Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce

Supporting Businesses ~ Supporting Our Community

ChamberNews

214 Fair Street Kingston, NY 12401 www.UlsterChamber.org

January 2026

Fostering Local Businesses For Success

Sen. Hinchey Chamber Breakfast Guest Jan. 22

The New York State Senate will reconvene in early January, and business leaders can get an early update when three-term Sen. Michelle Hinchey addresses the Chamber's first networking breakfast of 2026 on Jan. 22.

The breakfast, sponsored by Ulster Savings Bank, is scheduled from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus Kingston. Hinchey said affordability would be the theme of the morning.

"Our goal is to improve the quality of life in the Hudson Valley so families can achieve economic stability with an opportunity for growth," Hinchey said. "When families are financially stable and see a path for growth, they can support local businesses, our communities are safer, and local economies grow. Businesses are at the heart of that prosperity—they create local jobs, provide essential services, and attract visitors, which drives our region's economy.

"It's critical that we foster an environment where businesses can succeed. I'll be highlighting initiatives I'm championing to advance that vision, including lowering costs for working families, upgrading aging infrastructure, investing in housing, and expanding markets for New York farms."

Hinchey, a Saugerties Democrat who won a third two-year term in the Senate in November 2024, said while the federal government is causing instability and making it hard for local businesses and non-profits to plan, she will make utility affordability a "top priority" in 2026.

"I'm advancing bills to make the Public Service Commission more accountable to residential and commercial ratepayers, ensuring that affordability is central to their decisions and that small businesses have more protections," she said.

Hinchey said utility companies could once justify rate hikes by claiming the need for new capital projects without providing a clear picture of how the funds were being allocated. However, she helped pass a new law requiring transparent and public reporting on utility capital expenditures, ensuring project costs are accurate and preventing inflated rates for both residential and business customers.

"Additionally, I will be supporting and championing multiple pieces of legislation to help small businesses lower costs and navigate state guidelines," Hinchey said.

One bill would ensure that credit card processing fees no longer include taxes and tips, reducing expenses for retailers. Another bill would require the Division for Small Business to publish an annual, easy-to-understand guide covering any new regulations.

Sen. Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey also hopes to define "microbusiness" as independent companies with fewer than five employees and guarantee at least $5 million in state funds for micro-loans.

She also supports the Good Jobs Guarantee Act, a new state program that would partner with private investors to help income-eligible New Yorkers without a college degree gain the skills to enter new fields.

Hinchey also could touch on some of her bills that have already been signed into law, including one making it easier for Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises to maintain their certification.

"If an MWBE hasn't had a major ownership change within the six years since their last certification, the applicant will be presumed eligible to retain their certification," Hinchey said. "This reduces costly administrative burdens, protects existing contracts, and lets business owners focus on growth."

Sen. Hinchey's bill, the Universal School Meals Act, became law this year, guaranteeing two meals for every New York student every school day, supporting their health and development, and helping families save money on grocery costs each week. At the same time, a goal for this year is to expand the State's farm-to-school program, which will help create direct business opportunities for local farmers to sell their products to our school system.

Sen. Hinchey also has proposed legislation that would provide $5 million for meat-processing expansion grants that will help grow processing facilities and support farm businesses, and extending the Farm Workforce Retention Tax Credit to help farms retain workers. She is the chair of the Senate Agriculture & Food Committee.

Sen. Hinchey has also:

-Provided $50,000 to each of the four county-wide Chambers of Commerce in the 41st District for workforce development initiatives over the last two years.

-Expanded access to mental health courts to protect public safety and ensure those who need support can get the treatment they need.

-Provided funding (since 2023) for 13 historic downtown performing arts centers across upstate, including UPAC in Kingston and the Bardavon in Poughkeepsie.

"This year, we delivered $300,000 to UPAC, an important economic driver, whose visitors go on to patronize local restaurants, hotels, and small businesses across our community," she said.

Hinchey said while the challenges are complex, she believes "we are still in a moment where a lot of good can be accomplished, and impactful reforms can be identified to make our collective future better for everyone" in New York.

