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# **Chamber***News*

214 Fair Street Kingston, NY 12401 www.UlsterChamber.org



2021

## Virtual St. Patrick's Breakfast March 17

## Celebrating All Things Irish

The Chamber's Annual Peter B. Mathews St. Patrick's Day Breakfast will resume this year after being canceled at the very last minute in 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This year the event will be Virtual, Livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube with technical support by Radio Kingston.

Chamber President Ward Todd said even though the event is Virtual, viewers will still be able to enjoy the breakfast, especially since this is the first year the program will feature Irish music exclusively.

Todd said the audience will enjoy live music with the T. McCann Band playing everyone's Irish favorites, bagpipers and drums from the Ancient Order of Hibernians, plus other surprise entertainment.

The breakfast is sponsored again this year by the Reis Group Insurance Co., which is apropos given that the last winners of the Honorary Irish Person of the Year in 2019 were brothers Louis, Paul and Frank Casciaro Jr., the president, CEO and CFO of the Reis Group.

Frank Casciaro Jr. said he was "very

surprised" by the honor since his family is full-blooded Italian, or FBI. He speculated it could go to his brother Paul, but the Chamber made it a family affair.

"They've never chosen more than one and I guess they didn't want to leave any one of us out." Frank said.

Paul said he has attended the breakfast for years and wondered if he or one of his brothers would get the nod someday.

"We've sponsored it for such a long time and people know we're not Irish, so I would think eventually ... but I was surprised it was all of us." he said. "It was kind of a shock."

Louis agreed that the family privately thought one of them may get the honor some year.

"We've supported and sponsored that breakfast for well over a quarter of a century. When the three of us were honored together, we were delighted and very surprised," Louis said

Many of the past winners of the Honorary Irish Person of the Year said the gesture turned

them into quasi-celebrities for a year.

Paul said people called him to congratulate the family and sent him copies of the picture in the Daily Freeman.

"It really was a lot of fun, and I think anything that's fun is life-changing in my opinion," Paul said when asked if the honor changed his life

Frank Jr. agreed with his brother.

"It made me feel Irish for a little bit, and I still do, probably until this St. Patrick's Day," he said. "Being that I have no Irish descent, being able to pretend I'm Irish is certainly a pleasure and a privilege just to enjoy a different culture."

Louis said the brothers were "proud to wear our scally caps around all day" after the 2019 breakfast.

"It was certainly a gesture that we were



extremely flattered and humbled to get," Louis said. "We had been going to these things for years. It was quite nice.

"We're going to continue to sponsor the breakfast for as long as we're able."

Virtual Chamber Breakfasts are a great way to stay on top of current events. For more information, contact the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 or go online at <a href="https://www.ulsterchamber.org">www.ulsterchamber.org</a>.

### The Reis Group Is Sponsoring The March Virtual Breakfast

The Reis Group is, once again, proud to sponsor the Peter B. Mathews Honorary Irishman of the Year Breakfast.

2020. Where do we begin? Let's start with St. Patrick's Day. After it was clear the looming situation made group gatherings unsafe and our breakfast would, in fact, be cancelled, we were all terribly disappointed. To that end, and to celebrate the missed 2020 St. Patrick's holiday, The Reis Group has brand-new tote bags to distribute along with the commemorative 51st Annual Peter B. Mathews Reis Group scotch tumblers. The Reis Group will host a "Drive-Thru St. Patrick's Day Swag Event". All fellow Chamber Members need to do to claim their swag is drop by The Reis Group parking lot at 475 Washington Avenue on either March 17th, 18th, or 19th. All members who come through and leave a business card will be entered into our celebratory iPad giveaway!

2020's greatest challenge was to keep our doors open, while balancing the safety and needs of our employees brought about by the pandemic. Most employers who were able pivoted to a remote work environment. For people used to traditional office culture, this was a complete shift from "business as usual." Employees with school-age children now shoulder the burden of working from home, while attempting to balance a homeschooling routine. This has caused great stress for many and The Reis Group is grateful to the employees who took on this responsibility with great courage and resolve.

As an essential business, and for the safety of our clients, The Reis Group had to keep its doors open through even the darkest days of the pandemic. Unfortunately, fires, car accidents. and other losses continue, regardless of world events, but The Reis Group was here even through the most uncertain times. Having a house fire or collision is a disruptive enough life event. When you add the pandemic to the mix, our clientele had an even greater need to maintain a sense of normalcy. By keeping the lines of communication open and providing multiple service options, we were able to serve the great public of Ulster County and elsewhere in these times of need. Insurance is for peace of mind, to protect families and assets alike, and bringing a sense of security and protection to our clients became The Reis Group's number one priority. We strived to bring a sense of business "as usual" in a time that was anything but.

