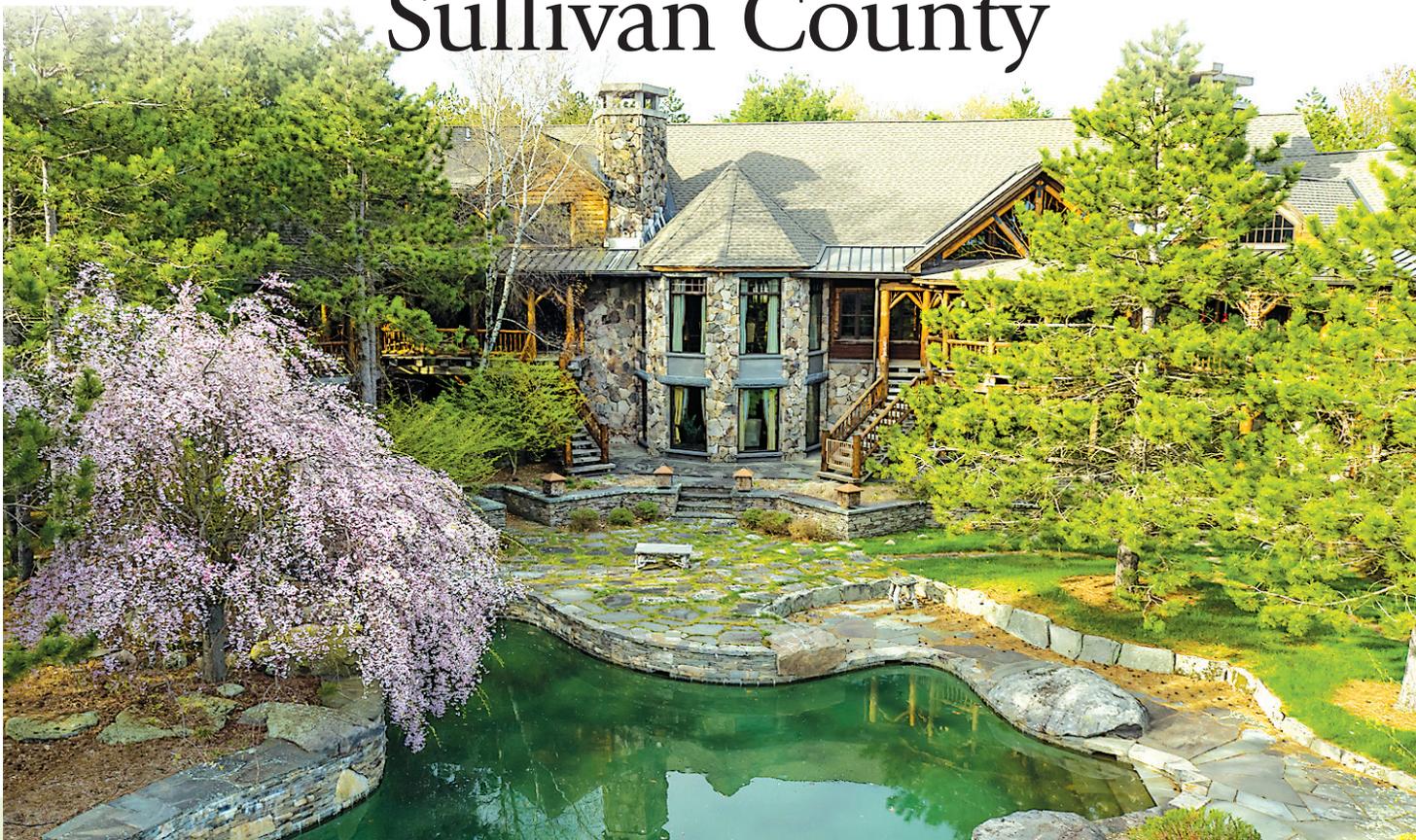


Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development ▶ Sullivan County Industrial Development Agency ▶ Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce ▶ Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association ▶ Sullivan County Democrat

## New properties add luster to Sullivan County



The Chatwal Lodge is situated on the shores of the Toronto Reservoir Lake, and guests will have ample opportunity to explore nature and enjoy the scenic views.

### THE CHATWAL LODGE

BY ISABEL BRAVERMAN

The Chatwal Lodge is bringing luxury to our backyard. Opening this summer, the resort will feature a variety of accommodations, including private suites and glamping tents, a farm-to-table restaurant, a banquet hall, wine cellar and much more.

The Chatwal Lodge is the newest property from the international Dream Hotel Group and is located inside the Chapin

Estate in Bethel, a 2,500-acre gated residential community nestled within a 30-acre environmentally protected land.

Guests can enjoy views of the Toronto Reservoir Lake and other nature features like hiking trails, horseback riding, fly fishing, boating, mountain biking and more.

Carefully curated amenities will include a house vehicle; 24-hour valet, concierge and butler

Please see **LUSTER**, page 3E

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**Kiefer looks to build local economy**  
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**S**ullivan County is booming. From Main Streets to developments, there has been a growth of both residents and businesses which has in turn led to an ever-increasing popularity of the county.

There have also been a handful of major projects which recently opened their doors to welcome both residents and vacationers to our area and their investment in our community has rippled throughout many township.

Here is a look at three of the most recently opened projects – Callicoon Hills, Seminary Hill Cidery and Chatwell Lodge. (Please see pages 14-15 for a look inside the new Eldred Preserve.)

Enjoy your glimpse into these properties and explore all their is to offer in our local hamlets and villages. Sullivan County is experiencing a renaissance in more ways than one.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



CEO/President Marc Baez

## It Is Time...

To the People:

As the weather continues to warm up, more people are getting vaccinated, and we experience the loosening of Covid-19 related restrictions by the day. There is a hunger to get this economy going again from a business point of view, and I believe from a psychological perspective as well.

