



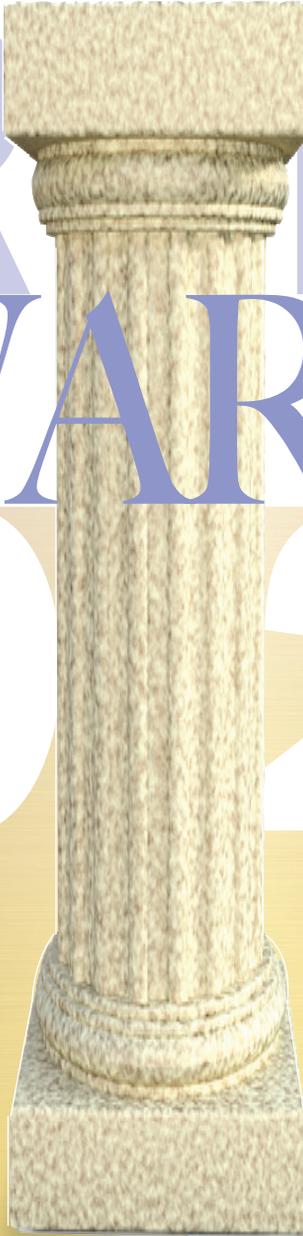
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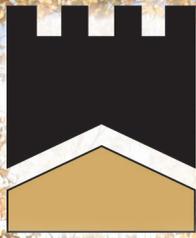
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# Business of the Year Award: Jacobowitz and Gubits, LLP

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Every year, the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce bestows the Business of the Year Award to a company that stands out and shows its commitment to the community.

For 2021, that honor goes to Jacobowitz and Gubits (J&G), LLP, who for 50 years has provided sophisticated legal representation to individuals, families, businesses, non-profits, and municipalities throughout the Hudson Valley.

“Our firm has a strong reputation for providing premier legal services to our clients and also for being heavily involved in our community. We try to set an example of professional and community responsibility,” said Michele L. Babcock, Esq., Managing Partner at

Jacobowitz and Gubits, LLP.

With over 20 highly skilled attorneys practicing in over 30 areas of law, J&G has been delivering optimal legal solutions employing a team approach.

With offices in Monticello and Walden, they can service clients throughout the Hudson Valley, which includes the communities of Newburgh, New Windsor, Middletown, Monticello, Kingston, Beacon, Poughkeepsie, Port Jervis, Pine Bush, Cornwall, Hyde Park, Patterson, Warwick, Goshen, Wallkill, Fishkill, Nyack, New City, Monroe, Tuxedo, Campbell Hall, Ellenville, Florida, Gardiner, Suffern, Kingston, Liberty, Montgomery, White Plains, and Yonkers, as well as Orange, Sullivan, Dutchess, Ulster and Putnam Counties.

Their practice includes Business Law, Estate Planning, Matrimonial, Real Estate, continued on page 5



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The team at Jacobowitz and Gubits, LLP.



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# Jacobowitz and Gubits, LLP

continued from page 3

Litigation Services, Land Use, Environment, and Zoning.

J&G says it is one of the longest-standing full-service law firms in the region because they are united by the desire to exceed its clients' expectations.

They have done this while establishing a reputation for excellence.

J&G says they are proud of its reputation of being a community-minded firm, and that its commitment to the local community helps set them apart.

A recent example of this was their taking part in a panel with the Orange County Human Rights Commission that discussed the current housing crisis in Newburgh and Orange County.

The attorneys and staff commit their energies, talents, and time to support many local organizations and causes.

Furthermore, the attorneys at J&G serve as legal counsel and/or board members for several charitable, non-profit, and community-based organizations.

Those organizations include the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, the Leadership Sullivan Chamber Foundation, the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development, the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association, the Sullivan County Land Bank, the Catskills Food Hub, Sun River Health, Children's Rights Society, Access: Supports for Living Foundation, Womens Bar Association of Orange and Sullivan

Counties, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, the Town of Mamakating, and the Liberty Public Library.

