

# SYRACUSE AIRPORT EXPANSION FOCUSES ON NORTH CONCOURSE



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IMAGE CREDIT: NEW YORK STATE



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LE MOYNE EXTENDS ERIE21 PROGRAM TO  
 SCHOOL DISTRICTS OUTSIDE SYRACUSE

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CNY BUSINESS JOURNAL  
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**CNYBJ CALENDAR:**

**April 1 List:** Commercial Printers

**April 1 Special Report:** Manufacturing Directory

**April 8 List:** Staffing Firms

**April 8 Special Report:** Battle for Talent/ Succession/Crystal Ball & CNY SME Awards

**April 15 List:** Commercial-Property Management Firms

**April 15 Special Report:** Small Business/Minority and Women-Owned Business Directory *NEW!*

**April 22 List:** Airports

**April 22 Special Report:** Employee Benefits/HR/Insurance/Generations

**April 29 List:** MBA Programs

**April 29 Special Report:** Banking & Credit Union Report

**May 6 List:** Technology Companies/Addiction Treatment Programs *NEW!*

**May 6 Special Report:** Health Care Quarterly

**May 13 List:** Minority-Owned Businesses

**May 13 Special Report:** Construction/Luxury Living


**May 20 List:** SBA Loans and Lenders *NEW!*

**May 20 Special Report:** Family Business/Small Business *NEW!*


**May 27 List:** Environmental Firms

**May 27 Special Report:** Energy/Environment/Sustainability

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**CNYBJ BRIEFS**



PHOTO CREDIT: HERKIMER COUNTY HEALTHNET

Herkimer County HealthNet has received a \$5,000 Excellus BlueCross BlueShield grant to support Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County's Veggie Van. From left to right are: Excellus Community Investments and Partnerships Manager Shayna Keller, Cornell Cooperative Extension Nutrition Team Leader Cameron Burke, Herkimer County HealthNet Executive Director Elyse Enea, Excellus Regional President Eve Van de Wal, and Cornell Cooperative Extension Executive Director Garet Livermore.

**Excellus \$5,000 grant helps Herkimer County battle food insecurity**

HERKIMER — Herkimer County HealthNet announced it has received a \$5,000 Excellus BlueCross BlueShield Health and Wellness Award.

The awards focus on "community investments" to support programs and initiatives that improve health and health outcomes for community members.

Herkimer County HealthNet will contribute the funds to the Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer County Veggie Van program that will deliver fresh fruits and vegetables to communities in the county.

"We are thankful to Excellus BlueCross BlueShield for their funding and support of the Veggie Van," Herkimer County HealthNet Executive Director Elyse Enea said in a Herkimer County HealthNet release. "Creative solutions are necessary to ensure our most vulnerable community members have access to quality nutrition."

According to a report released in February by the New York State Department of Health, Herkimer County has the highest percentage of adults, at 28 percent, who experience food insecurity. That uncertainty can lead to a higher probability of chronic diseases including hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, and more.

"This support from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield will enable us to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved com-

munities in Herkimer County this growing season," Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County Executive Director Garet Livermore said. "It will also help build business for our region's farmers who are growing healthy produce that is not available to many of our residents. Additionally, the Veggie Van will bring university-developed nutrition programs to these sites through Cornell's FMNP and SNAP-Ed programs so that our families know how to make the most of their food dollars."

The Veggie Van will help address food security, promote equitable food access, and work toward a sustainable and diverse local food system.

"Our goal for this program is to reduce food insecurity in Herkimer County, make fresh produce accessible, and provide a space for educational opportunities," BlueCross BlueShield Regional President Eve Van de Wal said. "Impacting the communities we serve by supporting programs that combat food insecurity is core to our mission as a nonprofit health plan. We are proud to help provide funding for the Veggie Van program because it helps provide essential, healthy nutrition to the people of Herkimer County."

The mission of Herkimer County HealthNet is to improve the health and well-being of individuals who live, work, play, and learn in Herkimer County, the organization says.

**KeyBank parent company has a new chief accounting officer**

Stacy L. Gilbert is the new chief accounting officer at KeyCorp (NYSE: KEY) — parent company of KeyBank, the No. 2 bank ranked by deposit market share in the 16-county Central New York region. She started in the position on March 15.

Gilbert has served as corporate controller at KeyCorp since August 2023. She previously served as assistant corporate controller and senior director of external reporting and accounting policy, according to a Feb. 26 news release from the banking company. Gilbert first joined Key in 2002, holding a variety of accounting roles, before leaving to join FirstMerit Corp. in 2008. She rejoined Key in 2016.

"I would like to congratulate Stacy on her appointment," Clark Khayat, chief financial officer of KeyCorp, said in the release "Her more than 25 years of accounting and finan-

cial reporting experience with publicly traded financial institutions will serve us well. I am confident that this well-planned succession will result in a smooth transition."

Douglas M. Schosser, the prior chief accounting officer at KeyCorp, left to pursue a senior executive position at another company, effective March 15, the release stated.

"I want to thank Doug for his significant contributions to Key during his more than 25 years at our company," Khayat said. "We wish him all the best in his next endeavor."

Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, Key is one of the nation's largest bank-based financial-services companies, with assets of about \$188 billion as of Dec. 31. Its roots trace back nearly 200 years to Albany. KeyBank has a network of more than 950 branches and over 1,200 ATMs in 15 states.



Gilbert



FILE PHOTO CREDIT: GRIFFISS INSTITUTE WEBSITE

**Virginia firm wins Air Force tech contract and will do the work in Rome and at other sites**

ROME — Analex Corp. — doing business as Arcfield, of Chantilly, Virginia — was recently awarded a more than \$52.6 million order for Xdomain Technology through Research, Evolution, Enhancements, Maintenance and Support - Next Generation software and hardware.

This contract provides for essential life-cycle support functions for, and to evolve, the Information Support Server Environment and the X-domain Agile Rules-Based Information Transfer Orchestrator Cross Domain Solution National Security Systems and associated core-data services suite of solutions and technologies. Work will be performed in Rome, as well as at various locations worldwide, according to a Feb. 27 contract announcement from the U.S. Department of Defense. It is expected to be completed by April 25, 2029.

Arcfield says on its website that it is a government services and mission-support provider that employs more than 1,400 engineers, analysts, IT specialists, and other professionals.

This Air Force contract involves foreign-military sales to Australia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. This pact was a competitive acquisition, and one offer was received, per the Defense Department contract announcement. Fiscal 2024 research, development, test, and evaluation funds totaling more than \$2.45 million; fiscal 2024 procurement funds of \$3.1 million; and fiscal 2024 operation and maintenance funds totaling about \$600,000, are being obligated at time of award. The Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome is the contracting authority.

**Syracuse mayor names Department of Water construction administrator**

SYRACUSE — Brian Messe has recently been appointed construction administrator in the City of Syracuse Department of Water.



Messe

Messe will act as a liaison between the Department of Water and contractors regarding construction and maintenance projects, Syracuse Mayor Ben Walsh announced on March 6. He will also work to ensure that projects follow appropriate timelines and safety guidelines, as well as use proper materials.

Messe previously served as an architect with the city Department of Parks and Recreation. In this capacity, he played a key role in developing the Parks 2023-2024 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), creating preliminary architectural drawings to advance projects, and offering computational project cost estimates, according to a March 6 city news release. Additionally, Messe contributed to securing project funding, participated in project design, and played a role in construction administration, contract fulfillment, and final inspections.

Prior to his tenure at the Syracuse Department of Parks and Recreation, Messe gained hands-on experience with construction and green-building practices while working for contractors and landscaping companies. During this time, he collaborated with residential and commercial clients, leading negotiations on timelines, budgets, and materials for each project.

Messe received his applied science associate degree in architectural technology from Onondaga Community College. He is also a certified playground safety inspector and inclusivity assessor.





The state announced that construction has commenced on a \$28.5 million project to expand the north concourse at Syracuse Hancock International Airport. New York Department of Transportation officials announced the funding and displayed project renderings at a press conference on March 7.

PHOTO CREDIT: NEW YORK STATE



A rendering of the expansion project in the north concourse at Syracuse Hancock International Airport that the state provided to the media. New York State says construction has started on a \$28.5 million project that will also expand the federal-inspection station to help the facility retain its international designation.

PHOTO CREDIT: ZOEYADVERTISING.COM

# Syracuse airport expansion focuses on north concourse

Will also expand the federal-inspection station facility

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
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SYRACUSE — The new construction project at Syracuse Hancock International Airport (SYR) centers on two elements.

The \$28.5 million project will expand the north concourse to provide additional seating and concession areas while also improving passenger flow.

The effort will also include the

renovation of the terminal building's second floor, near gate 15, to expand the federal-inspection station facility — ensuring the airport retains its international designation.

The effort is meant to “enhance the passenger experience” and provide Central New York with a “world-class travel hub,” the office of Gov. Kathy Hochul announced on March 7.

VRH Construction, of Englewood, New Jersey — a firm that specializes in aviation construction in the northeast region — is the primary contractor on the project, Matthew Szejbka, customer-experience manager at the Syracuse airport, tells CNYBJ in an email. In addition,

Dallas, Texas-based Corgan is designing the project, he added.

Szejbka also noted that the north concourse and federal-inspection station project must be completed by January 2025.

The state awarded the project \$20 million from the governor's \$230 million Upstate Airport Economic Development and Revitalization Competition. New York Department of Transportation officials announced the funding at a press conference at SYR on March 7.

The Syracuse airport was one of nine upstate New York airports awarded a total of \$230 million in the latest round of the competition that Hochul announced in 2022.

The awards are intended to “promote, revitalize and accelerate” investments in Upstate commercial-passenger service airports, “helping to create airports for the 21st century,” Hochul's office said.

## Project details

The new improvement project will add about 4,700 square feet to the north concourse, which serves about 40 percent of the passengers traveling through the facility each year. The expansion will provide room for improved passenger flow, additional seating areas, and concession space.

The design supports optimal natural ventilation for improved air quality, promotes energy efficiency through the installation of “dynamic” window panels to increase natural lighting, and new lighting controls and sensors that reduce nonessential lighting during off-times.

High-efficiency building

equipment will also “improve the airport's sustainability,” Hochul's office noted.

Besides the concourse expansion, the plan also calls for upgrades to the airport's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) federal inspection station (FIS).

That project seeks to ensure the facility meets the latest CBP standards and preserve the airport's international designation, including its ability to handle both international passengers and cargo operations.

The initiative will install the latest FIS equipment for international operations that will allow for the processing of 200 passengers per hour, replacement of a jet bridge, installation of a new elevator tower and baggage carousel, and the creation of an additional hold room and boarding space.

The project also includes the installation of a wayfinding lighting-control system and support for hearing-impaired passengers. ■

# Berkshire Bank parent company to pay Q1 dividend of 18 cents in early April

BY JOURNAL STAFF  
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Berkshire Hills Bancorp, Inc. (NYSE: BHLB) — parent company of Berkshire Bank, which has a significant presence in the Mohawk Valley region — recently announced that its board of directors has approved a

quarterly cash dividend of 18 cents per common share.

The dividend is payable on April 4, to shareholders of record as of the close of business on March 21.

At Berkshire Hills Bancorp's current stock price, the payment yields about 3.3 percent on an annual basis.

Boston-based Berkshire has about

\$12.4 billion in total assets and a footprint of 96 branches in New England and New York state.

The banking company recently announced it is planning to reduce its branch count to 86 after the sale of one office in East Syracuse, plus nine other branches in upstate and eastern New York. After the branch sale, expected



to close by the end of the third quarter, Berkshire will continue to operate 16 branches in its core New York market including offices in Rome, New Hartford, Whitesboro, North Utica, West Winfield, and Ilion. ■



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# Human Technologies Corp. and ECR plan building swap

BY TRACI DELORE  
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UTICA — Human Technologies Corp. (HTC) is moving to a new home base, but it's not too far away.

The nonprofit social enterprise, which creates employment for people with disabilities, purchased the ECR International building at 2201 Dwyer Ave., on Feb. 28. In the coming months, HTC will move its operations from about one-third of a mile away at 2260 Dwyer Ave.

"Our business has been growing," HTC's CFO Carl Reistrom, says in an interview. The organization has been searching for a suitable building for a while, hoping to consolidate from multiple locations that include its home base at 2260 Dwyer Ave. and leased space about a mile away on Blecker Street.

"Nothing really fit the size we needed," Reistrom notes. Then while driving to work one day, he saw the "for sale" sign on the ECR building. The heating and cooling product manufacturer announced in October 2023 it would cease manufacturing in

Utica and consolidate all manufacturing in its Dunkirk (Buffalo area) facility, where it had invested \$2 million to streamline operations and increase productivity. Some ECR operations remained in Utica.

"It was a great opportunity to pursue," HTC President/CEO Timothy Giarrusso says. Now in its 70th year, HTC has gone through several transformations over the years. Today, the organization employs more than 300 people and is financially independent, with all its revenue coming from the products and services it sells. Those include facilities management and environmental services, third-party logistics/supply chain and order-fulfillment services, uniform and apparel-management services, and manufacturing and packing operations.

