

# A Matter Of Character

## Motivational Speaker Jay Rifenbary Breakfast Guest

Fall is here, a season that internationally known speaker and author Jay Rifenbary believes is a good time for serious reflection on personal and professional growth.

The Kingston native will be appearing at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus, 503 Washington Ave., Kingston, on Sept. 25 as the Chamber Breakfast speaker to challenge and inspire attendees to embrace new beginnings as effective, relatable and authentic leaders. Nuvance Health, proudly joining Northwell Health is sponsoring the breakfast from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m.

"It goes beyond a business presentation," said Rifenbary, a professional speaker, trainer and consultant, who for over 30 years has brought his inspirational message to audiences across the United States, Europe, Asia and Australia.

"My major focus is sharing applicable ideas in building an organizational, professional and personal culture of character and accountability. I want people to be inspired to take a step back and reflect on the principles of character and bring that awareness back to their organizations and their individual lives. It is very heartfelt and will provide applications to take back to family as well. It will also provide an opportunity to reflect on the core values that define one's character and how they would like to be remembered."

Rifenbary, author of three books, including the international best-seller "No Excuse!—Incorporating Core Values, Accountability and Balance into Your Life and Career," said he will draw from his writings, particularly what

he calls the "triple crown of leadership."

"It's tough to argue the importance of accountability and core values," he said. "They're not just fluffy words on the wall in the workplace. They weave through every element of our lives, but another big part of it is the role of vulnerability in leadership. Vulnerability, plus humility, plus transparency equals authenticity. Showing your humanness is not a weakness."

Rifenbary added that bringing humanness back into the workplace creates a "more impactful level of authentic leadership," which inspires others to feel included and valued.

"Vulnerability, humility and transparency enhance professional and personal relationships and open greater avenues to more effective communication, which, in turn, leads to trust and organizational health," he said.

Rifenbary, who now resides in Saratoga Springs, is president of Rifenbary Training and Development. He holds a bachelor's degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point with a concentration in nuclear physics.

As a former airborne ranger, military commander, sales professional, corporate manager and entrepreneur, Rifenbary brings a unique background of interpersonal skills and business experience to each of his training and speaking engagements, according to his website, rifenbary.com.

He was named the Vistage Speaker of the Year in 2017 and the inaugural recipient of the 2022 Speaker Impact Award.

This won't be Rifenbary's first appearance



Jay Rifenbary

at a Chamber event. He was the featured breakfast speaker in 2017 and 2021 and said it's always a pleasure to reconnect to his Kingston roots.

"I grew up right off Lucas Avenue. I still have a lot of friends there and a lot of good memories of Kingston," he said. "It's always good to come back home."

As for his upcoming presentation, Rifenbary said he hopes Chamber members will come to the breakfast with great expectations.

"One goal is to reinforce for everyone the importance of personal character, as I believe it is needed now more than ever. Fall is a great time to get back on track, kick off the autumn on a high note, inspire and touch hearts," he

September  
Breakfast  
September 25  
7:30-9:00 am

The Venue Uptown at the  
Best Western Plus  
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said.

*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.*

## Northwell Health/Nuvance Health Is September's Breakfast Sponsor

Nuvance Health joins Northwell Health to help build a healthier future for the Hudson Valley

Earlier this year, Nuvance Health officially joined Northwell Health, beginning a new chapter in care for our communities across New York and Connecticut.

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lies we serve every day.

Vassar Brothers Medical Center in Poughkeepsie continues to be a regional leader in advanced care, with specialties in cardiology, oncology and neurology. Its expert teams and modern facilities help patients get the care they need close to home. The hospital also offers a wide range of outpatient services, making it easier to access care without a hospital stay.

Northern Dutchess Hospital in Rhinebeck complements this with a more intimate setting and strong focus on wellness. Known for its family-centered birthing center and comprehensive orthopedic care, the hospital provides personalized treatment that reflects the heart of our mission.

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across the region, from routine check-ups at new primary care locations to specialized treatment at Vassar Brothers Medical Center. Nuvance Health, now part of Northwell Health, is here to support your health journey with care that's thoughtful, personal and always focused on you.

This integration also means more access to experienced doctors, nurses and specialists across a wide network of hospitals, urgent care centers and outpatient locations. It's about making care more convenient and coordinated, whether you need a same-day appointment, follow-up care or a referral to a trusted expert. And with strong ties to leading medical schools and research institutes, we're working to bring the latest advances in medicine directly to our communities.

## Cornell Creative Arts Center Hosts Mixer

### Midtown Kingston Is The Center Of Arts

A vibrant atmosphere matters when a bunch of vibrant business owners get together to network and have fun. That's why the Sept. 17 Mixer at the Cornell Creative Arts Center is the perfect stage for all that energy and enthusiasm.