The Partnership has held two in-person events, though limited in scale due to restrictions, sold out, and demonstrated across all industries, gender, and age groups, how ready people are to go about the 'business of business.'

It is time to re-engage... time to rekindle old relationships, time to get back on the success train.

While platforms like Zoom allowed operational tasks to move forward, the framework always felt awkward at best. Enough of the technical glitches, background noises, extracurricular conversations, and other disruptive occurrences that shall

not be mentioned.

Recently cleared in-person gatherings will be a huge step toward getting things back to normal and allow for rebuilding our economy from the effects of covid and the policy decisions made as a result.

It will not be easy.

Jobs are plentiful, people willing to fill those jobs are not, making it very difficult for businesses to function. Inflation is now impacting all of us personally, but business is feeling the heat as well.

The cost of materials, inventory, energy, and a wide range of commodities has increased dramatically as the economic pump is being over primed with stimulus bills.

Yet we go on, and there are signs that we can turn things around, at least locally, relatively quickly.

There are several largescale and moderate-sized

projects going through approvals at this time and others that were delayed by covid about to open.

We are at the dawn of our busy tourism season and the real estate sector continues to perform at unprecedented levels. The Sullivan Catskills are being rebuilt project by project, methodically, but appealing to a new market, driven by new residents that left more populated areas and have decided to make a home here.

Covid has certainly created permanent changes to our society and to our economy. However, we must adapt to the changes and boost the opportunities where we can.

We must take advantage of the newfound interest in our area. If we do, the Sullivan Catskills will be back to pre-pandemic activity.

It is time.

Sincerely,

Marc Baez

President, Sullivan County Partnership



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## LUSTER

From front page

service; luxury mattresses; plush duvets and pillows; bespoke linens; cashmere and alpaca throws; deep soaking bathtubs; outdoor showers; organic bath products; terry robes; ample closet space; 24-hours in-suite dining; private bars; fireplaces; flat-screen Smart televisions; docking stations; complimentary Internet; and a choice of complimentary newspapers every morning. Rates will start at \$1,200 per night.

The Lodge was designed by architect Steve Dubrovsky, founder of The Chapin Estate, who is known for his hallmark rustic design.

The property will feature hand-hewn timbers, huge stone fireplaces and mighty trunks of 40-foot white pine trees towering from floor to ceiling, creating a luxurious country retreat.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held in December of 2018 and the opening date was pushed back due to snow delaying construction.

They are currently hiring for many positions, from housekeeping to servers to valets.

## CALLICOON HILLS

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY AUTUMN SCHANIL

Nestled in the Catskills mountain valley in the heart of Callicoon Center, stands a quaint century old resort once known as the Wenzel Boarding House - now Callicoon Hills.

If you're a resident of the area, the past year has most likely brought you plenty of curiosity, wondering about all of the construction going on at the previous Hills Resort - who bought it, what are they doing, and when are they planning to open.

Inspired by past lives of the property, Callicoon Hills is again a vacation resort and a retreat to nature, but in a new era with fresh ideas, designs, eyes, and faces.

"I started working here last April when the property changed hands," stated Project Manager Matthew Lohry, "just as the pandemic began."

Oddly enough, the pandemic allowed the new owners the time and space to renovate the resort and get it ready for opening.

"We have a lot of programs here, so



Callicoon Hills has been revitalized into a new resort offering a country escape.

we're opening in phases," stated Lohry walking through the game room towards the kitchen. "The restaurant, Conover Club, opened for Memorial Day weekend, and the Rise & Shine Coffee Shop opened that Monday, Memorial Day."

Walking into the kitchen, Lohry greeted Executive Chef Jean Paul (JP) Medina who was taste testing the line of desserts for a large wedding party who would be arriving over the weekend.

"The inspiration for the menu of

the Conover Club is the area," said JP. "Just very straight forward, highlighting the products that are available to us and doing right by the product and the farmer's hard work. They work with us, we work with them, and we want to make the best out of their product."

The dinner menu has items for meat eaters, vegetarians, and vegans alike. A little bit of everything for everyone. You can find things like

Please see LUSTER, page 4E

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Callicoon Hills is now open and ready for guests.

## LUSTER

From page 3E

wings - your choice of sweet, spicy, or dry - beef sliders, salads, a classic BLT, a fried chicken sandwich, spicy hummus, gnocchi, and a roasted bowl.

"The Roasted Bowl has radishes, carrots, beets, mostly root vegetables for now until we get different vegetables during the summer. So it's working with what we have in the area," said JP. "I think my favorite thing on the menu is the chicken liver mousse. I

was trained in classic French cuisine, and I really wanted to combine that with the cuts that were big in this area but were steered away from over the years - like liver, tongue, etc."

JP's main desire is to keep the food simple but delicious, both in the restaurant and in the coffee shop. A straightforward menu that people aren't afraid to try something new every time they sit down to eat.

"What's great about our location is that Callicoon Center is right smack in the middle. People can stop on their way to work or on the way home," stated JP.

Another hope of JP's for the Callicoon Hill's kitchen is as a type of education center.

"There's a lot of people around here who want to learn how to cook. People who are just really interested in food, but don't have a strong foundation. So I'm working with the Culinary Institute of America to teach people how to cook the right way. To do right by the product and what they're putting into their bodies," JP said, biting into a crispy, hot, hand cut fry. "Ultimately this kitchen is huge, and I think it would be more beneficial to have people here learning and being students than just having cooks walking

through the area."