Purchasing the nearly 190,000-square-foot ECR facility on just over 13 acres gives HTC plenty of room to grow, Giarrusso says. "It has ample office space to accommodate us," he says, and the warehouse "is as close to move-in ready as we could ever hope for."

Giarrusso hopes HTC can ex-

pand both its supply-chain services and third-party logistics services once settled into the new space.

The new facility will replace HTC's 40,000-square-foot building at 2260 Dwyer Ave. and between 80,000 and 90,000 square feet of leased space on Blecker Street.

"Once we're in the ECR building, everyone is going to be together on one roof," Reistrom says, adding it will help create a unified corporate culture.

While HTC is busy moving into the ECR building, ECR plans to start moving into HTC's former building.

"The Utica facility has always been the center for customer service, technical support, accounting, information technology and engineering, laboratory operations, and customer training," Joe Langlois, ECR executive director of engineering and marketing, tells CNYBJ in an email. "We never intended to relocate all those operations to the Dunkirk facility."

"ECR wanted to be able to maintain our lab and training facilities locally and not have to relocate those operations to Dunkirk," he



Human Technologies Corp. (HTC) purchased the former ECR International facility in Utica, a move that will help the nonprofit consolidate all its operations under one roof with room to grow. ECR, which moved manufacturing operations out of Utica earlier this year, plans to relocate its remaining operations into HCR's old building.

PHOTO CREDIT: HTC

says. "Having ECR in the former Human Technologies facility is ideal. The space is the right size, and we will be able to build a new training center and laboratory facility at that location. The team at Human Technologies has been great to work with, and this is one of those rare situations whereby both companies were able to find the ideal space by swapping locations."

Along with a continued presence in Utica, ECR will also stay involved as a founding sponsor of the Boilermaker Road Race, Langlois notes. While the organization won't be able to supply the

same manpower as in years past, it will continue financial support of the annual event.

ECR is working with the New York State Department of Labor to facilitate employment for those workers impacted by the manufacturing consolidation, which took place in early January, Langlois says.

"Consolidation is never an easy decision for any company to make," he says. "We understand the impacts that these decisions have on the employees who are not able to be retained, and we did not make those decisions lightly." ■






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## Guthrie Clinic maternity care initiative to benefit from \$3M gift

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
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The Guthrie Clinic says it will use a \$3 million donation from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to support its systemwide Maternity Care Oasis initiative.

Sayre, Pennsylvania-based Guthrie Clinic has operations in Binghamton, Ithaca, Cortland, and Corning.

The initiative seeks to "bridge the gap" in maternity care by providing a "lifeline of compassionate, accessible, and expert" maternity services to underserved communities with low to moderate access to maternity care.

Guthrie Clinic notes that it will use the gift to help secure and support a mobile maternity unit — described as a "key feature" of the new program — which will serve as an "oasis of hope and care" in regions where maternal health care is scarce. It'll offer prenatal care, childbirth support, postpartum guidance, and education.

Guthrie will additionally deploy care teams comprised of midwives, doulas, and other community workers across its service area in New York to assist with community outreach, education, and essential maternity-care services.

"We are enormously grateful to the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation for this groundbreaking, momentum-generating gift," Dr. Edmund Sabanegh, Jr., president and CEO of the Guthrie Clinic, said



in a news release. "We know that rural communities face significant challenges in accessing comprehensive maternity care services, leading to disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. We are determined to play a role in addressing these issues, and through their generosity, the Cabrini Health Foundation is partnering with us to make an enduring difference for those who depend on us for this care."

The Maternity Care Oasis initiative is part of a multi-million-dollar, system-wide investment that includes infrastructure improvements in outpatient services, behavioral health, and emergency care. New training and education programs will "ensure an enriched future with the best and brightest clinicians recruited," Guthrie contends.



# PAR Technology makes acquisitions worth nearly \$400M

BY TRACI DELORE  
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NEW HARTFORD — Foodservice-technology company PAR Technology Corp. (NYSE: PAR) recently announced two acquisitions it says will help it expand its cloud-based offerings into convenience stores and fuel retailers, along with international markets.

The New Hartford-based company entered into an agreement to acquire TASK Group, of Sydney, Australia, for cash and PAR common stock at an implied value of about \$206 million, assuming an all-cash transaction. PAR has also completed its acquisition of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania-based Stuzo Holdings, LLC for about \$190 million combined, paid in cash and stock.

The closing of the TASK acquisition is expected to occur in the third quarter of 2024, subject to TASK shareholder approval, Australian court approval, certain regulatory approvals, and other customary closing conditions, per a March 11 PAR news release.

“This is a monumental day for us at PAR as we expand our business across the globe and enhance our product and service offerings for a wider range of foodservice and fuel-retail industry,” PAR CEO Savneet

Singh said. “Over the past five years, we have evolved our capabilities to include point-of-sale, loyalty, back-office, payment-transaction services, and digital ordering. The transactions announced today further our vision and help us offer a more comprehensive set of best-in-class solutions for global brands.”

Singh expects the acquisition of both companies will add more than \$80 million in annual recurring revenue (ARR) and more than \$20 million in adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) to PAR’s coffers.

“Simply put, we expect to increase our ARR by well over 50 percent while adding meaningful cashflow and unlocking significant new markets that ensure faster future growth,” he said.

TASK is a foodservice-transaction platform offering solutions including interactive customer engagement and seamless integration used by brands including Starbucks and Guzman Y Gomez, while its loyalty customer-engagement platform is used by McDonald’s in 65 markets.

In a March 11 webcast for investors and the media, Singh said many of PAR’s customers expect to grow internationally in the coming years, which put TASK on PAR’s radar.

The platforms the two companies offer

are very similar, he says, “except it’s the global presence that TASK is bringing to PAR.”

PAR first learned about TASK through McDonald’s, a mutual customer of both companies, he said. The fast-food company utilizes a number of PAR hardware and software products, and also uses TASK’s loyalty platform.

“It’s an incredible set of products, an incredible team, and one we’re really excited to move to PAR,” he says. “I don’t think we’ve ever felt such a great strategic fit.”

PAR’s acquisition of Stuzo Holdings was for \$170 million in cash plus \$20 million in stock. Stuzo is a digital customer and loyalty engagement software provider to convenience and fuel retailers.

“We at PAR have run into Stuzo numerous times as our Punchh business and Stuzo go head-to-head quite often,” Singh said during the webcast. PAR’s Punchh platform has been expanding into convenience and fuel stores (C-stores) as those businesses add more food options and want to provide the same level of customer engagement and loyalty options as quick-service restaurants do.

“While we were doing a good job at PAR, it became very clear for us to win this mar-



ket, we needed to partner with Stuzo, who we believe had the best solution,” Singh said.

The acquisition strengthens PAR’s business strategy to expand its market across a growing foodservice market with a highly profitable platform. Stuzo’s customers

include RaceTrac, Circle K, Marathon, Chevron, and Gulf. With Stuzo, PAR now provides the technology in more than 25,000 sites with substantial opportunity for growth.

PAR financed the Stuzo deal with the proceeds of its private placement of about \$200 million of the company’s common stock to funds and accounts advised by T. Rowe Price Investment Management, Inc.; ADW Capital; Voss Capital; Greenhaven Road Capital; Jane Street; Progeny 3; Fund 1 Investments LLC; Newtyn Capital; Ghisallo Capital Management; and Burkehill Global Management.

J.P. Morgan Securities LLC served as sole placement agent in connection with the private placement. Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP served as legal counsel to PAR in connection with the acquisition and financing transactions.

PAR serves more than 100,000 restaurant and foodservice customers in more than 110 countries with its point-of-sale, digital ordering, loyalty, and back-office software and hardware solutions. ■

## GUTHRIE:

Continued from page 4

“We are dedicated to nurturing the well-being of expectant mothers, ensuring their journey into motherhood is safe, healthy, and supported,” said Dr. J. Manuel Arreguin, chair of obstetrics and gynecol-

ogy at the Guthrie Clinic. “The Maternity Care Oasis Initiative aligns beautifully with the values of Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, who dedicated her life to serving those in need and providing support to the most vulnerable in our community. The Foundation’s gift, and their investment in our initiative, is a perfect collaboration and families throughout our service area will

benefit.”

“Addressing New York’s immediate and long-term health needs requires a comprehensive approach. Over the past five years we have worked to get funding into communities across the state struggling with heightened health inequities,” Msgr. Gregory Mustaciolo, CEO of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, said in the

Guthrie release.

The New York City-based Mother Cabrini Health Foundation is a nonprofit whose mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of New Yorkers, bolster the health outcomes of vulnerable communities, eliminate barriers to care, and bridge gaps in health services, according to Guthrie. ■



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## CEO assessment of recent job applicants, 2023 and 2019

Assessment of Job Applicant	2023	2019
	Excellent + Good / Fair + Poor	Excellent + Good / Fair + Poor
Verbal skills	35% / 60%	29% / 66%
Technical skills	32% / 60%	32% / 61%
Professionalism	27% / 67%	29% / 66%
Work ethic	22% / 73%	28% / 66%
Initiative	22% / 73%	23% / 72%
Realistic about compensation	18% / 77%	24% / 71%
Writing skills	19% / 69%	18% / 75%

Siena College Poll: March 5, 2024

IMAGE CREDIT: SIENA RESEARCH INSTITUTE WEBSITE

# Siena: Upstate CEOs' confidence slumps in 2023

Two-thirds of top executives say business conditions have worsened

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

More than two-thirds (67 percent) of upstate New York CEOs surveyed say business conditions are getting worse, while 29 percent indicate they are staying the same, and only 4 percent believe conditions are getting better.

Only 18 percent of CEOs expect the economy to improve in 2024, while 55 percent see worsening conditions in the

next year.

That's according to the 17th annual Upstate New York Business Leader Survey that the Siena College Research Institute released on March 5. It is sponsored by the Business Council of New York State, Inc, UHY Advisors, Inc., and the Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation.

By comparison, more than half (54 percent) of upstate New York CEOs surveyed a year ago said business conditions had worsened over the last year.

"Despite increasing consumer sentiment, lessening inflation and recent stock market gains, the CEOs of Upstate New York are decreasingly positive about business conditions and fewer than 1 in 5 expect a rebound this year," Don Levy, director of the Siena College Research

## Percent of CEOs that think each is an asset or detriment to doing business in New York

	% Asset	% Detriment
New York's natural resources	52%	7%
New York's tourist attractions	48%	3%
The quality of life in New York	43%	29%
New York's educational system	31%	34%
New York's workforce	26%	51%
New York's culture	24%	42%
New York's transportation system	23%	26%
Local government	21%	35%
New York's healthcare system	17%	48%
New York's energy system	14%	47%
Housing affordability	12%	60%
New York State Government	9%	81%
Local permitting processes	8%	55%
Crime in New York	2%	68%

Siena College Poll: March 5, 2024

IMAGE CREDIT: SIENA RESEARCH INSTITUTE WEBSITE

Institute, said in the survey report. "Troubled by the lack of suitably trained workers and feeling as though neither the federal or state government contribute to their success, CEOs expect a year of lower revenues and profits."

The Siena College Research Institute (SRI) conducted interviews with 585 CEOs of upstate New York companies/non-profit organizations from Oct. 10, 2023 through Jan. 24, 2024. Those leaders included firms in the Capital Region, Central/Mohawk Valley New York, the Finger Lakes region, the Mid-Hudson region, and Western New York.

The surveyed CEOs worked in industry sectors that included service (21 percent), manufacturing (17 percent), nonprofit (8 percent), engineering and construction (12 percent), retail (10 percent), food and beverage (9 percent), wholesale/distribution (8 percent), financial (5 percent), health care (6 percent), technology (3 percent), and tourism (2 percent).

### CEO sentiment

The survey found 17 percent of CEOs say that economic conditions in New York state today as compared to a year ago are either a little (14 percent) or considerably (3 percent) better. A majority, 59 percent, say conditions are worse (22 percent considerably, 37 percent a little) today than a year prior.

A year ago, 54 percent of CEOs said that conditions had been worsening while at that time, 23 percent thought that economic conditions had been improving.

Today's assessment is slightly more pessimistic than last year's, but still stronger than it was three years ago when only 9 percent saw improving conditions and 80 percent said conditions had worsened.

When asked the same question about conditions in their industry, 15 percent say that economic conditions in New York have improved for their industry and 61 percent (up from 54 percent) say they are worse.

Looking forward from today through the balance of 2024, 18 percent (unchanged from last year) expect economic conditions in New York to be either a little (16 percent) or considerably (2 percent) better, while 55 percent expect economic conditions to grow worse in 2024.

The survey also found CEOs assess their industry prospects for the rest of 2024 only slightly better than the overall conditions as 18 percent (down from 23 percent a year ago) expect improving conditions while 50 percent (virtually un-

changed) anticipate further worsening.

At least 50 percent of CEOs from engineering/construction, manufacturing, financial, food/beverage, tourism, and health care anticipate economic conditions within their industry to worsen in 2024.

"The results of this survey show the concern employers express to us every day that harmful policies are adversely impacting their business' ability to grow and prosper. Our business sectors are seeing high taxes, strict mandates, and little cooperation from

lawmakers, forcing them and their employees out of New York State," Heather Briccetti Mulligan, president and CEO of the Business Council of New York State, said in the SRI report. "Instead of encouraging investments in our state, those elected to represent businesses in their districts continually pass legislation and accept policies that add burdens to the already mounting challenges of doing business in New York. This must end."

