

Get Your Own 'State Of The State' Hinchey Addresses Chamber Breakfast

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul will deliver her "State of the State" address on Jan. 14, but if you want a more localized version, state Sen. Michelle Hinchey will appear at the Chamber's next networking breakfast just a day later in Kingston.

The Jan. 15 breakfast, sponsored by Ulster Savings Bank, is scheduled from 7:30 to 9 a.m. at The Venue Uptown at the Best Western Plus Kingston.

Hinchey, a Saugerties Democrat who won a third two-year term in November, said she is looking forward to highlighting some of her legislative initiatives, including support for small businesses, growing the next generation of skilled workers and expanding broadband and cell service. She also plans to discuss workforce housing and healthcare, supporting family farms and emergency services and holding utility companies accountable.

"We all want the Hudson Valley to be a place where people can grow a business, raise a family and thrive with stability and opportunity," Hinchey said. "Small businesses aren't just local economic drivers—they support the families and employees who depend on them for their livelihoods and the neighbors like us who rely on their services.

"It's incumbent we do everything we can to help them succeed and I'm focused on practical solutions to achieve that."

Hinchey said her focus in the new term will be to reduce the cost of living and make the Hudson Valley more affordable for families and small businesses alike.

"I'm championing investments in housing for rural and upstate areas, expanding childcare access and bolstering public education and vocational training to help prepare workers for high-demand jobs," she said.

Hinchey said one of her bills, the Cellular Mapping Act, continues her work with municipalities and small broadband providers to close gaps in cell and internet coverage.

She also is focused on reliable, affordable public transportation and believes the Mid-Hudson Valley deserves the same quality transit options available in other parts of New York. She has proposed a Mid-Hudson Valley Transportation Authority.

"I'm also advocating for stronger oversight of utilities to lower rates for families and businesses, and I'm leading efforts to designate EMS as an essential service to expand access to emergency care in our district," Hinchey said.

Breakfast guests will also hear about the bevy of bills Hinchey has had signed into law to strengthen the upstate ag economy, to fight "predatory utility billing practices that hurt small businesses" and expand programs to boost tourism.

Hinchey said she is "optimistic" about New York' economic future, particularly the "transformative opportunities" here in the Hudson Valley with the iPark 87 business park, tourism and the Hudson River—all regional strengths that can drive growth and innovation.

As major infrastructure projects gain momentum across the state, Hinchey said the skilled trades will be essential to building our future and success hinges on having a workforce capable of meeting these needs.

"I'm focused on strengthening ties with local trades, expanding vocational training and creating clear pathways into high-demand careers," Hinchey said. "By fostering partnerships between schools, apprenticeship programs and local businesses we can lay the foundation for an adaptable and highly-skilled workforce—one that positions both students and mid-career professionals for success in New York's evolving job market."

Another priority for Hinchey is fighting the unemployment insurance debt many businesses are still carrying from the COVID-19 pandemic. She has advocated using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to reduce or eliminate the debt.

The senator also wants to make it easier to start and grow small businesses by reducing start-up costs and streamlining Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) certification and recertification. "New York also has significant potential to lead in cutting-edge industries like industrial hemp, exploring its use as a sustainable building material and plastic alternative," she said. "Becoming a global leader in this untapped market would reduce environmental impact, create new jobs and position us as an innovator on the world stage.

"The future of business in New York is about balance: fostering innovation while removing the barriers that exist today that are holding small businesses back."



Sen. Michelle Hinchey

A Saugerties native and former executive in the technology and media fields before entering politics, Hinchey is the daughter of the late U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey. She is a graduate of the Industrial and Labor Relations School at Cornell University.

The 41st Senate District Hinchey represents includes most of Ulster and Northern Dutchess counties and all of Greene and Columbia counties.

Chamber Breakfast Meetings are a great way to stay on top of current events and connect with other local business leaders and are open to Chamber members as well as the general public. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 at the door for Chamber members, \$40 for non-members. Reservations are required. Call (845) 338-5100 or register online at www. UlsterChamber.org.