The Reis Group has been providing insurance to the residents of The Hudson Valley and beyond for 55 years. Our personal lines department works diligently at matching our clientele to one of our many carriers, customizing coverages to meet the exact needs for auto, home, umbrella, liability, and other personal insurance. Our commercial insurance departments are skilled in providing business insurance needs for all types of ventures; from the sole contractor to restaurants, retail, large manufacturers, municipalities, and all other businesses. The Reis Group brings together all of its combined experience to support each policyholder. We also offer competitive group health insurance, specialized Workers Compensation solutions, and custom-structured risk management plans to reduce the chance of catastrophic loss. The Reis Group - Insurance Worth Having for peace of mind and security.

The roots of the businesses that make up The Reis Group go

back over 100 years in Ulster County. We are a local company. Our employees are your neighbors, the patrons of your businesses, and the diners in your restaurants. Our commitment to our area is evidenced in the support we show for local charity, organizations, and fellow businesses. In the past 10 years, The Reis Group has been fortunate to be able to provide over a half-million dollars to



people in need all around Ulster County.

The Casciaro Brothers have been doubly blessed to be the only Honorary Irishmen to serve a full two-year term! We are extremely honored to have received this designation and have worked tirelessly to up our gift of blarney. We wish the next Honorary Irishman of the Year a much quieter, peaceful, and in-person year of service and celebration.

Happy St. Patrick's Day from The Reis Group...Insurance Worth Having.

214 Fair Street Kingston, NY 12401 845.338.5100 Fax 845.338.0968

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## DAILY FREEMAN

## **UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS**

March 17 | 9:00 - 10:00 am

St. Patrick's Day Breakfast

Technical Support by Radio Kingston Livesteam on Facebook & YouTube

Sponsor: The Reis Group

March 24 | 9:00 - 10:00 am

Virtual Business Card Exchange

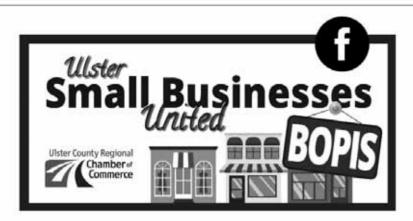
Via Zoom Meeting Reservations are required. Register at www.UlsterChamber.org

April 20 | 9:00 - 10:00 am

Virtual Chamber Breakfast Meeting Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan

Technical Support by Radio Kingston Livesteam on Facebook & YouTube

Sponsor: Sawyer Savings Bank



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## **New Space Fits Her Well**

## Maria Cabrera Alterations & Tailoring Moves To Kingston

Maria Cabrera is back to where it all started for her when she first opened her alterations and tailoring business five years ago. She just moved the shop from the town of Ulster back to the Governor Clinton building at 1 Albany Ave. in Kingston and said it feels like home.

"I was here for my very first year, but since then, I've grown so much," Cabrera said. "I've gone from the back of the building to the storefront. Everybody's been great, and I'm very pleased with the decision I've made. It feels cozy, private and more personal, and that's the essence of my business. I just enjoy that personal experience with my clients."

Maria Cabrera Alterations & Tailoring is one of those niche shops that offers a service few others in Ulster County do. In fact, some of the best-dressed people in the area seek her

Cabrera, who learned the lost art of sewing from her parents at a small dress factory in Puebla, Mexico, has decades of experience nipping, tucking and adjusting clothing to make her clients look their best for any occasion.

"In my house, I grew up with laces and beads and expensive fabrics, and my mom developed her own patterns," Cabrera said. "I don't even remember when I learned how to sew. It was just part of my being."

Cabrera would end up following in her parents' footsteps after she settled in the United States in 1989. She was just 15 when she made her way here and shared a home with her parents' friends.

"I already knew pattern-making, so when I came to America, it wasn't hard to find a job in the industry, especially in Kingston," she said.

Cabrera landed work at various local facilities, including the former Shirt Factory on Cornell Street as well as a shop that specialized in mother-of-the-bride dresses and a coat and

"I'm a very lucky and blessed person,"

she said. "I've worked in all phases of the industry. I've done it all. That's what's make me different. That—and my industry is a dying art. Unfortunately, people don't take sewing seriously anymore, but there are those who do appreciate their clothes and those people know how much of a difference it makes."