### Index of Business Leader Confidence

Each year, the SRI computes an Index of Business Leader Confidence based on the four questions in which CEOs assess the current and future economy of New York as well as the current and future conditions within their own industry. An index score of 100 represents a breakeven point at which optimism and pessimism are balanced. Two years ago, the Upstate index stood at 94.4. Last year, the index fell to 68.8. Today the index is down again to 60.8, the SRI said.

Today's overall index, while only slightly down from last year, is now the lowest SRI has measured since the all-time low of 39.0 in 2008.

The current component of the index — measuring CEO assessment of current/recent past economic conditions — is 55.9, down 12 points from last year, but still 17 points above the current index in 2020 during the depth of the pandemic.

The future index — measuring CEO outlook on state and industry conditions over the coming year — stands at 65.7, just 3 points down from last year but the lowest since 2008.

The survey found 27 percent of all CEOs remain optimistic with an index score well above 100; 41 percent of CEOs have index scores of about 72, about 28 points below the breakeven; while 32 percent have extremely low index numbers



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# EMPLOYEE BENEFITS/HR/INSURANCE/GENERATIONS



Le Moyne College on Feb. 22 announced it would use \$250,000 in funding from Onondaga County to expand its ERIE21 program to the Onondaga Central and LaFayette Central school districts this spring. ERIE21 was initially started to benefit students in the Syracuse City School District. Shown in the photo (from left to right) are: Jeremy Belfield, superintendent of the LaFayette Central School District; Amanda Delaney, director of the ERIE21 program; Le Moyne College President Linda LeMura; Rob Price, superintendent of the Onondaga Central School District; and Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon.

PHOTO CREDIT: LE MOYNE WEBSITE

## Le Moyne extends ERIE21 program to school districts outside Syracuse

### Uses county grant for the expansion

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

SYRACUSE — Le Moyne College's ERIE21 technology-education program is now available to students in both the Onondaga Central and LaFayette Central school districts.

Onondaga County awarded Le Moyne \$250,000 to enable the expansion. ERIE21 stands for Educating for our Rising Innovation Economy in the 21st century. The program is designed to address the region's "twin problems of persistently" high poverty in Syracuse — particularly among Black/African-American and Latino residents — and the challenges employers face in attracting and retaining the skilled workers needed to fill current job openings in technology, per Le Moyne's Feb. 22 announcement.

Focusing on early intervention (middle school) and providing ongoing support to students in high school and college, ERIE21 is "strengthening the region's capacity to develop pathways that generate local talent to feed the growing demand for computational, software and engineering professionals," Le Moyne contends.

As the program is designed, Lock 1 introduces middle-school students to coding, robotics, engineering and quantitative reasoning through after-school and summer programs. Lock 2 provides high-school students with academic support and an emphasis on college and career readiness, empowering at-risk students to work toward new possibilities for their futures and careers.

"Since it was launched in 2018, ERIE21 has focused on providing transformative learning experiences for middle- and high-school students within the Syracuse City School District," Le Moyne College President Linda LeMura said in the

school's announcement. "Our long-term goal has been to bring those same experiences to students throughout Central New York. Thanks to the generosity of Onondaga County, this goal is now becoming a reality."

Students from the two school districts will begin work in the ERIE21 program starting this spring.

Over the past seven years, ERIE21 has "equipped and empowered" hundreds of Syracuse youth to explore career pathways in tech and innovation through a variety of activities and initiatives, Le Moyne said. They include after-school coding classes, monthly Tech Saturday events at Le Moyne, tours of local tech-centered businesses, residential summer programs and more.

The funding from Onondaga County will provide those same experiences to hundreds more young people, including students from the Onondaga Nation.

"With cutting edge companies like JMA Wireless, SAAB, Inficon, Lockheed

Martin and many others already calling Onondaga County home, it is imperative that we make strategic investments in our young people now to train them for these high-demand jobs," Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon said in Le Moyne's news release. "With Micron soon coming, we must be prepared to meet the moment and create the workforce necessary to fill these jobs. Thanks to our partner at Le Moyne College and their innovative ERIE21 program, students in the City of Syracuse — and now OCS and LaFayette — will be part of that critical effort."

Le Moyne's ERIE21 program has partnered with organizations across the region that include M&T Bank (NYSE: MTB), KeyBank (NYSE: KEY); JP Morgan Chase (NYSE: JPM), Empire State Development; City of Syracuse; Onondaga County; CenterStateCEO; MACNY, the Manufacturers Association; PEACE Inc.; and the Syracuse City School District, Le Moyne College said. ■



# Crouse Health, union team up on workforce development, training center

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

SYRACUSE — Crouse Health is now using a workforce development and training center, which it says is designed to provide educational and career-advancement resources and opportunities for the health system's 3,200 employees.

The center is located in 7 West Tower in the Crouse Health campus, according to its Feb. 2 announcement.

In partnership with the 1199SEIU Training and

Upgrading Fund (TUF), Crouse Health will staff the center with TUF representatives two days a week. They will provide union members with workshops, tutoring, and resources to help staff in expanding their knowledge base, prepare for classes leading to an advanced degree, or assist in gaining qualifications for job advancement within the organization.

"Our goal is to invest in our current workforce and attract and retain employees who are passionate about the Crouse culture and want to develop or build on



Crouse Health on Feb. 2 announced it has started a workforce development and training center, working in partnership with the 1199SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund. Those pictured include Dr. Seth Kronenberg (center of group), president and CEO of Crouse Health.

PHOTO CREDIT: CROUSE HEALTH

the skills and resources needed to advance within our organization," Dr. Seth Kronenberg, president and CEO of Crouse Health, said in the announcement.

He added that services provided through the training site will meet the education and staff-development needs of all Crouse employees, both union and non-

union.

"We want our employees to stay at Crouse for their entire career. This program will give them the tools and support to do that," Kronenberg said.

The opening of this training center is a "true testament" to the partnership between Crouse Hospital and 1199SEIU, Kevin

Lockhart, CNY area VP of 1199SEIU, said in the Crouse Health announcement.

"Jointly there has been a commitment to offer educational and career advancement opportunities to Crouse employees, which in turn will have a lasting impact on their everyday lives," he contended. ■

# Don't accept falling as part of aging

More than 1 in 4 older adults (28 percent) in the U.S. report falling each year, according to an Excellus BlueCross BlueShield review of the most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That translates to about 36 million falls each year, of which 36,000 result in death.

Many who survive and recover from a fall lose the ability to live independently on a short-term or long-term basis, and those who require medical treatment may incur substantial out-of-pocket costs. According to the CDC, falls among older adults result in \$50 billion in annual medical spending, including \$12 billion out-of-pocket.

Falls are not a normal part of aging and can be prevented. Daily exercise, avoiding certain medications that can affect your balance, and even making sure eyeglass lens prescriptions are up-to-date can help to prevent falls. I advise discussing these topics with your health-care provider. You should also check your home for obvious hazards, such as:

- Clutter
- Worn carpets
- Stairs with rickety railings
- Rooms with insufficient lighting
- Unstable chairs or tables
- Bathrooms lacking grab bars
- Uneven transitions between bare floors and carpets

A simple test can help identify individuals at risk for a fall. It's called the Timed Up and Go test, or TUG test, and anyone can do it at home. The TUG test requires a stopwatch or wristwatch with a second hand, a chair, and a friend to assist you. Wear regular footwear and use a walking aid, if needed.

## How to take the "TUG" test:

- Mark a line on the floor that is 10

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Insurance rates----What is really going on with these premiums and why they seem to be increasing!

This is a question we continuously get asked at CH Insurance. Clients with a good loss history, timely payments, excellent credit, and very good policies and procedures. All across the landscape consumers are feeling the pinch of their insurance carriers in both Commercial and Personal Insurance. There are many factors that are continuing to drive insurance rates up. Let's explore some of these by line of coverage.

**Auto** insurance rates have been continuing to rise over the last 5 or so years. Here are some of the reasons:

- For every \$1.00 the auto insurance takes in with premium, the carrier is paying out \$1.07 in claims nationally.
- Distracted driving still contributes to a high number of claims.
- The cost to repair a vehicle continues to increase for both labor and materials and is outpacing inflation.

**Business owners** are also experiencing rate increases. If you are a business owner with vehicles and property, much of the same items that are impacting personal auto and homeowners' rates are impacting your business as well. In addition, business owners are also being impacted by their general liability, group benefits, employment practices premiums going up.

- Litigation concerns. Lawsuits and verdicts continue to escalate.
- Medical Providers want more money.
- Product Liability concerns are increasing.

As an independent agent, CH Insurance has access to numerous insurance companies to help you analyze this maze. We will work hard to find the right insurance solutions for you, your business, or family. CH Insurance is in your corner... every day, every way!



Joe Convertino, Jr.  
President



feet away from the chair

- Sit in the chair
- When your assistant with the stopwatch says "go," stand up from the chair
  - Walk 10 feet to the line on the floor at your normal pace
  - Turn and walk back to the chair at your normal pace and sit down again

Your assistant should start timing on the word "go" and stop timing after you sit back down.

If you take 12 or more seconds to complete the TUG test, you may have a higher chance of falling and should seek a health-care provider's advice on actions you can take to reduce the risk.

Be honest with your health-care provider about issues with balance or concerns about taking a fall. Don't put your ability to live independently at risk, because falling doesn't have to be a part of aging.

View a video demonstration of the TUG Test online at: <https://youtu.be/iVXgT9OeZXk>. ■

*Kelly Berchou, M.D., is the medical director at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, a nonprofit health plan with 1.5 million upstate New York members. This article is drawn and edited from a recent news release the health insurer issued, featuring Dr. Berchou's advice.*

# AAA Western and Central New York hires director of insurance

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
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AAA Western and Central New York says it has hired Christopher Lawrence as its director of insurance.

Lawrence joins AAA after 19 years at Geico, the majority of which were spent in leadership roles, including most recently as director of operational strategy. He begins his new role "at a time of immense growth in the insurance division," AAA said in its recent announcement.

"I wanted to join a company that has a strong presence in the local community and has a family feel and a lot of growth opportunity to be a part of — AAA checked all those boxes," Lawrence said in the news release.

In his new role, Lawrence will focus on leading AAA insurance teams across Western and Central New York "with a focus on customer service."

"One of my priorities will be expanding and growing insurance operations to make sure all of our members and clients are aware of the services we provide and that they are properly covered with our array of insurance products," he added.

Lawrence has experience leading teams in service, sales, underwriting, and claims, AAA noted.

"We look forward to the leadership capabilities that Chris brings to the table," James Miller, senior VP of sales at AAA Western and Central New York, said in a statement. "Our insurance division is rapidly growing and reached \$50 million in policy premiums last year. We're excited to have Chris on the team at this pivotal time."

Lawrence, a Buffalo native, is a graduate of Medaille University and Niagara County Community College, AAA said. ■



Lawrence



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# NextGen Label Group CFO promoted to lead Van Alstine

Move follows pending retirement of long-time president

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

DeWITT — Van Alstine, a division of NextGen Label Group, will soon have a new president with the pending retirement of the individual who has long held that role.

Gary Riley, Sr., the current division president, will continue to serve as in the role until April 1 when Daniel Rosenbaum will assume the role of president.

Rosenbaum, a certified public accountant, currently serves as CFO for NextGen Label Group, per the Feb. 23 announcement from Van Alstine.

Rosenbaum will maintain a dual role of

president of the Van Alstine division and CFO of NextGen Label Group, the firm noted.

Van Alstine has offices at 27 Corporate Circle in DeWitt and at 18 New Courtland St. in Cohoes (near Albany), per its website.

“After over 44 years of dedicated service to the organization, Gary Riley, Sr. will retire, leaving behind a profound legacy of leadership, vision, and commitment,” Tom Sargent, president and CEO of NextGen Label Group, said in the company’s announcement. “Gary’s contributions have been instrumental in shaping the success of the Van Alstine division, and his departure marks the end of an era. Beyond his professional achievements, Gary has been a mentor, a confidant, and a source of inspiration to his team. His guidance, wisdom, and genuine concern for the well-being of every team member have left an impact

that will continue to resonate long after his departure.”

Sargent went on to say that NextGen Label Group believes in “nurturing talent” from within its organization, and this promotion is a “testament to our commitment to fostering leadership and expertise among our team members.”

“In welcoming Dan Rosenbaum as the new president of the Van Alstine division, we are confident in his ability to continue the division’s legacy of excellence,” Sargent added. “Dan’s strategic vision, financial acumen, and commitment to brand custodianship make him the ideal leader to guide Van Alstine into its next chapter.”

## About Van Alstine

The Van Alstine division is one of 3M’s (NYSE: MMM) distributor partners, supporting some of the region’s companies with packaging systems, equipment, ser-

vice, and related materials. It also provides label-application expertise in support of the label-printing division.

## About NextGen Label Group

NextGen Label Group, a “100% employee-owned company,” represents the merged assets of Syracuse Label, Macaran, and Van Alstine, per the announcement.