Besides the restaurant and cafe, Callicoon Hills offers a beautiful event space with outdoor dining and seating, cozy rooms in the Boarding House, Pool House, and Ridge Rooms - which have a great view of the property, the hamlet and the Catskill Mountains beyond.

"I think the hope is that people come and have a good time and feel like they're part of the community here. That this place could be a bright spot in the already wonderful offerings in the area," said Lohry as he placed his hands in his pockets. "The Catskills have had layers of hospitality throughout the years and we hope to be part of the next fresh phase of that as kind of a new player in this area. Working with what's already great around here but also adding some new programming, new events, and new food offerings. We just want people to have a good time."

Visit callicoonhills.com to read more about the history of the resort, to find the cafe and restaurant's menus, and to check out new offerings. Or simply stop in in the morning for a fresh coffee, a delicious snack, or grab your friends and enjoy a night out for dinner!

# SEMINARY HILL CIDERY

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY ISABEL BRAVERMAN

New York is known for its rich history of apple farming and now Seminary Hill Orchard and Cidery pays homage to the agricultural heritage with a diverse apple orchard and on-site cidery.

The brand new building in Callicoon boasts a spacious tasting room with large floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the view of the orchard and the Delaware River Valley.

Offerings include dry cider varieties and a tasting menu that is meant to be paired with the cider, with culinary delights like baby back tamarind ribs, hummus with flatbread and a market salad.

Since opening in May, Seminary Hill has been a hot spot for both locals and visitors and has already hosted events.

The property is available for event and party rentals as well as weddings. There is an on-site house for families



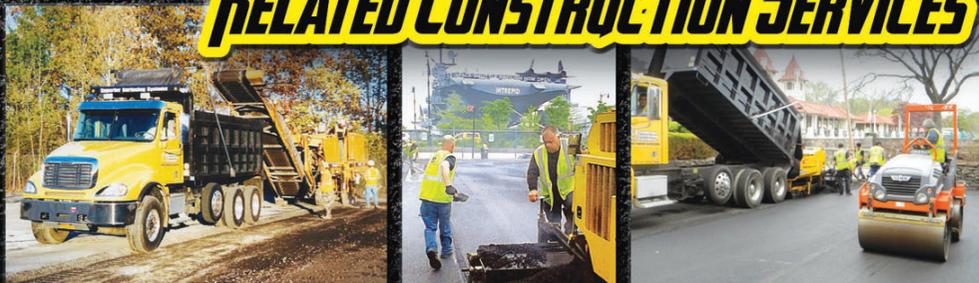
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The cidery and tasting room at Seminary Hill Cidery in Callicoon is passive house certified, meaning it uses passive solar energy to keep it cool in the summer and warm in the winter with minimal energy usage.

BELOW: Stop by the tasting room at Seminary Hill Cidery to try their delicious varieties of hard cider best paired with their menu of fresh local food.



and large groups, and just down the road an eight-unit boarding house.

Their orchards use holistic methods to produce apples and pears without relying on harmful pesticides and herbicides. They have more than 40 varieties and 1,500 trees on 12 acres.

The two-story cidery houses a production facility on the ground floor and a tasting room and event space

on the second floor.

The building is passive house certified and was designed by James Hartford of River Architects.

Stop by for a drink, a quick bite or a sit-down meal and take in the stunning views. They are now open Thursday through Sunday. Check the website for possible closures due to events.



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# IDA update, June 2021

BY JENNIFER M. FLAD  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
COUNTY OF SULLIVAN  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



**Cono Cimino stands in front of the building he purchased at 33 Plaza Drive earlier this year. The new commercial/industrial park is located nearly across the street.**

**L**ike all industrial development agencies in New York State, the County of Sullivan IDA works to promote, encourage, attract, and develop job and recreational opportunities and economically sound commerce and industry.

We do this by providing financial incentives to eligible companies seeking to locate and expand here in the County.

The IDA's Uniform Tax Exempt Policy describes the requirements a company must meet in order to be eligible for IDA assistance.

The IDA can provide four types of tax incentives to approved projects:

1) Property tax relief from county, school, town, and village taxes resulting from an increase in

assessed value due to new construction or expansion;

2) Sales tax exemption on equipment, rentals, and other costs associated with the company's construction or expansion project;

3) Mortgage recording tax exemptions in instances where a mortgage is required to finance the company's project; and finally,

4) Under some circumstances, issuance of tax-exempt bonds to finance the project.

We have an array of programs targeting various industries including tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and others.

In April 2021, the IDA adopted a new program, the Commercial/Industrial Park Program. This program is designed to

encourage owners of land zoned for commercial or industrial uses to invest in roads and infrastructure, making the land more attractive to future buyers or lessees seeking to undertake vertical construction projects.

The program is limited to projects located on land with zoning that allows commercial or industrial uses. Thus, it is applicable to only the Towns of Liberty, Thompson and Mamakating along Interstate Route 86, and the Towns of Fallsburg and Bethel, where commercial or industrial parks are located.

## How the program works

Projects approved for benefits under the Commercial/ Industrial Park Program are eligible for sales tax abatements on all taxable items purchased or leased in connection with the development of commercial or industrial park infrastructure.

Approved projects are also eligible for an abatement of all mortgage recording taxes on real estate mortgages securing loans for road and infrastructure development.

Finally, approved projects are eligible for an abatement of real estate taxes on the increased value of the land following installation of roads and infrastructure, at one hundred percent each year for a period not to exceed ten years.

The program has already attracted interest from developers. In the Village of Monticello, for example, an approximately 85-acre parcel once planned for the expansion of

Please see **EUPDATE**, page 8E

## Apple Ice ready to enter hot market

BY FRED STABBERT III

Apple Ice Owner Cono Cimino likes what he is seeing in Sullivan County.

