

Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development \* Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency \* Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce \* Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association \* Sullivan County Democrat

## Connecting a county, with and without wires

BY JOSHUA A. POTOSEK, SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From the left, Archtop Fiber's Chief Development Officer Shawn Beqaj gave NYS Senator Peter Oberacker and Sullivan County Manager Josh Potosek a tour of Archtop Fiber's Kingston headquarters last year.



Hundreds of spools of Archtop Fiber cabling – nearly 22 million feet in total – occupy a portion of Kingston's iPark 87 complex, where IBM used to manufacture its famous typewriters and mainframe computers. Archtop Fiber already has the necessary amount to begin wiring Sullivan County.

I've heard that there are still people in Sullivan County connecting to the Internet by dial-up – a 1980s technology. Plenty more are accessing the digital world via satellite. I suppose you can call that “modern,” but it's the slowest and most weather-dependent of today's choices. Then again, when it comes to high-speed connectivity, County residents and businesses tend not to have many choices. Spectrum is by far

the largest provider here, but it's not everywhere, and both Verizon and Frontier have had fairly small footprints in Sullivan. I get it – we're a rural place, with homes and businesses spread far apart, making us a difficult and expensive place for Internet service providers to expand. With costs to string fiber-optic cable as high as \$12 every foot, Sullivan's relatively small population and large geography

are unattractive to all but the most well-capitalized fiber companies. Until one company, called Archtop Fiber, came along in May 2022. They had an intriguing idea: how about a public-private partnership? They wanted to become a regional player in the communications provider field, and they had the expertise and the funding to match. We wanted to push past the financial and

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## TO THE PEOPLE

### At year-end Economic Development efforts are working

As we close out 2024 a sense of optimism is beginning to set in throughout the business community. After trudging through a year of uncertainty, the noise that typically consumes our lives during a presidential election year, and the impacts of inflation, there are signs that we are in for a successful 2025.

In Sullivan County, we have added over 400 jobs and stand with an unemployment rate of 2.9 percent, our tourism continues to flourish and projects that have been slowly working through approvals are

slated to break ground, with some opening in 2025.

Recent infrastructure funding announcements in broadband expansion by the County and commercial sewer and water expansion by the Town of Liberty together totaling \$50 million will lay the groundwork that will impact the county for decades to come.

Our industrial/commercial site portfolio, now at over 2.4 million sq. ft., continues to grow, and new tourist-based investments certainly help the momentum moving forward. From The Center for Discovery, Camp FIMFO, Sullivan County Golf Course, the Eldred Preserve, the Sullivan County Airport, Candlewood Suites, additional retail offerings in the



CEO/President Marc Baez

Town of Thompson and projects seeing approvals from Rockland to Bethel, activity will be plentiful in the coming months.

These projects represent a diverse sector range including tourism, high tech, light industry, retail, healthcare, and construction sectors, among others. This diversity helps provide for a balanced and stable economic base as we grow in the future creating demand for local products and services that put local dollars to work in our economy.

Housing is a priority, with the County leading the charge to create an environment that fosters the development of affordable

market rate options. The economic development partners in Sullivan County including the Partnership, SCVA, Chamber, IDA and the County are united in our effort to help our communities grow and provide opportunities to invest, create jobs and live in our Sullivan Catskills.

So, let's enjoy the holidays with a sense of optimism for the future of our county and keep working to help economic development thrive. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Marc Baez  
President and CEO  
Sullivan County Partnership

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## CONNECTING

Continued from front page

geographical barriers to expanding broadband Internet service to every corner of the County, and we had access to grants and low-cost financing unavailable in the private sector. It seemed like a great match.

The relationship proved easy. The process thereafter, of course, was not. Archtop Fiber was assembling a crew and equipment, finding office space, solving engineering challenges, and navigating a slew of regulations at the Federal, State and local levels.

We were working with our own shifting regulatory and political landscapes, including a previously awarded grant for a totally wireless system we were no longer contemplating. Years' worth of preparation seemed to stretch infinitely behind and beyond us.

But together, we were a determined bunch. We had worked too long and too hard on this tantalizing possibility to let the slow gears of government grind it to pieces. We persisted, we innovated, we persuaded, we endured. And we have arrived.