The Label Group divisions (Syracuse Label and Macaran) produce label and packaging products.

The divisions say they are experts in the spirits, craft beer, beverage, household, health, beauty, cannabis, industrial, and medical markets. Product offerings include pressure-sensitive labels, shrink sleeves, flexible packaging, RFID labels, and extended content and promotional labels. ■



Rosenbaum

# All six CNY sub-regions added jobs in the last year

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
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The six sub-regions that cover the 16-county Central New York area all added jobs in the last year, according to the latest state jobs report.

The Syracuse, Utica–Rome, Watertown–

Fort Drum, Binghamton, Ithaca, and Elmira areas generated job growth ranging from 1.5 percent to 6.2 percent between January 2023 and this past January. That’s according to the latest monthly employment report that the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) issued on March 7.

## January jobs data

The Syracuse region gained 6,700 jobs in the past year, an increase of 2.2 percent.

Elsewhere, the Utica–Rome metro area picked up 1,800 positions, up 1.5 percent; the Watertown–Fort Drum region added 1,500 jobs, growth of 3.9 percent; the

Binghamton area gained 2,000 jobs, a rise of 2.1 percent; the Ithaca region added 3,600 jobs, a jump of 6.2 percent; and the Elmira metro area gained 700 jobs, an increase of 2 percent.

New York state as a whole added more than 154,000 jobs, a gain of 1.6 percent, between January 2023 and this past January. The state economy also picked up 59,300 jobs, a rise of 0.6 percent, between December 2023 and January 2024, the NYSDOL said. ■



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# HUNT Insurance Agency appoints new president

BY JOURNAL STAFF  
news@cnybj.com

BUFFALO — HUNT Real Estate Corp. Chairman and CEO Peter F. Hunt in February announced the appointment of

David Weber as president of the HUNT Insurance Agency.

HUNT Insurance Agency, a core business of HUNT Real Estate, has been a provider of comprehensive insurance products and services since its estab-

lishment in 1989. Specializing in personal insurance, the agency also offers a wide range of coverage options, including homeowners, auto, dwelling, umbrella, and life insurance.

“David Weber brings a depth of ex-

perience in the insurance industry and as a business leader to our organization, specifically to our insurance agency as we continue to develop this vital element of a superior experience for our clients,”



Weber

SEE WEBER, PAGE 26 ▶

# NYDFS Issues Circular Letter on Use of AI in Insurance Industry

On Jan. 17, 2024, the New York State Department of Financial Services (NYDFS) issued a proposed circular letter addressing the use of artificial-intelligence systems (AIS) and external consumer data and information sources (ECDIS) by licensed insurers (proposed guidance).



MARC J. KRAWIEC  
Viewpoint

The proposed guidance follows the issuance of a model bulletin by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) in December 2023, concerning the use of AIS by insurers, and the adoption of regulations by the Colorado Commissioner of Insurance in November 2023 concerning the use of ECDIS, algorithms, and predictive models by life insurers. NYDFS encouraged interested parties to provide feedback on the proposed guidance through March 17, 2024.

In the proposed guidance, an artificial-intelligence system is defined as “any machine-based system designed to perform functions normally associated with human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning,

and self-improvement, that is used — in whole or in part — to supplement traditional medical, property, or casualty underwriting or pricing, as a proxy for traditional medical, property or casualty underwriting or pricing, or to establish ‘lifestyle indicators’ that may contribute to an underwriting or pricing assessment of an applicant for insurance coverage.” NYDFS defines ECDIS as “data or information used — in whole or in part — to supplement traditional medical, property or casualty underwriting or pricing, as a proxy for traditional medical, property or casualty underwriting or pricing, or to establish ‘lifestyle indicators’ that may contribute to an underwriting or pricing assessment of an applicant for insurance coverage.”

As indicated by the definitions, the proposed guidance applies only to the use of AIS and ECDIS in the underwriting and pricing operations of insurers, and it relies on existing statutory and regulatory schemes, including rules governing nondiscrimination, disclosure and unfair trade practices. However, the proposed guidance would also establish new obligations of insurers regarding how insurers develop, manage, and use these tools. The proposal would also impose new respon-

sibilities on insurers using AIS or ECDIS regarding governance, risk management, reporting, and management of third-party service providers.

While acknowledging the potential benefits of insurers’ use AIS and ECDIS, NYDFS expresses concerns about the accuracy of AIS and ECDIS, as well as risks of systemic biases and arbitrary or discriminatory outcomes that may result from the use of such tools. Consequently, the proposed circular would place burdens on insurers to test their AIS or ECDIS models, to demonstrate that they are reliable and to demonstrate that they do not use criteria that would constitute an unfair trade practice or discriminate unfairly against insureds or potential insureds. Insurers would be required to document the processes and reasoning behind methods and analysis for discrimination testing, and to continue to conduct testing on AIS and ECDIS on an ongoing basis. Insurers would be responsible for being able to explain how their AIS operates and to articulate the relationship between an ECDIS and other model variables.

The governance implications of the proposed guidance include requirements that insurers adopt written policies concerning

development and management of AIS and ECDIS, and that insurers maintain an inventory of all such systems. Insurers are encouraged to develop written standards for model development, and written standards, policies, procedures, and protocols for the acquisition or use of AIS or ECDIS developed by a third party. Insurers may be required to provide this documentation to NYDFS in connection with audits or regulatory reviews.

The proposed guidance is clear that insurers remain responsible for their use of AIS and ECDIS, even if the AIS or ECDIS is licensed from a third party, saying “an insurer may not rely solely on a vendor’s claim of non-discrimination or a proprietary third-party process to determine compliance with anti-discrimination laws.” As a result, insurers intending to use such tools may need to revisit and enhance their due diligence, disclosure, and contract-negotiation processes for suppliers of AIS or ECDIS. ■

Marc J. Krawiec is a senior counsel in the Buffalo office of Syracuse-based law firm Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC. Contact him at [mkrawiec@bsk.com](mailto:mkrawiec@bsk.com). This article is drawn and edited from the law firm’s website.

# Ask Rusty: Why Must I Pay into SS when I’m Collecting Benefits?

Dear Rusty: I am collecting full Social Security benefits at age 72 and also working full time. Why is the federal government still taking money from my paycheck? I have written to Social Security experts on this issue, and they tell me “It’s the law.” That is not a good answer for me. About \$4,400 was taken from my pay in 2023 for Social Security and, yes, I get a pittance of a COLA increase, but not equal to what I pay. No one has been able to fully explain the federal government’s thought process on taxing me for Social Security when I am receiving full Social Security benefits. Can you?

Signed: Working Senior

Dear Working Senior: Far be it from me

to try to explain the federal government’s thought process on anything, but I can explain why those already collecting Social Security (SS) benefits must continue to pay SS payroll taxes while working.

It actually goes back to 1935 and the panel commissioned by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) to create America’s Social Security program. Said panel determined how the program would be financed, Congress approved it, and FDR signed it. That methodology was essentially this:

Workers who earn (and their employers) must contribute to SS via payroll taxes to fund the program (we now know this as “FICA” for employees and “SECA” for the

self-employed). When the program first started, certain employees and their employers were required to each contribute 1 percent of the employee’s first \$3,000 of earnings. Obviously, those amounts have risen over the decades. And, for clarity, only certain workers originally participated in Social Security, which has also changed over the decades so that now nearly everyone who works must pay Social Security payroll taxes.

Starting in 1937 and still today, SS payroll taxes paid by those now working are used by the federal government to pay benefits to those who are currently receiving. Said another way, Social Security is a “pay as you go” program where income from those working (and their employer) is used to pay benefits to those receiving benefits. Payroll taxes collected aren’t put into a personal account for the worker; rather they are used to meet current SS payment obligations. Any excess money collected is invested in special-issue government bonds as reserves for future use (although current annual SS income is less than annual program costs — a topic for another day).

So, the financing method enacted in 1935 and started in 1937 still applies — those who work and earn (and their employers) must pay into the system to fund benefit payments to those who are now receiving — and that includes those workers who are already collecting their Social Security. FYI, there was a time when, if people worked after starting their SS benefits, they lost all of their benefits. Fortunately, that rule no longer exists, so those who are collecting SS benefits can now continue to get ben-

efits if they work, but they must also still pay into the program from their work earnings to help pay benefits to SS recipients.

I hope this provides some insight for why you must continue to contribute to Social Security even after you have started collecting your benefits. It is a result of how the program is financed — predominantly by workers through payroll taxes on their earnings (and to a lesser extent from interest on Trust Fund reserves and income tax on Social Security benefits). With very few exceptions, everyone who works helps pay benefits to those who are now receiving. ■

Russell Gloor is a national Social Security advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC). The 2.4-million-member AMAC says it is a senior advocacy organization. Send your questions to: [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org).

Author’s note: This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation’s staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). The NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity.



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Child care (of those using child care)	48%	39%	13%
Health care	44%	45%	8%

Siena College Poll: March 13, 2024

The percentage of New Yorkers spending more, the same, or less on monthly expenses than two years ago  
IMAGE CREDIT: SRI WEBSITE

# Siena survey finds 54 percent with retirement confidence

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
ereinhardt@cnybj.com

More than half (54 percent) of New Yorkers surveyed who have yet to retire are either very confident (21 percent) or somewhat confident (33 percent) that they will be able to retire and have enough money to maintain their quality of life throughout their non-working years.

At the same time, 42 percent are either not very confident (25 percent) or not at all confident (17 percent) about retirement.

Among surveyed New Yorkers who are retired, 69 percent are either very confident (29 percent) or somewhat confident (40 percent) that they will have enough money to maintain their quality of life in retirement, while 26 percent are either not very confident (15 percent) or not at all confident (11 percent).

The findings are part of a special survey focused on inflation, budgeting, and retirement planning that the Siena College Research Institute (SRI) released on March 13.

At the same time, the report indicates “overwhelming majorities” of New Yorkers say they are spending more today than they were two years ago on groceries, housing, and transportation.

By 79 percent to 14 percent — after considering both their income and expenses — respondents say that inflation has had a negative, not positive, impact on their finances, and 70 percent say that inflation is still a “big problem.”

Overall, when it comes to money, the survey found 33 percent of New Yorkers say that they are falling behind.

On the retirement-planning portion of the SRI survey, the research also found 37 percent of respondents have a traditional pension plan through an employer that provides a guaranteed monthly income, while 57 percent have a personal retirement account like a 401(k) or an IRA.

The survey also found 34 percent of New Yorkers have neither a traditional pension nor a personal retirement account. Meanwhile, 55 percent of those without retirement accounts are under the age of 45, one-third are between 45 and 64 years of age, and 10 percent are 65 years of age or older, the SRI noted.

“Despite inflation and its toll of higher monthly costs, a majority of New Yorkers remain optimistic about their future financial picture,” Don Levy, SRI director, said in the report. “While I’m a pollster and not a financial planner, these numbers tell me that more probably ought to have a written budget, and as soon as possible, start saving for retirement as optimism alone may not pay these increasing monthly bills.”

SRI researchers conducted the poll between Feb. 20 and March 5, 2024, by random telephone calls to 401 New York adults via landline and cell phones, and 400 responses drawn from a proprietary online panel of New Yorkers.

Respondent sampling via phone was initiated by asking for the youngest person in the household. The overall results have an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.8 percentage points, the SRI stated. ■

# Ronald McDonald House Charities of CNY names Egan to board of directors

BY JOURNAL STAFF  
news@cnybj.com

SYRACUSE — Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central New York recently announced it has appointed Matthew Egan, M.D., to its board of directors for 2024.

Dr. Egan is a board-certified pediatric cardiologist at Pediatric Cardiology Associates in Syracuse. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Cardiology, and a member of the American Society of



Egan

Echocardiography, the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

Egan joins 10 other members currently serving on the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central New York board.

The organization operates the CNY Ronald McDonald House — located at 1100 E. Genesee St. in Syracuse — 24 hours a day, year-round, at no cost for families whose children are hospitalized with serious illnesses or injuries. The CNY Ronald McDonald House says it offers a comfortable room and warm bed, home-cooked meals, and support and compassion. ■

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# Castner receives the DAISY Nurse Leader Award

BY JOURNAL STAFF  
news@cnybj.com

GENEVA — Amber Castner, registered nurse and surgical-services manager at UR Medicine Finger Lakes Health, was recently recognized by her employer with the DAISY Nurse Leader Award.

The DAISY Nurse Leader Award was created to shine a light on the managers and others who do not typically have direct patient care as part of their work, according to a UR Medicine Finger Lakes Health news release. The nurse leader's responsibilities include: providing a haven of safety for staff, both physically and emotionally; ensuring standards for quality patient care are main-

tained; ensuring nurses have access to the technology and equipment they need; and managing human and financial resources across staffing, supplies, and more.

Leaders are responsible for creating an environment where compassionate care by clinicians can thrive, the release stated. The people who nominate them for The DAISY Nurse Leader Award are typically their staff who describe the impact leaders have on their ability to provide quality, compassionate care.

Linda Zappia, RN, nominated Castner for the award. As part of her nomination letter, Zappia wrote, "Health care is constantly changing and a lot of the success of Surgical Services is overseen by Amber.