"Being a small business or nonprofit can be incredibly hard right now, and we need to do everything we can as a state to make it easier for small businesses to stay open and nonprofits to continue serving their communities," she said. "That's why we worked to clear the long-standing unemployment insurance debt this year, removing a major financial burden for businesses, and why we've focused on removing unnecessary roadblocks that slow business growth and service delivery."

January Breakfast

January 22

7:30-9:00 am

The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus

503 Washington Ave.

Kingston, NY

Sponsor:

Ulster Savings — Community Matters

A Saugerties native and former executive in the technology and media fields before entering politics, Hinchey is the daughter of the late U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey. She is a graduate of the Industrial and Labor Relations School at Cornell University.

The 41st Senate District Hinchey represents includes most of Ulster and Northern Dutchess counties and all of Greene and Columbia counties.

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.

Ulster Savings Bank is January's Breakfast Sponsor

The New Year is a time of reflection, celebration and anticipation. It's also a very special year for Ulster Savings Bank, as they celebrate a true milestone of incredible longevity.

Chartered on April 12th, 1851, Ulster Savings is one of the longest continuously run businesses in Ulster County and a respected, long-standing fixture in the Hudson Valley. This year they celebrate their 175th year in our community. Back in June of 1851, Severyn Bruyn, Ulster Savings Bank's very first customer, made a $120 deposit. Back then this was a major transaction!

Rooted in the Hudson Valley, this community bank has grown alongside the people and businesses they serve, combining deep local knowledge with a steadfast commitment to their neighbors. Today, Ulster Savings has 15 locations and an asset size that exceeds $1.39 billion!

It's not just about asset size or the number of locations, however. Ulster Savings Bank's network is large and that enables them to offer innovative solutions to address today's issues. They often work with private and public sector partners to provide grant opportunities that strengthen affordable housing options and help non-profits benefit from additional funding sources. Last year, $2,967,083 homebuyer grants were funded, and $46,658,309 first-time homebuyer loans were approved.

Ulster Savings also provides both online and in-person resources to help customers navigate the homebuying process, repair poor credit, prevent identity theft and more. In 2025, $45,750 in homebuyer credits were earned by attendees of first-time homebuyer workshops.

A community giver year after year, Ulster Savings Bank has donated over $869,830 to our community along with thousands of volunteer hours. Their impact touches over 420 organizations in the Hudson Valley.

"For nearly two centuries, we've been more than a bank-we've been a neighbor. We bring generations of experience, stability and relationship-based banking to the Hudson Valley. We blend our rich community banking legacy with forward-thinking financial solutions-always focused on what matters most: our customers and community," said Bill Calderara, President and CEO of Ulster Savings Bank.

The Ulster Savings team serves the community with compassion, expertise and a real desire to see their neighbors succeed. Helping a first-time homebuyer overcome obstacles to transition from renting to owning; empowering local entrepreneurs to start a business, grow and succeed; offering solutions to help grow and manage wealth are just some of the examples of the true impact that Ulster Savings quietly makes every day.

Ulster Savings — Community Matters

Ulster Savings continues to be an award-winning bank year after year. In addition to being a five-year Chronogrammie Readers' Choice awardee, Ulster Savings Bank was featured in Forbes and Fortune magazines and most recently recognized in Newsweek's America's Best Regional Banks and Credit Unions for both 2025 and 2026.

The New Year is a time for fresh starts and new possibilities. Ulster Savings is here to help you plan, grow, and achieve what matters most in the year ahead. For more information, visit ulstersavings.com or stop into any of their 15 locations in the Hudson Valley.

Honoring Black History

MyKingstonKids Poised To Mark MLK Day, Black History Month

At MyKingstonKids, the annual observance of Martin Luther King Day is just the beginning of a yearlong commemoration of African-American heritage, history, achievements and overall contributions to the American story.

Every January, the leaders at the nonprofit youth organization take a proactive role on social media, posting details about the Civil Rights leader and have even created an immersive virtual reality experience highlighting his life and fight for racial justice and equality.

Frank Waters, founder and executive director at MyKingstonKids, said the nonprofit youth organization also supports communitywide tributes, including UlsterCorps' MLK Celebration of Service at the Rosendale Recreation Center and the annual Martin Luther King celebration at Pointe of Praise Family Worship Center in Hurley.