"There is a lot going on in Sullivan County right now and we are excited to be part of it," Cimino said.

To that end, Cimino is working with Sullivan County IDA to develop an 85-acre shovel ready, multi-tenanted commercial/industrial park.

"We are planning on building a 40,000 square facility there that can produce between 400-500 tons of ice per day," Cimino said. "This [park] will also help bring other businesses into Sullivan County."

Based in Deer Park, Long Island, Cimino said his company sees great opportunity in Sullivan County and he appreciates all the help he has received from Sullivan County Partnership President and CEO Marc Baez and the Sullivan County IDA team.

"I like Sullivan County and this expansion will be good for my business," he said.



Serving bowls as ice sculpture (or ice sculpture as serving bowls) make a unique display for any occasion.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## UPDATE From page 7E

the Sullivan County Landfill is now slated for development as a commercial/ industrial park.

The County recently transferred the parcel to the Sullivan County Funding Corporation (SCFC), a local development corporation focused on economic development, and SCFC has entered into an option agreement with Monticello Industrial Park LLC (MIP), a company based in Deer Park.

MIP has engaged an engineering firm to begin preliminary site investigations and, upon purchase of the property, MIP is expected to apply for IDA benefits under the new



Apple Ice trucks will be rolling throughout Sullivan County on their way to deliveries.

*Mr. Cimino owns and operates Apple Ice and the new Monticello facility will enable his business to reach a rapidly expanding service territory, while creating an estimated ten construction jobs and five permanent jobs.*

Commercial/Industrial Park Program to develop a shovel-ready multi-tenanted commercial/ industrial park.

The owner of MIP, Cono Cimino, has already demonstrated his

commitment to economic development in Sullivan County.

Last year, his business purchased a building and land near the Apollo Plaza for development of an ice distribution facility. Known locally as the ARC building, the property had been in County ownership since 2002.

It was most recently used to store the County's voting machines, but has been unused for several years. Mr. Cimino owns and operates a successful regional ice distribution business, Apple Ice, and the new Monticello facility will enable his business to reach a rapidly expanding service territory, while creating an estimated ten construction jobs and five permanent jobs.

The benefits the IDA confers through the Commercial/ Industrial Park Program are intended to keep development and carrying costs manageable while the owner markets the newly improved lots for future development.

As companies buy or lease parcels for further development, those parcels are carved out of the original owner's IDA agreements. We expect the buyers or lessees to apply to IDA for tax abatements under our General Abatement Program or other appropriate program.

In this way, the IDA can also support the full buildout of industrial and commercial park parcels, maximizing investment in Sullivan Coun-

ty, creating both construction and long-term jobs, and ultimately increasing tax revenues for the County, its towns, villages, and school districts.

We work hard to ensure the IDA's programs bring the types of development Sullivan County's municipalities want and need.

Five years ago, the IDA adopted a new Community Distributed Generation Program to incentivize the development of small- to mid-size solar photovoltaic electricity generating facilities.

Since that time, thirteen solar projects have been approved. Eleven of those projects are now interconnected with the electric grid, producing almost 24 megawatts AC of power annually.

The other two are under construction and slated to go online this year. The IDA's program was the first of its kind in New York State, and we are happy to be a part of putting Sullivan County at the forefront of the State's transition to a more sustainable energy economy.

Similarly, the new Commercial/ Industrial Park Program is rare among IDA programs in New York State, and has great potential to tip the balance in Sullivan County's favor as developers explore their options for siting new commercial and industrial projects.

We are grateful to the affected taxing jurisdictions for their collaboration and support in the development of this program, and we believe it will bring meaningful new projects, jobs, and tax revenues to Sullivan County.

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# Crown Castle poised to help Sullivan County grow

BY FRED STABBERT III

**"I'**m a big self-proclaimed geek when it comes to my territory," Terry Flood, Crown Castle's Hudson Valley Team Manager said. "I immerse myself in my territory."



And that includes not only introducing himself and his business to as many clients as possible but also trying to develop a relationship that goes beyond business into truly learning all he can about them.

Crown Castle is a 25-year-old company that is a cell tower provider that not only builds its own towers but owns the land it's built on.

"We are a Real Estate Investment Trust (Reit)," Flood said.

Crown Castle's offerings include a unique network of communications infrastructure including cell towers, small cells and fiber.

"Gone are the days that a mom and pop store can survive

when the internet goes down," Flood said. "They need reliable service to power their business, service that is stable and fast.

"I like to know about what is happening in the area, the politics and status of projects, what my competition is doing and how businesses are growing,"

he said.

And while Flood was promoted to the Manager of the Hudson Valley Team in May, he still finds the time to travel

into Sullivan County, enjoy the beauty and also network with clients.

"I love the [Sullivan County] Partnership and the [Sullivan County] Chamber," Flood said.

"I met Marc

[Baez] and Jaimie [Schmeiser] and they helped immerse me in

the business community up there,"

he said. "They really do right by the people they serve."

Flood said he was amazed by how tight-knit Sullivan County was, including many businesses in and around Monticello.

From Thompson Sanitation to Schmidt's Wholesale to Robert Green Chevrolet, Flood said

that he is happy to see the next generation of family members starting to take over and make things happen in the area.

"If you do well by them, you build a good rep," Flood said. "And, on the flip side, if there's a problem, everybody knows. That's what I love about that area."

Because Flood tries to provide exceptional service to his client, he said he is only a phone call – and 30-minute drive – away from reaching any client.

"We have about 20 business clients right now in Sullivan County – including the Center for Discovery," Flood said. "We have focused a lot on the lower Hudson Valley and the health-care and education sectors.

While Crown Castle can bring fiber to your door, Flood said clients sometimes need help tying their networks into the

system.

