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Breathing new life into the community

BY AUTUMN SCHANIL

Some of the greatest actions remembered in history were achieved because trust, belief, or reliability were instilled into a cause, or a person.

Walter A. Rhulen Awardees Sims Foster and Kirsten Harlow Foster hold trust at the forefront of what they do each day, and for this reason their business excellence, service to humanity, and their commitment to community stands out.

"There's a line in the Dao that states: 'If you don't trust someone, you make them untrustworthy,'" Sims said, putting his glasses down on the table, "and everyone is worthy of being trusted until they prove that they aren't."

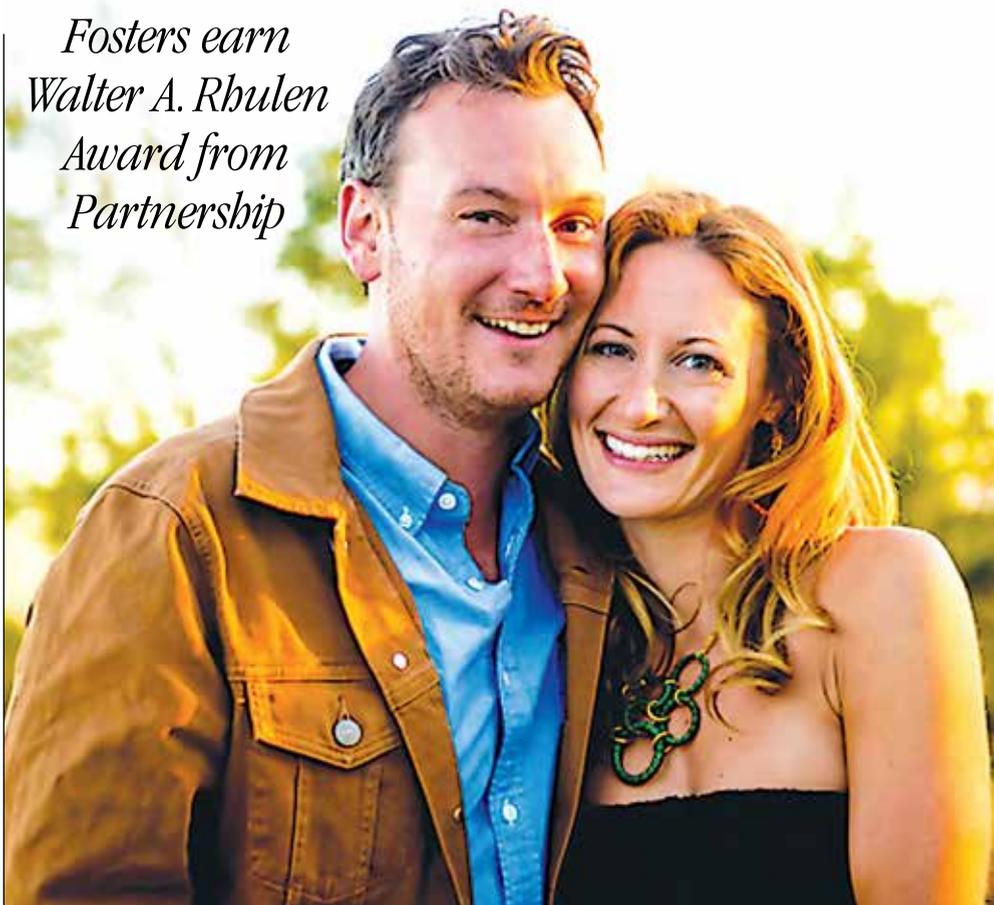
Born and raised in Livingston Manor, Sims, along with wife Kirsten, always had a desire to help revitalize his hometown, and with the Foster family line dating back to the early 1900s in Livingston Manor, that was the first place they landed after having active careers that took them to New York City and beyond.

"I guess I look at it as two chapters," stated Sims. "The first chapter was opening a coffee shop with my brother in 2002 that ran for eight years, followed by Resort in 2005, and finally The Lazy Beagle, that unfortunately we lost to a fire.

"The second chapter, the chapter we're in now, really started with The Arnold House in 2014," he continued. "Kirsten and I weren't really sure how it would play out but we started to see new momentum happening in the area, and we also saw that what we were doing was really starting to attract new guests to the area."

