Chamber’s St. Patrick’s Day Breakfast Back In-Person After Last Year’s Virtual Event

A funny thing happened last year at the dinner. Eileen Loizou, the 2021 Honorary Irish Person of Ulster County, said she was not even thinking of her Irishness until that moment. “I was overwhelmed with joy and happiness I didn’t know what to do or say. Joe had to basically hold on until that moment passed.”

Last year marked a first for the Reis Group. The Irish breakfast as an annual event was live-streamed on YouTube and Facebook due to the pandemic. The previous year it was canceled altogether as COVID-19 cases began rising at Ulster County and statewide restrictions were put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. “I guess I really did make history,” said Eleni Loizou, the Reis Group…Insurance Worth Having.

The Reis Group is, once again, proud to present Mathews Honorary Irish Person of the Year Breakfast.

We are thrilled to have all our friends, the patrons of your businesses, and the community here to be all together, in person for the first time, since last year. The Reis Group will kick off this month with the annual breakfast to remember and celebrate.

We observe a few moments of silence for all those who have suffered and for those who have lost lives over these two years, remembering the families that carry their memories.

Think about it. 2021 was like a mini 2020. Ominous camera, racial, and felt just as quickly. We opened and closed our businesses doors more than once. The toll on all the businesses owners and entrepreneurs in this room, struggling to keep their doors open and our economy healthy, all the while being pummeled on all sides by factors, including enormous oversight and compliance has been more than a challenge. It’s been fatal by crippling, confusing, and onerous oversight and management plans to reduce the chance of catastrophic loss.

The Casciano Brothers were beyond humbled and thrilled to have been chosen Honorary Irishmen of The Ulster Chamber of Commerce. We along with our colleagues would like to give you all a toast. Congratulations to all the winners.

We’re so looking forward to seeing a live audience this year because we feel the energy of the crowd is integral and vital to the party. It’s about having a good time and getting to know that person.

The breakfast annually recognizes an outstanding community leader with the Royal Order of the Blarney Stone proclamation, which states, “Whereas, it has been observed that those worthy individuals who have been admitted annually to membership in this Royal Order truly works unselfish with the spirit of St. Patrick, Blessed with the art of blarney, but, unforseen with Irish name, who, by one of quick and facile tongue, have ended their days untouchable to the Irish race.”

In the case of Ulster Chamber, it isn’t ever of Irish blood in her veins. “Irish genealogy Greek-American.”

“We’re going to play some of the standards, the light-hearted and festive breakfast,” said Eleni Loizou, the Reis Group…Insurance Worth Having.

We also offer

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As far as last year’s honor is concerned, Loizou still gets chills when she thinks of her moment in the chamber spotlight. “It was really humbling. And it did in a smart way. As we were doing the ‘Irish Deficient’ interview, she kept telling me the diner was going to be advertised live during the St. Paddy’s Day Breakfast and to stand by. She did in her own spooky way and she totally liked it.” Loizou said. “Then, they accepted me right there and took me to the best Western Plus, where Ward announced it again and gave me my plaque in person. Everyone who came to the dinner told me I was the first Good-Irish person they ever met. It was a lot of fun.”

The breakfast live stream “video on the Dart Stadium Deal did put on the Ulster Chamber United Irish page on March 21, so we do anticipate the exposure for the week of St. Patrick’s Day.”

“I will never forget this honor,” she said. “I do what I do for the community and don’t expect anybody to give me an award for it. If you pick it this year, cherish that moment. It’s a blessing to be recognized in this way.”

Church breakfast programs are a great way to network with other local business leaders and stay on top of current events. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged.

For more information or to register, call the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 or go online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

The Reis Group is the March Breakfast Sponsor.

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Eleni Loizou, the 2021 Honorary Irish Person of the Year.

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As an essential business we all need insurance; we also offer

Our commitment to our area is evidenced in the support we show for local charities, organizations, and fellow businesses. The Reis Group is a proud supporter of the area we serve and has given over one and a half million dollars to charities over the past 10 years.