"For that we rely on Kristt Kelly Office System to help them out," Flood said. "They are our biggest partner up there and they get our clients up and running."

Flood said broadband, cybersecurity and SD Wan are the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Terry Flood

major offerings right now and he is working hard to help Lost Lake Development in the Town of Forestburgh set up a

small cell network.

"That's a network that positions poles throughout the property," he said. "It's called a Neighborhood Network and we design, install, upkeep and do everything to make sure it works."

As Sullivan County continues to get more cell service, including 5G, Flood said the growing business community will just flourish more and more.

"Think about it. If you are moving a business into Sullivan County you cannot risk not having reliable, fast internet service," Flood said.

And as he looks across the Sullivan County landscape and sees so many new tourist-related businesses opening Flood thinks he knows why.

"The fast growing business sector shows that there is a need these type of businesses up there," he said. "You have the workforce and technology and these new investors are saying, 'This is where I want to plant my flag.'

"They have a vision, they see the future and Sullivan County is going to be a huge draw," he said.



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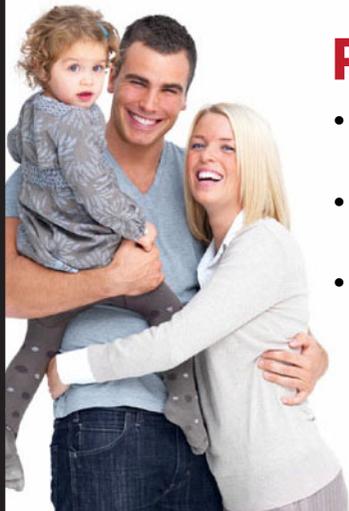
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# Bringing together three legacy brands to create a new legacy

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ISABEL BRAVERMAN

The Eldred Preserve is now open and ready to accept guests. The resort property weaves together three Sullivan County legacy brands—The Eldred Preserve, The Bradstan Country Hotel and The Old Homestead Restaurant.

The unique hospitality offering includes an event space, luxury accommodations, and a classic steakhouse offering fine, farm-to-table dining.

The Eldred Preserve, originally founded in 1967 by Robert H. Abplanalp, was once known as Sullivan County's premier fishing resort. The 3,000-acre property offered overnight accommodations and a host of outdoor activities, including hunting, world-class fishing, hiking, and target practice.

It has now been reincarnated by local resident and entrepreneur Dan Silna and his wife, Joan. They brought on Bradstan owners Scott Samuelson and Edward Dudek and Old Homestead owners Paul and Alice Edelman to help implement their vision.

The dining room and lounge are open to the general public. The sprawling eatery includes a wine tasting room, a private dining room, a sunroom dining area, and large outdoor terraces that are ideal for dining al fresco.

The menu includes steak options from New York Strip to Filet Mignon and classic steakhouse sides like a baked potato, fries and creamed spinach.

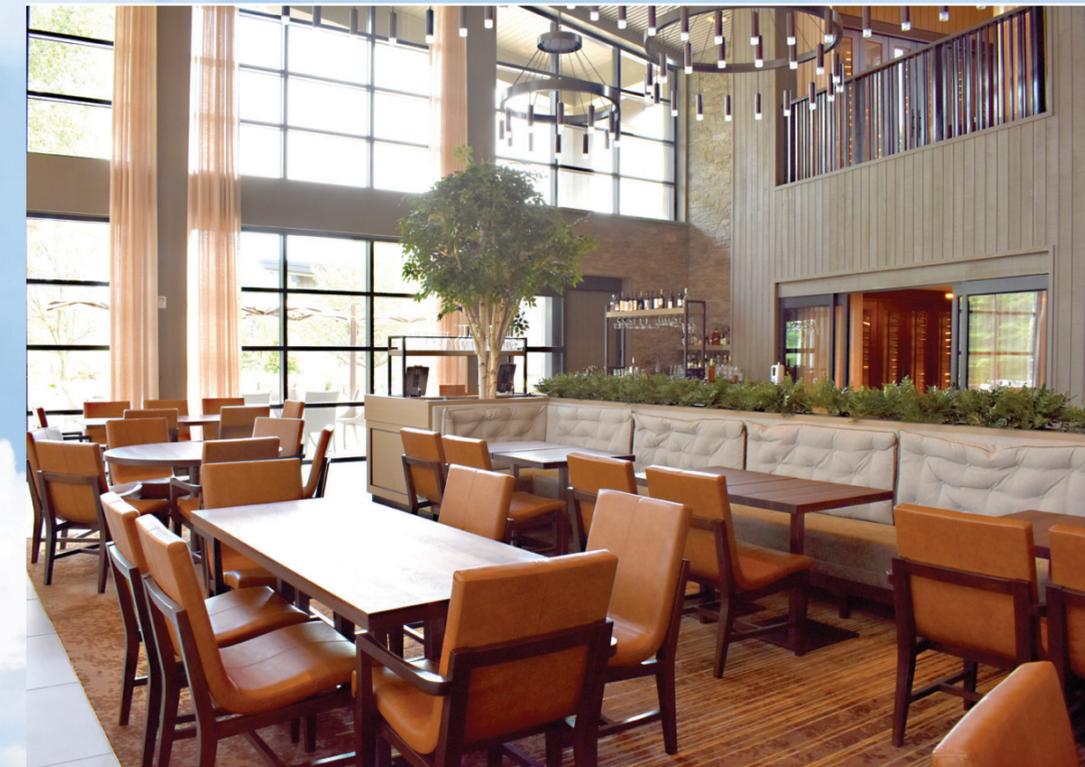
And if steak isn't your thing, the menu also offers fish and seafood, roasted beet salad, duck breast, rigatoni Bolognese, the classic Homestead burger and much more.