After The Arnold House, they opened The North Branch Inn in North Branch, Nine River Road in Callicoon, and The DeBruce - named one of the best new hotels in the world by Conde Nast Traveler - also in Livingston Manor. They currently have about 125 people, a majority of which are local, on their payroll and with their Kenoza Lake property opening

Fosters earn Walter A. Rhulen Award from Partnership



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sims and Kirsten Harlow Foster are the 2019 Walter A. Rhulen Award winners for the Sullivan County Partnership.

in the near future, officially named Kenoza Hall, they're expecting that number to increase.

They also recently acquired two restaurants - The Cabin at Hessinger-Lare in Jeffersonville and the well-known Piccolo

Paese in Liberty.

"The Cabin and Piccolo are both Sullivan County institutions and we wanted to do our part to try to keep them going."

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Looking Back.... Moving Forward

To the People:

As our Partnership staff continues to do what we can to keep our recent success in Sullivan County going, we of course hope that you are experiencing some of the good fortune that it seems everyone is experiencing in Sullivan County. Construction of new facilities continues, our unemployment hovers at 3.3% and our labor force has reached 40,000, the highest it has ever been!

With new projects approved and in waiting, representing housing, healthcare, hospitality and manufacturing, the future, at least in the immediate, looks very promising. Once again we approach our annual meeting, but this year marks a truly remarkable achievement.

For 25 years businesses have supported the organization with the thought that our work would truly help make a difference, help Sullivan County businesses

grow and by extension create a dynamic economic environment that continues to expand and uncover new opportunities.

I believe it is fitting that this economic success coincides with our 25th anniversary. When I took a hard look back at two-and-a-half decades of effort, I was pleasantly reminded of how many businesses we have helped – large and small – the economic development strategies we have advanced, the struggles as well as the victories all culminating in where we are today; with a brighter outlook toward our future and the possibilities of much more to come.

We are proud of our award winners Sims & Kirsten Foster, and Michael Zalkin who share roots right here in Sullivan County. These Walter A. Rhulen and Distinguished Service award winners underscore a trend we have been seeing recently, where people are coming back to the county and adding to the ingredients that are now making Sullivan County truly a place to



CEO/President Marc Baez

work, live and a grow.

Today there are more jobs available than we have people to hire, a far cry from where we were just several years ago. Not only are new projects coming in from the outside, long standing businesses are expanding and rebuilding as well. Of course, the Partnership is not responsible for all this activity, but we have had a major hand in many of the successes we see today.

While I know this is only the beginning with much more work to be done, it is nice to look back on where this organization began, how we have grown and where our future will take us. Looking back, twenty-five years is a special milestone. Moving forward, here's to twenty-five more.

Sincerely,

Marc Baez
President, Sullivan County Partnership



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FOSTERS, from front page

said Sims. “We bought them both for what they are, not to try to make them a version of what we think they should be.”

Through opening their four small hotels and restaurants, the Fosters created their dynamic company, Foster Supply Hospitality. With Kirsten’s background as an economist and her work as Senior Policy Advisor at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and Sims’ long-time work as a hospitality executive working with some of the most noted chefs in the world, Foster Supply is expanding more than ever.

“There is no magical place that you go that people are lining up at your doorstep asking you for a job,” Sims laughed. “To say that you can’t find good people in our county just perpetuates a negative narrative. Some of the most amazing people have come through our doors to work with us, and of course, others didn’t work out. For us it’s so important to tell the people we’re hiring our why, our purpose, our mission.

“Of course, people need work, they need to support their families or pay their rent, but telling them our why and putting our trust in them, allows them to connect with what we’re doing,” he

added. “It allows them to decide if it’s something they want to be a part of.”

Sims continued to talk about community initiatives they’ve worked on in the area, and one in particular really brought a smile to his face – A Single Bite.

A Single Bite is a non-profit program to help change the way kids think about food, and about choice, one single bite at a time.

This is the fourth year the program has been in place as a part of the 8th Grade Curriculum at the Livingston Manor Central School, where Sims is an alum, and where his father was a teacher for years.

“The whole purpose of it is to make kids aware of the difference between real food and processed food,” Sims explained.

The Fosters worked closely with the Food & Nutrition Teacher and built a four-part interaction program that takes place over the course of a school semester. That way the 8th grade class can have a more immer-

sive experience.

“I love what Michelle Obama did as far as bringing awareness to having the White House garden but I thought it was so off on having any lasting effect, because unless you grow up being a part of the garden – weeding the garden, harvesting its produce – it just doesn’t work. It needs to be simple,” said Sims. “There is one rule of the program – that the kids take a single bite. They don’t have to like it, but they at least have to take one bite. It’s their choice if they like it or not, and either is fine.”