This two-inch-deep "microtrench" was installed by Archtop Fiber last year as a test along a residential street in Saugerties. The cut is pictured as it is about to be paved over, sealing in the cabling.

At right, the fiber-optic conduits sit snugly inside the microtrench. This technique is less expensive, more weather-resistant, and a better aesthetic than stringing cable overhead via utility poles.

Last month, Governor Kathy Hochul and U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand announced Sullivan County would receive \$29.9 million in ConnectALL funding – the crucial grant we needed.

So it is no longer premature to state that by 2027, the majority of Sullivan County – including its more remote locations – will have access to a new broadband connection service. Residents and merchants

throughout the County will connect to lines Archtop will bury along our roadways, or they'll be outfitted with routers allowing them to wirelessly upload and download through antennae mounted on our communications towers, at speeds far faster than anything currently available locally. The price will be competitive, and it may lead to other companies entering our marketplace.

It certainly will grow our

attractiveness as a place to live and work. Internet access is all but necessary to life these days, akin to a utility like electricity. And it's not hard to imagine that people

and businesses have chosen not to move or stay here because broadband is either nonexistent or too expensive.

The transformative power of this initiative also rests in our collaboration with Archtop Fiber, who will be the installer, servicer and biller of customers. We will own the infrastructure for

10 years but will largely serve as a pass-through to Archtop for the above-mentioned funding.

We'll have our own project manager, but the County is not interested in being an Internet service provider – only in positioning us to be the place of choice to expand your business, raise your family, grow your community and stay connected with the rest of your world.

It's about time, isn't it?

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# The Power of a Skilled Workforce: Fueling Economic Growth and Community Prosperity

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**Getting a GED can be crucial for landing a good job.**



**B**usinesses succeed when they have the right people in place. Just as a winning sports team needs talented players and a skilled coach, businesses need a workforce with the right skills and knowledge. This skilled workforce is the engine that drives economic growth.

Education is the key to unlocking human potential. For many people, a high school diploma is a crucial stepping stone to a better life. Without it, finding good jobs, accessing quality healthcare, and providing for their families can be a significant challenge. This can create a cycle of poverty that's difficult to break.

That's why programs that help people earn their GED or High School Equivalency Diploma are vital. These programs give individuals a second chance to

improve their lives and equip them with the confidence and skills to build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

A skilled workforce benefits the entire community. When people have good jobs, they can contribute to a thriving local economy. They can buy homes, start businesses, and support local shops, strengthening the community. Additionally, a skilled workforce reduces the strain on social programs as individuals become more self-sufficient.

To further support this effort, SUNY Sullivan has recently opened a new testing center on campus. This modern facility provides a convenient and accessible location for individuals to take the GED test and will offer other testing soon. Recognizing the needs of working

adults, the center offers flexible evening and weekend hours to make it easier for people to pursue their educational goals.

Students who receive their GED are eligible for the Sullivan Promise Scholarship, which provides Sullivan County residents who earn a high school diploma or GED the opportunity to receive free tuition and fees at SUNY Sullivan.

By investing in education and empowering individuals with the skills they need to succeed, SUNY Sullivan is helping individuals and building a stronger, more prosperous community for everyone.

For more information about the SUNY Sullivan testing center please contact Jaime Schmeiser, Director of Workforce Development at [jschmeiser@sunysullivan.edu](mailto:jschmeiser@sunysullivan.edu) or call 845-434-5750 X4320.

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# Sullivan Catskills: new doves, businesses, and tourism growth

The Sullivan Catskills continues to flourish as a destination for travelers, with exciting new developments, community-focused projects, and enhanced outreach efforts. From the unveiling of a new Dove Trail sculpture to welcoming innovative businesses and engaging with media, the region's tourism industry is thriving.

## Dove Trail adds its 78th Sculpture in Parksville

The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) has unveiled the 78th dove in the Dove Trail series at the Parksville Cultural Center, contributing to the revitalization of the area. This iconic trail celebrates the legacy of the 1969 Woodstock Festival while showcasing the

creativity of local artists who bring these sculptures to life.

