customers, he noted. "When you buy a hat from me, you will never have to send it back because when you leave, it will fit. I give you a 100 percent guarantee that you'll be a satisfied customer. I give you personal care and attention."

Doug Kleeschulte, owner of Scrub Co. Car Wash, with eight locations in the Mid-Hudson Valley, added that local business owners have a direct stake in the community.

"We're a local family business," he said. "We've been here since 1993, and when you support local businesses, you're supporting your neighbors and the people that mean the most to you. We, ourselves, always try to source everything locally to keep the money in the community. It's a great way to do things."

When it comes to novel and practical gift ideas, Kleeschulte suggests 90-day car-

washing memberships, gift cards or gift packs.

"You'll be giving anyone who drives the gift of a nice, clean car, which is, for most people, one of your biggest investments. You want to take pride in your ride and make it last as long as possible, especially during the harsh winter," he said.

Another option is to invest in someone's health, said Christina Mengert, manager of Origin Wellness NY in Kingston, which is offering 30 percent off gift certificates from now through New Year's.

"We have over 20 services to help people relax and reset and reboot for the new year," Mengert said.

That includes infrared sauna; compression therapy, which supports circulation and the lymphatic system; cryotherapy; light boost and sensory refresh.

"Our services are designed for stress recovery. There's really nothing else like us here. We have everything under one roof," Mengert said.

She echoed Blue's point on the value of keeping dollars in the local economy.

"Buying local keeps resources in our neighborhood. In addition to economic value, it strengthens community relations and our resilience as a community."

Christa Freemann, owner of 9 Essentials Pilates and Wellness in Saugerties, believes that the best gift is movement.

"We believe health and wellness should be at the top of your holiday list. After all, when you take care of your body and prioritize movement, you show up stronger—not just for yourself, but for everyone around you," she said.

This holiday season, Freemann is offering a 30-minute semi-private Pilates reformer or weight/strength training session for two people for just \$60.

"Staying active during this time helps keep your energy up, manage stress and balance out those festive treats. Even short workouts can boost your mood and strengthen

your immune system," she said.

"It's also the perfect time to support your local community. Supporting your local studio means investing in your community. When you choose 9E, you're not just joining a workout—you're helping sustain a space that's built on

connection, encouragement, and real results.

Every class you take keeps local instructors employed, supports small business growth, and helps create a positive environment. When you move together, you grow stronger together."

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The Daily Freeman has partnered with the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce to bring you a monthly publication with specific content from the Chamber President, Board and Members. Support this section while marketing your business to consumers and local business owners!

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November 20, 2025
Ulster Savings Bank
180 Schwenk Drive
Kingston, NY



Mixer Host & Sponsor Ulster Savings Bank President & CEO Bill Calderara, Connie Harkin (Ulster Savings Bank), Saida Faquirzada (SUNY Ulster), Ulster Chamber President Ward Todd, and Debra Sonnenstein (Ulster Savings Bank).



Julie Jordan (Herzog's Home & Paint Centers), Pete Shults, and Bud Walker (both from Ulster Savings Bank).



Jessica Kohler, Jennifer Mosher, Chris Franco, and Rebecca Maxwell (all from American Printing & Office Supplies).



Herb Litts (GPI), Evan Ulscht (Aqua Jet Pools), Alison Causer (Artist Painting Company), Eric Atkins (Wiltwyck Golf Club), and Kelly Caldwell (Visions Human Resource Services).



Erin Barth (Hotel Kinsley), Robert Sykes (Simply Gone Mobile Dumpsters), and John Menne (Hotel Kinsley).



Bill Calderara (Ulster Savings Bank), Robyn Gullickson, and Rick Alfandre (both from Alfandre Architecture).

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Description: We are a family-owned brewery. Ryan and Rich Gillette—a father-son duo are excited to bring you the newest locally made beers in Kingston, NY. Having grown up in the Hudson Valley, and calling Kingston home, this is something we've been dreaming of for a long time! We're teamed up with Phoenicia Diner. They do our food programing, bringing you a special experience like no other. Rich previously owned and operated Gillette Creamery, now he and his son have the brewery world in their sights. Blue Duck is focused on making a variety of beers but the main focus is Lagers.

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Description: The Maternity Home of the Hudson Valley and Shelter Outreach Program is a Christ - Centered Ministry and Not - For - Profit service to mothers, infants and their families in need of hope, faith, love, shelter, medical care, supplies, groceries, and bedding. MHHV and the Shelter Outreach Program recognizes the desperate need for extended service and care to women, children and their families inside and outside of the maternity home. We execute armies of volunteers to administer that care and aim to meet every need required to provide a sustainable, happy, healthy and holy future to the beloved.

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Carly Migliorelli - Owner
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Kingston, NY 12401
Ken Pangburn -
www.pangburnwildlife.com
Category: Artists
Description: Master carver.

SYNAGEX
7401 S. Broadway
Red Hook, NY 12571
John Sinopoli - CEO
www.synagex.com
Category: Consultants - Technology
Description: A result-focused and cybersecurity first IT managed services provider.

TETTA'S ATHLETIC CLUB
2063 County Road 3
Olivebridge, NY 12461
Primo Stropoli - Owner
Category: Fitness/Health Clubs
Description: Tetta's Athletic Club is an organization that provides a space for a wide range of activities such as yoga, pilates, mixed martial arts and much more.

THE GOAT BASKETBALL OF KINGSTON, LLC
32 Old Sawkill Road
Kingston, NY 12401
John Stote - President
thegoatbasketball.com
Category: Sporting Goods
Description: Sales of sports merchandise.

WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS

THE PINES AT CATSKILL
154 Jefferson Heights
Catskill, NY 12414
Mary DeGregoria - Director of Admissions
pinescatskill.com
Category: Nursing Homes/Senior Residences
Description: At The Pines at Catskill Center for Nursing and Rehabilitation, we center health care on healing so the joys of daily living can be celebrated. Our center provides post-acute rehabilitation and long-term care services, including a myriad of medical and therapy services. We offer around-the-clock care for those living with chronic illnesses and disabilities. Each day, our skilled, compassionate team strives to help our guests become a better, brighter, and stronger version of themselves.

TRIPLE M PAVING & EXCAVATING
1375 Old Post Road
Ulster Park, NY 12487
Harry Merrill - Owner/Operator
www.triplempavingandexcavating.com
Category: Contractors - Paving
Description: Triple M Paving & Excavating is a small local business with 30+ years of experience, that proudly serves Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess Counties. We are proud to offer a range of services including commercial and residential paving, seal coating , stone installation, drainage, swales, and all aspects of excavating. Owner on-site for every job to ensure satisfaction.

VISIONEXCEL
1636 Ulster Ave.
Lake Katrine, NY 12449
Chadd Kline - Practice Manager
www.visionexceleeyecare.com
Category: Opticians/Optometrists
Description: Optometric Practice

ZERO TOLERANCE TASK FORCE INC.
PO Box 1257
Port Ewen, NY 12466
Jose Torres - CEO
Category: Non-Profit Organizations
Description: We rigorously investigate systemic abuses in Police Departments, Correctional Facilities, Juvenile Centers, and cases of Political Corruption and Predatory Landlords. We dismantle injustice by exposing malfeasance and demanding transparency from those in power. Simultaneously, we build a future defined by equality: dedicating resources to support our local youth, providing direct aid and pathways to stability for the homeless, and giving back to strengthen the entire community. Our mandate is dual: To challenge and to champion. We clean up the system and uplift the people the system has failed.