January Breakfast Sponsor Is Ulster Savings Bank

Financial Institutions may look alike and offer similar products and services, but indeed can be very different. Ulster Savings Bank is a mutual savings bank with no stockholders and has remained that way for over 173 years, making it one of the longest-running successful businesses in Ulster County.

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to fulfill customers' financial dreams," said Calderara.

The Ulster Savings network is large and that enables them to offer innovative solutions to address today's issues. They often work with private and public sector partners to provide grant opportunities that strengthen affordable housing options and to help non-profits benefit from additional funding sources. Ulster Savings also provides both online and in-person resources to help navigate the homebuying process, repair poor credit and to prevent identity theft.

The Ulster Savings team serves the community with compassion, expertise and a real desire to see their neighbors succeed. Helping a first-time homebuyer get into their first home, growing and managing wealth, assisting someone in starting that first business and then watching it be successful are just some of the

Take Charge Of Your Health YMCA To Host January Mixer

The year 2025 could very well be your best if you make time for self-improvement. A big part of that is fitness, says Heidi Kirschner, President and Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County.

"It's important for adults to get exercise, but also to play and have fun," she said. "It helps relieve stress, and it boosts creativity and overall performance."

On Jan. 29, the YMCA will again host the first Mixer of the year from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The Bank of Greene County is sponsoring the networking event at 507 Broadway in Kingston.

"We're very happy to have Chamber members back," Kirschner said. "There's so much to offer here, and we encourage individuals to participate in what we have to offer—whether it be organized sports like pickleball or basketball or in any of our group classes "can change the trajectory of where they're going and keep them from becoming diabetic."

Another chronic disease prevention program offered at the YMCA is the blood-pressure self-monitoring program, which gets participants in the habit of checking their blood pressure regularly.

"Heart disease is the No. 1 killer in Ulster County, so this is to help people identify issues that they don't know about," Kirschner said. "We really want to get people to focus on taking care of themselves."

The YMCA is set up to do just that. It offers everything from group fitness classes to yoga and pilates to senior strength training. One of the newest and most popular additions is an indoor rowing studio led by a certified instructor for all populations and skill levels.



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between the YMCA and Day One Early Learning Community. The 11-week program is for adults who are passionate about early childhood learning.

Because youth development is such a key part of the YMCA's

or just doing it on your own.

"The vision is a path to better health for all in 2025. That means taking charge of your health," Kirschner added.

The YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County does its part to keep residents on track with 25 exercise classes, including six aquafitness classes, personal training, massage therapy and swimming lessons.

The Y further offers programs that focus on lifestyle change for optimum health.

One of the ways it's done that is with its Diabetes Prevention Program, which kicked off last year. Led by a trained lifestyle coach, the program comprises 26 sessions designed to help adults at risk of developing type 2 diabetes take steps to improve their overall health by following a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention curriculum.

Kirschner said participants learn about triggers to diabetes, how to monitor blood-sugar levels and about proper nutrition, which Additionally, the YMCA offers basketball and pickleball leagues, a large indoor track for walking, leadership and educational programs and myriad youth enrichment activities.

In recent years, the Y upgraded its locker rooms, gyms and childcare rooms. Not only that, but a new parking lot was installed and a conference room built to accommodate 170 people for meetings, seminars and other community functions.

One of the biggest improvements was to its pool. The space now sports floor-to-ceiling windows, a new pool surface, lighting, filters and climate control. Aquatics fitness classes, swimming lessons and lap swimming are offered.

On top of everything else, the YMCA offers community enrichment programs such as movie and panel discussions, poetry slam workshops, afterschool activities and a space known as the "Zen Den" for quiet contemplation.

Kirschner said 2024 saw the kickoff in September of the Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP) of Ulster County, a partnership mission, the organization has done its part to employ young people. Kirschner said the Y has 250 young adults on its payroll.