The Dove Trail has become a cornerstone of cultural tourism in the Sullivan Catskills, drawing visitors to explore its artistic and historical significance. The newest addition in Parksville reinforces the SCVA's commitment to blending art, history, and community growth.

## Exciting New Business Openings

The Sullivan Catskills continues to attract entrepreneurs who enrich the region's culinary and cultural scene. In Jeffersonville, Toast, Double D Sourdough, and Cuppie Cake Desserts have opened, offering delightful dining and baked goods.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY SCVA

Livingston Manor's newest Korean Restaurant, Toast, is ready to welcome guests from near and far.

Threshold in Livingston Manor now serves as a vibrant space for art, community, and culture, while Bloomingburg welcomes Two Farms Brewing, a new craft brewery already creating buzz among beer enthusiasts. These additions reflect the region's growing appeal as a hub for innovation and creativity.

## SCVA highlights winter Travel at NYC Media Event

On November 19th, the SCVA participated in the I Love NY Media Reception in New York City, showcasing the Sullivan Catskills as a top winter travel destination. The event connected SCVA



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The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Assn. was on hand when Two Farms Brewing, located on Winterton Farms in Bloomingburg, had its ribbon cutting.

representatives with travel writers and editors, highlighting the area's cozy accommodations, outdoor adventures, and unique cultural experiences, especially our Good Taste Craft Beverage Trail.

This outreach effort is part of the SCVA's broader strategy to ensure the Sullivan Catskills remains a

must-visit destination year-round.

**Looking Ahead**

With the unveiling of new Dove Trail sculptures, the launch of



exciting businesses, and effective media outreach, the Sullivan Catskills is well-positioned for continued growth.

Visitors can enjoy everything from artisanal sourdough and cupcakes in Jeffersonville to craft brews in Bloomingburg and artistic experiences in Parksville and Livingston Manor.

As the region's tourism efforts continue to celebrate local creativity and community connections, the Sullivan Catskills remains a shining example of how thoughtful development

can drive cultural and economic success.

Whether discovering a new favorite spot or revisiting beloved locations, there's always something fresh to experience in the Sullivan Catskills.

The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Assn. recently unveiled its latest dove sculpture in Parksville, marking the 78 doves on the trail.

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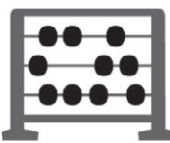
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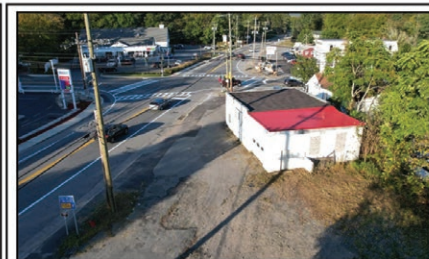
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# SUNY Sullivan to offer EMT basic and refresher courses

SUNY Sullivan announces that Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Basic and Refresher courses will begin in February 2025. These classes are designed to equip aspiring EMTs with essential skills and knowledge for responding to medical emergencies as well as current EMTs looking to renew their certification. Classes will take place on the campus of SUNY Sullivan, located at 112 College Road, Loch Sheldrake, NY.

SUNY Sullivan's EMT courses provide a hands-on, interactive and engaging learning experience through classroom simulation and field experience. Students learn to assess and care for patients at the scene of an incident and while transporting patients by ambulance to the hospital, as well as how to manage respiratory, cardiac, and trauma emergencies. Instructors are committed to each students'



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
EMT course.



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success, preparing them for the NYS practical and NYS written certification exams.

The EMT Basic Course is ideal for newcomers to the field. The course follows the latest New York State Department of Health guidelines, ensuring students receive up-to-date and relevant training. The EMT Basic Course, which runs for 12 weeks, begins on February 25, 2025, and will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and on Sundays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The tuition for the EMT Basic Course is \$950, and there is a \$100 registration fee for all participants.

For certified EMTs looking to renew their certification, the EMT Refresher Course includes classroom instruction and practical, hands-on training to ensure all participants stay at the forefront of the field. The EMT Refresher Course starts on February 23 and classes run concurrently with Basic. Tuition for the EMT Refresher Course costs \$400, and there is a \$100 registration fee.