J&G says they are incredibly proud of their partnership with the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce and their work to support the Chamber's efforts in making a difference in our community.

Babcock added, "Being recognized as Sullivan County Business of the Year is something we are very proud of, and we are so grateful to the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce for selecting our firm for this prestigious award."



# Distinguished Achievement Award: Franklin Trapp

BY MARGARET BRUETSCH

There is a special kind of magic when the curtains rise on a live performance. A sudden hush, and anticipation as a show begins. For 75 years the Forestburgh Playhouse has been a staple entertaining locals and visitors with a wide array of musicals, dramas, comedies, and cabarets.

Beyond the scenes it takes a crew to get a show up and running, and after all the challenges over the past year and a half the “Miracle of the Forest” is looking to the future with hope thanks to the guidance of Producing Artistic Director Franklin Trapp.

Trapp was born to Louise and the late Byron Trapp, and grew up in Dayton, Ohio before attending Vanderbilt University in Nashville with a major in Spanish and a minor in theater. He eventually moved to Atlanta as he sought a Master’s Degree in Spanish and taught at Emory University, but he cut short his path for a PhD and instead took a turn north.

“I took a big giant leap from the south to New York City,” Trapp said. He auditioned for roles, worked at regional theaters, and was even cast in a national tour of *Annie*. But one of his first stops in the theatre world was at the Forestburgh Playhouse, and eventually he got his Actor’s Equity card. “One of my first jobs was here [at the Playhouse]

as a resident company member.”

Trapp’s tenure at the Playhouse lasted four years, and after working as an actor and director, he eventually left show business behind returning to Vanderbilt University for law school, and then practiced law in Atlanta for almost 7 years.

“And then the call of the wild came from the Forestburgh Playhouse,” Trapp explained. He was in a position to take another big leap, and come back North to dive back into show business that anyone who knows him well can tell he really loves. Trapp bought the Playhouse in 2014 and moved up to the area with his husband John Bubb.

“Fortunately, Norman Duttweiler, the former Producer, worked with me in 2014, so I had full access to his institutional knowledge as I began preparing and running the season,” Trapp said. “It certainly was still a daunting task stepping into a business that had been running for decades.”

The year 2014 was also when Trapp became a member of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce and since joining has been an active member, helping to promote business interests within the county. He even hosts an annual

Chamber breakfast at the Forestburgh Playhouse. And this year, Trapp is the recipient of the Chamber’s Distinguished Achievement award.

“It’s very humbling. It’s such an honor to get an award from one’s peers in business,” Trapp said. “Especially





CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

### Franklin Trapp

after such a challenging year...it feels great. It's a lovely and kind award."

The Forestburgh Playhouse has truly had a miraculous comeback this past summer. In March 2020, the Playhouse joined theaters across the country as curtains came down, ghost lights were lit, and the theater community was left in limbo. While the last year and a half was challenging for many, it was potentially devastating for the theatrical arts community and Trapp, like theater owners and actors across the country, had to navigate a new and daunting reality.

"In 2020, 90 percent of the Playhouse's income was slashed because we couldn't operate normally," Trapp said. "It was a challenge because you have to keep the brand alive."

So for the remainder of 2020, Trapp and

his team switched gears and focused on raising money, coming up with creative online content, putting together safe outdoor entertainment via their Forestburgh Under the Stars performance series, continuing safe arts education for local youth, and planning for their reopening.

Thanks to the help of donors and the acquirement of federal relief through the Small Business Administration's "Save Our Stages" program, the Forestburgh Playhouse was able to mount a fully staged 75th Anniversary season which was dedicated to Trapp's late father Byron.

"It's been a year now," Trapp said. His father was an avid supporter of his son as both a Resident Company member and as Producer, and was a frequent audience member. "It's a special way to honor his memory."

In addition to fully staged mainstage shows, the Playhouse also continued their popular Cabarets, put on another "Under the Stars" concert series, continued with their Arts Education program for over 60 children, and if that wasn't enough, Trapp decided to add something new to the mix.

