

You Can Count On This Breakfast

UC Comptroller Elliott Auerbach Speaks

"Protecting the People's Interests" will be the theme of Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach's breakfast speech to the Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 15, but he sees it as much more than that.

"That's not only my speech," Auerbach says, "that's my mission in life."

The Ulster Community College Foundation, celebrating their 40th Anniversary, will be sponsoring the breakfast, scheduled for 7:30-9 a.m. at the Best Western Plus in Kingston.

"We're really going to present an illuminating look at county government transparency," Auerbach said of his breakfast remarks. "That's our underlying theme for that day."

Auerbach has been Ulster County's only comptroller since the office was established in 2008 and he said the charter form of government has been a huge improvement.

"It truly has changed transparency and



Elliott Auerbach

accountability in county government," Auerbach said. "I like to say every number has a story and every story has a number. That's really what we do here is look at the numbers. That will be the underlying theme of my speech.

"I like to say it's a peek behind the curtain of county government. My team is made up of folks that look at every dime and every dollar being spent by county government and ensuring

that it is efficient, effective and economical."

Auerbach said his office not only saves the county money, but he sees a "paradigm shift in the way we operate."

"There's a stewardship that we've instituted by all the folks who work here and everybody's taken ownership of how they look after the interests of the taxpayers' money," he said.

Auerbach said his office has conducted more than 30 audits, reports and reviews this year of the county's 40 offices, departments and contract agencies.

His office also has reviewed some of the top non-profits the county funds each year.

Auerbach said his office also reviews contracts, often before the county enters into those pacts.

"Most of the time we're throwing down

Continued on page 5

**November
 Breakfast**

**November 15
 7:30-9:00 am**

Held at:

**Best Western Plus
 503 Washington Ave.
 Kingston, NY**

Sponsor:



November's Chamber Breakfast Sponsor Is Ulster Community College Foundation

The Board of the Ulster Community College Foundation Inc. wishes to thank the members of the Ulster Regional Chamber of Commerce as we celebrate 40 Years of Philanthropy. In 2016, we honor our **Top 40 Donors in 40 Years** and are proud to announce the Chamber and its members have earned that distinction. Please accept our congratulations and a heartfelt thank you! Your contribution of annual scholarships since 2007 has changed the lives of 32 individuals. Their successes and individual achievements make our entire community and economy stronger.

Our scholarship program as a whole has awarded



two-year colleges in the United States with the lowest net price after grant aid and scholarships. Our community of donors, 3200 strong, is at the core of our vision to change lives and empower all.

This is also the inaugural year of our SUNY Ulster President's Challenge Scholarship. Launched by

nearly **\$4,000,000** to **6,000** students and allowed our students to thrive. In 2015, SUNY Ulster was noted to be among the top 100 public

President Alan P. Roberts at the Rondout Valley Central School District, this program is designed to remove the barriers to higher education by giving 8th grade students the opportunity to earn two years of tuition-free education at SUNY Ulster. Selected through an application and interview process, these students are provided with mentorship and support along their journey through high school to our campus. Meet the six students who will enter SUNY Ulster in 2020 in our video at: www.sunyulster.edu/presidentschallenge.

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Mixer

**Nov. 10
 5-7 pm**

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DAILY FREEMAN

UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

November 10 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Chamber Mixer
@ Ulster Performing Arts Center (UPAC)
601 Broadway | Kingston, NY
There is no charge for Chamber Members and Prospective Members to attend but reservations are required.
Sponsor: Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union

November 15 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
Elliott Auerbach
Ulster County Comptroller
BEST WESTERN PLUS
503 Washington Avenue | Kingston, NY
\$25 Members-Advanced Pay • \$30 Members-At the door
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Sponsor: Ulster Community College Foundation

November 17 | 10:00 am - Noon

Health Insurance Open Enrollment
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No cost to attend but reservations are encouraged.
You can also login from your work station.

December 13 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

Chamber Breakfast Meeting
with Dr. Charles Khoury, Ulster BOCES
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Register for all Events (845) 338-5100
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UPAC To Undergo \$4M Rehab

Hear The Details At The November 10th Mixer

The Ulster Performing Arts Center (UPAC) will be raising the curtain on a \$4-million capital campaign during the Chamber's Nov. 10 Business-After-Hours Mixer at the Midtown theater.