Our personal lines department works diligently at matching our clientele to one of many carriers, customizing our policies to meet the exact needs for auto, home, umbrella, and 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 our combined expertise to support each policyholder. We also offer competitive group health insurance, specialized Workers’ Compensation, and custom-structured risk management plans to reduce the chance of catastrophic loss.

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The new Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Ulster County comes with an impressive resume and has some big goals for the organization he took over just eight months ago.

David Drimer, who was born and raised in New York City, is a former associate publisher of Newsday and one of the most senior Jewish newspaper. He also is the former national executive director of the Zionist Organization of America.

Drimer and his wife, along with former Forward executive editor Dan Friedman, most recently co-founded the non-profit National Holocaust Awareness Initiative (NHAIonline.org). “I’m happy to help the federation become even more prominent for the benefit of the Jewish community and the Ulster community as a whole,” Drimer said. “We’re really involved in preserving cultural identity, safety and security and being the voice and proponent for social justice for all peoples in the County. We are not a religious organization. We are a secular organization.”

The Jewish Federation of Ulster County, now in its 41st year, is the local affiliate of the Jewish Federation of North America. “It’s hard to put all of the programs into words,” Drimer said. “I’m happy to help the federation become ever more mission-driven for the benefit of everybody.”

One of the first things Drimer was able to do was organize the Ulster County Anti-Semitism Hotline, which can be reached at (845) 859-9858. “People can report any anti-Semitism they’ve witnessed or that they’ve been a victim of,” Drimer said. “We have resources available in helping them to follow up.”

“Encourage anybody who has ever been a victim of or witnessed acts of anti-Semitism to contact law enforcement first then to contact us. We have strategic partners that help back up in pursuing appropriate remedies, depending on what the original problem was.”

“We get tremendous value out of the exposure that the Chamber and its events provide,” Drimer said. “We were pleased to get that award because we want the community to understand that we’re not an insular community. We’re here for the benefit of everybody.”

For a full list of programming, go to UCJF.org. “Our mandate is to promote Jewish culture and the safety and security of the Jewish residents of Ulster County,” Drimer said. “We want to be a voice for social justice, humanitarian efforts, and educational advancement for all Ulster residents of any race or religion.

As a newcomer to Ulster County, I cannot tell you enough how pleased to get that award because we want the community to understand that we’re not an insular community. We’re here for the benefit of everybody.”

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Tony Marmo hears the constant and desperate cries of local employers who can’t find enough workers to fill jobs, and he wishes he had some tangible solutions to ease their stress.

The owner of Norman Staffing, a Kingston-based private employment service that provides temporary and permanent employment help to organizations in health care, customer service industries, manufacturing, customer service, and other sectors, said the ongoing labor shortage is not only a national crisis but a local one that is affecting his business operatively.

“There’s been a tremendous decline in workers since the pandemic started,” he said. “In 2021, things started coming back, and then, when the Omicron variant hit, things reversed again, so it’s been cyclical for us, and that has to do with the demand. Right before Omicron exploded, we were actually seeing an uptick in people wanting to come back to work, but then it all stopped.”

To understand the factors behind the ongoing labor shortage, the last harrowed year served as a look back for company’s sake.

“Prior to the pandemic, we were pretty much at full capacity. We were needed, but also what they didn’t even know they wanted. The feedback I get when I photograph somebody is that ‘I never really managed to bring out their essence,’ she continued. “It was fun and quite unexpected. I’m a portrait photographer. I put a camera in her hand and said, ‘Snappy to it!’ and she didn’t know it at the time, but the process truly is fun.”

In the five years of the portrait photography, Lofaro said the business was profitable, but she was still broke. "It was like a roller coaster. There’s a lot of burnout for the people remaining. Those folks say they just can’t do any more. I’m hoping that if Omicron declines, people are going to have one less concern. There’s certainly the demand out there, but we need the fuel to make this happen, and the employees are the fuel,” he said.