"We also created and launched a brand new theater festival 'In the Works - In the Woods'," Trapp said. "I know that's going to be a major destination to get people into the area."

As the Playhouse's 75th Anniversary Season closes following a successful Fall Series at the Tavern, and yet another sold out run of the ever popular Rocky Horror Picture Show Live, Trapp's focus can start to look further into the future.

"I think it is cool that the Playhouse has operated for 75 Years and has kept its doors open despite many changes in the Sullivan Catskills," Trapp said. "We have stayed the course and are excited for the future."

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# Franklin Trapp



FILE PHOTO

Franklin Trapp is the Producing Artistic Director at the Forestburgh Playhouse, which is currently celebrating its 75th Anniversary.

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Jacobowitz and Gubits,  
Franklin Trapp, Dawn Ciorciari,  
Marie Smith, Matthew Sush,  
Samantha Dorn, and  
The Bethel Business Association

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# Distinguished Service Award: Dawn Ciorciari

BY  
SAMANTHA  
MONTAGNA

**D**awn Ciorciari, a lifetime resident of Sullivan County and Chair of Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, is one of the recipients of the Chamber's Distinguished Service Award. Ciorciari describes her work as "really about raising awareness." As the General Manager/Director of Sales of Bold Gold Media, she is able to spread the word about many different organizations and events happening in Sullivan County.

Bold Gold Media owns three local radio stations that reach the Catskill Region in New York along with Northeast Pennsylvania. Ciorciari said that all the work that she and the stations do is about being in the community and helping others in the community. She also insisted that this "award belongs not just to me, but the entire team" from the ownership of Bold Gold to the staff and friends that also lend support.

Ciorciari said she places a

continued on page 15



**Dawn Ciorciari**

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# Dawn Ciorciari

continued from page 13

heavy focus on getting the word out for community organizations and events to ensure that these events are successful in their goals. She said the radio station regularly promotes Rotary Clubs, Fire Departments, and other local organizations and programs to increase participation and donations for them.

The radio stations are promoting a couple of big events that are coming up. For the holidays, the stations will be promoting A Single Bite, a group in Sullivan County that tackles food insecurity in the county, and The Giving Tree for the Boys and Girls Club, which will help provide gifts for families in need.

One of the station's biggest events is coming up in February, Ciorciari said. The station holds the 98.3 WSUL Heart-a-thon, which is an all-day radio event that encourages listeners to pledge money to improve the heart health of residents in Sullivan County. The money goes directly to Garnet Health Medical Center-Catskills for their Cardio-Pulmonary program.

Last year, the Heart-a-thon raised \$90,000, and to date, the event has raised \$2.5 million dollars, Ciorciari stated.

Ciorciari also said she was proud to have partnered with the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce to bring back the popular Bagel Festival this year. Ciorciari said she and the station provided the sponsors and entertainment while the Chamber found the

vendors. Together, they were able to bring back the popular festival since it was canceled last year due to COVID. The festival brings thousands of people to this one area, Ciorciari said. The festival serves as a huge boost for tourism in the county.

"Every single month," hundreds of organizations and events are promoted. "If somebody is helping the community, we are looking to help spread the word," Ciorciari said. There are so many great people out there doing the "leg work" and volunteering their time, Ciorciari said, so it's important to her to help them have a successful event. It's not just promotion either, Ciorciari said she loves to be actively involved in her community as well.

Ciorciari encourages more people to reach out. Anyone can submit their community event to Bold Gold Media's portal on their website to have their event or programs promoted for free, Ciorciari said.

Reflecting on this recognition, Ciorciari said, "When I was a child my grandparents would always take me with them as they did volunteer work. It is amazing to me that now in this same community, I am able to carry on that tradition, and be recognized for it. This recognition is not just for me alone, everything I am involved in that supports our community is possible because of the many that sur-

round me, my amazing Bold Gold

Media Team, my Sullivan

County Chamber of Commerce Board & Staff, and my Family and Friends."



