

2024 Sullivan County
Pride Awards



*50th Anniversary
and Awards Gala*
Thursday, November 14, 2024
*The Main Dining Room at the
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A letter from the Chamber board chair



**Dawn
Ciorciari**

Dear Chamber Members,

As I near the end of my second term as Chairwoman of the Board of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, I find myself reflecting with pride on how far this organization has come since I first joined in 2015.

I can still remember my first meeting like it was yesterday. At that time, the Chamber office was an RV called “Chamber on the Run,” and our meetings were held in the basement of the old SCVA offices in Liberty.

At my first board meeting, I distinctly remember thinking, What did I get myself into? But that question pushed me to want to take the Chamber to the next level.

As my career in Sullivan County at Bold Gold Media expanded, so did my roll on the board. In just one year, I became the Secretary of the Board, and a year later, I stepped into the role of First Vice Chair.

From those early days until now, we have made remarkable progress. We’ve moved from an RV to an office in Monticello, grown our membership from under 400 to nearly 600, and expanded the Bagel Festival to the largest one-day event in Sullivan County every summer, attracting upwards of 20,000 people to “Bagel Boulevard”.

The Chamber has had incredible leadership, that has helped guide this organization to where it is today. I’ve had the privilege of working with three incredible presidents throughout my tenure:

- *Cathy Paty, who brought the Chamber into its first brick-and-mortar location and successfully executed major fundraising events;*
- *Jaime Schmeiser, who brought a new level of professionalism, and helped guide our members through the challenges of COVID; and now*
- *Ashley Leavitt, whose skills and leadership will take the Chamber to even greater heights.*

The Chamber’s success is also the result of the dedication and hard work of our board members. The Chamber has had, by far, the most committed and effective board I’ve ever had the pleasure of working with.

When I became Chairwoman of the board, my goal was to help make the Sullivan County Chamber stronger and more respected than ever before. I believe I’ve accomplished that goal.

As I change roles to immediate past Chairwoman in the coming years, I will continue to help the new Chair and Board of Directors as we grow our membership and our member benefits, and strengthen our relationship with the Sullivan County Government.

The future is bright for Sullivan County businesses, if we all continue to work together and support each other.

Thank you.

*Dawn Ciorciari,
GM Bold Gold Media
Chairwoman Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce
2019-2024*



The Chamber's 50-year journey



Ashley Leavitt

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, I am proud to reflect on the incredible journey that has brought us here. For five decades, our Chamber has served as a pillar of support for the business community, evolving alongside local enterprises and empowering them to grow and thrive. This milestone reflects the strength, dedication, and vision of our members, without whom this achievement would not be possible.

Looking ahead, my focus for the coming year is to expand our offerings by introducing additional entrepreneurial workshops, training sessions, and business-related programs. Our goal is to provide valuable resources that help our members grow, succeed, and stay competitive in an evolving market. In our commitment to enhancing member value, we've expanded benefits to include healthcare options, advertising discounts, and savings on essential business supplies. We aim to deliver practical support that makes a real difference for our

members.

Thank you for your continued support and trust. Here's to the next chapter of growth and success as we move forward together for another 50 years and beyond.

Sincerely,

*Ashley Leavitt
President/CEO*

Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce



Annual Summary of Activities

This year has been an exciting period of growth, community engagement, and support for local businesses. Below is a summary of our key achievements and events:

New Members: 62 new members joined this year, reflecting healthy growth and community engagement.

First Friday Breakfasts: 12 breakfasts were scheduled throughout the year.

Ribbon Cuttings: 20 ribbon-cutting events were held, celebrating new businesses and expansions.

Events: 14 events were organized, ranging from festivals to mixers and community benefit fairs.

Programs/Classes/Webinars: Multiple educational and training programs were conducted, including webinars and entrepreneur training.

Community Support: We assisted 350+ community members in finding and connecting with local businesses, ensuring they are pointed towards our valued member businesses, thereby strengthening the local economy.