Cabrera credits a lot of people for her success, namely her parents and the famed doll maker Robert Tonner. She started working for the Tonner Doll Co. in 1998. Tonner was so smitten by her skill set that he sent her to Parsons School of Design, paying for her tuition and transportation to and from the college in Lower Manhattan. Over time, she became the lead patternmaker for the

"He loved my work, and I loved working for him. I stayed with him for almost 20 years. I became a professional working



for him and will be forever grateful to him. It was the opportunity of a lifetime," she said of her work with Tonner.

addition to doing alterations, Cabrera also sells, rents and fits bridalwear, including dresses accessories. That part of her business has ebbed in the last year due to COVID-19 restrictions on wedding gatherings, but Cabrera remains hopeful it will pick up later this summer.

Due to the pandemic, 2020 wasn't her best year, but she emerged as one of Ulster County's rising stars after she started sewing face masks for essential

"Even while I was dealing with my own

frustration and depression, I started scrolling on Facebook. and I noticed that nurses were looking for PPE (personal protective equipment). thought, 'Tomorrow morning, I'm going back to the shop to sew masks.'

"I found fabrics and started

making them. thought was going to be small batches, but it turned out to be a very big deal, and the way that

people received them gave me joy. They cried. It felt so good to be able to do something for those on the frontlines."

Cabrera estimates that she made close to 6,500 face coverings-something she considers the greatest accomplishment of her career.

"I was there day and night. It was an addiction. For me, it was all about helping to make a difference. It was very rewarding," she said.

Speaking of rewarding, Cabrera can't help but look around her new 700-squarefoot digs and feel like this is where she needs to be to carry her business forward.

"It's a very intimate and cozy space," she said. "That's the picture I had in my head five years ago when I started the business. This is more of who I am. This is what my customers want. I'm happy to be home."

Maria Cabrera Alterations & Tailoring, located at 1 Albany Ave. in Kingston, can be reached at (845) 514-2108 or www. mariacabrerabridal.com.





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## The Jolly Cow Brings Joy In Midst Of Pandemic

The images of happy people last summer were a testament to John and Ann Stowell that what they do matters. While there are tons of examples they could point to, the owners of the iconic Jolly Cow ice cream shop in Lake Katrine recall one scene vividly. It involved a doting dad, who ordered several kiddie cups of ice cream one hot afternoon.

"He took the cups of ice cream over to the picnic table and set them down. He went to the car and opened the doors. Out came the kids," John Stowell recalled. "They were smiling and dancing and running to their treats. We thought to ourselves,



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'There's no place else we'd rather be.'"

In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, handing out something as simple as an ice-cream cone may seem trivial, but the couple's role last year at The Jolly Cow was monumental, especially for area children, whose routines from school to summer camp were interrupted by COVID-19.

"The pandemic changed the world, but we were a momentary escape from all the doom and gloom," John said. "It gave the kids something to look forward to. We had so many people stop and thank us for spreading some happiness. It truly was an amazing thing."

The couple has been at it for a decade. They bought the 59-year-old business in 2011. The classic roadside stand, founded by the Martinson family in 1962, became available at just the right time in their lives.

"For us, it was a career business decision to purchase the real estate," John said. "Ann was in the insurance industry and was looking for a career change, so it was a good time, and we went for it."

Over the years, the couple slowly and methodically grew the business while keeping the feel of The Jolly Cow the same. They expanded on the menu, including adding more soft-serve flavors as well as ice-cream cakes, sorbet, frozen yogurt, and non-dairy options. They also opened up the parking lot and added more outdoor seating and tents.

The Jolly Cow is the place to be in Ulster County on a typical summer day. With oldies blaring in the background, the family destination feels like a retro drive-in scoop shop, where banana splits and butterscotch sundaes rule the moment. Jolly, the Holstein mascot outside, beckons children of all ages to test their agility by climbing onto her back.

Last year, they put a mask over Jolly's snout, a gesture that got a lot of positive feedback for the family-run business. The Stowells also got high marks for strict sanitation and keeping their guests safely separated. Every time a picnic table vacated, or a child dismounted Jolly, a worker would be there to wipe the surfaces down.

The owners give their employees much of the credit.