Additionally, if a student is sponsored, following New York State certification, the qualified sponsor may submit DOH form 3312 for tuition reimbursement pursuant to NYS DOH Policy.

The demand for skilled EMTs is rising, with employment opportunities available in various settings, including ambulance services, hospitals, and fire departments. "Our instructors go the extra mile to help prepare students for the NYS practical and written certification exams. It is highly recommended that you register now to secure your spot as classes are filling up quickly," said Jaime Schmeiser, Director of Workforce Development.

For more information about the EMT Basic and Refresher courses, please visit SUNY Sullivan's website: SUNY Sullivan to Offer EMT Basic and Refresher Courses - SUNY Sullivan or contact Jaime Schmeiser, Director of Workforce Development, at sccworkforce@sunysullivan.edu, or 845-434-5750 ext. 4320.



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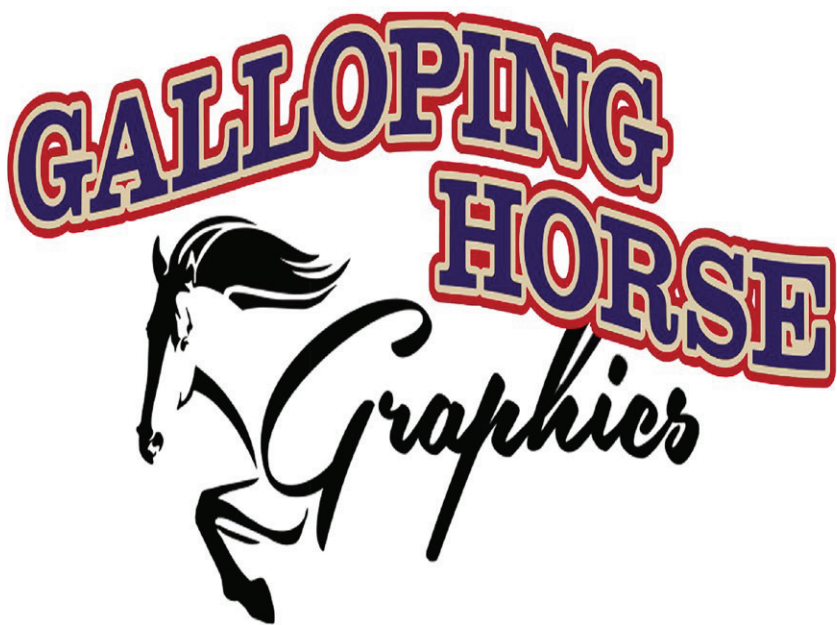


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# Drones Law Enforcement, Emergency Services and private sector all embrace technology By Fred Stabbert III

Getting a bird's eye view of an emergency situation is sometimes vital in law enforcement and emergency services.

It not only can save the responding agency a lot of legwork – but also give first responders a new perspective.

The same can be said for using drones in the private sector, where companies need to go into the field to inspect powerlines, dams, trails or even the roofs of buidlings.

## Sheriff's Dept. Drone Unit

In October, after an early

morning fire swept through a home on Skinner's Falls Rd., the Sullivan County Sheriff's Dept. utilized one of its drones to take overhead photos of the scene to aid in determining the cause of the fire.

"Our [Sullivan County Sheriff's Dept.] Drone Unit started to catch traction last year," Deputy Michael Barrett, who is an FAA certified drone pilot, said. "It's great to get an overview of the scene and it can help us tell where a fire started – although it's not a perfect science."

Barrett, who is also a Sullivan County Bureau of Fire Investi-

gator, said the Sheriff's Dept. currently has 12 drones, the largest being a Mavick 3T and M30.

"It's a really awesome program we have going. There's a lot of practice involved but the more we deploy our drones the better we get at it," Barrett said.

The Sheriff's Dept. assisted the State Police is searching for a missing person several months ago with a drone.

Barrett said the Sheriff's Dept. is also working with Sullivan County Commissioner of Public Safety to integrate the fire service, EMS, police and

Bureau of Fire to communicate together and share information that is gathered from using the drones.

In early October Deputy Barrett and law enforcement put on a demonstration for 13 Sullivan County fire chiefs on the use of the drone.

There are even smaller interior drones – such as the Avita 1 or 2 – that can be deployed inside a building.