2024 Ribbon Cutting Locations



1. T&C SALON
2. JURNI Quantum Healing Center
3. Upstate CPR
4. Catskills Equipment
5. Lorenzo's Bistro
6. Bold Gold Studios
7. The Country Bumkin
8. Catskill Public Theater's Stage
9. Safe Harbor's Catskills
10. All Things Accuracy
11. Organic World US
12. Liberty Blooms
13. The Halal Hen
14. Untouchables Gym
15. PRASAD Dental Clinic
16. BOCES Welding Lab
17. Smith Family Farm
18. Grizzly Bagels
19. Serenity's Touch
20. Life Styled By Katelyn

Visit Our Calendar
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Businessperson of the Year

Bruce Davidson

BY VINCENT KURZROCK

*I*ntegrity is a word that Bruce Davidson always believes in and lives by. To him, integrity is a cornerstone in many relationships inside and outside of business. With this ideal in mind, Davidson is a man who has always strived to give back to his community and he has been accomplishing this goal for the last decade.

With the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce bestowing on him this year's Businessperson of the Year award, that integrity is rightfully put on full display.

In his work, Davidson seeks out blighted buildings and works to restore and revitalize those buildings.

One of his most recent projects may be the familiar Liberty Theater which he diligently worked on for many years. To be able to do what he does, it required selling the pest control company. Before his most recent endeavour, he owned and operated Pestech, one of the largest privately-owned pest control companies in 2021 at the time he sold it.

Davidson truly finds his selection as Businessperson of the Year to be a humbling experience. He credits his



very supportive family as a key to all his success.

"They encourage me to keep moving forward when times are tough," explained Davidson.

His family which he has leaned on has been in Sullivan County for seven generations. Davidson himself is number seven.

This year's Businessperson of the Year has been a longstanding resident of Sullivan County, furthering his unmatched resolve to give back to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Businessperson of the Year

Bruce Davidson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

it. His keen work sense started early when he worked to help clean up the local Rail Trails. From that point, it then morphed into the Flower Fund.

Davidson went to SUNY Sullivan for Entomology and Finance, while not attaining a degree, this experience wouldn't go to waste as these are two skills he would carry into the work force. His skills did not go unnoticed as a result.

"I hold eight certificates for the New

York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)," stated Davidson. "I also am a certified Trainer for pesticides from the DEC."

Davidson is also a familiar face as a committee member of the Sullivan County Airport and the President of the Community Development Corporation (CDC). In giving back to his community, it should be no surprise that he looks to Mahatma Ghandi as a number one inspiration to him.

"[What drives me to do my best] is something my father always taught me: make it worth doing," Davidson emphasized. "I think I do all this to show people that giving back to the community is rewarding and worth it."



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Businessperson of the Year

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Bruce Davidson, Sullivan Allies Leading Together (SALT), Robert Ernst, Sullivan County Sheriff's Office, Aileen Gunther - NYS Assembly District 100, Rutberg Breslow Personal Injury Law, Kellee Thelman - Sullivan 180, Chico Rodriguez (Town of Thompson), Tara Burke (Town of Neversink), Lou Monteleone & Frank Monteleone (Town of Highland), Joseph Adamo (Town of Liberty), Bill Rieber (Town of Thompson), Domingo Ramos (Hope Alive 845), Alex Rogers, Nicky Ciorciari, and Carissa Ciorciari.



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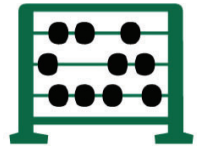
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50th Anniversary Award

Bob Ernst

BY CRYSTAL TWEED

As a young man, being an active member of the community and involved all over the county appealed to Robert “Bob” Ernst. He knew at a young age that “it was important to give back.” This is a theme that would resonate with him throughout his life. Bob is one of the founding members of the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce.

After serving as a member of the Businessmen’s Association, it was decided that starting a countywide Chamber of Commerce would be better for the community, and he remained a member for over 10 years. Bob served in the Navy and after active duty, he enlisted in the Reserves until 1963. In his professional life, Bob worked as a banker and became President of the Sullivan County National Bank in 1954.

He is the longest-serving active member of the Monticello Rotary Club, with 58 years of service. Bob epitomizes the Rotary motto “service above self.” He served as President of the Monticello Rotary from 1974-1975, was the past chairman of the Rotary Scholarship Fund, and is currently serving on the Board of Directors as co-chair of the Rotary Golf Tournament. Bob was the first president and one of the founding members of the United Way of Sullivan



County an organization dedicated to building a strong community through advocacy, education and partnerships so it is very fitting for Bob to receive such an award for his tireless years of commitment to his community and others.