"Our staff here really stepped it up," Ann said. "They were disinfecting left and right. We're very fortunate for our staff and their dedication. They're priceless. Many have worked for us from high school and have stayed with us into their 20s until they have kids of their own."

Her husband added that the business has benefited from their employees' dedication.

"We've been successful because of our staff and loyal

customers. This is a fast-paced business that's not for everyone. These kids work very hard. They keep moving. I believe they definitely enjoy their work."

With the winter thaw in progress, the Stowells are getting set for The Jolly Cow's 59th season. They typically welcome guests back on St. Patrick's Day weekend, and by now, the spring cleaning is done, and the ice-cream machines are ready to pump out daily pleasure.

"We want to thank all our customers and community for being our family and coming back to us year after year, even in a pandemic," John said. "It was a turbulent time, but it brought us all closer together, and we are proud to be a part of this community.

"We don't know what this year will bring, but we'll be back dishing out those treats and being that sense of normalcy in people's lives. To us, there's nothing better than that."

The Jolly Cow, located at 1620 Route 9W in Lake Katrine, can be reached at (845) 336-6090 or on Facebook.



## **Drawing Crowds To The Hudson Valley**

## Walkway Over The Hudson Helps During COVID

Most Hudson Valley tourist attractions shuttered their doors when COVID-19 hit last March, but not the Walkway Over the Hudson.

"Not for a single day," said Geoff Brault, director of marketing and communications for the Walkway, a pedestrian bridge that spans the Hudson River and connects Highland on the west with Poughkeepsie on the east.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced almost immediately after COVID hit that state parks like the Walkway would remain open. Brault said the Walkway staff had to overhaul sanitation protocols to keep people safe, while making other changes to discourage people from gathering in groups.

"So, picnic tables and things like that were taken out of the park," he said. "Water fountains were closed. But the important thing is that the park stayed open above and beyond efforts to sanitize every public space where people might be touching things to try and keep them as safe as possible. The net effect was that the park remained open for people to get out of their house and to be outside."

of people that were thankful to have something like the Walkway in the community at that time."

Brault said more than 6 million people have crossed the 1.8-mile span in the 11 years the Walkway has been open. The Walkway towers 212 feet above the water.

"We average roughly 600,000 visitors per year, so it's tremendously successful," he said. "We've welcomed visitors from all 50 states and more than 50 countries.

"We also know that at any given time, roughly half of the people in the park are local and within a 30-minute drive of the gates. The other half, in a typical, non-COVID year, are coming from outside the area. So, it's not only a great amenity for the people that live in Poughkeepsie and Highland and Dutchess County and Ulster County and the surrounding communities for exercise and things of that nature, it's also a real magnet and tourist attraction for people coming to the Hudson Valley."

Brault said tourism officials in Ulster and

Dutchess have data showing that tourists usually put the Walkway on their itinerary if they are coming here for a visit.

"There's many great reasons someone might want to visit the Hudson Valley, whether it's the culinary scene. whether it's the history, whether it's the outdoor activities, whatever might be," he "I think said.

where the Walkway comes in is we are obviously an awfully large and awfully visible, awfully picturesque entity that you're not going to get anywhere else in the world. We're the world's longest elevated pedestrian bridge. So, quite frankly, you're not going to get one on a grander scale anywhere else on the planet."

The former Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge was constructed in 1889 and, at the time, was the only rail link between New York City and Albany. It ceased being a railroad bridge in 1974 when a spark from a crossing train ignited the tracks. No trains would ever cross the span again and it was dormant for many years.

The public began talking about turning the bridge into a linear pedestrian park in the 1990s.

A small grassroots organization got behind that idea and started campaigning at community events. The group raised more than \$30 million from public and private sources to totally retrofit the park and turn it into what it is today.

Today, the Walkway is operated and owned by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation the state Bridge Authority.

Braut said the Chamber has been "tremendously helpful" and a "great partner" in helping promote the Walkway, which is part

of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail.

"The Chamber has been instrumental in helping us promote events, get local people to come to those events, and also just spread the word that the Walkway is a destination that is here for the people of the area," he said. "We want the Walkway to be a place for people that live here, an amenity for them to improve their lives."

Walkway Over the Hudson, located at 61 Parker Ave. in Poughkeepsie, can be reached at (845) 454-9649 or www.walkway.org. The administrative offices are at 80 Washington St., Suite 300, in Poughkeepsie.



While some people felt trapped inside their homes in March, April and beyond, the Walkway was there as an oasis for people to get out and about.