"We're probably the largest youth employer in Ulster County. That's important because for many, it's their first job, and they're learning so many important things like responsibility and how to communicate with their manager," she said.

As for the Chamber crowd, Kirschner said she is looking forward to connecting with new members and welcoming back old friends.

"It's always exciting for us because we get to share all the things we've accomplished over the year and look ahead to the new things that we'll be offering in 2025."

Chamber Mixers are a great way to network and promote your business. Be sure to bring plenty of business cards! This free networking event is open to Chamber members and prospective members only. Reservations are required. Call (845) 338-5100 or register online at www.ulsterchamber.org.

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ULSTER COUNTY CHAMBER NEWS Recognizing Excellence State Honors Director Of Go Beyond Greatness

Ashley Knox-Alleyne has reason to be proud of her accomplishments as the founder of Go Beyond Greatness Inc., a celebrated and certified educational consulting firm that's been around for a decade.

In November, all her hard work and dedication to the youth of Ulster County paid off when she received the Carey Gabay Excellence and Innovation Award from Gov. Kathy Hochul's team at the annual Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Forum in Albany.

"I'm still in disbelief," said Knox-Alleyne, a lifelong fifthgeneration Kingston resident and chief executive officer of Go Beyond Greatness. "Only four business leaders in the state received this award, and they recognized all the work we've done right here in Kingston. They said it was a highly competitive process to select the honorees. I kept thinking, 'Why me? Why us?' I am just so grateful for receiving this award. It's a true testament to the dedication of everyone who's supported Go Beyond Greatness and our mission to uplift young leaders."

The Carey Gabay award recognizes minority and womenowned businesses for their entrepreneurial spirit and efforts to strengthen their communities. It is named after the assistant counsel to former Gov. Andrew Cuomo and first deputy counsel for Empire State Development. Gabay, who was an innocent victim of gun violence in 2015, was a key member of Cuomo's Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise team, which worked to grow the program's participation numbers and goals.

Knox-Alleyne suspects she was selected because of the track record of Go Beyond Greatness and what it's done for the thousand or so youths who have participated in the past decade.

"Go Beyond Greatness is more than an educational consulting firm," she said. "It's a philosophy and a way of life. It doesn't matter who you are. You can embrace that greatness mindset. It's the idea of believing in yourself and pushing beyond the limits you've set for yourself. The way that we define greatness is the ability to make the most of your talents, skills and energy."

Together with her husband, Azriel Alleyne, she established Go Beyond Greatness in 2014 as a response to an apparent "opportunity gap." While working in higher education, Knox-Alleyne said she observed that many college students were unclear about their goals, which led to lost opportunities and delayed graduations.

Go Beyond Greatness guides students from historically marginalized communities to

"explore who they are, where their greatness lies and how to build a bridge to their goals," she said. It provides counseling and career readiness programs for students and educators, including leadership development, college preparation workshops, guidance for continuous learning, individualized action plans and life coaching and workforce development training.

Go Beyond Greatness partners with schools and community organizations like the YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County, the Ulster County Youth Bureau, Ulster County Office of Employment and Training, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Schenectady and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection to provide programming, which is

tailored to each participant, Knox-Alleyne said.

"What makes me the proudest are the students that bought into the concept of the greatness mindset and who went on to achieve amazing things as young people. That's my real accomplishment," she said.



rest on her laurels. She plans to expand Go Beyond Greatness throughout the state and later introduce it nationally and even globally.

"I'm a firm believer that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail," she said. "Before Go Beyond Greatness was even incorporated, I worked with some of the best strategic planners in our area to build out the business plan, and once we were in a position where we were acknowledged on a local level, we would expand out even further. It's time for Go Beyond Greatness to go beyond its greatness.'

Knox-Alleyne said she's had a good support system and is grateful to her husband, local business advisers, area nonprofits and past and present Go Beyond Greatness staff, including Sophie Rhind and Richard Knox, the current program coordinators.