"There's pros and cons, but overall it's an awesome tool," Deputy Barrett said.

Thinking out of the box, Deputy Barrett said that drones can also help look for drown-

ing victims. "We can see into the bottom of the river," he said.

And if the drones were equipped with a "drop system" Deputy Barrett said they could fly a drone out to a struggling swimmer and drop a life jacket.

Today, with the use of technology, almost anything is possible.

## Drones help electric company

New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) and Rochester Gas and Electric (RG&E) are inspecting thousands of miles of transmission lines throughout their service areas through

the end of 2024. The process, known as Comprehensive Visual Inspection (CVI), uses drones with high-resolution cameras to capture detailed images of electrical infrastructure.

"Using drones to gather aerial data is highly effective," said Paul Iannuzzelli, manager of Networks Standardization and Maintenance for NYSEG and RG&E. "Drones can inspect electrical infrastructure that's hard to access, such as high-voltage power lines or remote locations, without the need for scaffolding or other equipment. The process is also

faster and safer than traditional inspection methods."

The inspection is critical for maintaining the safety and reliability of the electrical grid and is designed to identify issues that may not be visible from the ground, such as damage, wear, or potential hazards. With CVI, the Companies check for physical damage, corrosion, or other signs of deterioration that could lead to failures or outages. By identifying and addressing potential issues before they lead to failures, NYSEG and RG&E can ensure the consistent delivery of electricity to homes and

businesses.

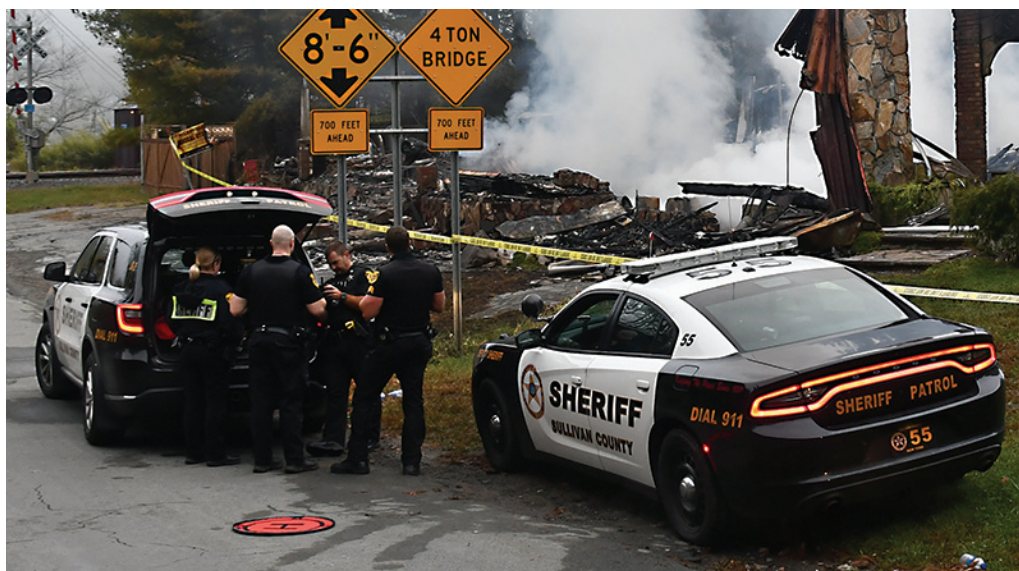
Once data is collected, NYSEG and RG&E look for several factors that may require repairs, including vegetation encroachment that could interfere with power lines, physical damage to poles, lines, or transformers, and other causes that could lead to outages or safety hazards. The Companies have been performing inspections using drones since 2021. The process has significantly enhanced their ability to conduct thorough and efficient evaluations of their infrastructure, helping improve overall reliability.



ALL SULLIVAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT. DRONE PHOTOS BY FRED STABBERT III



PHOTO COURTESY OF NYSEG



Clockwise from above left: A drone flies over the badly burned house on Skinner's Falls Road last October, trying to uncover where the fire started.

A NYSEG drone is used to inspect transmission lines. The process, known as Comprehensive Visual Inspection, uses drone with high resolution cameras to capture detailed images of electrical infrastructure.