"We've been wanting to host a Mixer for a while," said Chris Silva, UPAC's executive director. "We want to share our story with other businesses in the community, especially regarding the capital work we want to do next year at the theater."

"This will be sort of the first public announcement of what we're doing."

The Mixer is scheduled for 5-7 p.m. at 601 Broadway. "We'll eat, drink and be merry," Silva said. "There will be some music. We'll definitely get people up on stage and answer questions and just give people a tour and a feeling of what UPAC is like."

There will no doubt be questions about the capital campaign, which involves replacing the theater's heating, venting and air-conditioning system. Silva said the HVAC system is about 50 years old and often goes out.

"We have to close in the summer," Silva said. "The air-conditioning is so unreliable. It's failed us so many times and even the heat is iffy."

The campaign will also involve new restrooms, an expanded lobby and some roof work.

"We've already spent \$3 million on the theater since we took over and we're certainly looking at this as our final big investment, which will hopefully solidify that theater for generations," Silva said.

The theater, built in 1926 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979, is the largest theater between Manhattan and Albany.

Today, UPAC is operated by the Bardavon Theater in Poughkeepsie and is a symbol of the resurgence of Midtown Kingston.

The theater is now gearing up for its Christmas season highlighted by the Ulster Ballet Company's "A Christmas



Carol" and the Catskill Ballet Theater's presentation of "The Nutcracker."

Some of the acts coming in early 2017 are Norah Jones, Peter Frampton, Alton Brown and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic.

"We're bringing some of the greatest artists in the world to Midtown Kingston and that's a major thing," Silva said. "That creates pride in the community, but it also increases the quality of life for everybody that is experiencing these artists and it's something to be proud of."

Silva said UPAC is a "huge economic stimulator" for Kingston. Besides ticket sales and concessions inside the theater, Americans for the Arts calculates that each ticket-buyer spends another \$24 in the community.

"That comes out to well over \$1 million a year that we put back into the economy every year at UPAC," Silva said. "All of the restaurants in Kingston are packed whenever we have a big show. That includes Midtown, of course, but also Uptown and Downtown. It's great for business and we're very happy about that and very proud of that."

"The hope is that we'll get this work done and that will spin another \$200,000 back into the community by us being open three more months of the year."

Silva said the Chamber's popular Mixers, as advertised, are a gold mine for networking.

"It's a chance in a more relaxed social environment to connect with people who you may know through their business or you may have seen them around, but you've never really had a conversation with them," Silva said.

"You're always going to meet new people and people are going to learn more about your business and you're going to learn more about them."

UPAC, located at 601 Broadway, can be reached at (845) 331-1613 or www.bardavon.org.

Chamber mixers are a great way to network and promote your business. Be sure to bring plenty of

business cards. This free networking event is open to Chamber members and prospective members. Reservations are a must and can be made by calling the Chamber office at (845) 338-5100 or by registering online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

Mixer

Thursday, Nov. 10, 5-7 pm

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Sean Griffin

Another political season is winding down and the time for political candidates to be creative in their outreach to potential voters.

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"We won 80 percent of the primaries in which we were involved last year," says owner Sean Griffin, "and we won 60 to 70 percent of the general elections in which we were involved. Getting results is a great calling card."

Cornerstone was founded in 1998 to serve the needs of small and medium-sized non-profit organizations and businesses. Griffin, who formerly worked for a Westchester-based mailing technology firm, left to start Cornerstone after having bad experiences as a volunteer in outsourcing bulk mail to regional mail houses.

Griffin said his goal with Cornerstone was to execute all work "on time, under budget and uneventfully" under the principles of Conscious Effort, Resolve, Service and Truthfulness (C, R, S and T).

"I ended up doing more direct mail because there was a need and very few people were trained specifically in direct mail," he said. Griffin is also quick to point out that more recently, the USPS no longer has the depth of staff to provide mailing guidance, so Cornerstone

therefore fills the knowledge gap.

The company has a unique "project management approach" with a dedicated department to guide mailings and data work through a highly managed process. Cornerstone also offers discounted postage rates and fast turnaround. Aside from complete letter shop and mailing services, they also provide graphic design, printing, and access to unique and thinly traded data.