“I’m honored to be receiving the 50th Anniversary Award,” Bob said. “I didn’t do any of this for the accolades but to improve the business development and help my community in Sullivan County.”

He also stresses that it’s important to make time for family, as that’s the most important thing. Bob is married to Eileen and the couple has 3 children, 8 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

Thank you, SC Chamber!

**Cheers to 50 years of fostering
business + a culture of commerce
in Sullivan County.**

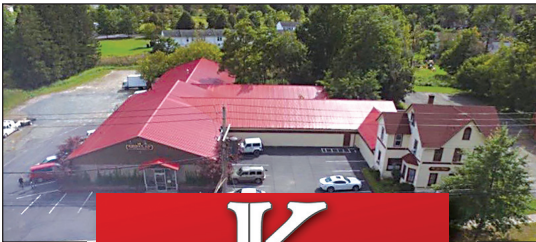
*And congratulations to this year's award recipients,
who help to amplify the voice of our communities.*



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Distinguished Achievement Award

Sullivan County Sheriff's Office

BY DEREK KIRK

Being recognized by the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce with the Distinguished Achievement Award is the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office. Under the supervision of Sheriff Michael Schiff and Undersheriff Eric Chaboty, the law enforcement agency was adorned with the accolade to showcase their remarkable achievements that have had a profound and beneficial impact on the commu-

nity. The award acknowledges those whose accomplishments have made a substantial difference in the lives of the people and the region they serve. To the Sheriff and Undersheriff, the work of the roughly 200 individuals within the law enforcement agency is the reason for the commendation.

"We have very dedicated people who put their heart and soul into protecting the public," Schiff said. To him and Chaboty, the award's bestowment is all

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



Gathered in front of the Sullivan County Jail in Monticello are members of the Sheriff's Office, all who share the accomplishments with the roughly 200 individuals employed within the agency who give their time, energy and heart in defending Sullivan County's peace and safety.

Distinguished Achievement Award

Sullivan County Sheriff's Office

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

“because of our people.”

The Sheriff made it a point to spotlight the various ways that the agency maintains visibility and communicability within the community, such as the occasional Coffee with the Sheriff, their interactive Youth Division which sponsors education and enriching activities, and an extensive network of community liaisons with ears and eyes locked in on all matters that concern those the police office is sworn to protect and serve.

“Thank you to the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce for recognizing the Sheriff's Office,” Schiff said. “It is nice to know people are paying attention to the accomplishments of their local law enforcement.”

In receiving this award, Sheriff's Office leadership also expressed their deep gratitude to the many fire departments and volunteer ambulance/EMS workers who often work hand-in-hand with the law enforcement agency.

“We tip our hats to the firemen and medical volunteers,” Undersheriff Chaboty said, “all of whom help us to be successful. Without their equipment, manpower and support, law enforcement in a county like ours would not be as effective.”



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Distinguished Service Award

Aileen Gunther

STORY AND PHOTO BY ALEX KIELAR

Aileen Gunther announced back in February that she would not be seeking re-election to the 100th District of the New York State Assembly after 20 years of service. Despite her stepping back, her history within State government attests to the Distinguished Service Award from the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce.

“I was very honored to hear of this award,” Gunther said. “As a New York State Assembly person for 20 years, I’ve worked with my community and, of course, brought home a lot of money to enhance our community. The Chamber of Commerce is very important to all of us and the work that they do. So I am honored that they are honoring me. I don’t expect to disappear after I retire.”

Before her political career, Gunther attended Orange County Community College and then went to SUNY New Paltz while working nights and raising children. She has two brothers and one sister, with three of them including her having three children and the other having two. Originally from the Bronx, Gunther and her late husband Jacob lived in California before deciding to move back to New York after his grandfather gave them a piece of land in the area on which they built a house.



The Assemblywoman, who was first elected in 2003 after Jacob passed away, said that she decided to step down from the Assembly due to a difficult situation going on with one of her children.

“It is very difficult when your child is sad and my children mean everything to me,” she described. “I’m a single mother of 20 years and I would do anything to keep my kids happy and healthy. My children are the best things in my life and what I care about most. Watching one that is in distress was difficult, but we worked through it and she’s okay now.”

Gunther was raised by parents who

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Distinguished Service Award

*Aileen
Gunther*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

also served their communities, her father as a policeman in New York City and her mother taught in Catholic school. She said that her mom and dad supporting her growing up was key to getting to where she is today.