# Distinguished Service Award: Marie Smith

BY  
SAMANTHA  
MONTAGNA

“I was shocked,” said Marie Smith, one of the recipients of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce’s Distinguished Service Award.

Smith, a lifelong resident of Sullivan County, received this award because of her belief in giving as much as one can to the community. Smith is a member of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Vice President of the Bethel Business Association, and a volunteer for countless events and organizations within the county. Smith said she has participated in events and programs for the Boys and Girls Club, the Boy Scouts, the Liberty Rotary Club, fire departments, trunk-or-treats, and more.

Smith even donates blood every 56 days because she believes in giving “as much as you can.”

For her day job, Smith bartends and has been running



Marie Smith

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



her own mobile spray tanning business for the past nine years. She has four daughters, and eight grandchildren with one on the way. Despite her busy schedule, she makes time to volunteer her time. It's important to "give to get back," Smith said. She said it is essential to go into smaller communities and encourage community members to come together to support one another. "If everyone gives a little piece of themselves, Sullivan County will only continue to succeed."

Smith also said she wants younger people to become involved in the community. Smith has held many beauty titles over the years including the Elite Spirit of the USA, Elite Spirit of the Empire State, and Ms. Sullivan County twice. She currently holds New York's Heart of Spirit and Ms. Military Star New York. Smith stated that her participation in these pageants has helped her become more involved in the community, and she hopes her participation can influence younger people to help their communities.

If younger people do not want to be in pageants, there are other organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club,

Boys/Girls Scouts, and different clubs in their schools that they can join to start making a difference too.

When Smith was asked what community service she was most proud of, she responded that she is "proud of everything." Smith emphasized, "Everything stands out because each thing is as important as the next," and each event or program is "equal."

Smith stressed the importance of showing up in support of an event or program. Even if people do not have time to volunteer, they can support their community in smaller ways. People can support a raffle or come to a breakfast for the VFW.

"Show you care," to make a difference, Smith said.





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Liberty Rotary Club wishes to congratulate  
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Matthew Sush—Young Emerging Leader Award

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Dorn; and our very own, Matthew Sush!*

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**96795**

# Young Emerging Leader Award: Matt Sush



**Matt Sush**

**STORY AND PHOTO BY  
JOSEPH ABRAHAM**

**B**eing involved in the community was something Monticello native Matt Sush learned at a young age from parents Richard and Barbara. Today, at age 45, Sush is a Universal Banker II at Jeff Bank, chairs the Town of Thompson Planning Board, is the treasurer of the Liberty NY Rotary Club and is on the board of the Sullivan County Chamber

Foundation.

It is through his work with these organizations, and the community, that he is being recognized as a recipient of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce's 'Young Emerging Leader' Pride Award.

"I watched my parents do it for a long time," said Sush on giving back to the community. "Now they've kind of taken a backseat role, and it's my time to be involved and make it a better place for my

continued on page 21

*Congratulations*  
to **MATT SUSH**



**For Young Emerging Leader  
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*Congratulations Matt  
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Dawn Ciorciari &  
Marie Smith,  
Matthew Sush &  
Samantha Dorn,  
and Bethel Business  
Association!*

96730

# Matt Sush

continued from page 19

son Arlo and show him how to do things.”

Sush, his wife Jennie, Arlo and family dog Bari (a Bull Terrier, Hound mix) reside in Rock Hill.

Upon graduation from Monticello High School, Sush attended the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse where he earned his degree in Landscape Architecture.

After a nearly five-year stint in Allentown, PA., Sush returned home in 2009 during the Recession. Shortly after, he joined the Thompson Planning Board, where in addition to being chair, he currently is the longest tenured member, and began a new career in banking.

Sush started as a teller at Jeff Bank's Route 42 Monticello branch, and has risen through the ranks as Universal Bank II at their Anawana Lake Road branch across from Walmart in Monticello. In that role, he helps customers with a variety of their banking needs and also serves as a liaison to local businesses in the area.