"It starts with very hard and qualitative look data prior to assessing the direct mail component," Griffin said. "We're unique in that we combine old school and new school. We're old school marketing but with prevailing technologies to bridge the gap."

"I think data is more important than mail, but direct mail is refreshingly non-evasive; and, when done right, it provides a compelling buttress to other communications. When done poorly, I do not fault direct mail -- I fault the approach."

Griffin said all full-time staff members are trained in mailing regulations as certified by the Postal Service.

"We are a one-stop shop in a way no one else is. We can do the online data management, direct mail, printing... the full strategy. I am not aware of anyone else that can do the 360 to that degree and then also get the results that we're getting."

"The world is going to look more for the one-stop shop and because printing is becoming a commodity, it's not

enough to say you're a printer and you know some mailing regulations. If you don't have mastery, I'm not sure what you've got. You have to have mastery in whatever you're doing. And we've got mastery."

Griffin said in a social media world of short attention spans, he knows he has to hone his message — and hit it quickly.

"It takes an interesting kind of creativity and approach to get things to matter very briefly," he says. "We have 1 to 2 seconds to convey a client's message. If I have 5 seconds, it's a lifetime. If our client's mailpiece gets 5 seconds in front of the recipient, we have arrived, and I have done my job."

Most of Cornerstone's 500 active clients are non-profits, Griffin said.

Griffin said the Chamber has helped him with referrals and he is generally impressed with the organization.

"Any organization is only as good as the leadership," he said. "The Ulster Chamber has had great leadership and that has built structural integrity."

Cornerstone Services, Inc., 31 South Ohioville Road in New Paltz, can be reached at (845) 255-5722 or www.crst.net.

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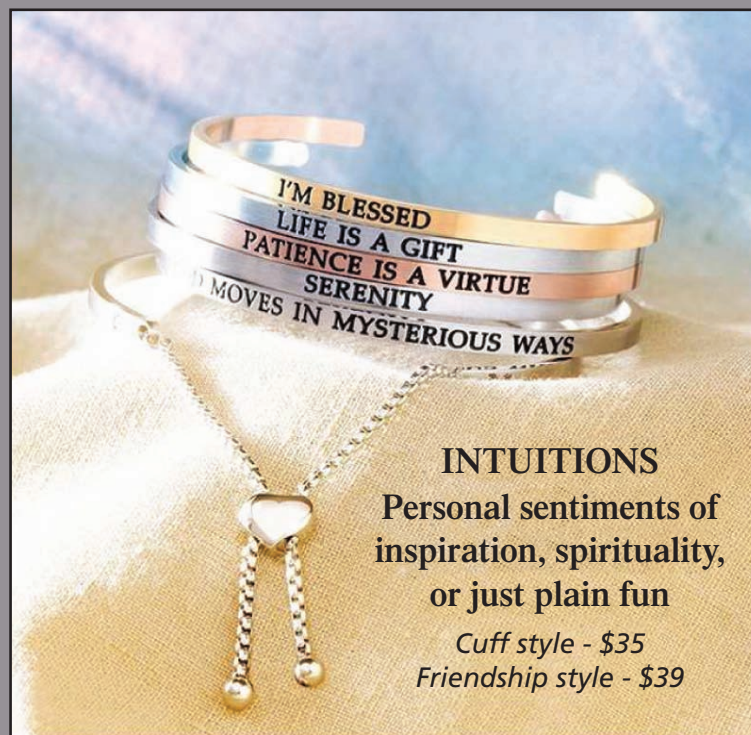
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Auerbach Will Be Speaking at Breakfast

Continued from page 1

the cautionary flag,” he said. “We bill ourselves as ‘professional skeptics.’ We look at the way the county enters into a contract and the way the county intends to pay the contract or the vendor.”

Auerbach’s office also reviewed 13,100 claims in the first half of this year to make sure they are accurate and meet the conditions of the contract with the county.

“Over the course of the first six months of this year, we looked at \$84 million worth of claims that the county had against it—such things as vouchers and invoices for purchases by the county,” Auerbach said.

The comptroller’s office found \$89,000 worth of mistakes, according to Auerbach.

“We’re like the smoke alarm or the carbon monoxide detector that’s on the ceiling in your house,” Auerbach said. “You know we’re there and, God forbid if something happens, we will certainly

“We’re really going to present an illuminating look at county government transparency.”
– Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach

send the alarm out.”