[She] thinks outside the box and comes up with a plan to keep our patients safe. Amber is kind and patient, always willing to help... a true leader."

Zappia concluded, "Amber is very patient and certainly is a staff advocate. [Her] clinical skills, her ability to formulate new plans to 'fix' the day to day operational problems that inevitably develop along with her ability/willingness to simply jump in to help when needed is wholeheartedly appreciated by the team. As a department we are very thankful to have Amber! It is an honor to work with, alongside, and for Amber."

The DAISY Awards recognize nurse leaders, like Castner, for creating an environment where attributes of trust, com-

passion, mutual respect, continued professional development, and ethical behavior are modeled and supported; for being accessible, available, and responsive to the needs of their team; for problem-solving and encouraging critical thinking; and more, per the release.



Castner

UR Medicine Finger Lakes Health is a multi-institutional health system that provides a full range of acute and long-term care health services to residents of the Finger Lakes region in upstate New York. The 623-bed health system includes Geneva General Hospital, Finger Lakes Surgery Center in Geneva, and Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital in Penn Yan, as well as a number of long-term care facilities, primary care practices, and specialty care practices.

## The Art of Recruitment: How to Hire & Hold Onto Great Staff

In a dynamic business landscape where talent is the currency of success, recruiting and retaining the right staff are crucial aspects of any organization's strategic planning. The art of recruitment goes beyond simply filling vacancies. It involves attracting, hiring, and retaining talented individuals who not only possess the necessary skills and qualifications, but also fit your company's culture and values. Let's dive into how you can master this art and build a robust team that drives your business forward.




ANTHONY LAPOLLA  
Viewpoint

### Understanding your company's needs and requirements

Kickstarting your recruitment journey requires a deep understanding of your company's unique needs and requirements. This means identifying the technical skills and qualifications needed, as well as the less-tangible attributes like problem-solving, leadership abilities, and communication skills. Equally important is assessing how a prospective employee aligns with your company's culture and values. So, don't just focus on ticking off boxes for skills and qualifications. Make sure to create a comprehensive checklist that also includes the soft skills and cultural fits necessary for success in your organization. By aligning this process with your company's values, you're well on your way to finding the right fit for your team.

### Enhancing your business's brand to attract talent

A strong, positive company brand can be a magnet for top-tier talent. It's about



**ASK THE EXPERT**

**Timekeeping Trap: Be Careful When "Rounding" an Employee's Work Time**

Michael L. Dodd, Esq.  
Ferrara Fiorenza PC


The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regulations do not require an employer to track and pay an employee for the exact number of minutes they actually work. As currently written, the regulations will permit employers to round up or down to the nearest 5, 6 or 15 minute intervals, whichever your company chooses. For example, if your company chooses to round an employee's work time on a 15-minute interval basis, it could not "round up" for an employee who is four minutes late. It could only do so, if the employee were more than 7.5 minutes late. However, this rounding practice is increasingly becoming a subject of FLSA litigation.

The specific FLSA regulation reads as follows, in pertinent part:

Presumably, this [rounding] arrangement averages out so that the employees are fully compensated for all the time they actually work. **For enforcement purposes this practice of computing working time will be accepted, provided that it is used in such a manner that it will not result, over a period of time, in failure to compensate the employees properly for all the time they have actually worked.** (29 CFR 785.48. Emphasis added.)

Plaintiffs' attorneys are using the section of the regulations bolded and underlined above as the basis for legal action against employers. If they are able show that over a period of time that the rounding practices always favor the employer, employees may be able to recover large amounts of money.

Accordingly, employers should consider reviewing their timekeeping practices and records to ensure that employees are being compensated for all hours worked. Employers may also want to consider eliminating the rounding practice all together. The technology currently exists to precisely keep track of employees' work time. Such precise records would eliminate the risk of FLSA rounding litigation completely. If your company does not possess this technology, you may want to consider rounding to the smallest increment of time possible. This can help minimize the risk of this costly litigation.



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more than just the quality of your products or services. Potential employees are drawn to a business that resonates with their values and principles. So, how do you enhance your company's brand? Promote your mission, culture, and values across multiple platforms like social media, your business website, and recruitment events. Let your current employees be your brand ambassadors. Their testimonials can powerfully communicate what it's like to work at your company. Remember, a compelling brand can draw in the talent you need to elevate your business to the next level.

### Utilizing diverse recruiting strategies

Don't limit your search for top talent to just one avenue. By embracing a variety of recruiting strategies, you can reach

out to a broader demographic of potential candidates. Use online job portals, attend professional networking events, harness the power of social media, organize campus recruitments, and partner with recruiting agencies. Don't overlook the potential of employee referrals. They often recommend high-quality candidates who are likely to mesh well with your company culture. Diversity in your recruitment strategies can increase your chances of discovering the ideal candidate who will help drive your company's success.

### Offering competitive compensation and benefits packages

Attracting and holding onto skilled employees requires more than a sizable paycheck. It's essential to offer a comprehensive compensation package that

includes competitive salaries, health-care benefits, flexible working options, and robust retirement plans. But don't stop there. Consider opportunities for professional growth, including training programs or continued education benefits. By broadening the scope of your compensation and benefits package, you not only entice top talent to your team, but also give them reasons to stay, fostering a long-term commitment.

### Promoting employee development and growth

Investing in your team's continuous professional advancement demonstrates your commitment to their future. This can be achieved by providing on-the-job training, establishing mentorship programs, or offering resources for continued education. A focus on career growth secures your team's loyalty and enhances their skills — ultimately contributing to your company's success. By fostering an environment that values and promotes growth, you're not just retaining talent, but also nurturing it.

### Fostering a positive work environment

A thriving work environment can be the linchpin in employee retention. This entails more than just a pleasant workspace; it's about cultivating an atmosphere that values open communication, teamwork, and mutual respect. Make a point of recognizing your team's accomplishments and providing feedback in a positive, constructive manner. This fosters a sense of belonging and encourages staff to perform at their best. In creating this nurturing climate, your employees will feel valued and motivated, and develop a deep-seated loyalty to your company.

### Regularly evaluating your recruitment and retention strategies

Don't let your recruitment and retention strategies gather dust. Regularly assess their effectiveness by measuring variables like staff-turnover rates, employee-satisfaction levels, and the caliber of candidates applying. This analysis will shine a light on whether your methods are still hitting the mark. In this ever-changing business landscape, yesterday's winning strategy might not yield the same results today. Stay relevant, stay effective. Remember, strategic refinement is not a sign of failure; it's a testament to your commitment to continuous improvement. ■

*Anthony LaPolla is the CEO of Empower Business Strategies and can be contacted at anthony@gowithempower.com.*



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**Nick Grimmer**  
The Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties



**Vance Marriner**  
The Central New York Business Journal

### EMCEE



**Laura Hand**  
Retired Anchor, CNYCentral

# 2024 SPONSOR MESSAGE

Central New York is a region respected for its resilience and admired for its generosity. When faced with challenges, we work collaboratively to develop solutions that uplift our communities. We get involved and give charitably to ensure our community's greatest needs are met.

With all the inspiring work done by area nonprofits, their workforces and the companies that support them, you need to make a special impact to be honored with one of the CNYBJ Nonprofit Awards — and this year's honorees have done exactly that.

They have acted boldly, swiftly and bravely to improve lives and provide community relief. They demonstrate for us that it's not our challenges that define us, but how we respond to those challenges.

At M&T Bank, everything we do is driven by our purpose to make a difference in people's lives. Our work to empower our customers and uplift our communities is fueled by our eagerness to help others. Every year, we invest over \$1 million locally to support about 100 nonprofits that create positive change by serving people in need and expanding access to opportunities.

We're proud to live in a community that celebrates service, and we're grateful for the impact of the 2024 Nonprofit Awards winners. Let's remain inspired by their stories as we continue our efforts to strengthen Central New York.

***Congratulations to this year's honorees!***

**Stephen Gorczynski**  
Central New York  
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# BOARD LEADERSHIP

## Joseph R. Maldonado, Jr., M.D.

Dr. Joseph R. Maldonado, Jr. serves as the board chair of the Empire State Medical, Scientific and Education Foundation, headquartered in Camillus. He is a retired urologist and CEO of Four County Management Co. serving as executive director of the Medical Societies of the Counties of Oneida, Herkimer, Chenango, Madison, Oswego, and Cayuga. Maldonado is a graduate of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and holds three graduate degrees from Oxford University. He is a past president of the NYS Urological Society and the Medical Society of the State of New York.

Dr. Maldonado has served on the board of the Empire State Medical, Scientific and Education Foundation since 2019. During that time, he has been instrumental as a key leader in strategically guiding



the organization through difficult challenges including succession planning, board/stakeholder interactions, transition from a paper to cloud-based record system, and investment planning. He has strategically supported the former chair and current executive director in modernizing the operations and governance of the foundation, as well as securing outside resources to ensure the stability of the organization for the next decade.

Dr. Maldonado's strengths at the board have focused on the use of relationship and consensus building to secure necessary changes for securing a sustainable future for the nonprofit organization. The board has unanimously recognized his abilities and accomplishments, having elected him board chair this year.

### Brief description of the nonprofit organization:

Founded in 1960, the Empire State Medical, Scientific and Educational Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation focused on protecting the wellbeing of New York state residents by providing quality medical-care reviews of health-care provider services, ensuring that the care delivered meets industry quality standards and quality utilization reviews verifying that appropriate utilization of medical resources has occurred and that reimbursement for those services meets national industry standards.

### What is one thing you want the community to know about this organization?

The work of the Empire State Medical, Scientific and Education Foundation is to be your watchdog, ensuring that medical care rendered to the residents of New York is appropriate and that health-care providers and insurers are being accurately compensated for the care they claim has been rendered.



### What are the keys to developing the next generation of nonprofit leaders?

The keys to developing the next generation of nonprofit leaders can be captured by the FIRM principles: Fiduciary responsibility (which includes stewardship), Integrity, Relationship building, and Mentoring.

# COLLABORATION AWARD

## The Hub Business Incubator, operated by Partnership for Community Development (PCD)

### PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (PCD)

The PCD is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to enhance sustainable economic opportunity and community vitality in the village and town of Hamilton and the surrounding areas. Specifically, we help existing businesses and farms thrive, attracting and supporting new community-



minded businesses and talent to our area. We assist in developing an attractive, inviting, and commercially viable downtown area, preserving and enhancing the small town, rural character of

our community, and staying authentic to who we are. We foster widespread civic involvement in community development initiatives and research, solicit, and administer grants and gifts to serve these purposes and leverage the community resources of our partner organizations.

### The HUB



The Hub is a New York State-certified small-business incubator located in Madison County, offering coworking space, small-business counseling and training, business-plan development, access to capital, assistance with grant writing, and networking to other organizations to ensure the success of your venture.

### Provide a brief description and outcome of this collaborative project?

The Rural Equity Group collaborated to work on three main initiatives. The initiatives included: *Meeting with Local Elected Officials*: Development of outreach materials and meeting with all town supervisors countywide; *The Madison County Small Business Summit*: held this past January at SUNY Morrisville, this event provided educational and business-advancement modules to over 100 local businesses and entrepreneurs; *The Entrepreneur Next Door Roadshow*: The group is in the process of presenting from all the local libraries in Madison County to local startup businesses. Presentations will include mentoring opportunities and conversations with local successful businesses.

### How has developing this collaborative partnership impacted the community?

This collaborative partnership has opened accessibility to local resources for local businesses through our regional partners. Many of our community members were unaware of the resources available to them and now they are becoming quite familiar with and taking advantage of a variety of services. This enables our local economy to flourish in this small, rural community.





# CORPORATE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## Raymour & Flanigan Furniture

Raymour & Flanigan is the largest furniture and mattress retailer in the Northeast and seventh largest nationwide. Since 1947, the family-owned business has grown to more than 145 locations, including full-line showrooms, outlet stores, clearance centers, distributions centers, and a robust e-commerce business. For more than 76 years, the company has been committed to creating an exceptional shopping experience led by a dedicated team of over 5,000 associates, advanced technology, and quality products. The company believes in supporting local communities and sustainability efforts. Each year, Raymour & Flanigan associates plan and organize community events that raise awareness and funds for local organizations.

### Raymour & Flanigan

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Raymour & Flanigan prides itself on cultivating a company culture that values the well-being and dignity of its associates. The culture is built on principles of trust, empathy, and open communication, creating an environment where associates feel valued and supported. The continued dedication to the company's mission — "Treat our people well and they will treat our customers well" — is the cornerstone of the organization.

#### How have your employees been involved with supporting the community?

Raymour & Flanigan values the importance of serving the communities we operate in by encouraging associates to partner with organizations and charities they are passionate about. When associates have the opportunity to contribute to causes that align with their values and interests, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to make a positive impact.

Our Community Outreach program was created to give back to the community as well as bring the community together. Each showroom can hold an event for an organization of their choice and work together to give back to the community. We are proud of our strong connection to many local and national charities, including the American Cancer Society, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, United Way, and Make - A - Wish. In Central New York, our associates support the work of United Way of Central New York, donate clothing items to Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, make sandwiches for homeless community with We Rise Above the Streets, and partner with Make-A-Wish to make dreams come true.