Floor-to-ceiling windows offer restaurant and lounge patrons unobstructed views of the property with its ponds, stream and lush landscapes.

The hotel offers 28 accommodations that include suites, private cabins and standard rooms.

All of the accommodations are exquisitely designed and furnished and include amenities such

Please see **NEW LEGACY**, page 16E



The sweeping circular entrance gives a generous hint of the luxury and beautiful design waiting inside and in the surrounding terrain.

Inset above: The grand dining room at The Eldred Preserve is both a steakhouse and farm-to-table fine dining experience with indoor and outdoor seating.

## NEW LEGACY

From page 15E

as first-class linens, bathrobes and flat screen televisions.

Guests can enjoy a complimentary European style continental breakfast that includes eggs, French toast, cereal, fruit and baked goods, with gluten free and vegetarian options.

The property offers many ways to get outside and explore, from the two-mile walking trail to the private lake, with kayaks, rowboats and paddle sports.

There is also a fitness studio, outdoor exercise stations, and an outdoor pool and hot tub (opening in August).

Chief Operating Officer Scott Samuelson says they have been booked and busy. The site also offers private event rentals and weddings.

A grand opening is slated for June 30 and they already have some community events scheduled.

There are currently around 50 on-staff employees and they are hiring, particularly for service positions in the restaurant and hotel.



Top: The guest rooms at The Eldred Preserve are uniquely designed and feature luxury linens and mattresses.

Above left: The outdoor dining area is a great way to dine al fresco.

Above right: Guests will have access to spacious bathrooms, with both showers and tubs.

At left: The bar in the event center provides libations for all sorts of events from conferences to weddings.



The lobby at The Eldred Preserve gives guests a nice way to sit down and relax during their stay.



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# The Secondary Pandemic

BY JAIME SCHMEISER  
PRESIDENT/CEO  
SULLIVAN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



JAIME SCHMEISER

**S**ome businesses are saying we are in the midst of a secondary pandemic. But it's not the kind that requires masks and handwashing.

No, this one is harder to control.

There is a dearth of people willing (or able) to work for a multitude of reasons. Employers across the country are posting signs asking for patience with their existing employees because the business is understaffed.

In fact, there are hiring managers who are scheduling interviews only to have no show up! You can't hire people who don't even come to an interview.

So what's a business to do?

Some people blame the business. They believe that the average person wants to work but can't afford to because of minimal wages and expensive childcare. But the numbers don't entirely speak to that.

Thirty percent of US households are "married without children" in 2020. Single-person households are 23 percent of the population. So for over half, children aren't a concern.

So, what can you do to combat the 3 common hiring problems these days?

Here are some ideas.

## Employment Hiring Challenges Post-COVID

If you brush wages aside as the main reason people don't show up for interviews or first days for that matter, what are you left with?

## Working from Home

It's the elephant in the room. Why would a worker want to work behind a counter when they can sit at home and work (or sit by the pool or in a coffee shop, etc.).

An unparalleled number of businesses created work-from-home scenarios, and many will stick to those protocols long after COVID. Work-at-home is no longer a perk. It's an expectation and it's hard to compete with that.

Solution: If your business is entirely in-person, it's not likely you'll never be able to hire again. But it may take some creativity to appeal to workers. Things you might be able to do include flexible shifts (such as working around a child's schedule) or floating start times within a window of time. The clue here is to get creative with the allowances you can make.

## Ghosting is the norm

Ghosting has become the norm in relationships. Don't want to deal with a difficult situation, ignore it and disappear. We're starting to see this trickle down into our

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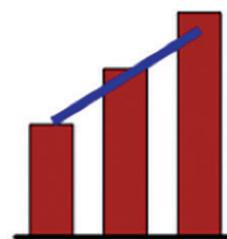
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workforce. It's acceptable to just not show for an interview, first day, drug screen, etc.

**Solution:** This is difficult to do when you've only had minutes of interaction with a candidate.

However, people are more likely to ghost when they don't feel a connection or don't think of the employer as a person but rather a large corporate structure as in the "they won't even notice I'm not there" scenario.

In order to avoid being ghosted, you have to do your best to connect with them in the short time you have. Share details about your life. Maybe you're interviewing them on a special day and "fitting" them in or "clearing" your schedule. Do it respectfully and don't force the guilt but try and make an impression. You may still get ghosted, but it will be less likely if they see you as a person with needs and feelings.

### Reevaluating the Same Old, Same Old

With our forced downtime this past year, we were exposed to a LOT of marketing messaging and frankly many people are just burned out. They may find it hard to believe the claims of some companies.

Another thing people may have done is reevaluating things in their lives that just aren't working. Some people may have decided that life is too short to work at an unfulfilling job. Others may have seen this pandemic as a kick in the pants from the universe to start their own business.

Maybe they saw how being a loyal employee can still result in a lay-off or furlough. Whatever the cause of their employment ennui, people have changed, and you'll need to too.

**Solution:** Find out what your existing employees want (and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Businesses throughout Sullivan County are working hard to fill open positions.**

what makes them stay with you). Use that in your job marketing. Ask employees for referrals. Reward them for their loyalty and they'll talk about how great you are to their friends.

Employers are facing an unparalleled time right now, finding it very difficult to recruit good people. For many businesses, it's difficult to get interest let alone keep

someone after their first day. In order to be competitive in the job market, you need to stand out. These tips should help you do that. But you'll need to go beyond them to think of some creative experiences for new employees. While you're at it throw a few in for your customers. You never know. A loyal customer may just want to become part of your team.

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# Sullivan Catskills is Catskill Confident in the Success of the 2021 Summer Season

The Sullivan Catskills is beginning to reopen and expects to experience a resurgence in tourist development this summer season.