Auerbach said he also would use the breakfast platform to discuss the budget for his office in 2017. The proposed Ulster County budget for next year would cut the comptroller’s office more than 20 percent from \$890,000 to \$695,000.

“I will not shy away from that,” Auerbach said. “I certainly will comment on it as it relates to this office and comment on it as it relates to the general public.

“We fancy ourselves to be the check to the balance or the balance to the check, so to speak. That’s our belief about what the public charge is for the office of the comptroller.”

Ulster County’s 23 legislators will also get their say on the budget and Auerbach said he has

been lobbying to get the funding restored.

“We’re really leading a charge with the Legislature to stand up for open government,” he said. “That’s the charge. That’s what our office promotes is open government.

“The Chamber breakfast will be another opportunity to explain to the hardworking business community exactly why it is impactful if our budget is reduced and the opportunity it does present to return us to

a government that is less open and less transparent.

“If we can tie all of these issues together in a neat package, I think it will resonate with the Chamber members.”

Auerbach, a former three-term mayor in his hometown of Ellenville, is a graduate of Hofstra University with a degree in Economics-Business. He has pursued graduate studies at Long Island University and SUNY New Paltz.

He also served as executive director of the Rural Economic Area Partnership during the 1990s.

Chamber 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.

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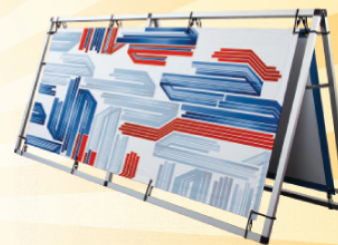
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Consistency Is The Key To Success

MEMBER PROFILE

“The whole idea was to create high quality, restaurant/chef quality prepared food...”

– Mary Ann Erickson

“We decided we wanted to try something slightly different and we went into the catering business at that point and closed the restaurant and just used the building for catering events and special events,” Erickson said.

The couple wanted to “create a new business model that would be accessible” and began eyeing the busy Route 28 corridor, Erickson said.

“We noticed there was kind of a lack of good food for takeout in the area,” she said.

The couple found a building at 948 Route 28 and, after a year of renovations, opened Blue Mountain Bistro-to-Go in November 2007.

“The whole idea was to create high quality, restaurant/chef

quality, prepared food on a daily basis for people to be able to eat in or enjoy at home at reasonable prices,” she said.

It wasn’t long before the economy collapsed in late 2008 and suddenly Bistro’s business model was needed.

“So many people just couldn’t afford to go out anymore to eat, but they still loved their good food,” Erickson said. “Our business has pretty much thrived here from the start because we offer a really excellent product at reasonable prices and people can get a restaurant-quality meal and take it home and enjoy it.”

Lunch is an extremely busy time, but Erickson said people pop in at all hours just to pick up a sandwich, wrap, Panini or salad (for a full menu go to www.bluemountainbistro.com) and get on their way.

“We have loyal customers who eat lunch here every day,” Erickson says, “but I would say we also get a lot of repeat

Continued on page 7



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Blue Mountain Bistro

Continued from page 6

customers every day who are just driving home from work and they don't want to cook and they pick up something to take home.

"I would say the Salmon Dijon is probably one of our most popular items. In the summer months, we have a lot of amazing barbecue items we offer. Catering season is a huge season for us."

Erickson said Bistro also offers a variety of soups each day and the sales are "huge."

When asked the key to Bistro's success, Erickson said consistency.

"People knew our food when we were in Woodstock," she said. "We have many loyal customers who came back because of the consistency of our product. People know that they're going to have a delicious, freshly prepared food item, whatever it is. They know that that's going to happen day after day."

"We provide a consistently quality and delicious product."

Bistro, which employs 20 people, catered the Chamber's recent Mixer at the Senate Garage in Uptown Kingston.

"It was a lot of fun preparing all the food and getting to meet all the people who come out to the Mixers," she said. "We think the Chamber's great."

Bistro's slogan, which is in the center of its neon sign, is "feel good food."

"The idea is that our food makes you feel good," she said. "We're really proud of that and people tell us that every day."

The website also includes more about the restaurant and a link to her work documenting vanishing roadside America. (www.vanishingroadside.com).