The program begins with two classes with a Chef from Foster Supply Hospitality that introduces the concept of real food versus fake food, and underlines that we all make a choice each day as to what we feed our bodies. The students then get to sit down at one of Foster Supply’s restaurants, and when possible, go on a farm tour of one of the local farms where the Foster

Supply restaurants source their produce. The program finishes with a class trip to New York City for a second meal with a celebrity chef, talking experience and passion of food.

“Every child should have the opportunity to know that they have a choice, regardless of their backgrounds,” Sims said with sincerity. “My father dedicated his life to the community and the children he taught. They’re the next generation. They may not reap benefits from this program this week, next month, or even in the next year. But something they experience taking a single bite of something good that they’ve never tried before, might be what triggers that ‘aha’ moment years down the road.

“Being awarded with the Rhulen Award obviously has a lot of meaning and it’s wonderful to be recognized,” Sims added. “We’re humbled and honored, and we hope to keep growing, along with the community that we admire so much.”

SC Partnership President and CEO Marc Baez said, “The Fosters are showing the county, the region, and the world how one can take an existing business or location that may be going through a difficult time and breathe new life into it at the highest level.”

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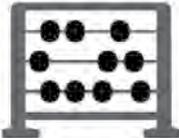
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Family roots buried deep in the community

STORY AND PHOTO BY AUTUMN SCHANIL

Each year the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development honors an individual with the Distinguished Service Award for his or her outstanding service and dedication to the 25-year-old organization. With family roots buried deep in the community since the heyday of the hotel era, 2019 awardee Michael Zalkin knows first hand the pull of wanting the county to succeed.

Zalkin was born and raised in Woodridge and spent most of his summers at his grandparents' hotels, eventu-

Please see **ZALKIN**, page 8E

Michael Zalkin returned to Sullivan County following a career as an assistant college professor to open up a successful resort in Woodridge – Jellystone Campground. Today his interests lie in helping to make his community stronger.





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ZALKIN, from page 7E

ally working as a teenager on the hotel property that his parents converted into a campground named Birchwood Acres.

"My grandparents had two hotels," explained Zalkin. "One was in Loch Sheldrake and the other one was on the grounds of what is now Jellystone in Greenfield Park. Shortly after my parents took over the hotel in Greenfield Park, it burned down, but a few years later someone suggested they turn it into a campground, so that's what they did. They started really simple but then began to add on to it," Zalkin continued, "and as it grew they decided to change the name from Birchwood Acres Campground to Birchwood Acres Camping Resort."

During this time, Zalkin graduated from Fallsburg High School and went on to study and earn his Bachelor of Economics from Ithaca College, followed by his Masters and Ph.D from the University of Massachusetts. He later was involved in several years of economic research in Nicaragua before becoming an Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Notre Dame from 1985

to 1990.

"In 1987 my Dad passed away," said Zalkin. "He was young, and so my mother was running the campground on her own."

"One day I was sitting at my desk at the University and I said to myself, 'I could keep doing this for the next 30 years and my stack of articles could be higher, or I could go back and take over the family business to see what I can do.'"

In 1990 Zalkin, his wife Martha, and their first child decided to move back and take over the campground, and to hopefully see it grow. From 1990-2013 Zalkin ran the family resort as President and Owner, eventually joining the Jellystone Franchise System, making the campground a Jellystone Park. The business won multiple awards like Rookie of the Year, Entrepreneur of the Year and the Camp-Resort of the Year. It was in this time that Zalkin also involved himself in the Sullivan County Partnership, the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, and the Sullivan County Visitors Association. He also became a

board member of his alma mater, Fallsburg Central, for 12 years and served four years each as the Vice President and President of the Board.

In 2013, when he decided to sell the family camping business to Sun Communities, he dedicated more of his time to his community and helping see things get off the ground within Sullivan County. Along with continuously overseeing real estate and other investments held in his own company Birchwood Lodge, Inc, he also serves as Chairman of the Partnership's Membership Committee.

"I think the Partnership is a really positive organization, and it's doing great things for Sullivan County," said Zalkin. "Not everything is

because of the Partnership obviously, there are a lot of small business owners out there who are working really hard to see their friends and their own communities make it," he stated, "but I think that the Partnership is a group of very forward looking business people who are really looking out, not just for their

own business to grow, but for the county itself to grow.

"Having been born and raised here, and having my family's business here forever, it's just amazing to see the county come up," smiled Zalkin.

"Michael has helped the Partnership evolve and has positioned the organization to better serve our members moving forward," said SC Partnership Board of Directors Chairman James Bates.

"One day I was sitting at my desk at the University and I said to myself, 'I could keep doing this for the next 30 years...or I could go back and take care of the family business.'"