By the time Black History Month rolls around on Feb. 1, the organization is laser focused on raising awareness of the Black experience in America, particularly in Ulster County. MyKingstonKids produces Black History Kingston, organizing and curating monthlong events.

It kicks off at Kingston City Hall on Feb. 2 at 10 a.m. with a combined breakfast and mixer to celebrate the accomplishments of area African Americans.

The annual Sojourner Truth Life Walk, which pays tribute to the legendary abolitionist, is another signature event. The educational walk happens on Feb. 21 with stops at Esopus Town Hall, Jug Tavern in Port Ewen, where she lived and toiled as a child slave, the Sojourner Truth statue at City Hall and the Old Dutch Church for a reenactment of her famous speech 'Ain't I a Woman."

Waters, the lead coordinator of Black History Kingston, said other events include a movie night at the Ulster Performing Arts Center as well as performances, workshops and art exhibits held throughout the month.

"But it's not just limited to February," he added. "It really continues throughout the year. We promote between 30 to 50 events each year in the Hudson Valley. Even the Chamber's Black Business Community Celebration and the Juneteenth Festival are part of that."

MyKingstonKids, founded by Waters and his wife, Shaniqua Bowden, is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. It continues to grow and bring in new partners, including businesses, nonprofits, churches and "anyone in the community who wants to celebrate and acknowledge African-American culture," Waters said.

"There are several of our white counterparts who are so heavily invested and participating in this. It's overwhelmingly impressive how they contribute. That's wonderful for our children, elders and community to see, and it helps us bond together more.

"There have always been challenges between our two cultures, and this is a way to have open dialogue about our differences. This

has allowed us to understand each other and work collaboratively. Just through this initiative, I see it happen constantly. Almost every organization has supported us or created an event or attended an event, which has been truly remarkable."

MyKingstonKids' mission is to create, promote and produce youth-related content, activities and events to "empower, educate and excite families" in Kingston and surrounding areas, according to its website, mykingstonkids.com.

It also offers Imagine Gaming and Party Rentals to area organizations and individuals looking for creative ways to keep children engaged at big events. Services include a gaming trailer, virtual reality arena, live DJs, a slime cart, laser tag and a sensory safe zone.

For more information, go to mykingstonkids.com

‘Nothing Like It Around’

Brad’s Barns To Debut 2-Story Indoor Showroom This Spring

Joe Charmello has a famous saying. You can’t just work in your business, he says. You have to work at your business. If you’re not working at your business, you’re not changing and evolving with the markets.

He apparently lives that out. Come spring, the visionary businessman who owns Brad’s Barns on state Route 28 in Kingston will have undertaken an expansion so big that it exceeds even his expectations.

It includes a news sales office, new office for scheduling and logistics and a two-story indoor showroom next door, the first of its kind on the Eastern seaboard. The showroom will be a microcosm of everything Brad’s Barns sells, including sheds, gazebos, agricultural buildings, pergolas, pavilions and yard furniture.

“Whether it’s snowing outside or 98 degrees, customers will be able to come and shop 24/7 in a comfortable atmosphere that is completely climate controlled. Everything that’s outside will be inside, and we plan to make it like a village. Every building will be staged the way it would look in your backyard or on your deck. It will become a significant destination,” Charmello said.

Formerly in the construction trade, Charmello bought Brad’s Barns in 2006. Back then, it was strictly local, selling smaller structures like sheds and gazebos mainly in Ulster County. Today, it serves Ulster as well as Dutchess, Orange, Greene, Columbia, Putnam and Rockland counties and beyond.

According to its website (bradsbarns.com), Brad’s Barns features the largest selection of Amish barns, sheds, gazebos, horse barns, along with modular, stick-built or custom-built garages in the Hudson Valley. The company also sells certified modular log homes, with two models in stock and another coming in early January.

Brad’s Barns has a sterling reputation for meticulous craftsmanship, design, structural integrity and quality materials.

“I never dreamed that it would get this big,” Charmello said. “Through our marketing efforts, we’re reaching way out of our area across state lines. We’re expanding our reach, and with the new offices, expanded lot and indoor showroom, we anticipate it’s going to bring people in from all over the Northeast. It’s been a long time coming. We needed it drastically.”