"The Cornell Creative Arts Center in Kingston is more than just an arts venue—it's a vibrant community hub where creativity meets inclusivity," said Jo Ann Campise, director of the center at 129 Cornell St. "Dedicated to providing access to arts education and support across a broad spectrum of disciplines, Cornell Creative Arts Center serves a diverse and underserved population in an environment that promotes equality, unity and inspiration."

Be sure to bring plenty of business cards and get set to mingle at this light and airy space that holds a world of possibilities for aspiring artists or those with a passion for creating. CDPHP is sponsoring the Mixer from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Campise described the Cornell Creative Arts Center as a place where "art comes to life," with a wide range of programs designed for children and adults.

"From drawing and painting to ceramics, dance, digital and mixed media, the Cornell Creative Arts Center offers something for everyone," she said.

The multifunctional arts facility offers a variety of year-round workshops, gallery exhibitions and community events. Campise said visitors can explore the arts at their own pace or participate in structured classes led by experienced artists.

In recent months, the center offered a range of lessons,

including tattoo illustration, kite-making, paint-your-own-pottery classes, a free Earth Day event for children, a digital summer program and belly dance classes.

Campise said she hopes to connect Chamber members to programming and get the word out about Cornell's community-centered approach to the arts.

"Cornell Creative Arts Center is thrilled to welcome Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce members for a lively evening of networking and discovery," she said. "Guests can expect a warm and inviting atmosphere, an inside look at the creative spaces and a chance to mingle with local professionals and artists. It's a unique opportunity to connect, collaborate and see firsthand how the arts and business communities can support each other."

Chamber guests will get a chance to tour all three gallery spaces, which will include sculptures by Aleksandra Scepanovic, drawings by Tafari Saunders and paintings and mixed media by Jackie Oster, Kate Masters and Sylvia Mueller of the Circle 24 Collective.

And when it comes to the little extras, Campise said she's got all the bases covered. That includes complimentary refreshments and entertainment by Phat Inc., a collective of Bard College musicians performing a unique blend of jazz, funk, soul and rock.

"The center is no stranger to hosting large gatherings," Campise said. "Its flexible event spaces can accommodate anywhere from 20 to 300 guests, depending on the event. Whether



you're planning a corporate retreat, private party, or gallery reception, Cornell's spacious layout and welcoming ambiance make it a top choice for professional and creative events alike."

*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-*

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# Cathy Hobbs, TV Celeb, Founder of Highland Passive House, Named Entrepreneur Of The Year

Cathy Hobbs, founder of the Highland Passive House, an eco-friendly 12,500-square-foot multi-use warehouse used for home staging, interior design services, short-term rental design and turn-key home furnishing packages for vacation homes, has been named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Hobbs, an author and five-time Emmy Award-winning interior designer and home staging expert, along with seven others will be feted at the annual Ulster County Business Recognition Awards Dinner at Wiltwyck Golf Club on Oct. 23. The awards recognize Ulster County businesses that are leaders in their sectors, have achieved outstanding results or shown dedication and commitment to furthering business and the quality of life in Ulster County.

Hobbs, a former New York City-based newscaster turned TV host, and interior designer relocated her home-staging company, Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, to a four-acre parcel in the town of Lloyd. Hobbs and her team of designers work with trade professionals, short-term rental hosts and homeowners to elevate their properties or attract a wider audience by standing out in ever-changing competitive markets.

Highland Passive House, the first multi-use passive warehouse in North America, also provides furniture and prop rentals for TV and film productions in New York City and the Hudson Valley.

Hobbs said she created Highland Passive House as a legacy to inspire entrepreneurs to think sustainably. The town of Lloyd resident said she is honored to be named Entrepreneur of the Year.

“I don’t think there’s any bigger honor than

to be recognized by one’s peers,” she said. “To win a business award, it says to me that all my decades of hard work and dedication to grow and be the best enterprise I could be, just feels really good.”

“I could have built my headquarters anywhere, but I love Ulster County, and I’m super excited to get this honor at this point, where we’re really just opening the home staging and design center.”

Also in the spotlight at this year’s event is Stewart’s Shops, which was named Business of the Year. The family-owned chain of convenience stores is known for its high-quality products, including award-winning dairy, coffee, bread, soda, food-to-go and grocery items.

Founded in 1945 by the Dake brothers in Ballston Spa, Stewart’s Shops employs more than 5,000 people and operates 400-plus stores across New York, Vermont and New Hampshire.

Last year, Stewart’s and the Dake family donated more than \$210,000 to schools, fire departments, libraries, children’s organizations and other charities throughout Ulster County.