#### How has your community support impacted your organization's corporate culture?

One of our largest corporate partnerships is with Make-A-Wish Foundation and extends throughout our seven-state footprint. Raymour & Flanigan associates, customers, and volunteers together have granted more than 25 wishes since we launched our partnership in 2022.



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# EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

## Elizabeth Nolan

### HILLSIDE

Since joining Hillside in 2008, Elizabeth Nolan has been instrumental in leading the agency's growing footprint in Hillside's Central New York region. As chief operating officer since 2018, she has overseen operations for one of the state's



largest not-for-profit child-and-family service providers: Hillside's 1,800

employees support the needs of nearly 9,000 youth, adults and families in two states, including more than 3,000 in Onondaga County and the surrounding region.

Nolan's life and work include varied examples of her commitment to the power of individuals, nonprofits, and whole communities to enhance the public good. A native of Long

Island, she relocated to Central New York — and promptly fell in love with the Syracuse community — while pursuing professional roles that allowed her to put her skills and passion to work in support of underserved populations impacted by trauma, poverty, and structural inequity.

Since earning an undergraduate degree in social work from the University at Albany and a master's degree in social work from Adelphi University, she has held progressive leadership roles with such organizations as the Salvation Army of Syracuse and Liberty Resources, where she served as COO between 1994 and 2008.

### Describe significant projects you have been involved with at Hillside?

In the past year, Hillside has launched three new projects to address challenges impacting the youth and families of CNY. They include the Family Opportunity Center, which strengthens families and prevents involvement in the

child-welfare system; Healthy Families NY to foster strong bonds between parents and their newborns and young children; and Project Rise, which helps prevent youth gun violence by providing pro-social options for young people at risk of juvenile-justice involvement. Hillside is also a member of the NYS Coalition for Children's Behavioral Health, and a founding member of the Children's Health Home of Upstate NY.

### What are you best known for?

I am known for my passion for work and my commitment to excellence. I am driven by Hillside's mission and vision which is to partner with youth and families who have experienced trauma so that they can thrive in home and community. I truly believe that it is my role to advocate and collaborate with internal and external leaders to ensure that staff have the resources they need so that they can have the tremendous positive impact that they have in partnership with individuals, families, and communities.



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# IMPACT AWARD

## Jan Maloff

### CNY FAMILY BICYCLE GIVEAWAY FOUNDATION

Jan Maloff is the director of the DeWitt Memorial Funeral Home and founder of the CNY Family Bicycle Giveaway Foundation that has been giving bicycles to the Syracuse community for 28 years. The focus of the program is to collect used bikes in any condition, refurbish and clean these bikes with a team of volunteer bike mechanics, and distribute the bikes to families. For many children this is their first bike. What began with a 125-bicycle giveaway has become an annual 1,500 to 2,000 bicycle. What began as distributing bikes to disadvantaged families in the Central New York urban communities has expanded to include refugees and local law enforcement. This program works closely with refugee-resettlement organizations to provide bikes to our newest community members. Many refugees come from countries where bicycles were the primary mode of transportation for daily activities like getting to work, to schools, and to shops. They cannot afford to purchase bicycles, let alone buy a vehicle. This program also partners with local law enforcement by giving

them bikes to distribute as a goodwill gesture to help foster positive relationships in the neighborhoods they serve. Since its inception, this organization has given away more than 50,000 bicycles in underserved Central New York communities.

#### What do you want the community to know about your organization?

My inspiration to start this foundation is the result of recalling the thrill of owning a bike as a kid. When I would ride my bike to school, I would pass by the Elmcrest Children's Center and about 75 of these children would come to school with me. I have memories of staying after school sharing my bicycle with those who did not have a bike. I told myself that if I ever became rich, I would buy every kid a new bike. I never became rich enough to do that, but I did figure out a way to give kids a used bike in good condition by starting this foundation.

#### What do you enjoy outside of volunteering?

I truly find great pleasure in helping people and, somewhat ironically, that was part of the inspiration to become a funeral director. What better way to help a family at their worst time than by guiding them through the grieving process?



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**FAMILY BUSINESS AWARDS OF CNY**

**FAMILY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR**

**CH INSURANCE**  
JOE CONVERTINO, SR., CEO

**Q: What does it mean to your company to win the Family Business of the Year Award?**

It's an incredible honor. Being a part of a family business can present its own unique challenges as well as opportunities. We've been fortunate, while also being prepared and diligent to maintain a balance that's necessary in our leadership and we're always striving to improve. We have tremendous talent on the CH Team and we work hard to ensure everyone feels like they're a part of something bigger. The vision and legacy that CH was founded upon nearly two decades ago holds true today and will for as long as this leadership is in place.

**Q: What are the guiding principles that you base your success on?**

- Learning: We're always learning and always growing.
- Staying true to who we are: We strive to combine the best of our traditions with the innovation necessary in the insurance industry and the business world to continue to thrive in the coming years.
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# Making a DIFFERENCE



We congratulate **Elizabeth Nolan**, Hillside Chief Operating Officer, for her **Executive of the Year** recognition! Her leadership and dedication to Hillside's mission makes an extraordinary impact in the communities of Central New York and beyond.



## SUPPORT OUR MISSION

Every day, Hillside's integrated programs and services bring support and hope to thousands of youth, adults and families. But we don't do it alone. Contact us today to learn more about how you can be a part of helping those in need forge new pathways to the stronger futures they deserve.



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# OUTSTANDING FUNDRAISING EVENT

## “There’s No Place Like Home

— FRANCIS HOUSE

Francis House is a home and a supportive extended family to people with terminal illnesses — those who are at the end of their life journey. Our family of caregivers, staff, and volunteers surround each resident with unconditional love, guided by core values of compassion, respect, and dignity. Francis House, founded in Franciscan values, welcomes all residents regardless of faith, ethnicity, or ability to pay for their care. Francis House is comprised of two homes at 108 and 114 Michaels Ave on the north side of Syracuse. More than 4,000 residents have been cared for since Francis House opened in 1991.



compassion, acceptance, respect, and dignity. Francis House, founded in Franciscan

families, donors, supporters, caregivers, and the volunteers who help to ensure the mission of Francis House continues. In 2023, more than 2,000 people enjoyed the evening. As a community care home, Francis House does not receive any federal, state, county funding or insurance reimbursement. We rely solely on our community’s generosity to operate, and this event is our largest fundraiser. More than 70 percent of our residents receive assistance with the cost of their care and no one is ever turned away due to their inability to pay. The 2023 event raised \$320,000 for our mission.

### How do you envision the community being involved in future fundraisers?

“There’s No Place Like Home” requires more than 250 volunteers on the evening of the event. The event is planned by a group of 30 volunteers who secure sponsors, advertisers, and donors to support it. The 2023 event had 90 sponsors and 500 prizes donated by local and regional businesses. This event is a night for the community to come together and celebrate the Francis House community and all the individuals who are a part of it. For more information or to learn how to get involved, visit our website at [www.franchishouse.org](http://www.franchishouse.org)

### Brief description of this fundraising project:

“There’s No Place Like Home” offers an experience like no other. Guests purchase keys and try their luck at opening the doors of 10 prize houses; browse and bid on hundreds of silent auction items; take a chance on a raffle with a cash prize; and participate in a Diamond Raffle with a prize donated by Cazenovia Jewelry. Guests also enjoy six gourmet-food stations, a dessert station, and an open bar.

### How has this event benefited the CNY community and/or the nonprofit organization affiliated with the fundraiser?

“There’s No Place Like Home” is an event that brings together the entire Central New York community, including past residents’



# RISING STAR AWARD

## Alayah Green

MAKE-A-WISH CENTRAL NEW YORK

Make-A-Wish Central New York is an amazing local nonprofit organization. The people who work there are life-



changers who work tirelessly to grant

wishes to critically ill children. These wishes bring joy and happiness to children and families facing difficult situations.

### Why did you first get involved with Make-A-Wish Central New York? How long have you been involved?

I was diagnosed with Pre-B Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) on Nov. 28, 2016 — just two months before my 3rd birthday. A friend of my mom’s referred me to Make-A-Wish Central New York and in August

2017, it granted me the most magical wish to meet the Princesses in Disney World. When we came back, I stayed involved with the organization by becoming a Wish Kid Ambassador. It did not take long for me to decide I want to be a Wish Grantor when I get older and so I have stayed close with them and love visiting, volunteering, and fundraising for Make-A-Wish Central New York.

### What do you want the community to know about your project and how can someone get involved?

I want the community to know how important it is to support wishes; they can change the life of a critically ill child and their families; they can change how you view your life circumstances and bring joy and happiness in difficult times. I started raising money for Make-A-Wish Central New York when it introduced the “Wish Heroes fundraising campaign.” When deciding on what

my campaign should be, it made sense to connect the fundraiser back to my wish personally; so, I chose to do a carousel rideathon. When you go on a Disney World wish, you stay at Give Kids the World, and they have the most magical carousel there that I rode multiple times every day; it was my favorite part of my wish. By creating the Carousel Rideathon, I am able to show the community how easy it is to make a difference. There are a few ways to get involved. Someone can donate to my fundraising page directly. They can come to Destiny USA during my Carousel Rideathon (April 5-7 this year) and ride on the carousel with me. The mall donates 100 percent of ride admissions to my fundraiser. If someone doesn’t want to ride the carousel but finds themselves at the mall that weekend, they can donate at the event right at the Make-A-Wish Central New York table.



### What are some of your favorite activities outside of volunteering?

Some of my favorite activities are dancing, singing, writing songs, playing violin, Coloring Mandala art, reading, and playing outside with my brother and our friends.





# VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

## Jackie Flint

### ERIN'S ANGELS OF CNY

Jackie Flint has served on the board of Erin's Angels since the program's inception in 2017. She spent most of that time helping the program founder promote the program and volunteering, leading to the development of fundraising chair, which Flint held for the last two years. Jackie has managed



several large fundraising events throughout the year, mobilizing the community and volunteers to make them successful. She currently serves as board VP, where her focus has been

bringing more stability to the program by participating in nonprofit lifecycle assessments and working with the team to execute strategic initiatives because of those findings.

Food insecurity has touched Jackie's life both as a child who experienced lean times growing up as well as the precious time she spent with Erin Maxwell. Erin's Angels means a lot to Jackie personally, being a part of breaking the cycle of poverty and food insecurity for the little people in our community.

Flint has worked for The Hartford Insurance Group for 35 years, most recently as assistant director of product management, implementing new state-

mandated Paid Family and Medical Leave programs.

#### Why did you first get involved with Erin's Angels of CNY?

I became involved with Erin's Angels after our founder, Sheila Dion approached me and asked me to join the organization as a board member. She knew I had known our namesake Erin Maxwell and was heavily involved in advocating for justice. She felt this was a good fit for both of us and she was not wrong.

#### How has your involvement impacted the community?

Erin's Angels is currently serving 124 students in the Phoenix Central School District. Our outreach programs are impacting another 269 students in both the West Genessee and Hannibal school districts. The development of the Feed our Future scholarship awards four Oswego County high-school students \$500 scholarships for college or trade school. We also created an endowment to help fund the program in perpetuity.

#### How has working with nonprofits impacted your career?

My involvement with Erin's Angels has given me an opportunity to build and refine my networking skills, cultivating new relationships and advocating for those less fortunate. The experience I have gained over the years in my professional career, particularly with project management, has helped me the most in positively impacting the Erin's Angels program. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be a part of something so meaningful to our community.