On advice to other emerging leaders, Sush says it is ok to experience someplace other than Sullivan County, but also encourages them to bring those experiences, and the knowledge gained, back home and adapt it to life here.

Also, Sush said, “Don't have a negative stigma about Sullivan County, promote

what's good about it so people and industries stay here.”

Sush's love for the county is rooted in the scenic beauty of the Catskills. “For me, it's being out in nature, the different seasons and experiencing the outdoor trails here. Just being immersed in the wilderness.”

On his recognition from the Chamber, Sush said he is very honored to accept the award.

“I'm going to keep doing good things,” said Sush, “going from an emerging to a solidified leader, mentoring the next generation.”



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# Samantha Dorn

Leading by example...  
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*Samantha is a former Sullivan Renaissance Intern, Horticulture Crew Leader, and Program Assistant. During her current internship with Sullivan 180, she has already reached 100+ Seniors by leading the OFA (Office for the Aging) on Wheels Project! We are proud to congratulate Samantha on her recognition as a Young Emerging Leader.*



GRANITE  
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96784

# Young Emerging Leader Award: Samantha Dorn



**Samantha Dorn**

**STORY AND PHOTO BY  
JOSEPH ABRAHAM**

**T**wenty-three year old Sullivan 180 Program Intern Samantha Dorn is a rising star in Sullivan County, and people are certainly taking notice.

She is one of the recipients of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce's 'Young Emerging Leader' Pride Award.

Dorn grew up in Rock Hill before finishing her high school career in Sleepy

Hollow, and then earning her bachelor's degree in Sociology at SUNY Geneseo. Also, in just a few short weeks, she'll have earned her a Master's Degree in Social Work from Fordham University.

Dorn was hired by Sullivan 180 to work on Office for the Aging (OFA) on Wheels, which they have partnered with the County, using a Rolling V-owned bus retrofitted by Sullivan BOCES to bring OFA services directly to seniors across the area.

continued on page 24

# Samantha Dorn

continued from page 23

Part of her duties include coordinating and planning parts of the project. She's currently also making connections with local senior housing establishments about the possibility of the bus paying them a visit.

When she isn't working with OFA on Wheels, Dorn supports Sullivan 180 Director of Health and Wellness Meaghan Mullally-Gorr and Healthier Generation Coordinator Cortney Larson with their "Empowering a Healthier Generation" program.

Dorn's love of Sullivan County blossomed during a four-year stint with Sullivan Renaissance, seeing all the work they do in the community.

Having started as an intern, Dorn eventually earned the roles of program assistant and crew leader.

"There's a lot of potential here," said Dorn. "If you meet the right people and make connections, anything is possible."

Dorn enjoys making connections with people of all different backgrounds and her community in a variety of ways.

She said she chose to study social work because it empowers those you interact with to better themselves.

"In my career as a social worker, if I can have an impact on one person, I feel like I've done my job," she said.

In her "spare time," Dorn works per

diem as an EMT for a company called Ambulnz, based out of Newburgh.

She also volunteers at a local food pantry and does outreach at local 5Ks. Speaking of running, another one of Dorn's hobbies, she'll be participating in the upcoming NYC Marathon through the Allyson Whitney Foundation.

Dorn also partakes in olympic weightlifting and can deadlift 200 pounds, go up to 101-lbs in the clean and jerk, and 65-lbs in the snatch category of the sport.

She said her dream job is to be a medical social worker or patient navigator, particularly in pediatric oncology. However she adds that, "Knowing I am making a difference. That'd be my dream."

On advice to young people, Dorn said that until recently she used to take things very seriously, but has learned to just enjoy the ride that is life.

Also she explained that just because you are young doesn't mean you don't have a powerful voice. "Speak up and speak your mind," she said.

Dorn admits to being shocked when she learned that she would be the recipient of this Pride Award.

