

Hospitality Superstars

Chamber To Honor Guido, Smiley Families At May Breakfast

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

– Maya Angelou

Two of the region's pillars in the hospitality industry—the Guido Restaurant Group and Mohonk Mountain House—will be honored at the Chamber's May 20 Breakfast from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus, 503 Washington Ave., Kingston.

Restaurateurs Frank and Mark Guido, along with hoteliers Eric Gullickson and Tom Smiley, will receive the Chamber's Inaugural Customer Experience Lifetime Achievement Award for their "long track records of providing exceptional experiences for their guests," according to Chamber President Ward Todd.

"Since customer service is at the core of every Chamber business, whether they're in banking, insurance, retail, manufacturing, tourism or even not-for-profit, a great customer service experience can make all the difference in the world to a customer, client or travel visitor," Todd said.

"This is the Chamber's Inaugural Customer Experience Lifetime Achievement Awards, and we couldn't have found two better businesses to honor. The Guido family has been providing exceptional customer service for decades through the Guido Restaurant Group, and Eric and Tom from Mohonk Mountain House have literally written the book on ways to enhance the customer experience."

After receiving their awards, the honorees will share some of their best business practices, tips and suggestions aimed to benefit those attending the event, which is being sponsored by Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union.

Mark Guido, who runs the award-winning Frank Guido's Little Italy at 14 Thomas St. in Midtown Kingston, said it boils down to two

things: Putting the customer first and hiring the best people.

"Every decision we make is for the customer, and hiring the best people is critical," he said. "I hire on personality.

Of course, experience matters, but you can't train a dynamic personality. We're known for our warmth. We want you to feel like you're coming to a family Sunday dinner. That's who we are."

Smiley, the chief executive officer at Mohonk, a National Historic Landmark resort built in 1869, agrees that it all comes down to finding the proper staff and building genuine connections with guests.

"We have a very talented and dedicated staff," said Smiley, who, with his cousin, Gullickson, represents the fifth generation of Smileys to run the famous year-round resort. "What we sell is an experience. It's about the interactions between our staff and our guests and just being consistent in providing an outstanding experience.

"It started from a quote by my great-grandfather (Albert Smiley) in a memo he wrote in 1916, which said, 'The cardinal aim of our business is the comfort and contentment of guests.' That pretty much says it right there. That'll be the centerpiece of my comments at the Chamber breakfast, but in the end, it's really about our staff. They're the ones delivering the experience that impacts the guests."

Mohonk Mountain House, a Victorian castle with 266 guest rooms, unlimited recreation, wellness programs, farm-to-table cuisine and a first-rate spa, has won countless national and international accolades in its 156-year



Eric Gullickson and Tom Smiley



Mark and Frank Guido

history, but this award from the Ulster Chamber will hold a special place for the Smiley family, said Gullickson.

"Tom and I will accept this award on behalf of the entire Mohonk family – there are so many wonderful and dedicated people that have helped sustain Mohonk throughout the last 156 years," he said. "We continue to place our commitment to our role as an employer of choice in the Hudson Valley as the most important attribute of our success."

The same holds true for the Guidos, who have also won their share of awards. Frank Guido, 79, founded the Guido Restaurant Group, which includes Frank Guido's Little Italy and the seasonal Port of Call in Catskill. Mariner's Harbor in Downtown Kingston is run by Guido's cousin, Sal.

Guido has been in the restaurant business for more than 50 years and has run upwards of 20 restaurants from Highland to Red Hook. All of them have been known for excellence in dining and customer service.

Over the years, the Guidos have entertained celebrities, athletes and statesmen at their restaurants, but the elder Guido said that his local customers—many he has known for generations—are the most important thing.

"Our goal is to make everybody happy," he said. "It's about simple courtesies like acknowledging the customer and saying thank you. It really comes down to three words: Just

May Breakfast
May 20
7:30-9:00 am
The Venue Uptown at the
Best Western Plus
503 Washington Ave.
Kingston, NY

Sponsor:

be nice."

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.

Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union Is May's Breakfast Sponsor

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Bank On Good Times

May Mixer At Bank Of Greene County Kingston Branch

This is one occasion where it's perfectly acceptable to laugh all the way to the bank. Get ready for good times with good people on May 22 as The Bank of Greene County hosts the Chamber Mixer at 2 Miron Lane in Kingston from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

"Our Kingston Branch is celebrating 10 years this year, so we want to say, 'thank you' to everyone for helping to make the last 10 years a huge success," said Sean DuBois, vice president, Southern Region Executive and Commercial Lender at the Bank of Greene County. "We were welcomed by the community with open arms and have received so much support from community members, the Ulster County Chamber and all of our customers. We have grown tremendously and have enjoyed being a part of this great community."

Headquartered in Catskill, the Bank of Greene County has served its neighbors in the Capital Region and Hudson Valley for more than 135 years. The bank offers full-service, community-based banking with an emphasis on personal relationships and giving back to local nonprofits to keep the region strong.

With close to 20 branches, including Kingston and Woodstock, the bank offers checking and savings accounts that pay interest and a debit card rewards program. In addition, the bank offers residential and commercial mortgages, which DuBois said, "the bank doesn't sell."

"This means you can walk into any branch to make a payment, or speak to local lenders when you call us," he said.

The Bank of Greene County, which also operates a Catskill-based Wealth Management Center with services ranging from investment and financial planning to concierge-level private banking, also offers the latest technologies with online banking and was the first community bank in the country to offer Apple Pay, according to DuBois.

"Our team is very friendly and knowledgeable and works hard to make sure each and every one of our customers is satisfied," he said.

Moreover, the BOGC team, led by affable President and Chief Executive Officer Don Gibson, gives back to the community with generous grants and robust volunteerism. In 1998, the bank created a Charitable Foundation that, to date, has contributed close to \$3 million to schools, nonprofits and community organizations.

Just before the Chamber Mixer kicks off on May 22, Gibson and his crew will hold their Kingston and Woodstock Charitable Foundation awards ceremony, where they will donate to 71 Ulster-based organizations. This year, the bank will be donating \$556,000 to 492 area charities across the Hudson Valley and Capital Region.

DuBois said the BOGC cherishes its relationship with the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce and enjoys mingling with friends and neighbors at monthly breakfasts and networking events.

"In addition to attending many of the Ulster County Chamber functions, we typically have an employee go through the Ulster Leadership (program). We find it's a great way to stay in touch with

Mixer
May Mixer
Thurs., May 22
5-7 pm

Bank Of Greene County
2 Miron Lane,
Kingston, NY

SPONSOR:
Bank of Greene County

community leaders and for our team members to hone their leadership skills," he said.

As far as the May Mixer goes, expect a warm welcoming from a fun group that truly loves what it does. That means plenty of food and drink, a special overnight giveaway, and live entertainment by 92.9 WBPM.

"It will be a great time to see friends and community leaders to network and catch up," DuBois said.

Chamber Mixers are a great way to network and promote your business. Be sure to bring plenty of business cards. Mixers are open to Chamber Members 21 years of age and older. There is no charge for Chamber Members to attend but reservations are required. Call (845) 338-5100 or register online at www.UlsterChamber.org. Prospective Members interested in attending, please contact Jess Davis (845) 338-5100 x4 or Jess@UlsterChamber.org.

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‘Reaching Hearts’ For 40 Years

It’s A Banner Year For Sound Of Life Radio

Years ago, a drug addict, who was estranged from her children, came across the Sound of Life Radio Network and heard a song that forever changed her life.

Matthew West’s hit “Going Through the Motions” spoke directly to her and led her to the longtime station, which had been located on Tuytenbridge Road in Lake Katrine, where she met the staff, including long-time morning host Joe Hunter, and reconnected with God. She also got a referral to the Walter Hoving Home, a residential, faith-based substance abuse program in Garrison.

Determined to turn her life around, the woman enrolled in the program, got the help she needed and has since reunited with her children—a redemptive experience that she traces back to the radio network, which serves eastern New York, northern New Jersey, northeast Pennsylvania and western New England with 12 frequencies stretching from Glens Falls to Port Jervis.

Station Manager Connie VanKleeck says she’s heard countless stories like this in her nearly 40-year career at the listener-supported radio network, and it moves her every time.