But just because she is stepping down from her Assembly seat doesn't mean she's done giving back, as Gunther noted that she wants to continue to work in the community in any capacity that she can – saying “I don't expect to

disappear after I retire.”

She said that she hopes to work in a clinic or somewhere similar that has people in need that she can help. In her years of service, Gunther has stressed the need to help and fight for the people of the community.

“I'm a registered nurse and somebody that has a lot of ties with the community,” she said. “I was a nurse in the hospital and I worked in the clinic during COVID. I think one of my best assets is helping people and having compassion while knowing different situations.”

Gunther described a number of situations that can be difficult for people, including someone living their last days, a family with young children getting evicted from their homes and not knowing what to do and several other types of situations.

“We do all we can to make sure that these folks have someone to talk to first of all, but also to help them,” she said. “I think that's very important and this job is a lot more than passing bills or giving out money. I think it's more about having compassion and understanding people's needs. Nursing gave me that edge in being able to do those kinds of things in my community.



*To My Fellow Honorees
Congratulations on making Sullivan County
the Pride of the Hudson Valley.
Thank you for your hard work and dedication in
making our county strong...
not only today but also for the future.*

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President's Award

Rutberg Breslow

Personal Injury Law

BY CRYSTAL TWEED

“We try hard to be good members of the community, so it’s very gratifying to be recognized for it,” said Marty Rutberg, who has been practicing law for over 45 years. In 1999, he established Rutberg & Associates P.C. and in 2014, Larry Breslow joined him in ownership, and the firm was renamed Rutberg Breslow Personal Injury Law. Over the years, the firm has expanded its service areas from the Hudson Valley to the Capital District, Catskills, Mohawk Valley, and Sullivan County with its Monticello location on Bridgeville Road.

It’s no surprise that all of the firm’s attorneys are members of the Sullivan County Bar Association, an organization committed to upholding ethical standards and values - values that Rutberg Breslow and their skilled team of attorneys adhere to when handling cases for negligently injured people and their families.

Rutberg Breslow has always been active in the community, and since 2017, when they became neighbors with the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce, they further increased their commitment to giving back to the community, by the example set by the Chamber.

“Our firm considers serving the com-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



President's Award

*Rutberg
Breslow*

Personal Injury Law

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

munity and giving back to others a privilege not an obligation," Marty said. "This award makes us feel recognized for trying to do what's right." He adds, "The Chamber also deserves recognition. They work tirelessly every day to help the community, and they deserve to be acknowledged."

The firm co-sponsors the Pride Awards, has sponsored and participated in Peace, Love, and Pumpkins at Bethel Woods since 2021, actively supports the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office and recently assisted with the purchase of a new K-9 Shepherd and its training. They also hosted the Rutberg

Breslow Golf & Gamble tournament at Resorts World Catskills earlier this year supporting two local law enforcement endeavors.

All funds raised by the tournament went to benefit Sheriff Mike Schiff's chosen camp, the New York State Sheriff's Institute summer camp, and the Dutchess County 10-13 Foundation through Dutchess County Sheriff Kirk Imperati. Rutberg Breslow is also a proud supporter of the arts and the Forestburgh Playhouse and is a studio sponsor for Bold Gold Media Group where Marty regularly co-hosts the Thunder 102 morning radio show.

With over 125 years of combined personal injury practice, Rutberg Breslow continues to serve the communities of the Hudson Valley, Catskills, and Capital District regions.

The "Presidents Award" honors a business that shows outstanding support and active participation as a well-established Chamber member, contributing significantly to the Chamber's mission and community, and Marty, Larry and their staff are proud to receive recognition for their efforts towards bettering the community.

Congratulations!



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Emerging Leader Award

Kellee Thelman

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Kellee Thelman didn't expect to be named the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce's Emerging Leader, but when she got the news, she was floored.

"I was shocked," she said, still sounding a little surprised. A Bethel native, Thelman's roots run deep in Sullivan County. She graduated from Sullivan West in 2009, then went on to SUNY Sullivan for media arts and SUNY Oneonta, where she earned her degree in mass communications.