Norman Staffing, located at 251 Clinton Ave., Kingston, can be reached at (845) 556-8111 or Info@NormannStaffing.

Juliet Lofaro Portrait Photographer

Juliet Lofaro was a 9th grader at Orange High School when her world was turned on its axis with the attack on the World Trade Center.

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These Members Have Renewed

ABC Fuels, Inc.  
ABC Pest Control, Inc.  
Adirondack Trailways/Pine Hill Trailways/New York Trailways  
AFCO Fuel, LLC  
AGS Deliveries, LLC  
Affandre Architecture, PC  
Allen Ross Architecture, LLC  
Antio’s Copy Hut  
Benefit Counseling Associates  
Blair Collectibles  
Blauweiss Media  
Boiceville Pharmacy, Inc.  
Brian Hommel Home Improvement, LLC  
Casa Vallastra II, Inc.  
Catholic Charities Orange, Sullivan and Ulster  
Close Out New York, Inc.  
Cooper Associates  
Crasy Bowlz - New Paltz  
Curious Minds Media  
Donna Moss Greeting Cards  
Emery & Webbi, Inc.  
FirstLight  
Francis P. Flynn, CPA  
Global Dwelling  
Grind Mill Real Estate  
Guerin & Guerin Agency, Inc.  
Hello Dolly Real Estate  
Herzog’s Home & Paint Centers  
Hudson Valley Foundation for Youth Health  
Hudson Valley Insurance Agency  
J & C’s Fine Furniture Repairs & Refinishing  
Jaffer Electric, Inc.  
Kingston Library  
Kiku Life, Inc.  
Lawn Doctor of Ulster & N.W. Dutchess Counties  
Mattress By Appointment Lully Mattress, LLC  
Medical Aesthetics of the Hudson Valley  
Meltzer & Hill Advisory, LLC  
Mid Hudson Valley Chapter of SHRM  
Miles of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation  
Miller/Howard Investments, Inc.  
Minnewaska Distance Swimmers Association (MDSA)  
Nancy Plumer/New Visions  
Olympic Diner  
Raising Your Awareness about Narcotics  
Raleigh Green Inc.  
Rennia Engineering Design, PLLC  
Saunderskill Farms  
Spectrum Reach  
Stella Bella Salon and Beauty Supply  
Texas Roadhouse  
Thomas P. Lindgren, CPA, PC  
Town of Hurley  
Town of Saugerties  
Town of Ulster  
Trataros Law Firm, PLLC  
Trusco Bank  
Ulster BOCES  
Ulster County Board Of REALTORS  
Ulster County Clerk  
Ulster County Sheriff’s Office  
Ulster County SPCA  
Ulster Performing Arts Center (UPAC)  
Veronica L. Kugelman, CPE, Electrologist  
Williams Lumber & Home Centers  
ZenBusiness

Anniversaries:

45 Years
Benefit Counseling Associates  
Ulster BOCES

10 Years
Hudson Valley Foundation for Youth Health  
Trataros Law Firm, PLLC

25 Years
J & C’s Fine Furniture Repairs & Refinishing

5 Years
Boiceville Pharmacy, Inc.

Greek Greece - A Land of Gods & Heroes
November 4 - 12, 2022

9 days, 7 nights including deluxe hotels, meals, luxury transport, tour guides, and airfare from New York JFK
$3,249 including land & air!

INFORMATIONAL MEETING
Monday April 11, 2022 @ 5:30 pm
Holiday Inn Express & Suites | 1835 Ulster Ave, Lake Katrine, NY 12449

This trip is open to Chamber Members and the general public.

For more details, Itinerary or to Register for informational meeting visit

www.UlsterChamber.org

Questions? Contact Carol Ricken Carol@UlsterChamber.org | 845.417.7143

Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce