SUNY Ulster President Breakfast Guest Going Back To School To Get Ahead

Both of Ulster County's state universities have new leadership in 2022 and SUNY Ulster President Dr. Alison Buckley will be introducing herself to the local business community when she addresses the Chamber's holiday breakfast meeting on Dec. 13.

The breakfast, scheduled from 7:30-9:00 a.m. at Wiltwyck Golf Club, 404 Steward Lane in Kingston, is sponsored by Rondout Savings

Chamber President Ward Todd said the breakfast will also feature a performance of holiday songs by the Kingston High School Choir, an acknowledgement of the Chamber's Corporate Sponsors as well as the recognition of several outgoing Chamber board members.

The highlight of the morning will be Buckley, who took over the leadership of the two-year community college in Stone Ridge on July 28 from Dr. Alan Roberts.

"I will speak broadly about how SUNY Ulster can support the economic vitality here in Ulster County," she said. "One important thing as we come through COVID is the critical role SUNY Ulster plays in supporting economic vitality through making sure that we've got a well-trained workforce.

Buckley said Ulster County is home to roughly 68,000 people without any posthigh school credential. They may have some college, but no certificate or degree.

"My goal is to make sure that we are serving that population and providing real meaningful educational opportunities so our residents can earn a family-sustaining wage," she said.

Her goal is to reach out and make sure adults know of SUNY Ulster's many offerings, from microcredentials to two-vear degrees.

"I think the critical component is making sure our residents know that they can go back to school to get ahead,' Buckley said.

"So, are offering we programs, through partnerships with employers, that are training up a workforce that meets those employment needs? It's about making sure that we're an institution that is ready to serve adults in a way to meet their goals."

Buckley said her goals for SUNY Ulster include increasing enrollment, which now stands at 3,686, according to the college's website (www.sunvulster.edu).

"The college took an enrollment hit during COVID, as did community colleges around the

country," she said. 'What we really need to do is to mitigate those declines and to get folks going back to school." Her other goals include "performing from a position of operational excellence and efficiency," while "building robust partnerships" with the community and other

educational institutions such as four-year

SUNY New Paltz. She already has forged a relationship with SUNY New Paltz President Dr. Darrell Wheeler, who also is new. "I think Dr. Wheeler and I are off to a great start as the new presidents and we are looking at ways we can partner and work together,' she said. "That involves really spending time with our employers and thinking about what the needs are and what we can do to make sure the residents of Ulster County have access to great jobs with wages to support a family and a

first-rate education that can take them in many



Dr. Alison Buckley

County with more than 20 years of experience in both college and university settings in executive leadership, enrollment management, marketing. recruitment. and program and budget management. She has degrees from Randolph College; the University of Delaware; the University of Dublin, Trinity College; and the University of Maryland. Her doctorate is from Northeastern University.

Buckley comes to Ulster

She most recently served as the vice president for enrollment management and student affairs for Connecticut State Community Colleges. She held other positions at Howard Community College, the University of Baltimore and the University of Maryland. She also worked at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and has taught at the American College in Dublin, the Community College of Philadelphia, Delaware County Community College and Howard Community

Buckley called SUNY Ulster a "gem"—the college is ranked the No. 1 community college in the state based on academics, affordability and other factors-and said she loves her new position.

"It's been wonderful. It really has," Buckley said. "I love the college. It is just such a family atmosphere. I always say it's the best job in the Buckley's husband, Mark, did post-doctorate

work at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie before the couple married, so he was familiar with the area when they moved here.

December Breakfast December 13

7:30-9:00 am Wiltwyck Golf Club 404 Steward Lane

Kingston, NY Sponsor:



"We have thoroughly enjoyed relocating to Ulster County," Buckley said. "I've been fortunate to live in some beautiful places, but I think this is one of the most gorgeous places I've ever lived. We've just really enjoyed getting to know the community, exploring and

Chamber Breakfasts are a great way to stay on top of current events and connect with other local business leaders. Reservations are required. Tickets are \$30 in advance and \$35 at the door for Chamber members (\$40 for non-members.) For more information, contact the Chamber at (845) 338-5100 or go online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

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Rondout Savings Bank's culture of caring has been formed over the years since its founding in 1868 and is stronger than ever today. The Bank's lighthouse logo signifies its unwavering commitment to help people reach their financial goals and ensure a safe and secure financial environment for all. As stated by Cheryl Bowers, President and CEO of Rondout Savings Bank, "Everyone deserves access to safe and affordable bank accounts, including the unbanked and underbanked residents in our communities. Everyone deserves access to financial literacy to learn how to budget, save, and invest in their future... and, most importantly, everyone deserves access to a bank that stands

The Bank's "Turn on the Light" programs reflect its culture of caring. The "Turn on the Light" Checking Account provides the opportunity for the underserved to bank with Rondout. It is tailored to those who want the safety and convenience of a bank account that is low-cost and without the worry of overdraft fees. The "Turn on the Light" to Financial Education Program provides education and resources, in-person and online, to businesses, adults and children K-12. A Lighthouse Savings Account complements the children's program as a fun way to teach them how to save.

The Bank's strong tradition of customer service excellence stems from its core values, C.A.R.E.S: Community, Accountability, Relationships, Excellence, and Security. Scan the QR code to watch the Rondout Cares Story.

The Rondout Cares campaign is back again from November 17th to December 26th, in which over a hundred non-profit organizations are participating. Everyone is encouraged to vote for their favorite non-profit organizations among those listed on the www.GoRondout.com/Care webpage. The three organizations that accumulate the most votes at the close of the online event will each receive a \$1,000 donation check from Rondout Savings Bank. The Rondout Cares campaign is a part





of Rondout Savings Bank's Dividends to the Community program, in which, 10% of the bank's profits earned are invested back

into the community each year.

Rondout Savings Bank was established in 1868 and is a state-chartered, mutual banking and financial services provider headquartered in Kingston, New York with five branches located in Ulster and Dutchess counties, Give Rondout Savings Bank a call at (845) 331-0073 or visit www.RondoutBank.com for more information to learn how they can Turn on the Light for you and invest in your financial health.

Seeing Is Believing

Catskill Mountain RR Restarts 'The Polar Express'

At this time of year, you may see lots of kids and their parents wandering around Uptown Kingston in their pajamas. Don't be too harsh on them. Many are out-of-town guests, who have actually dressed appropriately for the train they're about to board at

the Westbrook Lane Station in the Kingston Plaza. Ask them where they're heading and you'll likely hear the famous movie line: "Why, to the North Pole,

of course! This is the Polar Express After two years of being derailed by COVID-19, the Catskill Mountain Railroad's 90-minute production of "The Polar Express" is back on track and reinvigorated. It restarted on Nov. 18 and runs

"I think people are done with COVID, and it's time to get back to a normal life," said Harry Jameson, chairman of the Catskill Mountain Railroad's board of directors. "Ticket sales have been good. We're expecting somewhere around 35,000 people, so it's a big production.

"We tout ourselves as being one of the main attractions in Ulster County. A lot of our customers come from metropolitan New York and northern New Jersey dressed in their pajamas, and before or after the train ride, they might go out to dinner and stay at our hotels, so our local businesses know where they're coming from. We bring a lot of business to

During COVID restrictions, CMRR instead offered simple, open-air rides on the Catskill Christmas Express, which was first introduced in 2008.

'We took our flat cars and put canopies and lights on them and told people to bring their hot chocolate and bundle up because it would be a cold ride," Jameson said. "It was like the old sleigh rides, vhere to get somewhere, you'd get all bundled up and the frost would bite your nose. It was all part of that seasonal cheer. After two years of running the Christmas Express, we're back with 'The Polar Express.' It parallels the children's book written by Chris Van Allsburg."

That includes a full cast of characters, golden tickets, onboard refreshments and following along to the soundtrack of the 2004 animated film starring

"The Polar Express' is copyrighted through Warner Brothers, and Rail Events buys the rights to it and offers it throughout the country to different railroads," Jameson said. "We have to stick rigidly to the script. We're working with a company that is directly connected to Warner Brothers, and they're specific about costumes and everything else. They come out to do reviews. What we do reflects on them, and our job and their job is to create the best possible

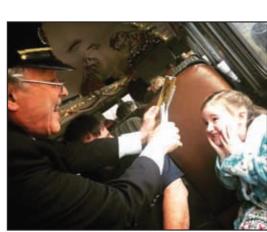
The Catskill Mountain Railroad, a heritage railroad based at 55 Kingston Plaza Road in Kingston, began operating in 1983. CMRR leases the former New York Central Railroad Catskill Mountain branch from Kingston to Stony Hollow at state Route 28A for an 8-mile round trip.

The Polar ddition to CMRR offers other themed rides throughout the year such as the Easter Bunny Express in the spring; Catskill Flyer Summertime Rides, which includes "Ice Cream Sundays"; Catskill

Fall Foliage Adventure; and the Pumpkin Express. Jameson has been the chairman of the CMRR board of directors since 2006 and a member of the railroad since its beginning. As a longtime Ulster County businessman in the tourism industry, he has been involved in every aspect of "The Polar Express" and even played a chef in 2018. He said the role was transformative.

"It was a new way to see the magic of Christmas through the eyes of a child. There's an awe and wonder about the size and magnitude of the train, especially with the younger kids. For them, it's an experience of a lifetime," he said.

'You take an 80-foot train car and transform it



into 'The Polar Express.' You fill it with people in pajamas. You introduce dancing chefs, who give them chocolate chip cookies and hot cocoa. At the finale, you throw in Santa Claus and his elves. You give each passenger a silver sleigh bell. You couldn't do any better than maybe throwing in some puppies

"It's the amazement in the kids' eyes and the joy it brings their parents that make this production worthwhile. We're in the entertainment business. That's what we do."

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Barnyard Bliss

New Beginnings Is The Perfect Wedding Venue

While most of us are in holiday mode full throttle, Elisa Tinti is looking ahead to the period between spring and fall. That's when she's busy creating storybook weddings at her New Beginnings Farmstead in Kingston. 3,200-square-foot barn at 2585 state

Route 209 in Kingston will be bustling with starstruck couples, sweet promises, toasts, hugs and dances from May through October. "We get to be a part

of other people's milestones," said Tinti, who runs the wedding venue—which also happens to be a working farm with sheep, free-range chickens and a maple syrup facility—with her husband, Egidio.

"I cry at every wedding. Our entire extended family works these events, including our children, sister-in-law, brotherin-law and their children. We want to make sure our guests enjoy their big day to the fullest."

The story behind New Beginnings is both sentimental and

As the Tintis began looking for a house between Kingston and the town of Olive years ago, they kept passing the former 130-acre dairy farm.

"There was a very large black walnut tree, which I loved, sitting on the front lawn. One day, I said, 'Let's just go look at it,' so we finally got a chance to roam the property. It had been semi-vacant for a while and needed work, but we could

"Initially, Egidio wanted to turn the big barn into a very large shop for all his equipment. He had a backhoe, a Bobcat and excavators. He had big dreams that this would be the best shop ever. I had other plans. I saw an events venue. He thought I was crazy. I won that argument."

The couple worked every day for a year to transform the barn that once housed 200 cows into a premier wedding destination that can accommodate up to 160 guests. "We kept at it," she said. "Neither of us is a sit-down-and-

relax kind of person. We rarely watch TV and are always on the go, so between the two of us working nonstop, we were able to get it done.'

After hard labor, the Tintis beautified it with twinkling string lights across the exposed ceiling beams, wagon-wheel chandeliers and other special touches that can be customized

The next big test was their own wedding. The Tintis got married on Oct. 8, 2016, at the barn they lovingly restored and shared their photos on social media. Their Facebook

"Right after our wedding, Egidio said, 'Let's see if you can get any venues booked,' and within two years, I had the whole place booked," she said. "As the years went by, we did additional work on the barn, landscaping and turned another barn about 100 feet from the main one into a bridal cottage for the bride and her wedding party to get ready for the day."

Many brides and grooms who book their weddings at New Beginnings are from metropolitan New York, Tinti said, but some have come all the way from Arizona for a destination wedding. She's even spied a celebrity or two in the crowd over the years. While the space is

for rent, clients must book their own caterer, DJ or live band. Once on the grounds, the wedding party has full access to the farm for photographs,

including the gardens, patios, woods, sugar shack, small ceremony field and O & W Rail Trail.

In the off-season, the Tintis produce honey and maple syrup in

the sugar shack Egidio built and host an annual Maple Weekend each winter, offering tours to the public.

An interesting side note is that many brides request Tinti's honey or award-winning maple products, including syrup and bite-sized molded candies as wedding favors for their guests.

'As I said before, we don't just sit around. Egidio and I love to keep busy and try new things," Tinti said. "We love seeing how our vision has grown over the years."

Those looking to book a wedding or special event at New Beginnings Farmstead can call (845) 430-8521 or go to newbeginningsfarmstead.com.

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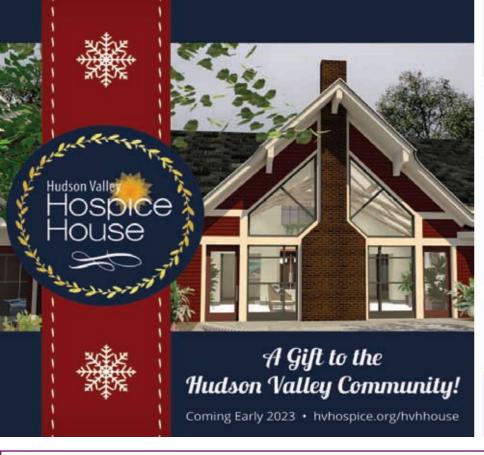
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UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

Wednesday December 7 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer @ Ole Savannah Southern Table & Bar

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Thursday December 8 | 9:00 - 10:30 am

Business Card Exchange

Holiday Inn Express & Suites - Kingston 1835 Ulster Avenue | Lake Katrine NY Space is limited. Reservations are required.

Sponsor: Hudson Valley Credit Union

Tuesday December 13 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting Dr. Alison Buckley, President, SUNY Ulster Wiltwyck Golf Club | 404 Steward Lane | Kingston, NY \$30 Members-Advanced Pay • \$35 Members-At the Door \$40 Non-Members

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Chamber News

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