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Visitors increasing and unemployment rate decreasing as the Sullivan Catskills adds new development

BY ROBERTA BYRON-LOCKWOOD
PRESIDENT/CEO

SULLIVAN CATSKILLS VISITORS ASSOCIATION

New data shows that the Catskills, especially the Sullivan Catskills are experiencing a substantial year over year increase in visitor numbers and new job growth. More progress is expected in 2020-2021.

In 2018, travelers spent \$1.5 billion in the Catskill Region with \$515 million of this expended in the Sullivan Catskills, a 14.5 percent increase over 2017.

The county's spending growth exceeds the other 3 counties in the Catskill Region with Ulster at 11 percent, Greene 8.4 percent and Delaware at 4.5 percent.

As new tourism developments emerge, the Sullivan Catskills job opportunities are expanding exponentially—with 18% of the workforce reliant on the tourism industry and unemployment at a 40-year all time low, with unemployment at 3.1



percent. March of 2019 shows there was 131 percent increase in leisure and hospitality jobs from 2016 to over 7,400 direct tourism jobs in 2019.

Were it not for tourism-generated state and local taxes, the average household in Sullivan County would have to pay an additional \$2,238 annually to maintain the same level of government services, this is an additional savings of \$316 from 2017.

The 2019 tourism statistics continue

the consistent upward momentum and record-breaking trends in incoming tourism and investment to the Sullivan Catskills. Much of this growth is because of the new and exciting things happening in our county and the proximity of where we are what sets us apart as one of the fastest growing and desired destinations in the world to visit.

- The opening of the Kartrite Resort & Indoor Waterpark, opened in Spring of 2019—adding to our suite of 4-5 star dis-

tinctive luxury resorts.

- New developments underway including The Eldred Preserve, Dream Hotels, Foster Supply Hospitality properties and Chatwal Lodge at the Chapin Estate (pictured) expected to open 2020-2021.

- The 50th anniversary of the original 1969 Woodstock Festival. Bethel Woods is celebrating this momentous golden anniversary with year-long events and programs.

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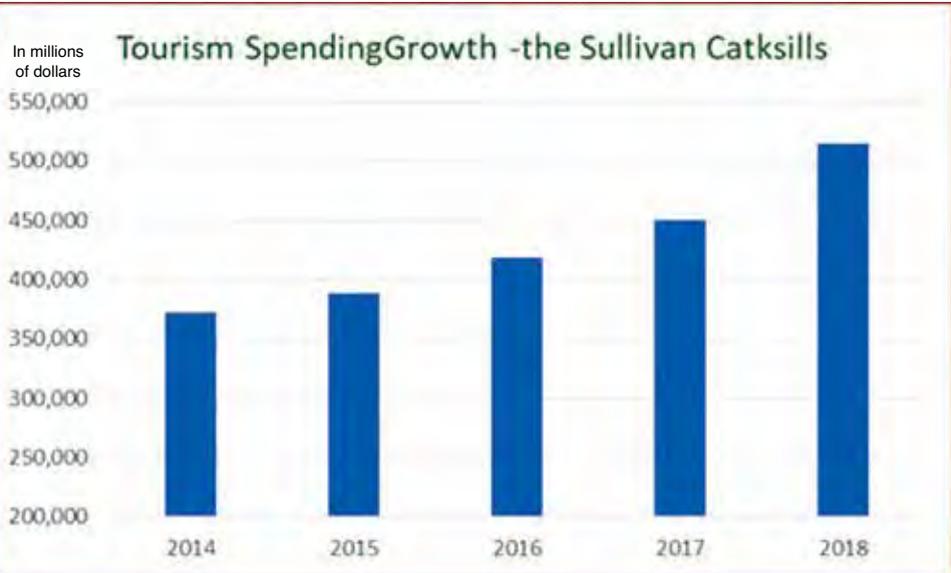
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• Our famous Dove Trail, adding to our communities' character and sense of place and pride. Many Dove Trail enthusiasts have revisited the Sullivan Catskills up to 7 times, just to finish the trail. Several member businesses stated they experienced up to a 50% increase in sales and visitors and claimed that this summer was their most profitable season in decades.

With all of this and the new proposed marketing initiatives for 2020 as well as press trips and familiarization tours

(guests will be from Australia, Austria, China, Germany and the UK) in the pipeline for October, we anticipate that Sullivan Catskills brand will be projected throughout the world. This will lead new visitors to our doorsteps while bringing new wealth and investment into our Sullivan Catskills.