To keep up with the growing demand for his products, Charmello bought the building next door and an additional three acres in 2024. He has already moved his sales and logistics teams into their new offices, and while the showroom is under construction, he expects it to be up and running by this spring.

“When I first bought the business, whenever December rolled around, you could have put the key in the door and left for Florida for a couple of months,” Charmello said. “The foot traffic would slow down because people didn’t want to be out in the snow and ice, but with the indoor showroom, all of that is about to change. People will be able to come inside and shop regardless of the weather. It will showcase a plethora of styles of our different buildings, and our outdoor furniture will no longer be stuck in garages during the winter. Customers will be able to come in, shop and place their orders.

“There’s no one else that has an indoor showroom like this,” he added. “It was kind of a unique thing I came up with as we were refurbishing the offices. I always thought having an indoor showroom would be great, but I never had the space before. Buying this extra lot allowed me to expand the building and expand this showroom, so we’re going to make that whole dream a reality. We’re going to make it a really nice customer experience. We hope people will come by and say hello. We’ll both be glad you did.”

For more information on Brad’s Barns, go to bradsbarns.com or call (845) 339-2276.

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Thursday January 8 | 9:00 - 10:30 am

Business Card Exchange
Wellness Empowerment Center at People’s Place
17 St. James Street | Kingston, NY
There is no cost for Chamber Members.
Reservations are required.
Sponsor: Hudson Valley Credit Union

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

Tuesday February 10 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer @
Ulster BOCES Career Academies at iPark87
300 Enterprise Drive | Kingston NY
There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members.
Reservations are required.
Sponsor: Archtop Fiber

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

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

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Still 'Crazy' After All These Years

Owner Of Crazy Bowlz Thankful For Chamber, Community

Jenny Yeung swore up and down that she'd never go into the restaurant business. As a child, she watched her parents toil day and night, operating their Chinese restaurants in Virginia and her home state of Maryland. It was simply not for her.

"I was that typical Asian kid who grew up in the restaurant business. I've been around it ever since I can remember," said Yeung, who, along with her husband, Ben Dong, co-owns two Crazy Bowlz locations in the town of Ulster and New Paltz. "I had to tell my parents, 'I'll never do that. It's too much work.'"

She stayed true to her word—at least, early on in her career. After earning a degree in international business from the University of Maryland, Yeung went on to become the territorial manager at ExxonMobil, overseeing service stations from Manhattan to Highland.

While conducting an audit in Highland, Yeung met Dong, whose family operated China Garden on Vineyard Avenue. After the pair got married and started a family, the idea of opening a business in the Hudson Valley seemed appealing.

Because they both had the restaurant gene in their blood and knew how to cook, they began experimenting in their Manhattan apartment with spices, sauces and recipes. The only caveat was that the end product had to be different from what is typically served at a Chinese restaurant.

"What you get at a Chinese restaurant is not authentic," Yeung said. "We don't eat that in Asia, so the question became, 'How do we prepare the food we eat at home without that stereotypical notion of Asian food?'"

After a bit of trial and error, the couple hit the jackpot with recipes that were authentically Chinese and Mexican, creating an evocatively palatable fusion of the two cuisines.

"They actually have a lot of similarities," Yeung said. "We set out to make them into one fusion. That's what we were going for, so we gave it a try flavor-wise, and it worked."

The next step was to find a location. Yeung said she and her husband spent a while scouting places in the Hudson Valley before they found the building at 301 Frank Sottile Boulevard set on a hill in a busy shopping center in the town of Ulster.

"At first, we didn't think we'd get that spot. It's a free-standing building, so we thought the rent would be ridiculous," Yeung said. "But the landlord was very nice and willing to give us a good deal for our startup."

Thus was born Crazy Bowlz Asian Mexican Grill, an innovative concept known for its freshly made bowls featuring different proteins (chicken, lamb, beef, shrimp or pork). Customers can mix and match their proteins, grains, vegetables and sauces for an adventurous and tasty experience.

Other unique options at Crazy Bowlz include teriyaki tofu salad, Korean bulgogi beef burritos, sweet Thai chili wings, teriyaki shrimp tacos, Korean beef and kimchi nachos, taco-styled Chinese steamed buns as well as soups, dumplings and appetizers. Crazy Bowlz also features bubble tea with flavors ranging from mango to passionfruit.