The Sullivan County Sheriff's Dept. mans a drown at a house fire in October whereby the house was totally destroyed. The officers reviewed the photos in

real time from a computer in the back of the cruiser and also set up a landing zone for the drone (orange H on ground).

This drone worked for several hours over the house fire, capturing valuable images of the destruction.

This is one of 12 drones that the Sullivan County Sheriff's Dept. owns.





# Banking industry stresses safety

From email scams to elder abuse, cybersecurity hacks to phone calls, scammers are trying to get your money every day, local community bank representatives say.

And one of the best ways to prepare yourself for these scams is to become educated on what is happening in the world of scamming.

Today, even AI – Artificial Intelligence – is being used to mimic family member's voices and likeness in an attempt to get at your pocketbook.

There are measures you can take but one of the most important is to become educated on what is happening and try not to "bite the bait" that the scammers are offering.

Jeff Bank, which has been operating in Sullivan County since 1913, has been offering training for seniors as well as handing out

literature to try and educate its customers as well as all residents of the area about the billion dollar illegal business of scamming.

One of their resources is the Cybersecurity Guide, which is authored by the FDIC.

In it are several important facts that the FDIC says is important in protecting yourself from scammers:

- **Protect Your Computer.** Install software that protects against malware, or malicious software, which can access a computer system without consent to steal passwords or account numbers.

Using a firewall program is also recommended as that will make it harder for hackers to get in.

- **Use the strongest method available to log into financial accounts.**

Use passwords that are difficult to guess and keep them secret. Create strong user IDs and passwords for

your computers, mobile devices and online accounts by using a combination of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols and then change them regularly.

Although using the same password or PIN for several accounts may be tempting, doing so means a criminal who obtains one password or PIN can log into other accounts.

- **Understand Internet Safety Features.**

You can have great confidence that a website is authentic and that it encrypts your information during a transmission if the web address starts with "https://."

Also, ensure that you are logged out of financial accounts when you have completed your transactions or walk away from your computer.

- **Be suspicious of unsolicited e-mails asking you to click on a**

**link, download an attachment or provide account information.**

It's easy for cyber criminals to copy the logo of a reputable company or organization into a phishing email.

When responding to a simple request, you may be installing malware. Your safest strategy is to ignore unsolicited requests, no matter how legitimate they may appear.

- **Be careful where and how you connect to the Internet.**

Only access the Internet for banking or other activities that involve personal informational using your own laptop or mobile device through a known, trusted and secure connection.

A public computer, such as at a hotel business center or public library, and free Wi-Fi networks are not necessarily secure.

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When using your mobile devices or computers you should always make sure you have a secure, trusted connection.

criminals to intercept the Internet traffic in these locations.

**• Be careful when using social networking sites.**

Cyber criminals use social networking sites to gather details about individuals, such as their

place or date of birth, a pet's name, their mother's maiden name, or other information that can help them figure out passwords – or how to reset them.

Don't share your 'page' or access to your information with anyone

you don't know and trust. Cyber criminals may pretend to be your 'friend' to convince you to send money or divulge personal information.

**• Take precautions with your tablet or smartphone.**

Consider opting for automatic updates for your device's operating system and "apps" when they become available to help reduce the vulnerability to software problems.

Never leave your mobile device unattended and use a password or other security feature to restrict access in case your device is lost or stolen.

Make sure to enable the "time-out" or "auto-lock" feature that secures your mobile device when it left unused for a certain period of time. Research any app before downloading it. Consult your financial institution's website to confirm where to download its official mobile application.

**• Educate yourself.** To learn more about cybersecurity, visit the "Stop.

Think. Connect.Resource Guide" at [www.stcguide.com/resource-index](http://www.stcguide.com/resource-index).

**Elder Abuse**

Elder financial abuse is a crime that deprives an older person of their resources or possibly their independence.

Anyone who sees signs of theft, fraud, misuse of a person's assets or credit, or use of undue influence to gain control of an older person's money or property should take action.

You can talk to a trusted family member, talk to an attorney, doctor or officer at a bank or contact the Sullivan County Office for the Aging at 845-794-3000, ext. 0241; or Sullivan County District Attorney's Office at 845-794-3344.