"I also want to thank the young people we have served. They bring me hope and keep me motivated," she said.

Go Beyond Greatness is located at 721 Broadway in Kingston. For more information, go to gobeyondgreatness.org or call (845) 416-2977. You can also follow GBG on LinkedIn,



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Wednesday January 29 | 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Networking Mixer @ YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County

507 Broadway | Kingston, NY There is no cost for Members and Prospective Members. Reservations are required.

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Thursday February 27 | 7:30 - 9:00 am

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More Info and Registration UlsterChamber.org Questions (845) 338-5100

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Rest Easy With Legal Shred Data Destruction Made Easy

The data destruction firm Legal Shred now boasts 15 trucks, thousands of clients and serves a wide swath of the tri-state area, but founder and president Judith Papo remembers the company's humble start.

Papo, along with her husband, Jeff, and fatherin-law, Fran, started in 2008 with just one specially designed shredding truck. Today, Legal Shred boasts 30 employees and helps other businesses destroy confidential paperwork, hard drives, USB drives, laptops, cell phones and a wide spectrum of electronics. To remain competitive in the marketplace, over the years they have added medical waste disposal and box storage services.

"The trucks we have now could shred the first truck we bought," she said.

In fact, the company got started when Jeff Papo was looking to outsource paper shredding for the pharmacy he co-owned. The Papo family saw a need for shredding and recycling services and a need to educate the public about identity theft and protecting client information.

Based in Wappingers Falls, Legal Shred covers Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, and Putnam counties, as well as metro New York, New Jersey, Long Island and parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The growing company has locations in Dutchess; West Haven, Conn.; Jersey City, N.J.; and Long Island, and will come directly to your business and shred documents on site.

"It's really gratifying to see the growth because what we do matters," Papo said. "When we started, I knew we had a credibility that other companies just can't compete with. I'm a CPA, so when it comes to confidentiality and reputation management and how invested we are in those things for ourselves, our clients just understand that we get it too. "It's confidentiality. It's personability. It's efficiency and our personality, too. We're very friendly. People really love our team. We take care of people, and we care. They talk to human beings." Papo said all businesses need to protect confidential information, most notably accounting companies, law firms, medical offices and facilities, community banks and school districts. Some of Papo's loyal clients are among the Chamber's biggest sponsors, including Naccarato Insurance, Ulster Savings Bank, Rondout Savings Bank, Adams Fairacre Farms, RBT CPAs and even the Ulster County government. We all as businesses have a fiduciary duty to our clients, our employees and our colleagues in all areas to protect their personally identifying information," Papo said. "We're that guarantee. Some people use us on a routine basis monthly and weekly. We're pretty flexible with that. Sometimes it's just a single purge. We're all about customizing. Are they an accounting firm or a law firm with ongoing needs or is

it something just quarterly or once a year? We gather all those details, and we ask a lot of questions. People need to be able to trust that it's going to get done, that it's done right and done on time and with a reasonable turnaround and at a reasonable price."

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Legal Shred recycles shredded paperwork to help protect the environment. In 2021 alone, the company

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Judith Papo

recycled more than 5,000 tons of confidential records to help save over 85,00 trees and more than 15,000 cubic yards of landfill space.

Legal Shred, a licensed electronic waste recycler, increased its e-recycling by 32 percent in 2021 by safely destroying hard drives, computers, laptops, cell phones and other electronics.

Papo is active in the Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce, even serving on committees, and plans on being more active in the Ulster Chamber. "We're a community ariented service." Papa said

"We're a community-oriented service," Papo said. "People want to use someone who understands and someone they know who's part of the community and that's us. That's me."

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ULSTER COUNTY CHAMBER NEWS



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Jeffey Smith (Ryan & Ryan Insurance Brokers) with Lisa Ross and Elizabeth Sutcliffe (both from Emery & Webb) with (Front) Saige Stephany, Larkin Uhl and Jamie LeGrand (all from The Coop Concept).



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