

INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



NEW YEAR, NEW BUDGET, AND A NEW LEGISLATURE

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

New Year's Day always brings change with it, but 2023's turn to 2024 introduced a new group of legislators to leadership. Not only did we welcome five new legislators - District 1's Matt McPhillips, District 3's Brian McPhillips, District 5's Cat Scott, District 8's Amanda Ward and District 9's Terry Bernardo - we gained a new Chair of the Legislature (District 2's Nadia Rajsz), Vice Chair (District 7's Joe Perrello), Minority Leader (District 4's Nick Salomone) and Majority Leader (Matt McPhillips). And they're all serving redrawn districts, a result of the redistricting planning the previous Legislature undertook after the 2020 U.S. Census. (The County's founding document, its Charter, requires each district to serve approximately the same-sized population, as determined by the Census.)

The legislators are also overseeing the implementation of a \$291 million County budget that promises to make transformative changes in all our lives. We've devoted significant funds to expanding Move Sullivan, figuring out ways to increase our rental housing stock, raising our poorer health outcomes, and making the County as attractive as possible to residents, businesses and visitors.

As you'll see in this newsletter, Sullivan County has been riding high Statewide in employment growth. We are experiencing unprecedented increases in jobs, sales tax revenue and tourism, and we want to keep that positive momentum going.



Nadia Rajsz, left, is sworn in as the new Chair of the Legislature. Holding the family Bible are her daughter Deanna and husband Michael.

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UNITING AGENCIES TO HELP EVERYONE IN NEED

Navigating the services in even a rural county like Sullivan can be daunting, and too many people go without services for which they're eligible. United

Sullivan aims to change that.

Led by our Division of Health & Human Services, United Sullivan is a collaboration of two dozen local nonprofits and government agencies seeking to help all who are in need. A website, unitedsullivan.com, is already up and is being further developed to become a one-stop resource locator. But you don't have to wait - we've already got a tool in action on the County website. Head to sullivanny.us/Departments/familyservices and scroll down to find a fillable form headlined by "How Can We Help You Get Services?"

Whether you or someone you care for is seeking food, housing, warmth, financial help or other assistance, just fill out the form and submit it, and it will automatically be shared with every agency and government office that might be able to help.

It's meant to be simple, for that is how we can make a true positive impact on the people we serve.

And stay tuned - more is coming to unitedsullivan.com...

WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?

Sullivan County has more social media channels than you have fingers! In fact, as of this writing, we have 14 Facebook pages, 3 Instagram pages, 2 LinkedIn pages, a Twitter (X) feed, a Threads feed, and a YouTube channel.

How do you find what you're looking for? Search for these keywords to locate us on these platforms (and become a fan!):

FACEBOOK

- Sullivan County NY Government
- Sullivan County NY 911
- Sullivan County NY Office for the Aging
- Sullivan County NY Sheriff's Office
- Sullivan County NY Public Health
- Sullivan County NY Center for Workforce Development
- Sullivan County NY Bureau of Fire
- Sullivan County NY Bureau of EMS
- Sullivan County NY Recycles
- Sullivan County NY Youth Bureau
- Sullivan County NY Probation
- Move Sullivan
- Sullivan O&W Rail Trail
- Care Center at Sunset Lake

INSTAGRAM

- Sullivan County NY Government
- Sullivan County NY Health and Human
- Care Center at Sunset Lake

LINKEDIN

- Sullivan County NY Government
- Care Center at Sunset Lake

X (TWITTER), THREADS and YOUTUBE

- Sullivan County NY Government

How Can We Help You Get Services?

This easy-to-fill-out form can quickly connect you with needed services. Find it at sullivanny.us/Departments/familyservices.



Celebrating the welding students' graduation on December 21 were, standing from the left, BOCES District Superintendent Robert Dufour, BOCES Instructor Nick Conklin, BOCES Career & Technical Education Executive Principal Jeffrey Molusky, grad Ethan Williams, grad Peter Smith, grad Kevin Alvarado, grad George Santiago and Center for Workforce Development Director Loreen Gebelein; and sitting from the left, grads Dominick Furlipa, Ashley Male and Daniel Johnston. Missing from the photo are grads Isaiah McNeil and Steven Koskey.

LEARNING THE SKILLS TO GET RIGHT TO WORK

Following up on our successful Construction Trades course in mid-2023, our Center for Workforce Development (in conjunction with Sullivan BOCES) spent the fall training 9 carefully selected local residents in the high-demand field of Welding. What's so special about that? Students - all adults, all in the workforce - didn't pay a dime in tuition. We literally gave them a new skill that made them immediately employable.

That's why we were selective in fielding the 60 or so applications. This was not a giveaway for a do-it-

yourselfer or someone uncertain about what they wanted to do next. This was specifically for local folks who fully intended to become a professional welder and apply their skills locally.

And that's exactly what we accomplished. All 9 graduates either have or are about to have employment in the field.