As a result, our visitor spending numbers will shatter previous years' numbers.

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What's new, hot and fancy in Jeffersonville these days

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY KATHY DALY



Jeffersonville Baking Company will open its doors in November, according to Lauren Seikaly, who, along with her husband, also owns Tavern on Main and The Vintage House.

Looking for all the world like a big pink birthday cake, Jeffersonville's soon-to-be-bakery is presiding over a mini-boom in eateries and shops this season.

Vacationers from the nearby Villa Roma and as well as locals and others are delighted to discover new places to shop and dine as they await the grand opening of the Jeffersonville Baking Company on Main Street.

"Not many communities have what we have — the array of all these types of food," mused Jeffersonville Village Clerk Colleen Freitas. "When you think about it, we have Turkish and Greek cuisine at the landmark Ted's Restaurant, Brazilian at Samba, Italian at Michelangelo's. There's the Chinese Restaurant, and now Lorenzo's Bistro where you can find Spanish food."

Tavern on Main and down the road, the Stone Arch Inn, round out the eating opportunities close to Jeff, Freitas added.

Lorenzo's at 4889 Main St. opened in April and is drawing raves. For breakfast, French-pressed coffee is paired with dishes like "The

Irish," which is house-made crispy corned beef hash and sauerkraut with eggs and crostini. Lunch ranges from a hearty prime rib sandwich to a vegetarian caprese toast of avocado, tomato and fresh mozzarella drizzled with balsamic and pesto.

Tuesdays and Fridays offer evening selections: tacos on Tuesday, and "smokehoused" pulled pork, brisket, ribs and chicken on Friday evenings.

Maria and David Lorenzo are experts at serving up fine cuisine. Both took turns as executive chef for the Tennessean Lake Golf and Tennis Club in Roscoe.

But buying is the next best thing to eating, and Jeff now sports several new shops to browse. Added to Jeff Junction, the Secret Garden, Jeffersonville Hardware and the Auction Barn near the Sunoco Station is John Peglow's Neat Old Stuff, a consignment and auction house next door to the U.S. post office.

"I specialize in vintage lighting and stained glass" said Peglow, pointing to a stunning chandelier and to a concrete, 800-pound water fountain that features a woman pouring water into a birdbath. Wares from Neat Old Stuff range from expensive to very affordable.

Across the street from Peglow is the new Vintage House owned by Lauren Seikaly who, along with her husband, opened Tavern on Main in the fall of 2017. They are also working on their Jeffersonville Baking Company project on the site of the old Jay Epstein building at 4906 Main St. Grand opening for the bakery is expected to take place this November.

"We had a little set-back with the HVAC system," explained Seikaly.

For The Vintage House, Seikaly hired Megan Montenegro as manager and John Geiger and Michele Milner for behind the counter. The store features earrings and tee shirts from the 80s, kitchenware from the 70s, clothes from the 60s, records from the 50s, hats from the 40s, pictures from the 30s, letters from the 20s and books from the last century.

"It's really lovely that we have such a diverse group of customers who come in," said Seikaly. "We have little kids



The Lorenzo's Bistro team of Maria and David Lorenzo believe in giving back. On a weekend in August, the new eatery at 4889 Main St. donated 10 percent of their profits to the Sullivan West High School cross country, track and field teams.

who come in with parents and they find cool toys like Lincoln Logs. We had a toaster from the early 1900s and to some it was pure nostalgia because it was in their grandmother's kitchen, but to others it was an item of wonder because they didn't know what the heck it was!"

"We always end up chatting with people about an old item that they remember from when they were kids, or what they love collecting, or what Jeffersonville used to be like," Seikaly added. "We have a wall dedicated to all the old Jeffersonville things that we find. John (Geiger) brought in his old Winkleried yearbooks so it's really fun when locals walk in and find their picture inside one of them."

A cement water fountain featuring a girl pouring water graces the front of Neat Old Stuff, a consignment and auction shop next to the Post Office on Main Street.



A dove picturing Main Street Livingston Manor

Small Town Destinations are the Backbone of Sullivan County

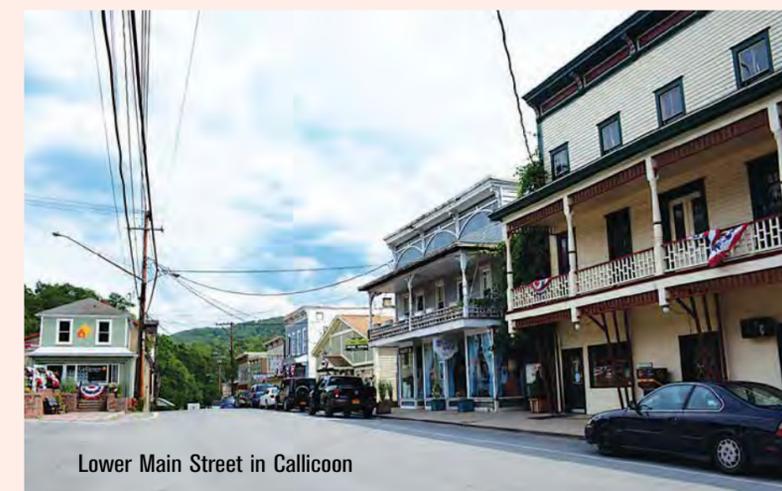
Although Sullivan County spans across 997 square miles, it is famous for its small-town vibes, and its small rural communities. Over the past 25 years Sullivan County's small rural towns have transformed into vibrant hotspots booming with business, attracting out of county and local patrons. With the transformation of Sullivan County's small towns, the county has seen a growth in businesses and visitors with distinguished tastes, choosing Sullivan County's small-town vibes over larger cities.

Over the past 25 years, Livingston Manor, located at the Northern end of the county, has transformed from a forgotten hamlet, to one with a growing variety of specialty shops catering to a new kind of tourist. Those seeking a connection with the outdoors frequent Main Street Farms, The Kaatskeller, Morgan Outdoors, Catskill Brewery, Brandenburg Bakery and others for natural home-grown products and outdoor activities that appeal to their lifestyle. Just North of Livingston Manor you find Roscoe another small vibrant town famous for its trout fishing. Roscoe is the home of Roscoe Beer Company, Prohibition

Distillery, Northern Farmhouse Pasta, and many more.

Along the New York and Pennsylvania border lie Narrowsburg and Callicoon; two small towns that have evolved dramatically over the past 25 years. Both Narrowsburg and Callicoon have seen an increase of second homeowners that are now becoming full time residents. Shop for antiques at Maison Bergogne and then grab a bite to eat at one of the riverside restaurants overlooking the Delaware River in Narrowsburg. Dine in one of Callicoon's many restaurants or pubs and enjoy watching a movie at the Callicoon Theater.

On the Eastern side of Sullivan County, Mountain Dale has seen a dramatic change over the past 25 years. Mountain Dale has transformed into a so-called "NYC borough north" but still provides the small-town vibe that Sullivan County is famous for and that its residents and visitors all enjoy. In each of these examples the Partnership has worked in a various ways to help individual businesses thrive all toward creating attractive new communities. Others too are laying the groundwork for the future. Jeffersonville is once again reinventing itself with new restaurants, a new bakery and more to come. There are tangible efforts now in both Liberty and Monticello from both the private and public sector to bring vibrancy back to these urban centers. Yes signature projects are making an extraordinary difference in our economy but small business have always been and will always be the backbone of the Sullivan County economy.



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Bethel Town Hall might see a deep energy retrofit in 2021 in order to become more “green.”

Bethel Town Hall might go green

STORY AND PHOTO BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Town of Bethel wants to get more “green” by upgrading and retrofitting their town hall located on State Route 55.

In 2018, the town was awarded a Bronze Certification by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.

The town wants to keep on the green trend and recently submitted Request for Proposal (RFP) for firms that are qualified to provide energy modeling and design services for deep energy retrofits.

Bethel Town Supervisor Dan Sturm said this is only for “Engineering and design services.”

Sturm said the current town hall is cramped and inadequate for the needs of the town, the staff and residents.

Councilwoman Vicky Simpson remembers when the town hall building was a medical office when she used to visit as a young girl. “This building was not designed to be [a town hall],” said Simpson.

The idea behind a deep energy retrofit is to make the town hall more energy-efficient and sustainable by reducing greenhouse gases when compared to a conventional retrofit.

“The town of Bethel has made a commitment to sustainability and efforts to

combat climate change in all aspects of our town operations,” said Sturm.

The town has goals to upgrade the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system, along with improving the lighting, building, and the building’s envelope.

“We need to be the leader and set the example for others to follow,” said Sturm.

“Our objective is to operate our town buildings in a sustainable manner by decreasing energy usage, using more from renewable energy sources thereby reducing reliance on fossil fuels and providing a safe and healthy workplace environment with attention to indoor air quality and energy efficiency,” said Sturm.

Sturm said the funds for the retrofit would come from the town’s building reserve fund and grants.

“We will not raise taxes to cover this improvement,” said Sturm.