Blue Mountain Bistro to Go, located at 948 Route 28 in Kingston, can be reached at (845) 340-9800 and www.bluemountainbistro.com.

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The Shawangunk Mountains are beautiful from just about any angle, but now you can experience them from behind the wheel of a Jeep at Northeast Off-Road Adventures (NORA).

Adventure-seekers from all over the country are making the trek to Ellenville for the experience of low-speed, off-road driving instruction. Owners Scott and Susan Trager and the NORA team of trail guides lead drivers through miles of pristine driving trails and obstacles at a 68-acre mountaintop facility.

Drivers can use their own 4-wheel drive vehicle or rent one of NORA's Jeeps for the day.

"You're off the road, you're off the pavement, you're in the woods and you're in the beautiful Shawangunk Mountains," explained Susan Trager. "You're getting a thrill at 3 miles an hour.

"All of a sudden your left wheel is up, your right wheel is down, and you're looking at your dashboard at a 45-degree angle. That can be a pretty scary thing, but your vehicle is certainly capable of doing that without missing a beat."

MEMBER PROFILE

"Whether you are a novice or you have off-road driving experience, NORA offers a fun-filled adrenaline rush for all."

– Scott Trager

NORA, which opened two years ago, offers classes by appointment only for students who want to learn how to drive off-road.

"Whether you are a novice or you have off-road driving experience, NORA offers a fun-filled adrenaline rush for all," said Scott Trager, an off-road enthusiast.

Public and private classes are available, including beginner and advanced skills training, corporate adventure team building and multi-day driving events. Classes are usually held on weekends and by appointment.

Susan Trager said a typical session gets started with a 90-minute introduction in NORA's open-air pavilion, followed by a trip to the parking lot, obstacle course and then the trails.

"The trails are groomed and pristine," she said. "We haven't had any sort of accidents or scrapes. The trails are maintained by our employees."

Lunch is served on the trail and everyone talks about the experience before the afternoon session, Susan Trager said.

"It's a little less hands-on from the guides," she said. "We kind of let the students feel their way while they're driving on the trails. Everyone is always together. They're never off on their own. It's a group-learning event."

People come from all over the United States and even Puerto Rico, Canada, United Kingdom, Austria and Italy to hit the trails.

"We're getting calls all the time from all over," Susan Trager said. "We had somebody come up from Florida

Continued on page 9

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Northeast Off-Road Adventures

Continued from page 8
recently.”

Scott Trager said NORA has 25 5-star ratings on Facebook and several more 5-star ratings on TripAdvisor.

NORA’s website (www.nyoffroaddriving.com) is full of testimonials, such as this one from a driver in New Jersey: “I can’t say enough good stuff about the company. After doing the entry-level class and trail ride today, I am hooked and want more hands on knowledge. To sum it up in just a couple of words ... super professional, super caring, super knowledgeable.”

Another driver writes: “I couldn’t be happier with my findings and choice to attend one of their beginner classes. The folks at NORA are professional, well educated, and love what they are doing. That is evident from the minute you drive onto their grounds and start meeting people.”

The Tragers bought the property six years ago and were hopeful about a possible casino opening in Ellenville, but that plan fell through. They are equally thrilled about developer Michael Treanor’s plans to bring Nevele ProSport, a \$150-million complex for youth sports to the former Nevele Hotel property in Ellenville.

“We just fell in love with the property

and fell in love with Ellenville,” Susan Trager said. “There is just a lot of potential for this little town to sort of put it back on the map in a very positive way.

“The hiking is beautiful. The restaurants are great ... the people are wonderful. Ellenville is going through a renaissance right now and we’re proud to be a part of it.”

The Chamber hooked NORA up with the children at the Center for Spectrum Services in Ellenville, allowing them to see the Jeeps and honk horns recently.

“Going to the Mixers is great,” Susan Trager said. “When we can do it, we’re more than happy to resource and work with people at the Chamber.”

NORA also gives back to local pantries and other community groups.

“We’re looking to expand and build a conference center and be more of a presence in the Ulster County area,” Susan Trager said. “We want to continue to network with people and bring people into the area so they can see what it has to offer.”

Northeast Off-Road Adventures, located in Ellenville, can be reached at (845) 514-9895 and www.nyoffroaddriving.com.

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