The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) is working diligently with its members for the expected influx of visitors to the area by promoting its Catskills Confidence campaign to help instill and build confidence in the county's hospitality industry.

The confidence comes in ensuring that SCVA member businesses are following all CDC recommended guidelines to protect the health and wellbeing of its workers and consumers as they begin to reopen and welcome visitors once again to our legendary destination.

Catskills Confidence shows that our businesses are mindful and that as always, the Sullivan Catskills is the place to feel secure and peacefully confident. The SCVA team continues to build traveler confidence in the Sullivan Catskills brand and encourage visitors to select our destination, knowing they are our priority and that we have the experiences they are in search of as they begin to re-emerge.

And, to express that our destination's renowned outdoor adventures and escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life makes



The Forestburgh Playhouse recently kicked off its Diamond Anniversary with an "Under the Stars" performance. There will be six main stage performances this year along with seven "Under the Stars" shows.

us the perfect getaway for those seeking to recharge, refuel and detach with friends and family.

The SCVA team has been collaborating with its members, educating and encouraging them to assure that they are appropriately following required reopening procedures.

SCVA's member outreach efforts include directly connecting with businesses through a designated

webpage, regular Facebook postings, radio promotions, E-News, a logo with a complimented advertisement promoting the campaign, a window cling, and a Catskills Confidence toolkit.

SCVA continues to feature member businesses that have developed



At left: Do Good Spirits in Roscoe has been offering outside seating accompanied by music on special occasions. At right, Catskills Confidence abounds at member businesses, who all follow the most appropriate CDC health guidelines.





**Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther has been a staunch supporter of Catskills Confidence and the Sullivan County tourist industry. Here she visits a SCVA member business in Callicoon, Catskills Provisions.**

measures adhering to the instructed cleaning and interaction best practices.

The members proudly display window clings on the front door of their businesses to inform the public that they are taking every precaution and doing what is necessary to protect their staff and customers.

Member videos, pictures, and stories were also showcased to build traveler confidence and demonstrate that the Sullivan Catskills is serious about safeguarding its community and guests as the Sullivan Catskills starts to reopen and welcome the return of our visitors.

In addition to following proper CDC and NYS guidelines, the other essential component of this campaign is to bring awareness that the Sullivan Catskills is renowned for its great outdoors and its closeness to the New York City metro area. Its natural beauty, tranquility, and

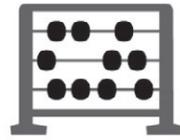
solitude have long been the attraction for generations of visitors. Our hospitality businesses are all anxiously welcoming back our new and returning visitors.

The SCVA created the Catskills Confidence campaign, which aims to create an environment where our valued residents, front-line workers, and visitors feel secure knowing that we are all putting their health and wellbeing first. We are taking extra measures to give you peace of mind, said Roberta Byron-Lockwood, SCVA President/ CEO.

Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association, the official tourism promoter for Sullivan County, is a multi-award-winning organization for its marketing and leadership initiatives. For more information about the Catskills Confidence campaign or membership opportunities, visit [SullivanCatskills.com](http://SullivanCatskills.com) or call 845-747-4449.

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# Retain and attract employees with Education Assistance Program Benefits



**By offering employees either free tuition or paying off their student loans – if they commit for either two or four years – employers can attract and keep valuable personnel, a must in this very competitive job market.**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

**T**ired of losing employees? The federal government has taken significant action to extend a temporary and generous tax benefit to employers (business of all sizes) to cover educational expenses for employees.

Competitive benefits can help keep employees committed — like offering to pay their college tuition if they commit to two years, or paying off their student loans after four years.

Right now, employers can offer these incentives and write off education expenses up to \$5,250 per employee. It's a great savings and a great way to build employee loyalty to help close that revolving door.

The federal government has made this temporary extension through 2025 to allow plenty of time to get set up. Take advantage and give employees a great reason to stay on board for the long haul!

The amount paid by employers is income tax-free to employees (this is different than many other Student Loan Repayment Programs) and tax-deductible for the employer, and neither the employer nor employee is required to pay FICA (payroll) taxes.



With this program, SUNY Sullivan has a wonderful tool to strengthen partnerships with local businesses. In other words, this is a limited-time chance for employers to establish a program that is a win for themselves, and for their employees.

Fifty-four percent of younger employees prefer a student loan payment assistance program over a 401K plan, and 60 percent prefer professional development over pay raises. If you already offer Education Assistance Programs, then you know you can contribute up to \$5,250 for each employee

every year.

The average cost of a SUNY associate degree is \$4,870 each year – employers could be offering employees a free two-year college degree if they work for their business.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 extended temporary benefits first enacted in the CARES Act (originally set to expire in December 2020). So employers with a qualified Educational Assistance Program may receive a tax deduction for annual contributions of up to \$5,250 per employee towards education expenses

(including tuition, fees, books, supplies, and equipment).

This credit includes costs associated with student loans (such as cost of principal and interest).

Contributions are considered non-taxable income to the employees. Employers including corporations, partnerships, and small businesses can receive the benefits as long as the program meets the requirements included in section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code, and participating employers may automatically claim the deduction on their annual tax filings.

The extension of these benefits through December 31, 2025 gives employers who do not already have educational assistance programs ample time to establish one.

Don't forget to claim all tax benefits! Employers can deduct payments that are part of a qualified educational assistance program on the "Employee benefit programs" or other appropriate line of your business tax return. For more information on educational assistance programs, go to [www.irs.gov/publications/p15b](http://www.irs.gov/publications/p15b), or contact SUNY Sullivan at [admissions@sunysullivan.edu](mailto:admissions@sunysullivan.edu).

# Sullivan County real estate market seeing big changes

BY LORETTA WOLFF,  
PSA, C2EX, E-PRO  
LICENSED REAL ESTATE SALESPERSON  
DIANE C. BUTLER REAL ESTATE  
DIRECTOR, SULLIVAN COUNTY BOARD OF REALTORS



LORETTA WOLFF

There is some promising news on the horizon for the real estate market in Sullivan County!

As many of us have watched the market over the last year, we wonder how we can sustain this influx. Here are some of the most recent statistics from the New York State Association of Realtors.

In Sullivan County, the median price for single-family homes rose from \$152,250 to \$211,500 in one year, while the average days on the market have decreased from 73 to 70 in this quarter alone.

Our neighbor to the north, Delaware County, saw a price increase on single-family homes from \$242,500 to \$251,000 while the average days on the market has increased from 104 to 108.

Just over the county border to the south, Orange County, saw an average price increase on single-family homes

from \$315,000 to \$319,950 with shorter days on the market from 43 to 41.

In all counties, one thing is certain, sales are still

happening within days of the listing becoming active on the market. Although the inventory has reduced significantly, the real estate market itself is stable.

Sellers are getting higher values for their homes right now and buyers are willing to make the

investment. Members of the Sullivan County Board of Realtors are reporting their clients are looking for short walks to town, boutique shopping, nearby amenities, access to dining, and outdoor activities.

A contributing factor to our growth is the increased access to high-speed internet throughout the county.

We are seeing a significant change in the second-home market. Our seasonal and weekend homeowners are becoming year-round residents and supporting local businesses.

As a Pricing Strategy Advisor, I am pleased to see these more permanent changes to our county and the growth we have experienced.

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# Kiefer looks to build local economy as CEO of the IDA



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**John W. Kiefer was recently named the new CEO of the County of Sullivan Industrial Development Agency.**

BY JOSEPH ABRAHAM

**J**ohn W. Kiefer believes there are a lot of agencies with the same goal of promoting economic development in Sullivan County, but they all have a different toolbox.

With 40 years of credit and financial analysis experience, as well as having been Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of two companies for over two decades, Kiefer, the new CEO of the County of Sullivan Industrial Development Agency, is confident he can utilize those 'tools' together for the benefit of the county's economic future.

Kiefer is a Monticello native, growing up two miles west of the racetrack. He attended SUNY Sullivan, then called Sullivan

County Community College, before earning his BBA in Finance from Pace University and his MBA from Long Island University.

His first job out of college was working in the accounting and credit department of the International Harvesting Company. After four years he realized credit was where he wanted to be and he got a job at Bankers Trust. Kiefer, who has an analytical and accounting mind, but a sales personality, rose through the ranks. After five years he was an assistant vice president and managed both professionals and clericals.

While at Bankers Trust, Kiefer was offered the vice president job

at the National Westminster Bank, heading up their credit operation for the entire Western Hemisphere.

His work there was noticed and he was recruited to Barclays Bank. At the time, Barclays didn't have a strong presence in New York City, and they felt if they were to be a worldwide institution, an office in the financial mecca was essential. Within five years as a senior vice president at Barclays, Kiefer grew the business to \$1 billion in annual volume.

Kiefer was then recruited to Florida to work for Capital Bank, which was then purchased by

Please see **KIEFER**, page 26E

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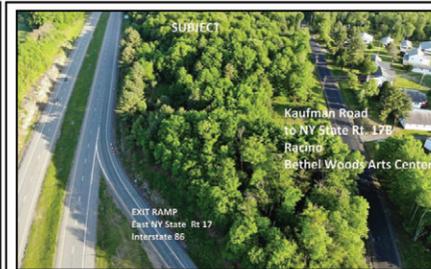
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## KIEFER

From page 24E

Union Planters Corporation. He'd become the CEO of their wholly owned subsidiary, Capital Factors, Inc. While there he grew the company's annual factored volume from approximately \$200 million to over \$4 billion.

In 2003, Kiefer was looking for a new venture, and conveniently enough an investment banker reached out to him because they had a company, First Capital, for sale. Kiefer gathered enough funds to purchase First Capital, becoming the chairman and CEO of the specialized commercial finance company. Upon acquisition, First Capital had approximately \$50 million in assets, and Kiefer grew its portfolio to just north of \$1.2 billion.

Eventually First Capital was acquired by a private equity firm. Looking to boost earnings by cutting expenses, Kiefer was offered an exit package. The timing worked out well, as Kiefer had reason to return home to Sullivan County where he'd maintained a second residence, to be with family.

Sullivan County has been the primary residence of Kiefer and his wife since 2013. He has two adult children and two granddaughters who reside in Florida. He also has three stepchildren, with the oldest of which having just graduated from medical school.

Kiefer's hobbies include fishing and playing golf. However, he is

always staying busy in the community.

After returning to Sullivan County, Kiefer started Mountain Lakes Consulting, as well as a small finance company called Cenacle Financial Services LLC.

He also previously served on the Monticello Central School District Board of Education, and the Sullivan County Board of Ethics.

Kiefer is currently a member of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County Board, and is the manager of the Sullivan County Division of Planning, Community Development and Real Property's Revolving Loan Fund, which provides seed capital and early stage

loans to eligible entrepreneurial companies who want to establish or expand within the county.

When IDA Board Member Ed Sykes recently made the decision to step down as CEO of the agency for health reasons, they needed a replacement and Kiefer had the credentials.

While he is complimentary of larger-scale employers like Resorts World Catskills and the Kartrite Resort and Indoor Waterpark, Kiefer also knows the value of small businesses.

Using a sports analogy, Kiefer says, "You don't just win baseball games with home runs. You also win them with singles and doubles ... and that's my philosophy on how we build the economy."



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