They will seek out grants once the engineering and design plans are done, said Sturm. He explained that can help pay for the retrofit and hopes that construction can begin in 2021.

“I know there are sometimes there are air quality issues that go on,” said Simpson. “We really are in desperate need of this. Let’s do it right and go for the grant money and do it green.”

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MINDING OUR BUSINESS

Real Estate Update Fall a great time to find a new home

By Cathleen Breen, President, Sullivan County Board of Realtors

September is here, marking the end of summer, the start of school, and the beginning of fall.

Sullivan County is a great place to be any time of year, but in the fall, it can be particularly rewarding. People can hop in their car and head out to go pumpkin and apple picking and enjoy the natural beauty and charm the area has to offer. It's an ideal time to take in the changing colors of the foliage and appreciate our area's natural splendor. And, fall is also an excellent time for buyers to find their dream home here.

Like the leaves on the trees, the real estate market is ever-changing. In the current home buying atmosphere, buyers today are more apt to search online first before venturing out to view properties. The prospect of enjoying the beautiful Sullivan County foliage and all the county has to offer can draw prospective buyers to our area.

As for the local housing market, the inventory of homes in our area continues to be lower than last year at this time – down slightly 0.6 percent. However, with spring and summer being busier house hunting times, fall can mean less competition from other buyers.

The median sales price for single-family residences is up 13.1 percent since last year. But, the number of days properties were on the market in Sullivan County was down 20.6 percent, which is good news for both buyers and sellers.

For homebuyers looking to get a mortgage, there continues to be good news when it comes to interest rates. According to the New York State Association of Realtors, mortgage rates are heading towards record lows. And, recent data from Freddie Mac has the average 30-year fixed mortgage rate at 3.49 percent.

So, with peak fall foliage coming up, it's a great time to take in the splendor of the Catskills and find that perfect house. Get yourself a Sullivan County Realtor and get ready for your dream home! Buyers can look forward to a great ride.

Sullivan County

| Key Metrics | July | | | Last 12 Months | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|-------------|----------|
| | 2018 | 2019 | % Change | Thru 7-2018 | Thru 7-2019 | % Change |
| New Listings | 204 | 219 | + 7.4% | 1,778 | 1,777 | - 0.1% |
| Closed Sales | 79 | 79 | 0.0% | 1,006 | 951 | - 5.5% |
| Days on Market Until Sale | 151 | 160 | + 6.0% | 189 | 150 | - 20.6% |
| Median Sales Price* | \$137,000 | \$160,000 | + 16.8% | \$123,745 | \$140,000 | + 13.1% |
| Percent of Original List Price Received* | 90.3% | 86.0% | - 4.8% | 87.5% | 88.2% | + 0.8% |
| Inventory of Homes for Sale | 1,034 | 1,045 | + 1.1% | 967 | 961 | - 0.6% |

This local market update from the HGMLS shows the activity from July 2018 to July 2019 as well as comparing the last 12 months of data.

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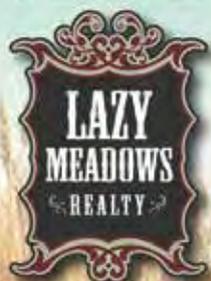
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2. Washington Street in Spencerport - 6 MW project - OPEN ENROLLMENT
3. Wood Oak Drive project in Narrowsburg - 2 MW project - SOLD OUT
4. Kelly Bridge project in Liberty - 2 MW project - SOLD OUT.
5. Villa Roma Road project in Callicoon, - (4) 2 MW projects. Villa 1 & 2 - SOLD OUT. Villa 3 & 4 - OPEN ENROLLMENT
6. Gaskill Road in Owego - 5MW project - OPEN ENROLLMENT (Almost Full)



In total these projects will save residents over \$200,000 and eliminate over 60 million pounds of carbon emissions EVERY year. Delaware River Solar is building community solar projects as part of New York State's Renewable Energy Vision and goal of 50% renewables by 2030. Community solar allows residents

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The Villa Roma Road project in the Town of Delaware will include four 2 MW projects when completed. The first two phases of the project are sold out and the second two are in open enrollment.

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MINDING OUR BUSINESS

4 ways a chamber membership can balance out seasonal business

BY JAIMIE SCHMEISER, PRESIDENT/CEO SULLIVAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

If your business is seasonal, it probably feels a lot like feast or famine. You may love your seasonal crowds but hate the fear you won't last long enough to see your next one. Seasonal businesses or businesses in towns with a seasonal draw struggle with year-round consistent revenue. While you might not ever achieve revenue equality throughout every month, a chamber membership can help you see a little steadier monthly income. Here's how:

A Chamber is often the first place visitors stop

Many visitors are conditioned to stop in at the chamber or the visitor's bureau for information. While a chamber may answer questions about all businesses, it gives preference to its members. Being a chamber member can cause you to make the short list when the chamber staff are asked to give recommendations.