The couple opened the town of Ulster restaurant in September 2013 and has since opened another Crazy Bowlz at 232 Main St. in New Paltz.

Being an astute businesswoman, Yeung also noticed how the bubble teas were all the rage at Crazy Bowlz. She acted on that by opening Bunsen Tea Lab in Denton Texas, another business she built from scratch, starring boba tea and Hong Kong bubble waffles.

Buoyed by its success, Yeung recently opened another Bunsen Tea Lab across the street from Marist College in Poughkeepsie.

While a busy mother of two, she keeps a sharp eye on all the businesses, maintaining high standards for her customers, whom she describes as people looking for high-quality dishes prepared with the freshest ingredients.

Yeung stressed that the dishes served at her establishments contain no MSG and aren't prepared using a wok, which requires greasing. "We use the flattop to grill our proteins instead of a wok so there won't be so much oil in the food." she said.

Yeung, who's been a Chamber member for almost 13 years, said she couldn't be more pleased with the experience and the how much support she's gotten.

"Ward and Jess have been so nice and warm and kind. They have done so much for our business community. We consider them family. I grew up in a metro area and never saw that kind of community-minded support. We are so grateful to be a part of this Chamber of Commerce," she said.

For more information on Crazy Bowlz, go to crazybowlz.net, or call (845) 382-6955 for the Kingston location and (845) 255-0179 for the New Paltz restaurant.

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www.justrightmechanicalny.com/
Category: Air Conditioning And/Or Heating
Description: *Just Right Mechanical Systems is a full-service Mechanical company providing heating, cooling, plumbing, electrical, and drain services for residential and commercial clients across New York's Mid-Hudson Valley. We specialize in system installation and repair, boilers and furnaces, heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, plumbing diagnostics, drains, re-piping, water treatment, filtration, and electrical service. As a multi-trade provider, we deliver integrated, cost-effective solutions tailored to each property's needs for long-term comfort and reliability.*

KPM RESTORATION
304 Wall St.
Kingston, NY 12401
Robert Carr - Project Manager
www.kpmrestoration.com
Category: Home Improvement
Description: *Water, Fire, Mold, Biohazard clean up. Originally based in Mechanicville NY, we are expanding into Ulster County by opening our newest location at 304 Wall St. in Kingston.*

PHOENICIA DINER CANTEEN
79 Hurley Ave.
Kingston, NY 12401
Courtney Malsatzki - Director of Operations
www.pdcanteen.com
Category: Restaurants
Description: *Locally sourced comfort food brought to you by the Phoenicia Diner team. Located inside Blue Duck Brewing.*

THE PEACE EDUCATION CENTER OF THE HUDSON VALLEY
670 Springtown Rd.
Tillson, NY 12486
Leonisa Ardizzone - Director
www.pechv.org
Category: Advocacy
Description: *The Peace Education Center of the Hudson Valley empowers individuals and organizations to create ecologically-minded, just, and peaceful communities. Through teacher training, family and children workshops, youth dialogue groups, interfaith explorations, and our curriculum library, we provide the space, skills, and values needed to transform society from our current war system to a peace system.*

TMI PROJECT
65 St. James Street
Kingston, NY 12401
Blake Pfeil - Operations & Programs Manager
www.tmiproject.org
Category: Non-Profit Organizations
Description: *TMI Project is a nonprofit organization based in the racially and economically diverse city of Kingston, NY offering transformative true storytelling workshops and live storytelling performances to underserved communities. Since 2010, TMI Project has led approximately 90 true storytelling workshops and staged live storytelling performances by more than 1,750 storytellers, which have been presented to audiences of nearly 50,000 people in schools, colleges, prisons, mental health clinics, theaters, community centers, and the United Nations.*

VISITVORTEX
PO Box 82
High Falls, NY 12440
Jesse Marcus - Publisher/Owner
visitvortex.com
Category: Magazines & Periodicals
Description: *A seasonal magazine showcasing local independent businesses & inspiring fun adventures in the Hudson Valley - plus an annual Wedding Magazine published since 2008.*
Be Drawn In.

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