KDD Marketing, a full-service boutique marketing firm in Kingston specializing in website design, graphic design, marketing and branding services, was named Small Business of the Year.

Founded in 2009 by Katy Dwyer, the company rebranded as KDD Marketing in 2024 to reflect the broad spectrum of services the company provides.

“For me, running this business is all about the people,” said Dwyer, who has led marketing seminars for the Chamber. “I am privileged to be able to support and champion the people on my team as well as all our wonderful clients,

so I’m beyond honored that people in our community are throwing some love our way with this award.”

Other honorees include:

- A Day Away Kayak Rentals, a paddle sport livery located at the Rondout Creek, which was named Tourism Business of the Year. Owner Jesse Hicks started A Day Away Kayak Rentals in 2010 when he was just 14. The business has grown to over 100 boats and rents out single-seat and tandem kayaks, canoes, electric boats and stand-up paddle boards.

- RUPCO (Rural Ulster Preservation Co.), the region’s leading provider and advocate for affordable housing, will receive the Commitment to the Community Award, given annually to an outstanding not-for-profit organization. RUPCO was established in 1981 to create homes, support people and improve communities. Over the years, it has spearheaded several housing development projects, including the most recent at the former Quality Inn in Kingston, which will create 83 units of affordable housing.

- Eng’s Chinese Restaurant, founded in 1927 by Jimmi Eng and his son, Paul, Eng’s at 304 Wall St., will receive the Heritage Award. Eng’s was Kingston’s first Chinese restaurant and among the first in upstate New York. As the restaurant prospered and outgrew that space, the family relocated to 297 Wall St. before settling at its current location at 726 Broadway, where it’s been since 1966. In February 2025, the restaurant reopened under new leadership after a pandemic-related hiatus. The new owner, Tom Sit, had been Eng’s chef for 50 years.

- Dave Amato, a Kingston native and successful restaurateur, will be honored with



Cathy Hobbs

the Len Cane Heart of Ulster County Award. Amato has supported the community through charitable giving, fundraising and random acts of kindness. He is the owner of The Cornell Restaurant + Bar (formerly Ole Savannah) and Brickmen Kitchen + Bar in Kingston.

- Wayne Winkler, President and Chief Executive Officer at the Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union, was named the 2025 Chamber Champion. Winkler has been a staunch supporter of the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce. Under his leadership, the credit union has been one of the Chamber’s major corporate supporters and has sponsored numerous Chamber networking Mixers and breakfast meetings.

*The Business Recognition Awards Celebration will take place Thursday, October 23, at the Wiltwyck Golf Club, 404 Steward Lane, Kingston, NY. Cocktails will be served at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and the awards presentation following at 6:30 p.m. For sponsorship opportunities, contact Chamber President Ward Todd at (845) 338-5100 or Ward@UlsterChamber.org.*

## Crafted With Passion In Marlboro Hazel Rose Baking Co. Feels Like Home

While most brides-to-be are fixated on tying up loose ends in the weeks leading up to their weddings, Jordan Polumbo-Murtagh was consumed with churning out pies and cheesecakes.

After all, she was getting set to open Hazel Rose Baking Co., her Marlboro-based dream bakery on Nov. 5, 2021—three weeks before marrying her dream guy, Jerry Murtagh.

“It was probably the craziest time of our lives,” said Polumbo-Murtagh, who grew up in a tightly knit Italian family in Marlboro. “We were so worried about how many pies and desserts to make for opening day. Everybody had been waiting for us to open our doors, so it was a very busy time. When we quietly announced on Instagram that we were opening, we were flooded.”

Hazel Rose Baking Co., a warm and welcoming space with seating for 40, features an assortment of handmade cookies, scones, muffins, turnovers, cupcakes and croissants. Polumbo-Murtagh, a graduate of SUNY Delhi’s culinary arts program, and her pastry chef, Diana Matias, specialize in seasonal pies

and cheesecakes (caramel apple crumb is all the rage).

Open for breakfast and lunch Wednesday through Sunday, Hazel Rose has built quite a following among locals, particularly families with children and teachers who work at nearby schools.

Popular breakfast items include sandwiches, omelettes, French toast and breakfast bowls like the to-die-for “OG,” a hefty serving of eggs over potatoes with crispy bacon and cheddar cheese.

For lunch, cheeseburgers are on the menu as well as Philly cheesesteak and the ever-popular “Mama’s Chicken Salad,” made by Polumbo-Murtagh’s mother, Cathy, who co-owns the bakery.

Four years into her marriage and business, Polumbo-Murtagh calls herself a lucky woman for having such a helpful husband and supportive community.