There are many warning signs of elder abuse, a few of which are:

- wiring large sums of money;
- altered wills or trusts
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# Support small businesses this Holiday season: The heartbeat of our community

**BY ASHLEY LEAVITT  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
SULLIVAN COUNTY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

As we enter the holiday shopping season, it's more important than ever to consider the impact our purchasing decisions have on the businesses that shape our local economy. Small businesses make up 99% of all businesses in the United States and account for 40% of the economy. They drive local economic growth, create jobs, and contribute to the unique character of our neighborhoods. This year, supporting small businesses is critical, as they face significant challenges.

**Why Shopping Small Matters  
Now More Than Ever**  
Quoted from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, recent data indicates that consumers are expected to spend \$191 less at small businesses this holiday season, a 40% downturn compared to last year. Rising costs and continued inflationary pressures are contributing to this pullback in spending. Small businesses, which rely on the holiday season to drive profit, could face significant strain. In fact, 61% of small business owners report that holiday sales are a key factor in the success of their businesses, according to QuickBooks data.

However, despite the expected decrease in total consumer spend,

there is an encouraging trend: nearly half of consumers (47%) say they prefer shopping at small businesses over larger retailers because they want to contribute to their communities and support entrepreneurship. This loyalty to small businesses plays a vital role in their survival and success.

**How Does Shopping Small Benefit Your Local Economy?**

When you shop at a small business, you're not just buying a product—you're making an investment in your own community. Small businesses contribute significantly to local economies by paying sales taxes, such as schools, parks, roads, sidewalks, and first responders.

Moreover, small businesses are deeply connected to the communities they serve. Nearly all small business owners say community engagement is crucial for their business success, and they actively give back through hosting local events, supporting charities, and collaborating with other small businesses. When you support these businesses, you're directly strengthening the fabric of your town.

**The Benefits of Shopping Small Extend Beyond the Transaction**

One of the most delightful aspects of shopping small is the unique products you'll find. Many items are handcrafted, one-of-a-kind, or custom-made, giving you the opportunity to purchase



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gifts that can't be found at larger retailers. In fact, 52% of consumers say they choose small businesses because they offer unique products and personalized services that big-box stores cannot match.

Small businesses also provide a more enjoyable and stress-free shopping experience. With many consumers looking to avoid crowded and busy big retail stores, 1 in 3 people say they prefer

shopping small to escape the chaos of the holiday rush.

How Can You Support Local Small Businesses? What if I want to shop online?

This holiday season, make a conscious choice to shop small and keep your dollars circulating within the local economy. Every purchase you make at a small business helps create jobs and fuels the growth of your community. Additionally, many small businesses offer online shopping options, so you can still support local entrepreneurs even if you prefer to shop from home.

Even if you are shopping online, supporting small businesses remains just as impactful. Many small businesses have adapted by offering online shopping through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, as well as their own websites. While the majority of small businesses cannot offer free shipping like larger retailers, you can still make a meaningful difference by choosing to shop from local online stores.

Join the Movement: Shop Small, Support Local

This holiday season, remember that every time you choose to shop at a local business, you're helping to sustain the economic vitality of your community. From handmade gifts to personalized services, small businesses offer a unique shopping experience that big retailers simply cannot replicate.

Let's all make an effort to shop small, not just for the holidays, but throughout the year. When you shop at local businesses, you're supporting the people who live and work in your community, and helping to ensure a bright future for Sullivan County.

This message is quoted from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Interested in learning more about how you can get involved and support Shop Small this holiday season? Contact the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce for more information on how you can participate and make a meaningful impact in your community.

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## Building projects that build community

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# Power your small business with energy tax credits, incentives, and more



BY JONATHON ROUIS, CPA  
RBT CPAS PARTNER

If you have been thinking about upgrading your business facility or vehicle, there is no better time than the present. Today's tax laws and resources can help your small business reduce energy and maintenance costs; create a more comfortable and productive work environment; reduce your carbon footprint; and enhance your brand.

The Federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides tax credits for operating more efficiently and cleaner. New York state offers

tax credits and numerous clean-energy programs. Add to that the incentives, special services, and financing available through energy-related providers and your small business may find significant energy and monetary savings. (Of course, eligibility criteria apply.) For example...