"It means a lot to me," she said. "I feel like a lot of young people in this county are moving away and don't feel they can change things. But this proves that wrong. Young people can make change [in Sullivan County]."



# Township Award: Bethel Business Association



Members of the Bethel Business Association gathered at the Table and Tap in White Lake in October for one of their social and networking events.

## STORY AND PHOTOS BY MATT SHORTALL

Whether it's for a weekend, a season or a lifetime — the town of Bethel is a great place to visit, do business or build a life. That's the message of the Bethel Business Association, which has worked for years to promote this lakeside and farming community of Woodstock fame as a place that's always moving forward while paying homage to its past.

The Bethel Business Association (BBA) is this year's recipient of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce's Pride of Community Township Award. As a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting local businesses in and around town, the

BBA provides networking, training and promotional opportunities to their more than 70 member businesses.

For more than a decade the BBA has produced an annual Bethel Guide which showcases some of the best that the town has to offer.

"It's really nice to be recognized for all the work that we do," said BBA Board Committee Corresponding Secretary and Marketing Committee Chair Carol Malek. "But it's a labor of love."

BBA Board Committee President Suzanne White says it's all about encouraging people to join, getting new projects off the ground and building momentum to sustain them.

"It's a combination of a lot of personali-  
continued on page 26

# Bethel Business Association



**It takes a team at the Bethel Business Association. Some of those members are, from left, Committee Vice-President Marie Smith, Committee member James Loney, Corresponding Secretary Carol Malek, President Suzanne White and Committee member Lori Rae Silvers.**

continued from page 25

ties that come together and get things done,” said White about all their members, volunteers and marketing committee. “It’s been very rewarding. We wanted to put Bethel on the map ... it’s time.”

The BBA formed in 1964 but was reorganized in 2007 to re-energize the organization and combine efforts with other civic committees.

The BBA says interest and investment in the town has only grown as more people discover its unique character and history. Bethel boasts of several lakes, state parks and a forest reserve for hiking and outdoor recreation. Lakeside music concerts at Gazebo Park and the Bethel Farmers’ Market attract locals and visitors alike. Bethel Woods Center for the Arts hosts world renowned artists and musicians and attracts tens of thousands of tourists each year with its museum and cultural events.

“Bethel is a go-to place right now,” said Malek. “We are the center of the county. We have so much to offer that I feel we’ll always be a strong draw for businesses to come here. We welcome them with open arms.”

The real estate market that began to heat up during the pandemic climbed even higher as people from New York City and other areas sought a more peaceful and bucolic way of life in the county.

Malek, who also owns a real estate business, says the main problem right now is not demand but inventory.

“We are still selling houses pretty swiftly,” she explained. “For the most part if something comes on the market and it’s good then it’s gone in a hot New York minute ... I’ve never seen anything like this in 25 years.”

White explained how a boom in real estate sales over the past few years has only

increased the demand for new businesses.

“Now we have all these people here who need services,” she said.

In the past, the annual Bethel Guides have focused a lot on the town’s summer season. The cover of this year’s guide features all four seasons, highlighting the unique experiences that Bethel has to offer all year round.

“We’re an all-season kind of place,” White said.

Bethel is not only about summer concerts or a glass of wine on a sunny day while sitting on the deck of a lakeside restaurant. The town hosted hundreds of ice fishing enthusiasts during the King of the Ice tournament back in February.

In the autumn months, Bethel Woods’ annual har-

vest festival attracts farmers, artisans and craftspeople from throughout Sullivan County and the region every Sunday for well over a month.

“We always focus on several different businesses every year, and we also spotlight different recreational things to do within the area,” Marketing Committee Volunteer Dawn Ryder explained about the Bethel Guide. “We try to put a different piece of Bethel history in each guide as well. I always look forward to that.”

While the COVID-19 pandemic over the past year and a half has been tough on the business community, the BBA sees a bright future with plenty of opportunities ahead.

“It has changed the way we do certain things, but we’re survivors,” said Malek.




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