They provide learning opportunities

If you can't balance out the monthly revenue, you can use your quieter times for additional learning that will improve your business. One of the first places you should look is your local chamber. They provide inexpensive (and sometimes free) learning for members on topics of interest, anything from social media to email marketing.

Learning more about these things can help you balance out your sales by bringing in more customers or expanding outside of your area. A ski town business may not make much in sales in May but

if they can sell their products outside of the town through the Internet and digital marketing, they can flatten out those dips in revenue.

The chamber markets year-round

The chamber is partnering to bring people to your area and improve the economy year-round not just in your high seasons. They are often assisting local businesses to find new angles to approach shoppers and visitors. Being a member of the chamber not only gets you referrals and featured in their business directories and lists but it also gives you a say in the direction they are taking. Your business voice can be heard as a member of the chamber.

They attract industry

Chambers also work hard with economic development partners to bring large businesses to town. This means more jobs and skilled labor. Both things could equate to more business for you during the off season. When the number of inhabitants of your town increases, the number of potential customers for your business does too.

It can be difficult to make it through the slow seasons if you're a seasonal business or a town with a busy season. Joining the chamber can provide you with many opportunities to help level out those revenue valleys. A chamber membership is a small price to pay to know it will help your business make it through another season.

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MINDING OUR BUSINESS

New program helps students connect with business in real world environment

BY JAY QUAINANCE, PRESIDENT, SUNY SULLIVAN



SUNY Sullivan student Kyle Edwards was one of the participants in this year's 'Earn While I Learn' program. He's seen here, on the right, inside the college's Greenhouse.

One of the most important roles of a community college is connecting with its community.

On a regular basis, SUNY Sullivan tries to do that - not only by educating our students in a traditional classroom setting, but by also providing them with additional experiential learning opportunities that take place outside the classroom.

This past summer, the college embarked on a new endeavor, "Earn While I Learn", that provided current SUNY Sullivan students with the opportunity to take two summer classes that could be taken on campus or online.

SUNY Sullivan offered summer housing from May 20 - August 24 at a discounted rate in the Lazarus I. Levine Residence Hall, promoted employment opportunities with hospitality/tourism-related businesses, and provided transportation to and from their jobs.

Despite some growing pains along the way, I'm proud to say that 11 students completed the program.

The strategies for this program were multi-fold:

- to provide students with an opportunity to catch up on college credits,
- to allow them to study for part of the day and to work and earn money for the other part of the day,

- to provide a secure housing option, and

- to provide area businesses with an opportunity to fill open positions during their peak tourist season.

Morningside Park, Lochmor Golf Course, the Hope Farm, and Shoprite of Liberty were just some of the places where students worked.

While summer may have just ended, administrators at the college have already begun to meet to debrief the inaugural program, and to begin planning next summer's schedule.

I'm happy to say that several businesses have already signed on for next year, including Frost Valley YMCA and the Kartrite Indoor Water Park, both of whom have said they will provide transportation to and from the college and their worksites.

As we see room to significantly expand the program for next summer, we hope that other businesses will consider joining us.

Employers should feel free to contact my office to discuss any questions and/or student employment opportunities related to the program.

At SUNY Sullivan, we see it as a win-win for all parties: the college, our students and our community of businesses.

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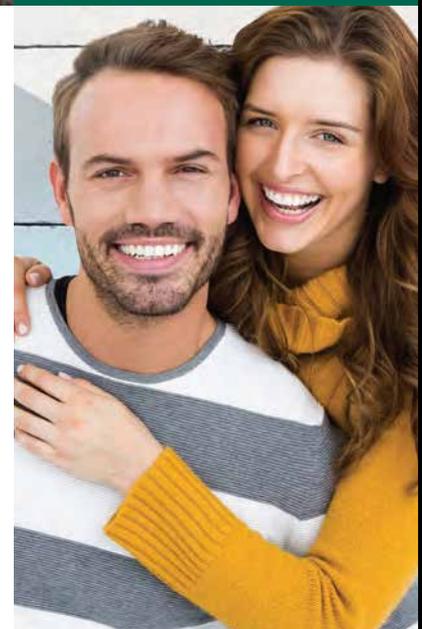
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