"We've heard from a number of people that it had a tremendous effect on their mental health," Brault said. "So, we are extremely proud of the work that the park staff did to keep the bridge open every single day.

"It's a place of peace and respite and you can walk by yourself; you can walk in a small group, you can still exercise. People were cycling. It's just a place to inspire people to get active. We've heard from a great number



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#### The Official Publication of the Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce

# WELCOME THESE NEW MEMBERS

#### **ADRIANA'S BRIDAL**

19 F Market Street Rhinebeck, NY 12572 Adriana Peruso - Owner

Category: Retail

Description: A bridal gown and accessory shop in the heart of Rhinebeck, New York, A fun and relaxing experience for all brides looking to be styled from head to toe for their big day! The store is run by appointment only and is an intimate experience for the bride and her auests.

#### ATLAS ARCHAEOLOGY LLC

628 Lakewood Road

Pine Bush. NY 12566

www.AtlasArchaeologyLLC.com

**Dylan Lewis** - Owner - Registered Professional

Archaeologist

Category: Consultants - Energy/Environmental

Description: Atlas Archaeology LLC is a cultural resource management and archaeological consulting service based in Pine Bush, New York, We satisfy all requirements outlined within Section 106 of the Environmental Review and Historic Preservation Act needed to complete building projects. Our services include Phases 1A/1B. II. and III cultural resource surveys, laboratory analysis of culturally sensitive material, State and National Registry of historic places, mitigation of human remains, and telecommunication/solar projects.

#### **FIRST CAPITAL POKE BAR**

310 Wall St.

Kingston, NY 12401 www.firstcapitalpokebar.com

Maximilian Glausen - Owner

Category: Fast Food/Delis

Description: Fresh, Fast, Quality Ingredients with a

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#### **MENTOR ME OF ULSTER COUNTY**

PO Box 199

Port Ewen, NY 12466 Stephanie Kresser - Director

Category: Non-Profit Organizations

Description: The mission of Mentor Me of Ulster County is to match at-risk youth to inspiring mentors focused on whole person wellness and supportive relationships. We believe every child deserves the opportunity to reach

their full potential.

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159 Green Street

Kingston, NY 12401 www.nxginsurance.com

Jeffrey Schaller – Sales Executive

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**Deb Boan** - Owner

Category: Pet Food/Supplies

Description: Artisan, small batch dog jerky. One ingredient, sourced locally and dehydrated to perfection.

#### **SCENIC HUDSON**

1 Civic Center Plaza Suite 200

Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

www.scenichudson.org

**Erin Riley** – Senior Vice President Category: Non-Profit Organizations Description: Environmental non-profit.

#### THE PAPER MILL RESTAURANT, INC.

7400 US 209

Napanoch, NY 12726

www.thepapermillrestaurant.com

Christine Schiff - General Manager

Category: Restaurants

Description: Restaurant, Bar and Events space.

#### **VILLAGE BAGELS**

248 Main Street

Saugerties, NY 12477 Rodney Mazzella – Owner

Categories: Restaurants: Fast Food/Delis

Description: Kettle boiled brick oven bagels, Fair Trade Certified Organic locally roasted coffee, home of the hot

pressed specialty banninis.

#### **VILLAGE PIZZA**

284 Main Street

Saugerties, NY 12477 Rodney Mazzella – Owner

Categories: Restaurants: Pizza

Description: Village Pizza & Restaurant is a local family owned pizzeria and restaurant celebratina more than 50 years in business in the Village of Saugerties. Pizza, Appetizers, Salads, Subs, Entrees and Desserts can be enjoyed for dine in, takeout or delivery 7 days a week.

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#### 30 Years

Town of Ulster

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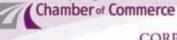


Each episode will take you inside a local restaurant where host Jess Davis will sample their best or most popular menu items.

To watch the latest 'Jess Delicious' video join Ulster Eateries United. (Videos can also be viewed on Chamber's YouTube Channel.)

www.UlsterChamber.org





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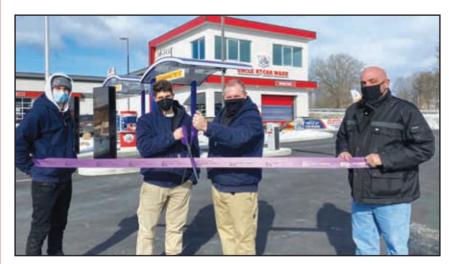
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