“While we’ve never really participated in any kind of ratings, we do know that at any given time, there are between 60,000 and 80,000 listeners, and they’re streaming from all over the country and even the world,” she said. “We really have no idea how many lives are being touched, but every now and then, we’ll hear these stories, so we know we’re making an impact and reaching people’s hearts.”

That, in fact, is the network’s motto as it marks its 40th anniversary this year and its recent move from a cluster of trailers at 199 Tuytenbridge Road to a new state-of-the-art facility at 507 Hurley Avenue, just outside Kingston.

The slogan “Reaching Your Heart” resonates with listeners from all walks of life, VanKleeck said, offering Christ-centered messages and soul-penetrating music with depth and real-life authenticity.

VanKleeck said while that’s always been the thrust at Sound of Life, the recent affiliation with Northwestern Media, a ministry of the University of Northwestern-St. Paul, has expanded its reach by providing resources the ministry lacked in the past, including a more modern space to carry out its mission of sharing the “life-changing message of the hope and love found in Jesus Christ.”

“We feel like we’ve taken a 25-year leap in technology,” she said of the 2,750-square foot facility that has a huge conference room, two broadcast studios with state-of-the-art technology and an updated kitchen. “We’ve been a small staff of five to six people for the past several years. Now, we have the support and backing of a larger organization to be a resource for us. Our goal is to continue to be a light

in our communities with even more interaction locally through a strengthened organization that has more resources and personnel.”

Sound of Life has come a long way since 1985, the year it signed on in Kingston with WFGB on 89.7 FM. VanKleeck said it got started by a group of local businessmen, mostly IBMers led by Bruce Winchell, Charles Rider, Phil Greer and others, who had a vision for a Christian radio station in the Hudson Valley.

They hired Sam Mason as the first station manager, who spread the word by visiting area churches to get financial backing.

“The founding members of the board were waiting for approval from the FCC so that they could legally turn the station on,” VanKleeck said. “They had hoped that it would be in the fall of 1984. There were several delays, and, finally, the letter came in the mail that granted the approval.

“The staff and board gathered at the station and thought that it would be no better time than to turn it on that day. That was Jan. 9, 1985, in the middle of winter. Central Hudson didn’t have the power lines installed on the top of Overlook Mountain in Woodstock yet, so the board members took turns driving up the mountain on snowmobiles with fuel for the generator for the first several months.”

Now, in partnership with Northwestern Media, which operates stations on 105 signals in 13 states, VanKleeck expects to reach even more people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

On a recent weekday, she noted that listeners were streaming Sound of Life from East Java, Indonesia; the Czech Republic; Caracas, Venezuela; Brazil, Argentina and across the



United States from Los Angeles to Tennessee.

VanKleeck said being a part of the radio station’s growth over the decades has both broadened her skill set and shown her that all things are possible with God.

“I’ve learned so much from technology to teamwork to leadership, and a lot about myself reacting to good times and struggles,” she said. “I’m encouraged daily by what God does through this organization that none of us could do individually.

“We have a saying: ‘The right song at the right time.’ It’s not that we plan, but God plans for each

person who needs to have something ‘spoken’ into their lives. When I began working at the Sound of Life almost 39 years ago, I just knew that it was important for people to be able to hear this faith-based music, and I wanted to be part of it. I didn’t know the myriad ways that God would use that in people’s lives.”

The Sound of Life Radio Network, located at 507 Hurley Ave. in Hurley, can be reached at (845) 336-6199 or soundoflife.org.

Anniversaries:

50 Years

Mohonk Mountain House

45 Years

Ulster Federal Credit Union

40 Years

RBT CPAs, LLP

20 Years

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UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

Tuesday May 20 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

**Chamber Breakfast Meeting
Inaugural Customer Experience Awards
Honorees/Speakers Frank Guido & Tom Smiley**

The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus
503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$35 Members-PrePay • \$40 Members-At Door • \$45 Non-Members
Sponsor: Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union

Thursday May 22 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer @ Bank of Greene County

2 Miron Lane | Kingston NY
There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members.
Reservations are required.
Sponsor: Bank of Greene County