Although she's always lived in the county, Thelman's career took her beyond its borders for a time. She worked for the Alzheimer's Association's Hudson Valley chapter, commuting to Middletown and Poughkeepsie, but she never left home. Her desire to stay close to family led her back to Sullivan County full-time and into her current role at Sullivan 180.

At Sullivan 180, Thelman wears many hats. As the Marketing and Events Manager, her days are anything but typical.

"I'm never bored," she laughed. She handles everything from media and social media to organizing major community events, and she's found that the organization's health and wellness mission is a perfect fit for where she is in life.



Thelman is no stranger to leadership, either. After finishing the Leadership Sullivan program, where she served as class president, she picked up some valuable skills.

"I learned a lot about leadership and teamwork," she said, recalling how she helped lead the group through a community project. The experience taught her how to bring people together to accomplish something meaningful.

When asked about advice for others, Thelman is quick to mention relationships.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Emerging Leader Award

*Kellee
Thelman*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

“Building relationships and having open, transparent communication is really important,” she said.

Things don’t always go according to plan, she explained, but staying flexible and being honest with your team can make all the difference.

Getting the Emerging Leader Award is an honor she’s still processing. She’s quick to give credit to those around her, like her family and the team at Sullivan 180.

“They’ve really taken me under their wing and trusted me with the work I’m doing,” she said.

Outside of work, Thelman loves spending time outdoors, and she’s looking forward to the upcoming ski season. When she’s not on the slopes, she enjoys photography and cooking. It’s clear that even when she’s off the clock, Thelman keeps herself busy.

Her journey from a local student to a leader in the community is an inspiring one, and her dedication to Sullivan County runs deep. For anyone looking to make their mark here, Thelman’s advice rings true: focus on relationships, stay flexible, and always keep the lines of communication open.

Congratulations, Kellee!

Kellee,

You are kind, encouraging and full of light. Thank you for your dedication, your smile and the heart you bring to our team every single day. You truly are everyone’s teammate and a shining example of leadership.

We are so proud of you!

The main thing that you have to remember on this journey is, just be kind to everyone and always smile.

—Ed Sheeran



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DEI Workplace Excellence Award

Salt

Sullivan Allies Leading Together (SALT) is a diverse partnership of community members, business owners, and agencies committed to working together to improve our quality of life in Sullivan County.

Through information sharing, increased prevention efforts, and interagency collaboration, SALT seeks to improve access to the services that empower us all to create lasting and positive changes in our community.

In addition to connecting our neighbors throughout the county to resources, SALT provides weekly food distribution through a mobile food



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SALT works hard to provide services to its community –including weekly food distribution through a mobile food pantry.

pantry, hands out harm reduction supplies such as naran, test strips, and wound kits, hosts an annual Unity Day event, and other educational programming for the Sullivan County Community.

Community Impact Award

Hope Alive 845

My organization works around the clock to help law enforcement and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

families find a missing loved one. I'm very proud of my volunteers who take their valuable time in helping others.

Our goal is to be that major resource for our communities and law enforcement in assisting them in a missing child or an adult. We thank the community and the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce for their support as we strive every single day to help our communities the best way we can.

We have a great program for our high-risk runaway children that's been successful and we look forward to continuing our service to help others.

Domingo Ramos

Township Awards

Bill Rieber

Thompson

Thompson Supervisor Bill Rieber is this year's Town of Thompson Pride Award winner.

"It's nice to be acknowledged for years and years of effort in improving the quality of life of the residents of the Town of Thompson as well as county residents," Rieber said.

"It's been a true team effort and on behalf of all the employees of the township, thank you Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce," Rieber said.



VINCENT KUZROCK | DEMOCRAT
**Town of Thompson Supervisor
Bill Rieber**

Joseph Adamo

Liberty

We are incredibly proud that Unity Ambulette Corp has been honored with the Township Award from the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce.

This recognition is a testament to our team's hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment to providing exceptional transportation services to those in need. Our ambulette service is more than just a business – it's a mission to offer safe, reliable, and compassionate transportation for individuals who require assistance. From seniors to those with mobility challenges, we have strived to create an environment where our passengers feel cared for and respected.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Joseph Adamo

Winning this award reinforces our belief that we are making a meaningful difference in our community. The

Township Awards

criteria for the award highlighted companies that demonstrated excellence in service, community involvement, and business integrity. To be acknowledged by the Chamber of Commerce is a tremendous honor, validating the values and goals that drive us every day.