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# HOTELS

## Ranked by Number of Rooms

Rank	Name Address Phone/Website	Toll-Free Reservation Number	Rooms Suites	Guest Amenities	General Manager or Key Executives	Year Estab.
1.	<b>Turning Stone Resort Casino</b> 5218 Patrick Road Verona, NY 13478 (315) 361-7711/turningstone.com	(800) 771-7711	790 161	complimentary high-speed internet, cable TV, business center, in-room safes, Keurig coffee makers, minibars, bathrobes, turndown service	Ray Halbritter, Oneida Nation Enterprises CEO	1993
2.	<b>Marriott Syracuse Downtown</b> 100 E. Onondaga St. Syracuse, NY 13202 (315) 474-2424/ marriottsyracusedowntown.com	844-STAY-SYR	315 16	suites with separate living room, accessible guest rooms, 49" screen LCD HDTVs, complimentary WiFi, wired and wireless access in guest rooms, suites, and meeting rooms, business center, fitness center, concierge level, local shuttle service, pet friendly	Melissa Oliver, General Manager	1924
3.	<b>Crowne Plaza Hotel &amp; Conference Center</b> 701 E. Genesee St. Syracuse, NY 13210 (315) 479-7000/cpsyracuse.com	(866) 305-4134	277 3	high-speed internet, room service, business center, shuttle to airport and Destiny USA, conference center, covered parking	Jenna Godlewski, General Manager	1969
4.	<b>DoubleTree by Hilton Syracuse</b> 6301 State Route 298 E. East Syracuse, NY 13057 (315) 432-0200/syracuse.doubletree.com	1-800-HILTONS	250 2	complimentary parking, business center, shuttle service, high-speed Internet, indoor pool, video conferencing, ATM, fitness center, Seasons Tavern & Bar, MADE Market - featuring a variety of snacks, salads, sandwiches and beverages open 24 hour	Robert Benetti, General Manager	1977
5.	<b>Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel &amp; Conference Center</b> 801 University Ave. Syracuse, NY 13210 (315) 475-3000/sheratonsyracuse.com	(800) 395-2105	235 23	fitness center, indoor pool, sauna, full staging and A/V equipment	Stephanie Gould, Director of Sales & Marketing	1985
6.	<b>Holiday Inn Binghamton Downtown</b> 2-8 Hawley St. Binghamton, NY 13901 (607) 722-1212/ holidayinnbinghamton.com	(888) HOLIDAY	225 25	marketplace, business center, high-speed internet, fitness facilities, valet laundry service, room service, indoor pool, banquet space	Abby Renfro, Catering/Sales Manager	1968
7.	<b>Embassy Suites Syracuse</b> 6646 Old Collamer Road S. East Syracuse, NY 13057 (315) 446-3200/syracuse.embassysuites.com	(800) EMBASSY	214 214	business center, 42" flat-screen HD TVs, desk, wet bar, refrigerator, microwave, coffeemakers, complimentary full cooked-to-order breakfast	Christine Penrose, General Manager	1990
8.	<b>Embassy Suites by Hilton Syracuse-Destiny USA</b> 311 Hiawatha Blvd. W. Syracuse, NY 13204 (315) 303-1650/ syracusedestinyusa.embassysuitesbyhilton.com	(800) EMBASSY	209 209	indoor heated pool, fitness center, on-site restaurant, 24-hour convenience shop, 24-hour business center, 10,000 square feet of meeting and event space	Justin Chapman, General Manager	2017
9.	<b>DoubleTree by Hilton Binghamton</b> 225 Water St. Binghamton, NY 13901 (607) 722-7575/inghamton.doubletree.com	(800) 723-7676	207 9	wireless, high-speed internet access, on-site athletic club with salt water indoor pool, room service, complimentary parking, airport shuttle	Michael Pemberton, General Manager	1987
10.	<b>del Lago Resort &amp; Casino</b> 1133 State Route 414 Waterloo, NY 13165 (315) 946-1777/dellagoresort.com	855-335-5246	205 -	casino, seven restaurants, full-service spa, free WiFi in public areas, free self parking, nightclub, 4 bars/lounges, health club	Lance Young, EVP & General Manager	2017
11.	<b>Hotel Ithaca</b> 222 S. Cayuga St. Ithaca, NY 14850 (607) 288-2096/thehoteliithaca.com	-	170 12	free parking, free Wi-Fi, exercise room, indoor heated pool, business center, onsite restaurant	Greg Conrad, General Manager	-
12.	<b>Holiday Inn Auburn-Finger Lakes Region</b> 75 North St. Auburn, NY 13021 (315) 253-4531/ihg.com	(888) HOLIDAY	165 2	mini-fridge in all guestrooms, free Wi-Fi, new business center, exercise room, and guest washer & dryer	Sonny Karimi, General Manager	1980
13.	<b>Delta Hotels by Marriott Utica</b> 200 Genesee St. Utica, NY 13502 (315) 797-8010/https://marriott.com/hotels/travel/ucade-delta-hotels-utica/	(888) 236-2427	162 3	business center, complimentary wireless internet	Lee M. Arthur, General Manager	1980
14.	<b>Tioga Downs Gaming, Racing, and Entertainment</b> 2384 W. River Road Nichols, NY 13812 (607) 699-3900/tiogadowns.com	(888) 946-8464	160 -	casino, live entertainment, dining, harness racing, heated saltwater pool, arcade, game area	Charlie Otto, President & GM, Tioga Downs & Vernon Downs	2006
15.	<b>Collegian Hotel &amp; Suites, Trademark Collection by Wyndham</b> 1060 E. Genesee St. Syracuse, NY 13210 (315) 476-4212/wyndhamhotels.com	-	159 80	fitness center, complimentary Wi-Fi, complimentary shuttle	Rob Marino, Director of Sales	2020
16.	<b>The Statler Hotel at Cornell University</b> 130 Statler Drive Ithaca, NY 14853 (607) 254-2500/statlerhotel.cornell.edu	(800) 541-2501	153 15	complimentary internet	Arthur Keith, General Manager	1989
17.	<b>Hope Lake Lodge at Greek Peak Mountain Resort</b> 2177 Clute Road Cortland, NY 13045 (800) 955-2754/greekpeak.net	(800) 955-2754	151 106	full suites with kitchen, fireplace, flat screen TVs & DVD players; traditional hotel-style room has bedroom & bath; restaurants, indoor water park, resort spa, fitness center	Wes Kryger, President Niki Pittsley, Revenue/ Reservations/Front Desk Manager	1958
18.	<b>Vernon Downs Casino and Hotel</b> 4229 Stuhman Road Vernon, NY 13476 (315) 829-6800/vernondowns.com	(877) 888-3766	150 30	business center, wireless internet, boardroom and meeting facilities, continental breakfast	Charlie Otto, President & GM, Tioga Downs & Vernon Downs	1953
19.	<b>41 Lakefront Hotel</b> 41 Lakefront Drive Geneva, NY 14456 (315) 789-0400/41lakefront.com	(800) 990-0907	144 3	business center, coffeemakers, hairdryers, data port, voicemail, fitness center, high-speed internet, ATM	Krista Johns, Director of Sales & Marketing	1997
20.	<b>Holiday Inn &amp; Suites - Syracuse/Airport - Liverpool</b> 400 7th North St. Liverpool, NY 13088 (315) 451-1511/mwsyracuse.com	(866) 318-9937	137 5	complimentary shuttle service, wireless high-speed internet, indoor pool & hot tub, state-of-the-art fitness center and onsite restaurant and cocktail lounge in one convenient location	Chelsea Presby, General Manager	2006
21.	<b>Hilton Garden Inn Watertown/Thousand Islands</b> 1290 Arsenal St., Suite 8 Watertown, NY 13601 (315) 788-1234 /watertown.hgi.com	-	136 15	fitness room, swimming pool, hot tub, whirlpool suites, business center, full-service restaurant serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily, room service available during evening hours, lounge	Jody Pettit, General Manager	2011
22.	<b>Comfort Inn &amp; Suites Watertown-1000 Islands</b> 110 Commerce Park Drive Watertown, NY 13601 (315) 782-2700/choicehotels.com	(877) 424-6423	135 20	complimentary hot breakfast, comp. local shuttle, free Wi-Fi, business center, heated indoor pool, 24-hour fitness center	Aimee Merchant, General Manager	1987
23.	<b>Aloft Syracuse Inner Harbor</b> 310 W. Kirkpatrick St. Syracuse, NY 13204 (315) 422-1700/aloftsyracuseinnerharbor.com	1-888-236-2427	134 0	24-hour fitness center, bar, indoor pool, billiards table, free parking, pet-friendly	Julie Jones, Director of Sales	2016
24.	<b>Riveredge Resort Hotel</b> 17 Holland Street Alexandria Bay, NY 13607 (315) 482-9917/riveredge.com	-	128 0	in-room coffee maker, hair dryer, iron and iron board, complimentary WiFi	Justin Mann, General Manager	1989
25.	<b>Bonnie Castle Resort and Marina</b> 31 Holland St. Alexandria Bay, NY 13607 (315) 482-4511/bonniecastle.com	(800) 955-4511	128 62	indoor & outdoor pool & jacuzzi, fitness room, game room, multiple restaurants & bars, full-service marina	Eduardo Brown, General Manager	1984
26.	<b>Hampton Inn &amp; Suites Syracuse North Airport Area</b> 1305 Buckley Road North Syracuse, NY 13212 315-457-9900/ syracusenorthairportarea.hamptonbyhilton.com	1-800 Hampton	124 36	complimentary hot breakfast, wired & wireless internet, fitness center, business center	Marc Emmi, General Manager	2017

# THE LIST

Research by Vance Marriner  
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(315) 579-3911  
Twitter: @cnybjresearch

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## ABOUT THE LIST

Information was provided by representatives of listed organizations and their websites. Other groups may have been eligible but did not respond to our requests for information. *The Business Journal* strives to print accurate information; it is not possible to independently verify all data submitted. We reserve the right to edit entries or delete categories for space considerations.

Central New York includes Broome, Cayuga, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, St. Lawrence, Seneca, Tioga, and Tompkins counties.

## NEED A COPY OF A LIST?

Electronic versions of all our lists, with additional fields of information, are available for purchase at our website: [cnybj.com/Lists-Research](http://cnybj.com/Lists-Research)

## WANT TO BE ON THE LIST?

If your company would like to be considered for next year's list, or another list, please email: [vmarriner@cnybj.com](mailto:vmarriner@cnybj.com)



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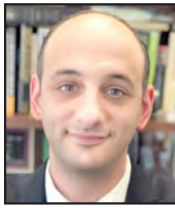
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# Inflation is still high as Fed weighs interest-rate cuts

Consumer inflation ticked up 0.4 percent in February to an annual rate of 3.2 percent amid a jump in oil, gasoline, natural gas, transportation, and shelter, according to the latest data by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**ROBERT ROMANO**  
*Opinion*

Gasoline was up 3.8 percent. Fuel oil rose 1.1 percent. Natural gas was up 2.3 percent. Used cars and trucks ticked up 0.5 percent. Apparel was up 0.6 percent. Shelter edged up 0.4 percent. And transportation services increased 1.4 percent.

Although the rate of inflation has indeed slowed down from its 9.1 percent annual peak in June 2022 to its current rate of 3.2 percent, since January 2021 when President Joe Biden took office, overall consumer prices are up almost 18.5 percent.

For comparison, from January 2017 through February 2020, prior to COVID, at that point consumer prices had increased 6.4 percent.

Meaning, what has already been experienced — and is still being felt — is

triple what the American people were accustomed to prior to COVID and its resulting \$7 trillion printing, borrowing, and spending binge by the Federal Reserve and Congress.

In the meantime, the Fed has been holding rates firm at 5.25 percent to 5.5 percent. But in its economic projections released in December 2023, the central bank appears to be anticipating rate cuts to begin sometime this year — which is usually what happens when the economic cycle is ending and unemployment begins to rise — projecting the Federal Funds Rate to drop to 4.6 percent in 2024.

But that might change with the latest reading from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. On March 6, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell told Congress that the central bank wants to be certain inflation is headed back to its “normal” 2 percent a year bearing. He said, “In considering any adjustments to the target range for the policy rate, we will carefully assess the incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks... The Committee does not expect that it will be appropriate to reduce the target range until it has gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2 percent.”

This could indicate the Fed wants to get inflation down as far as possible before making any moves, and although the unemployment rate is off its historic low of 3.4 percent in April 2023 to its current rate of 3.9 percent in February, the Board of Governors is not panicking. As unemployment moves up, that is usually when the Fed will begin cutting rates as the cycle ends.

The fear could be that once the economic slowdown or recession is realized, unemployment will temporarily jump up, the Fed will cut rates and then robust inflation could be restored very quickly. For years, Biden has rejected there being any necessary tradeoffs between inflation and unemployment, but as the Fed keeps rates higher than the rate of consumer inflation and 898,000 jobs have been lost out of the household survey since November 2023 that hypothesis will soon be tested. ■

*Robert Romano is the VP of public policy at Americans for Limited Government Foundation, the research arm of Americans for Limited Government, a libertarian political advocacy group. The organization conducts policy research and publishes reports with the goal of reducing the size of the government.*

# Immigrants drive U.S. economy

The American economy is thriving, and immigration should get some of the credit. That's the message from experts who highlight the critical role that immigrants are playing in the workforce.

**LEE HAMILTON**  
*Opinion*

This may seem surprising when immigration is under attack and chaos at the border is a staple of political rhetoric. But immigrants are filling essential jobs — in childcare, health care, food service, and agriculture, as well as in science, technology, and entrepreneurship — at a time when employers are struggling to find workers.

About half the recent growth in the labor market came from foreign-born workers, according to an Economic Policy Institute analysis. A recent report by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that growth in the labor force, largely from immigration, will add \$7 trillion to America's GDP in the next decade. More people working means more people paying taxes, which reduces the federal deficit.

Of course, this doesn't mean our immigration policies are working the way they should. They haven't been seriously updated since 1986. We need an immigration system that advances our national interest and reflects our values, and we don't have that. Our current system prioritizes family unification, which is important; but it hasn't kept pace with changes in technology and the economy.

Obviously, many Americans are concerned about immigration. A recent Gallup survey found 28 percent of respondents named immigration as the top problem facing our nation, more than cited infla-

tion or any other issue. And it's not just Republicans who worry. Liberal cities like New York, Chicago, and Denver have been overwhelmed by migrants bused from Texas.

But some fears are overblown. Research finds that immigrants don't take jobs from native-born Americans or drive down wages, at least in times of robust employment. Neither do they rely excessively on public assistance or commit more crimes. The vast majority play by the rules and contribute to society. The Pew Research Center estimates that just 22 percent of foreign-born workers are undocumented [in the country illegally].

America is a nation of immigrants, but immigration has often been controversial. An anti-immigrant backlash 100 years ago produced legislation to bar most migrants not from Northern and Western Europe. It wasn't until the 1960s that a point-based system replaced national-origin quotas.