Wednesday June 4 | 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 Members to attend. Reservations required.
Sponsor: Hudson Valley Credit Union

Tuesday June 10 | 5:30 - 8:30 pm

**Leadership Ulster Celebration
Alumni Hall of Fame Ceremony**

Honoring Hall of Fame Inductees
Sean DuBois | Kevin McLaren | Jenn Zell
This event is open to the public
Wiltwyck Golf Club | 404 Steward Lane | Kingston, NY
Tickets \$85 per person | Cocktails 5:30 pm | Dinner 6:30 pm

Thursday June 12 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

**Chamber Breakfast Meeting
Dr. Jonah Schenker, Ulster BOCES District Superintendent**

Wiltwyck Golf Club
404 Steward Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$35 Members-PrePay • \$40 Members-At Door • \$45 Non-Members
Sponsor: WMCHealth | HealthAlliance Hospital

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

ChamberNews

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For information on
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When You Simply Want It Gone *Simply Gone Mobile Dumpsters Can Help*

Robert Sykes had no idea when he purchased a mobile dumpster for his personal use as a homeowner and landlord that it would one day launch a business.

A former First Sergeant with the Town of Ulster Police Department, Sykes was soon renting out the dumpster at \$100 a clip to contractor friends. He figured he could make twice as much if he had two dumpsters, so he purchased another one "and it just grew from there."

Today, the owner of Simply Gone Mobile Dumpsters has 18 dumpsters and a thriving company offering dumpster rentals and junk removal.

"I saw the need in the market and the potential, so I grew the business," Sykes said. "I did it nights and weekends while I was working at the police department starting it 2017, and I grew it slowly and organically. It was a fun hobby, but then it grew into a business."

Sykes never took on any debt and built the business to the point he decided to retire in 2023 after 20 years as a cop. He had started on the desk at as a mere 18-year-old.

Sykes said Chamber Vice President Jess Davis urged him to join the Chamber several times, but he worried he might get too busy. He not only joined but is now part of Leadership Ulster, the Chamber's leadership development program.

"Joining the Chamber was the best thing I ever did for my business," Sykes said. "As far as networking and introductions, it's just a wonderful organization. The Chamber has been great.



and 30 yards) and the cleanup crew. The company also offers curbside pickup.

Simply Gone Mobile Dumpsters, which is based in Port Ewen, has two trucks and is looking to add a third. The company also has two drivers, two laborers and Sykes as employees.

Sykes said being in leadership with the Ulster Police Department taught him discipline and other skills that he has used in business.

"The Chamber is what you make of it. The more you put in, the more you get out of it. The more people you meet, the more warm introductions you can get. It's a great networking organization."

Sykes said the target customers for his firm are contractors, who use him regularly, and homeowners, landlords and property managers just looking to get rid of refuse.

Real estate professionals also seek him out and Sykes said he has two laborers on payroll who can help clean out a dwelling when someone passes away. He can provide both the dumpsters (ranging from 10, 15

"Managing isn't new to me," he said. "I'm just managing my own stuff now and it's fun. As far as being reliable, on time, and honest, those are keys to success that were instilled in me."

The company is also one with a big heart for giving back. Sykes said he sponsors and donates to Mentor Me of Ulster County, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ulster County, the YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County and the Benedictine Health Foundation.

"I'm just a local homegrown guy, not a big corporate entity," Sykes said. "The community keeps me busy, so I like to support them as well."

Simply Gone Mobile Dumpsters, located at 82 North Court in Port Ewen, can be reached at (845) 399-0934 or simplygonemobiledumpsters.com.

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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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April 30, 2025
Mariner's Harbor
1 Broadway
Kingston, NY



Mixer Host Mariner's Harbor Owner Sal Guido (center) and Staff.



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Stephen Bailer (American Heating and Cooling), John Burlingham (American Solutions for Business), Maureen Brivett (Women's Enterprise Development Center), and Jenna Kelly (Ethan Allen Workforce Solutions).



Christa Simon, Tonya McCaughey, and Brandi Rider (all with Rhinebeck Bank).



Adi Pal and Urvi Arora (both with Palindrome), Scott Williams (Upstate Studio), and Lea Garnier (Sage Academy of Sound).