**For new construction or a retrofit (addition of something new to something old) of a qualifying energy efficient commercial building.** With the IRA's Energy Efficient Building Deduction (a.k.a. 179d), when construction or updates reduce annual energy and power costs by at least 25%, and

prevailing wage and apprenticeship requirements are met, your business can receive a deduction of \$2.50/square foot. For each additional percentage that annual energy and power costs are reduced, the deduction increases by \$.10, with the maximum deduction being \$5/square foot (up from \$1.88 in 2022).

**Lighting.** One of the easiest ways to save energy (and money) is to upgrade to energy efficient lighting. Some LED solutions can save you up to 90% on energy related costs and some solutions can last up to 25 years without replacement. What's more, if you make this part of new construction or a retrofit, upgrades



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may qualify for IRA deductions.

**Building envelope.** Everything that goes into creating the shell of your building – walls, roofing, foundation, doors, and windows – is considered part of the building envelope. Improve temperature control, air quality, and condensation with building envelope updates like weatherstripping windows and doors, increasing insulation, and air leak sealing. Not only will your building be more comfortable, but you can also lower energy and operating costs, and possibly take advantage of IRA deductions.

**Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC).** Upgrading to a high-efficiency system can improve energy performance, especially if current equipment is more than 10 years old or malfunctioning. New clean heating and cooling systems not only save on energy, but also help your business reduce its carbon footprint. Plus, they have longer lifespans than older systems and provide more accurate temperature control. Make this part of a new



construction project or retrofit to qualify for IRA deductions.

**Solar.** One of the cleanest energy options is solar. Businesses that adopt it can save up to 30% on installation costs with IRA tax credits, while potentially reducing energy costs by 75%. If interested, get started soon as these tax credits begin to phase out in 2033. In addition, New York offers solar tax credits (for the lower of \$5,000 and 25% of installation costs). If your

business is eligible for both the IRA and NY credits, you can reduce installation costs by more than 50%.

**Vehicles.** With the IRA's Clean Vehicle Tax Credit, your business may qualify for up to a \$7,500 credit for a plug in EV or fuel cell electric vehicle (vehicles 14,000 pounds and over may qualify for up to a \$40,000 credit). In addition, for cars, you may qualify for a \$2,000 rebate under the Charge NY initiative, bringing your total potential tax

credit to \$9,500.

If you're not sure where to start, numerous resources (including energy audits) are available through New York State and local utility providers (i.e., NYSEG, Orange & Rockland, or Central Hudson). Learn more about the many programs available to help your business operate greener and cleaner at <https://www.nyseda.ny.gov/PutEnergyToWork/Industry-Energy-Solutions/Small-Business>.

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# Developments in the Hudson Valley labor market

The New York State Department of Labor recently released preliminary local area unemployment rates for October 2024 with Sullivan



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County leading the entire Hudson Valley in both job growth and low unemployment numbers.

Private sector job growth was spread throughout the region. Year-over-year, Sullivan County posted the strongest gains, up 4.0 percent. They were followed by the Orange-Rockland-Westchester labor market area (+1.2 percent), the Kingston MSA (+0.9 percent), and the Dutchess-Putnam Metropolitan Division (+0.4 percent).

Private sector jobs in the Hudson Valley rose over the year by 9,400, or 1.1 percent, to 828,900 in October 2024. The largest gains were in private education and health services (+9,400), other services (+2,400), leisure and hospitality (+900) and financial activities (+200). Job losses were centered in mining, logging and construction (-1,200), trade, transportation and utilities (-1,000), professional and business services

(-800) and information (-500).

In October 2024, the region's private sector job count reached 828,900 – a record high for the month. Four of nine sectors added jobs for the 12 months through October 2024. Two sectors posted gains of at least 4.2 percent. Private education and health services remained the region's leading jobs generator, up 4.2 percent to 232,100 – its highest employment count on record, regardless of month.

Rates are calculated using methods prescribed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The State's area unemployment rates rely in part on the results of the Current Population Survey, which contacts approximately 3,100 households in New York State each month. To recap last week's statewide press release, New York State's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate held constant at 4.4% in October 2024.

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