“I always wanted to have my own place, and my husband has been an integral part of Hazel Rose,” said Polumbo-Murtagh.

“When we looked at locations, we had

checked out one in Highland, but my dream location was a spot in Marlboro that was a former bakery with its own parking lot,” she said. “My husband walked into that building the next day and asked to talk to the landlord. He said, ‘We’d like to rent this place.’”

The couple signed the lease in April 2021 and set out to renovate the 2,000-square-foot space, with Murtagh, a handyman who works full time for the town of Marlboro Highway Department, taking the lead role.

“He built just about everything you see here, including our front counters, which he made from scratch. We bought old tables, and he sanded them and made them look gorgeous. We call ourselves the ‘Chip and Joanna of Marlboro’ after Chip and Joanna Gaines of the

TV series ‘Fixer Upper.’”

Opening a business during the days when COVID-19 was still a thing proved challenging because of the ongoing supply chain disruptions, so the goal of debuting that summer was dashed.

But the community waited with anticipation as Polumbo-Murtagh and her team worked diligently. Today, Hazel Rose teems with life, including Polumbo-Murtagh’s new baby daughter, and loyal patrons, who simply can’t get enough of the food and sweet ambiance.

“We have people who come in three to five times a week,” she said. “People love to come here with their kids. Our counter server,

*(Continued on next page)*

## UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

**Wednesday September 10 | Noon - 4:00 pm**

**29th Annual Buy Local Expo**  
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**Friday September 12 | 6:00 - 9:00 pm**

**YUP NEXTGEN Awards Ceremony**  
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 Frank Guido’s Little Italy | 14 Thomas Street | Kingston, NY  
 Tickets \$55/pp  
 For more info and to purchase your tickets visit:  
[www.ulsterchamber.org/yup](http://www.ulsterchamber.org/yup)

**Wednesday September 17 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm**

**Networking Mixer @**  
**Cornell Creative Arts Center**  
 129 Cornell Street | Kingston, NY  
 There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members.  
 Reservations are required.  
**Sponsor: CDPHP**

**Thursday September 25 | 7:30 - 9:00 am**

**Chamber Breakfast Meeting**  
**Jay Rifenburg**  
**Leadership & Character Development Speaker**  
 The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus  
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**More Info and Registration [UlsterChamber.org](http://UlsterChamber.org)**  
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(Continued from previous page)

Shawna O'Dell, is the first friendly face everyone sees when they come to Hazel. We're a very family friendly place." Polumbo-Murtagh, who had previously worked at local farms and restaurants, said one of the things customers can count on is product consistency.

"I've been to many places, and sometimes, it's a different flavor every time you go. Here, you're going to get that same delicious product whenever you come. I always want people to feel like every treat is crafted with passion and every visit feels like you're coming home," she said.

Hazel Rose is open Wednesday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

*Hazel Rose Baking Co., located at 1447 Route 9W, Suite 2, in Marlboro, can be reached at (845) 236-9512 or [hazelrosebakingcompanyinc.com](http://hazelrosebakingcompanyinc.com).*



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 St. Catherine's Center for Children  
 The Broadway Bubble / Community Hub  
 The Reis Group  
 Town of Saugerties  
 Ulster County Community Action  
 Ulster County Habitat for Humanity  
 Ulster County Office of Employment & Training  
 Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency  
 Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce  
 Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation  
 Ulster Strong  
 Wiltwyck Golf Club  
 Women's Enterprise Development Center  
 Young Ulster Professionals (YUP)

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC | FREE ADMISSION | FREE PARKING**  
**YOU COULD WIN A FREE 55" LED 4K ULTRA HD TV!**

*(No purchase necessary)*



Presenting a complimentary evening workshop

# KNOW YOUR WORTH

## Salary Negotiation for Women

**Wednesday, October 1, 6 to 8p.m.**

Thank you to our host/sponsor: **Wiltwyck Golf Club**, 404 Steward Lane, Kingston



**Sue Diamond, MSW, CFSW**  
 Licensed Insurance Broker  
 Entrepreneur | Speaker | Author



**Kate Waage, MBA, SHRM-CP, CICP**  
 Black Creek Consulting  
 Ulster Leadership '07

**Admission is free, but pre-registration is required.**  
 Hors d'oeuvres and cash bar available. Donations appreciated.

**To Register: Scan the QR code**  
 or visit <https://tinyurl.com/Know-Your-Worth-Workshop>.



*Women in Leadership is presented by Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce Foundation*

214 Fair Street, Kingston, NY 12401 - 845-338-5100, x6 - [UlsterChamberFoundation.org](http://UlsterChamberFoundation.org) — [su@ulsterchamber.org](mailto:su@ulsterchamber.org)