Jess Davis (Ulster Chamber), Lee Molyneaux (Green Heat), Frank Guido (Frank Guido's Little Italy), and Bruce Katz (Bounce Sports & Entertainment Center).

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Rinkesh Patel - Owner
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Highland, NY 12528
Lauren Miller - Worker / Owner
www.foundandfixedhv.com
 Category: Furniture Restoration
 Description: *Found & Fixed is a worker-owned co-op in Highland that specializes in repairing, refinishing, and re-imagining vintage furniture. We love investing in the future by repairing the past, and bringing inspiration and joy to shopping second hand. Most commonly, we work with clients on updating pieces they have in their home that no longer fit their needs. Furniture we have already restored and pieces ready for your own customization are available at our store in Highland and at our booth at Red Owl in Kingston.*

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 900 Ulster Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
Heidi Johnson - Partner
frugalfabrics.org
 Category: Retail
 Description: *Creative reuse shop for sewists and yarn-crafters. Sale of re-homed fabric and yarn, as well as workshops, classes and weekly support sessions.*

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Noa Simons - CEO & Co-founder
goodbread.net
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 Description: *GoodBread is a relationship-first lending platform built for small business owners who want more than just capital. We combine your personal story with data to offer fair, fast, and flexible funding helping build the bridge to long-term growth. Our process starts with the BOSS Index™, a quick personality assessment that helps you understand your business mindset. We're here to help you grow, not just get by, because we believe small businesses are the backbone of thriving communities. Let's build something better, together.*

KINGSTON VETERANS ASSOCIATION
Kingston, NY 12401
William Forte - Chairman
www.kingstonvets.org
 Category: Non-Profit Organizations
 Description: *Members of KVA include VFW 1386, American Legion Post 150, Seabees Island x9, Marine Corps League, and Viet Nam Veterans of America.*

NORTHWESTERN MUTUAL
 2515 South Rd, Suite 201
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
Kevin Caccomo - Managing Director
poughkeepsie.nm.com
 Category: Financial Services
 Description: *Financial Planning including life, disability and Long-Term Care Insurance.*

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 3438 Main Street
Stone Ridge, NY 12484
Urvi Arora – Partner
 Category: Real Estate
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PLANET WOODSTOCK MUSIC
 1112 Morton Blvd., Suite 5
Kingston, NY 12401
Dustin Bryant - Co-Owner
planetwoodstock.net
 Category: Musical Instruments/Instruction
 Description: *Step into Planet Woodstock, your local musical galaxy where sound, soul, and creativity collide! Whether you're hunting for that vintage vinyl gem, dreaming of your first guitar solo, or looking to jam under the lights, this is your universe. We've got everything from guitars and ukes to banjos and bows, plus all the accessories to trick out your tone. Need a fix? Our string instrument repair crew has your back—quick, careful, and always in tune. Live music? Yep—we've got a full sound stage for live shows, open mics, and spontaneous sonic adventures. Lessons? Absolutely.*

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 1200 State Route 213
Kingston, NY 12401
Sarah Kopczynski - Owner & CEO
thedesignery.com/locations/hudson-valley/
 Categories: Cabinetry; Home Improvement
 Description: *At The Designery Hudson Valley, we specialize in elevating living spaces through expert remodeling and high-quality craftsmanship. Our services encompass the following, offering products like cabinets, flooring, countertops, and accessories. Kitchen Remodeling: Creating functional and stylish kitchens tailored to your culinary needs. Bathroom Remodeling: Designing serene and modern bathrooms for relaxation and comfort. Closet Remodeling: Optimizing storage with custom closet solutions that blend form and function. New Construction Collaborations: Partnering with trusted contractors to bring your dream home to life from the ground up. We work closely with your chosen contractor or can connect you with our network of reputable builders in the Hudson Valley. Our commitment is to deliver durable and beautiful home solutions, featuring top-tier cabinets, flooring, countertops, and more. Dedicated to exceptional customer service and offering affordable luxury, The Designery HV is proud to serve homeowners, contractors, and builders throughout the Hudson Valley.*

For information on Chamber Membership,
email Jess Davis at
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