We are proud to serve the people of our county and are deeply grateful to our clients, partners, and the community for their continued

support. This award inspires us to keep improving and expanding our services to reach even more people who depend on reliable, compassionate transportation.

We look forward to growing alongside our community and continuing to be a trusted partner for those who need us most. Thank you for believing in us, and we're excited for the future ahead!

Lou Monteleone

Highland

Lou Monteleone is owner of the Corner Grill, Eldred Liquor Store, and The Piazza in the Town of Highland, located at the “Four Corners” in Eldred.

Lou won the George Bush Point of Light award for the Human line of hope across America to benefit St. Baldrick’s foundation.

He also was the creator of Santa’s Village of Giving in Eldred for over 20 years, collecting items for the homeless, pet shelters, food pantries, and children in need.

He also ran the Santa Express, providing families with holiday joy for over 15 years.

Lou was a Crusader For a Cure, dedicating 19 years of volunteer work to finding a cure for childhood cancer through the St. Baldrick’s Foundation



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lou Monteleone

and raising \$250,000 through the Line of Hope Across America initiative he created.

Township Awards

Frank Monteleone

Highland

Frank Monteleone is a dedicated entrepreneur and proud community member. He owns and operates several businesses, including Monteleone Garden HydroFarm, 4 Grills Cider Company, and a venture that provides Electric Vehicle charging stations.

Alongside his business endeavors, he also serves as the Vice Chairman of the Town of Highland Planning Board, President of the Eldred Lions Club, and is an active member of the Knights of Columbus.

“I’m deeply committed to driving



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Frank Monteleone

innovation while giving back to the community that I’m honored to serve,” Frank said.

Chico Rodriguez

Thompson

Chico Rodriguez is the Thompson Township Award Winner for 2024. Chico has been a short-order cook at Tilly’s Diner in Monticello for nearly three decades and greets his customers with a smile as he turns pancakes, cooks hashbrowns and makes your egg order just the way you like it.

“I feel wonderful,” Chico said about winning the award. “It’s the second time I’ve won it and I am very happy.”

Chico comes in at 6 a.m. every morning to get the grill going and stays until about 1:30 p.m.

“That’s my job,” he said. “I’m very happy.”



FRED STABBERT | DEMOCRAT

Chico Rodriguez

Township Awards

Tara Burke

Neversink

Tara (Berescik) Burke teaches agricultural education for Tri-Valley Central School in Grahamsville, New York and has been teaching since 2000.

Her courses include environmental science and conservation, large animal production, small animal care, anatomy and physiology, floral design, food science, international agriculture and sustainability, and middle school agriculture and technology.

Her courses focus on hands-on learning and building career skills but her dedication to her students helps set her apart from others.

Tara and her students operate the Tri-Valley Blooms Flower Shop, a hands on floral shoppe, where the students have prepared and delivered wedding flowers for 211 events since the inception in 2004.

This in class business allows students to develop hands on skills and also allows members of the community to receive beautiful, low cost flowers arrangements for their weddings. In addition, to Tri-Valley Blooms, the agriculture program also boasts a 39-raised-bed community garden.

All of the produce from the garden is donated to local food banks and Tara has been working to teach students in the program how to process and can items to help prolong the shelf stability for residents in need. With her guidance,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tara Burke

Tara's students help protect the environment where they live through conservation efforts and participation in research projects – from a Trout in the Classroom program to Community Stream Watch efforts, the environment and the watershed are in the forefront of the agriculture program. The student learn to educate the public about the importance of native species in the Catskills through their management of a native fruit orchard as well.

As the advisor to the Tri-Valley FFA, Tara is proud to work with over 300 youth in the Grahamsville area to promote the importance of a future career in agriculture as well as a future appreciation for those involved in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



Township Awards

Tara Burke

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

industry.

The FFA chapter at Tri-Valley is associated with the Sullivan County Farm Bureau, the Neversink Agricultural Society, the Daniel Pierce Library, the Time in the Valley Museum, the Soil and Water Conservation Society and a variety of animal shelters in the area.

As an offshoot, FFA members started Poultry-4-People, a nonprofit program to grow laying hens and donate them to community members interested in starting a small flock. The idea of teaching people to become food sufficient is something Tara promotes and always supports in her students.