Today, immigrants account for 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, a modern-day high and about the same percentage as a century ago. The share of foreign-born workers in the labor force is higher, largely because immigrants are likely to be of working age. That's important because the native-born population of working age isn't growing. The Baby Boom generation has reached retirement, straining programs like Medicare and Social Security. As Brookings Institution analyst William H. Frey writes, “immigration levels are crucial in leading to national growth as opposed to decline, and countering what would otherwise be extreme aging.”

A well-designed immigration system could maximize the benefits of immigration while reducing border issues and other concerns. Unfortunately, getting agreement on immigration is extremely difficult. We saw

**“A well-designed immigration system could maximize the benefits of immigration while reducing border issues and other concerns.”**

this recently when the Senate reached a bipartisan deal to pair border restrictions and funding with aid to Ukraine and Israel, only to see the House reject the plan.

Almost 20 years ago, former Sen. Spencer Abraham (R-MI) and I chaired a task force to study America's immigration policies. We recommended a simplified and streamlined system with consistent federal oversight, updated technology, improved border security, protection of human rights, and a path to legal status for unauthorized immigrants [those who entered the U.S. illegally]. These ideas shouldn't be controversial, and they are as worthwhile today as when they were written.

It may be too much to expect Congress to pass immigration reform in an election year, when politicians are eager to exploit the issue. But we can't keep kicking solutions down the road. Immigration is too important to the economy and to our identity as a nation. ■

*Lee Hamilton, 92, is a senior advisor for the Indiana University (IU) Center on Representative Government, distinguished scholar at the IU Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies, and professor of practice at the IU O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Hamilton, a Democrat, was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years (1965-1999), representing a district in south-central Indiana.*



# BUSINESS CALENDAR

Email us at [movers@cnybj.com](mailto:movers@cnybj.com)

## MARCH 26

■ **"Women Rising: Motivate. Connect. Empower."** event from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. at Everson Museum of Art, 401 Harrison St., Syracuse. Join CenterState CEO for an extraordinary gathering celebrating women's strength, resilience, and ingenuity. This half-day event is filled with enriching workshops and a lineup

of empowering speakers who have overcome obstacles and achieved remarkable success in their careers. Cost is \$40 per person. For more information and to register, visit: <https://centerstateceo.com/events/3/2024/women-rising-motivate-connect-empower>

## APRIL 17

■ **47th Annual Crystal Ball and Sales &**

**Marketing Executive (SME) Awards Banquet** from 6-9 p.m. at the Marriott Downtown Syracuse, Grand Ballroom, 100 E. Onondaga St., Syracuse. Join the Central New York Sales & Marketing Executives (CNY SME) in honoring this year's Crystal Ball recipient — Pierre Morrisseau, CEO of OneGroup — and see local companies honor their best and brightest sales/marketing professionals. Enjoy networking with the area's premier businesspeople, a silent auction, drinks, a sit-down dinner, and more. Tickets cost \$105 for CNY SME members and \$125 for non-members. For more information and to register, visit: [https://cnysme.org/events/?mc\\_cid=43e84907f6&mc\\_eid=bb073a1fde#event/2024/4/17/crystal-ball](https://cnysme.org/events/?mc_cid=43e84907f6&mc_eid=bb073a1fde#event/2024/4/17/crystal-ball)

## APRIL 24

■ **CNY ATD Coffee Chat** from 8:30-9:30 a.m. at Panera, 3401 West Genesee St. in Fairmount. The Central New York (CNY) Chapter of the Association of Talent Development (ATD) hosts this informal meet-up to socialize, share stories/experiences, discuss issues, explore challenges, and learn from each other. Complimentary activity. For more information and to register, visit: [https://cnyatd.org/coffee\\_chat](https://cnyatd.org/coffee_chat)

## WEBER:

*Continued from page 10*

Peter Hunt said in a news release, announcing the promotion.

Weber joined HUNT in 2019 as VP after 30 years of experience in the insurance

industry.

A graduate of the University of Vermont with a degree in political science, Weber began his business career as an independent producer with Lawley Insurance. He later served as VP of insurance at financial institutions and member and affinity group organizations.

In his new role as HUNT Insurance Agency president, Weber will be responsible for the execution of the business plan, including the continued development of client relationships as part of the HUNT integrated real estate and homeowner-ship services organization, the release stated.

With representation from more than 15 insurance carriers, HUNT says it can serve clients across more than 15 states. HUNT Insurance Agency has more than 40 branches across the U.S., including about a dozen offices in the 16-county Central New York region, according to its website.

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# PEOPLE ON THE MOVE NEWS

## CONSULTING SERVICES

**BRUCE A. BRODSKY** has joined Empower Business Strategies as a grant consultant. Empower Business Strategies is a full-service organizational-development consulting firm specializing in human resources, marketing, administrative support, and now grant writing. Brodsky's expertise will provide professional grants management and support for organizations seeking funding from federal and state-government agencies, corporate and private foundations, and other grant-making funders. He will help clients become grant-ready through grant writing, reviewing, and providing feedback on grant proposals along with budget research and development. Brodsky comes to Empower with half-a-century experience in helping organizations with grant-program development and implementation. Overall, Brodsky's career has spanned across areas of nonprofit management, human service administration, leadership, and information technology for community-based service providers. He has been a facilitator for organizational strategic planning, is a public speaker on grant preparation, and for over a decade, a college instructor in grant writing.



Brodsky

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

**COLIN NARDELLA** has been named a financial advisor at Pinnacle Investments, LLC as he teams up with his father, Mark Nardella, president of Pinnacle Investments. Colin Nardella grew up in Syracuse, attending Christian Brothers Academy, before earning a bachelor's degree in finance from Lehigh University. After graduation, he spent five years living in New York City, where he began his career in the financial-services industry as an internal annuity wholesaler for Lincoln Financial Group. In 2023, Nardella moved back to his hometown and joined Pinnacle Investments. He works on a team with his father, where they specialize in comprehensive financial and retirement planning.



Nardella

## ENGINEERING

Terracon has announced the promotion of **MICHELE FIORILLO**, P.E. to the position of principal. With more than 20 years of geotechnical experience, he serves as senior engineer and department leader for Terracon's Geotechnical group in Western New York (Rochester, Buffalo, and Syracuse). His responsibilities include managing a diverse group of professionals, developing strong client relationships, providing guidance



Fiorillo

## LAW

Mackenzie Hughes LLP recently announced the addition of three attorneys to its team. **ROBB P. BARRETT** joined the law firm in January as a partner in the Business Department. He focuses on business and corporate law, mergers and acquisitions, securities law, banking, capital markets, regulatory matters, and corporate governance. Throughout his career, he has assisted numerous corporations and fi-



Barrett

ancial institutions in domestic and cross-border mergers and acquisitions transactions as well as in corporate-finance matters and securities offerings. Barrett also counsels clients on regulatory matters before relevant federal and state authorities. Before joining Mackenzie Hughes, he held various positions in leveraged finance at Fortress Investment Group and MetLife Investment Management. Barrett began his legal career at the law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell LLP in New York City. Before that, he worked as an aide to then-New York Gov. George E. Pataki. **REBECCA E. ALESI** joined Mackenzie Hughes last September and was admitted to the New York State Bar in November. She works in the Trusts and Estates Department, concentrating her practice on estate-planning consultations, research analysis for complex estate and trust litigation matters, and counseling fiduciaries with the administration of assets. In addition to estate work, Alesi assists in Article 81 and Article 17A guardianship proceedings. She earned her law degree from Hofstra Law School. **ROBERT R. HOJNACKI** joined Mackenzie Hughes last August and was admitted to the New York State Bar in January. He works in the Litigation and Business Department, concentrating his practice on commercial litigation, business and corporate law, mergers and acquisitions, and corporate governance. Hojnacki received his law degree from Albany Law School. He interned at the Oneida County District Attorney's office, the New York State Attorney General's Office in the Organized Crime Task Force Division, and at Saunders Kahler LLP.



Alesi



Hojnacki

## NONPROFITS

The Longhouse Council, Boy Scouts of

America, has appointed **ED THEETGE** as its new Scout Executive and CEO, effective Feb. 16. In his new role, he leads the council in its mission to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law, the organization said in a release. Theetge brings a wealth of experience and a passion for youth development to this position. He has 15 years of dedicated service to the Boy Scouts of America, having held various leadership roles that have equipped him with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead the Longhouse Council successfully. Theetge is a native Central New Yorker who was in the Scouts as a youth, earned the Arrow of Light award in Cub Scouts, and attained the rank of Life in Boy Scouts. After graduating high school, he served four years in the U.S. Army, attended infantry, paratrooper, and ranger schools, spent a year and half in South Korea, and is a Gulf war veteran. Theetge attended college at Finger Lakes Community College and earned an associate degree in human services. He has had several positions with the Boy Scouts of America including den leader, Webelos leader, cubmaster, asst. scoutmaster, scoutmaster, crew advisor, chapter adviser, and camp director of several different camps. Throughout his tenure, Theetge has demonstrated a deep commitment to the principles of scouting, fostering character development, leadership skills, and community engagement among youth. His leadership style is marked by inclusivity, collaboration, and a steadfast dedication to the betterment of young people and their communities. In his new role, Theetge will oversee the council's strategic initiatives, program development, and community outreach efforts. He will work closely with volunteers, staff, and community partners to ensure that the Longhouse Council continues to provide high-quality scouting programs that empower young people to become responsible, engaged citizens.



Theetge

## SIENA:

*Continued from page 6*

significantly below breakeven.

Looking to the next three to five years, CEOs expect several sectors to have a positive impact on the economic vitality of their geographic region. Topping the list, 54 percent cite technology, followed by education (45 percent), tourism (42 percent), medical (37 percent) and manufacturing (39 percent).

With the decline in CEO confidence this year, 56 percent of respondents (down from 67 percent a year ago) think that their company will be in business in New York 10 years from today.

Still, 45 percent (up from 38 percent last year), say that if they had it to do all over again, considering all factors, that they would locate their business in New York rather than someplace other than New York.

When asked to sum up their appraisal of business conditions in New York state, 29 percent say that they are staying the same, 4 percent getting better, but a large majority (67 percent) say that they are getting worse.

Locally, the assessment is somewhat better. A majority describe business conditions in their local area as staying the same (45 percent) or getting better (8

percent) while 47 percent say that they are getting worse.

## Prospects for 2024

The SRI survey found 29 percent (down from 38 percent) of respondents expect their revenue to grow over the course of 2024. At the same time, 33 percent (up from 28 percent) anticipate declining revenue.

Only 21 percent (down from 26 percent) anticipate increasing profitability, while 43 percent (up from 37 percent last year) predict decreasing profitability.

The findings also indicate one-third of CEOs say that they will focus on market and demand growth this year in order to enhance profitability while 31 percent (virtually unchanged from last year) will emphasize price increases.

The percentage of CEOs focused on cost reductions is down only slightly this year to 20 percent from 22 percent a year ago.

This year, 50 percent of CEOs (down from 55 percent) intend to invest in fixed assets for their company designed to meet growing demand, reduce costs, or enhance profitability.

At least half of CEOs plan to invest from the following industry sectors: manufacturing (54 percent); tourism (63 percent); engineering/construction (61 percent); wholesale/distribution (55 percent); and

food/beverage (59 percent).

When asked about the challenges they face, at least 50 percent of all CEOs cited these five challenges: adverse economic conditions (58 percent, down from 65 percent last year); governmental regulation (65 percent, up from 63 percent last year); rising supplier costs (56 percent, down from 60 percent last year); health-care costs (58 percent, virtually unchanged); and taxation (57 percent, unchanged from last year).

## Workforce

When asked questions on their workforce, 29 percent of CEOs (down from 33 percent a year ago) plan to increase the size of their workforce this year.

The survey also found 80 percent (down from 82 percent) of CEOs say they're not seeking an ample supply of local workers who are "appropriately trained" for their employment needs. Only 13 percent say a sufficient supply is available. Those numbers are essentially unchanged from last year (14 percent and 82 percent), but considerably worse than three years ago when the numbers were 28 percent and 61 percent.

In addition, 75 percent of CEOs continue to say that they are having difficulty recruiting to fill open positions. The measurement of having difficulty filling open positions is highest in health care (89

percent); engineering/construction (92 percent) and manufacturing (79 percent).

At the same time, 33 percent (down from 38 percent) say that they are having difficulty retaining existing employees.

When asked to assess the quality of job applicants on a series of skills and attributes, CEOs again (as they did in 2019 when the SRI last asked) provide a predominantly negative assessment.

When asked whether a series of labor-related measures would have a positive or negative effect on their business, CEOs said (by a 74 percent to 7 percent measure) relief on unemployment-insurance taxes would have a positive rather than negative effect.

Large majorities also say that both increased workers'-compensation benefits and advanced scheduling mandates would "negatively" affect their businesses.

"CEOs continue to harshly assess the quality of recent job applicants as majorities grade them negatively on important qualities including technical skills, initiative and work ethic," Levy said. "This comes as nearly one in three is hoping to hire this year. Unfortunately, 80% of CEOs conclude that there simply isn't an adequate supply of suitably trained workers available to step in and contribute to their business success." ■





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