These two courses have demonstrated to us that there is a demand and a need for vocational skills in our adult workforce, so we'll be announcing another course later this year.

HAVE YOU MET 'SAIGE'?

Saige is the new chatbot serving all who visit the County's website, sullivanyny.us.

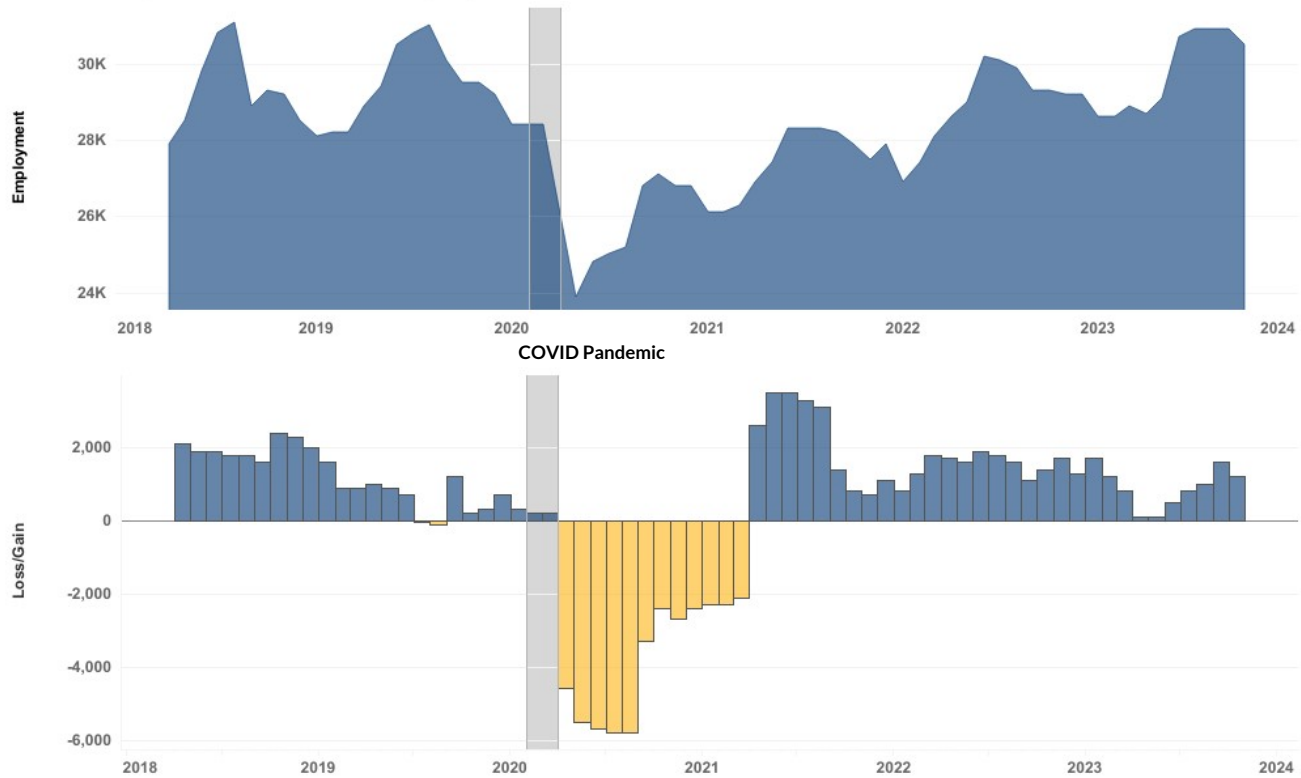
She's a part of Google's generative artificial intelligence software (thus the "AI" in her name),

Welcome to Sullivan County Government, How may I help you today?

created to better help you quickly find the information you need. Don't forget to click on "Helpful" or "Not Helpful" after she answers a question—she really does learn from that feedback!

WE'RE LEADING MOST OF THE STATE IN JOB GROWTH

Sullivan County Total Nonfarm Not Seasonally Adjusted



Graphs courtesy of NYS Department of Labor

Yes, this is part of a nationwide trend, but when compared to many of our upstate and downstate counterparts, Sullivan County has been seeing great (and, of late, phenomenal) numbers.

Most dramatic has been the swing in our unemployment rate. During the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, nearly 16% of our workforce was out of a job – the highest such percentage since electronic recordkeeping began in 1990 (see graph below).

From there, the unemployment rate started falling, to an historic low of 3.1% by December 2021. And then it fell further, to 2.9% in May 2022, finally bottoming out

at 2.5% in April 2023, with only slight increases since. Meanwhile, our job growth rate has climbed stratospherically. In fact, we led the State for many months after the pandemic eased, and we've consistently remained in the top five job growth performers Statewide all of 2023 (see graph above). We came close to eclipsing our historic August 2018 high of 31,100 people employed (non-farm) in Sullivan County, as we reached 30,900 employed in July 2023. However, unlike any year prior, we maintained that level of high employment for a full three months this summer. (Typically, we spike in August, then rapidly fall.)