The FFA chapter is one of the top rated programs in both New York and nationally and each year many students at Tri-Valley are recognized for their efforts. Tara is also actively involved in her school in other ways, serving as the Theater Club Advisor for over 20 years and teaching courses across the state of horror make-up for the stage.

She has mentored teachers all across New York and has been named the National Association of Agricultural Educators Outstanding Mentor teacher twice in her 25 year career.

Active in the community, Tara write grants for local organizations and seeks to make Grahamsville and Sullivan County the best place it can possibly be. She is a long standing Director

for the Neversink Agricultural Society and ahs served as the livestock for the Grahamsville Little World's Fair. She is a Board Member for the Sullivan County Farm Bureau and also has assist in many aspects for the Sullivan Renaissance Community Beautification efforts.

She also served as the President of the New York Association of Agricultural Educator three terms during her teaching career and has been the National Association of Agricultural Educators Finance Chair and Strategic Planning Chair.

Finally, Tara has been recognized as the National Association of Agricultural Educators Outstanding Teacher; the Outstanding Program (twice), Agriscience Ambassador, and Ideas Unlimited Award winner.

In 2014, she was also recognized as the Association of Career and Technical Educators Teacher of the Year. Tara is an alumnus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University where she earned her bachelor's degree in animal science and her master's degree in Vocational Technical Education.

Tara truly believes that growing youth is a community activity and that kids need to be engaged and nurtured so they can grow. She has mentored hundreds of youth in Sullivan County and also has served as a foster parent for the County. She and her husband, Mike Burke, are proud to live in Grahamsville and to be engaged in every aspect of the community they can be.



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Chamber of Commerce
& Congratulations
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By the Compassionate Actions
of its Members*

-Coretta Scott King

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Junior Emerging Leaders Awards

Nicolas Ciocari

Age 13

I have done so many things in my community that make me believe I deserve this award, like volunteering at the Bold Gold Open golf tournament and the Bagel Festival.

I also participate in some 5K walks like The Monster and the R4, which help many people. I have enjoyed volunteering and am proud that I was nominated for this award.



Nicolas Ciocari

Carissa Ciocari

Age 15

I have helped out in my community since I was a little girl. I started volunteering as a Girl Scout, and as I got older at community events.

I volunteer at the Bagel Festival every year, where I help with set up, stocking the bathrooms, and clearing the garbage.

I also volunteer at the Bold Gold Open, a Golf Tournament that benefits St Jude Children's Research Hospital and the Bethel Lions Club. I help to stuff the golfer goodie bags and I do the putting contest.

It's nice to be recognized as a Jr. Emerging Leader by the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce.



Carissa Ciocari

Alexa Rogers

Being a senior in high school, I found spare time in the craziness of college applications, writing essays for scholarships, and preparing for my final performances at my high school.

**Congratulations
To All the Pride Award Recipients**



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So I thought to myself, what better way to make use of spare time than with community service?

I love being out in my community and helping them in any way I can. I went through the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce because so many people I know are in it, including my grandma.

My grandma was the one who told me that the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce needed volunteers for their numerous events and I decided that they would be fun to work with and volunteer at.



Alexa Rogers

When Ashley (the president of the Chamber) reached out to me saying that I won the award, I was ecstatic that I had won something for my hard work.

I was surprised as well because I had no idea that my volunteer work had made such a difference to the Chamber.

I am very grateful to be receiving this award, and I cannot wait to accept it in November!

Congratulations
to all of the
2024 Recipients

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Go! celebrate

To our friends and 2024 Pride Award Recipients, congratulations, and thank you for always showing class, character, and pride in our Sullivan Catskills.

Bruce Davidson, Robert Ernst, Sullivan County Sheriff's Office, **Aileen Gunther**—NYS Assembly District 100, **Rutberg Breslow Personal Injury Law**, **Kellee Thelman** of Sullivan 180, (SALT) **Sullivan County Allies Leading Together**, **Chico Rodriguez** (Town of Thompson), **Tara Berescik Burke** (Town of Neversink), **Lou Monteleone & Frank Monteleone** (Town of Highland), **Joseph Adamo** (Town of Liberty), **Bill Rieber** (Town of Thompson), **Domingo Ramos**—Hope Alive 845, **Alexa Rogers, Nicky Ciorciari**, and **Carissa Ciorciari**.



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