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Christopher's Restaurant still very much a part of downtown

By KEVIN OKLOBZIJA

When redevelopment of Irving Place meant Christopher's Restaurant & Custom Catering would need to find a new home after 20 years in the old City Hall building, Paul Christopher thought maybe it was time to consider the suburbs.

After all, the list of restaurants in the Hall of Justice/Lawyers Co-op/Four Corners quadrant of downtown that had come and gone during Christopher's existence was longer than most lunch menus; from Edwards to McGillicutty's to Jump Café to Pillars.

"At one time there were 17 restaurants in this area," said Christopher, who first opened the restaurant in the Time Square Building on July 5, 1985. "That first day we served 160 lunches in two hours," he said.

Today his restaurant is one of the few still standing — and he doesn't intend on leaving anytime soon.

Christopher and his business partner, daughter Dominique Scaccia, have opted to stay downtown, revamping the vacant space in the First Federal Building that had been home to The Stock Exchange restaurant from 1994 until 2019. They re-



Dominique Scaccia and her father, Paul Christopher, are happy with their new downtown home for Christopher's.

opened the doors on Feb. 15.

"You won't recognize the place," Christopher said.

His customers, however, will recognize the faces and the food. The

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Employers must provide paid vaccination leave time

By KEVIN OKLOBZIJA

Employers in New York must provide all employees with up to four hours of paid "vaccine" leave should time off from work be necessary to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

The work leave requirement, covering all members of the public and private workforce, was signed into law on March 12 by Gov. Andrew Cuomo after both the Senate and Assembly passed bills on the subject.

The purpose of the law is to enable workers to schedule a vaccination appointment without fear of losing leave time they were already entitled to use for vacation or illness.

Lawmakers didn't want employees to be reluctant to seek the COVID-19 vaccination if it meant they would lose leave time.

"This legislation will allow both public and private employees to take time off to get vaccinated without ex-

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GRYT Health celebrates 5 years of empowering, connecting those affected by cancer

By VELVET SPICER

When Dave Fuehrer was 30 he wasn't sure he wanted to be alive anymore.



Fuehrer

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South East Area Coalition uses its network to help myriad neighborhood causes

By VELVET SPICER

Mike Evans is nothing if not passionate about his neighborhood. As the new executive director of the South East Area Coalition, Evans is working diligently on partnerships and collaborations that will help not only the area of Rochester his organization represents, but adjacent neighborhoods as well.

"We are a neighborhood preservation organization and we get a large amount of our operational funding through a grant from New York state for such tasks," Evans said. "We basically fight for the southeast area."

Evans began his role with the non-profit in October 2021, following four years with Ronald McDonald House Charities of Rochester and as director of operations at Rochester Child-

first Network. Evans, who has lived in the Upper Monroe neighborhood for eight years, is the organization's only employee; he works with a volunteer board and an occasional crew of volunteers when help is needed for projects.

SEAC was founded in 1968 as a result of neighbors protesting the Inner Loop being built in their back yards.

"The Inner Loop was going to slice through part of the south wedge, so they banded together and they petitioned the city and brought all this evidence about how it would affect the area and through that work they were able to have it moved and adjusted," Evans said. "As they were doing that they became a 501(c)3 and started advocating for grassroots projects, coalitions, community-based (groups)

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Health Care Heroes announced

By Rochester Business Journal Staff

Forty-one winners have been selected as recipients of the Rochester Business Journal's Health Care Heroes awards.

Rochester Business Journal created Health Care Heroes to recognize excellence, promote innovation and honor the efforts of organizations and individuals making a significant

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'The calm during the storm'



Photo provided

The Summit CEO Laurie Baker enjoys variety at work, and she got just that by taking the credit union's reins at pandemic's onset

By ANDREA DECKERT

Laurie Baker did not have much time to settle into her role as president and CEO of The Summit Federal Credit Union last February before the start of a once-in-a-century global pandemic.

"Taking on the role of CEO at the start of the pandemic was interesting

to say the least," Baker says.

The situation forced credit union leaders to act quickly, maintain a priority on employee and customer health and safety and bond together as a team.

Baker is proud of the team's ability to quickly shift and continue to meet the needs of its members.

"Ironically, it made the transition easier," she says, describing herself as a "glass half full" type of person. "I'm typically the calm during the storm. That trait worked well for me in 2020."

Baker was not focused on a career in the financial services sector when she was younger, but she always wanted to help people.

A Long Island native, Baker came to the Rochester region for college, where she pursued her undergraduate degree at SUNY College at Geneseo. She originally wanted to be a high school English teacher, but ultimately decided the

career path was not for her and switched gears, opting for a more liberal arts education.

She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Geneseo in 1985 and her Master of Arts degree in social science from SUNY Binghamton in 1993.

Baker started her career as a teller at another credit union before taking a job at The Summit as a loan officer. She has worked at The Summit for more than 25 years, most recently serving as chief operating officer, a role she held since 2001.

Baker believes her educational background complements her career path.

"This is a people business," she says. Baker became president and CEO on Feb. 2, 2020 following a nationwide search, replacing long-time credit union leader Mike Vadala.

Founded in 1941, The Summit Fed-

eral Credit Union is a not-for-profit, member-owned, full-service financial cooperative.

The organization ranked second on the most recent Rochester Business Journal list of credit unions, based on total assets.

The Summit is nearing \$1.2 billion in assets and has some 240 local employees and 88,000 members. Its branches span from Cortland to Buffalo.

As The Summit's assets have grown to more than \$1 billion, Baker's position makes her a member of a small, esteemed group. According to the National Credit Union Administration, only some 13 percent of billion-dollar credit unions in the U.S. are led by women.

Her professional efforts have been recognized locally. Baker ranked among the 11 "power players" in the

Laurie Baker

Title: President and CEO, The Summit Federal Credit Union

Education: B.A., sociology, SUNY College at Geneseo, 1985; M.A., social science, SUNY Binghamton, 1993

Residence: North Chili

Family: Husband, Jerry; son, Riley, 21 and daughter, Jenna, 16

Activities: Spending time with family, volunteering, reading, traveling

Quote: "I'm a person who likes variety in my work and enjoys a challenge. I've been exposed to many different facets of the organization. I think having varied experiences helps prepare you for advancement, and certainly helps you think more globally."

Rochester region's banking industry on the RBJ's Power 100 List 2021.

For Baker, there has been no typical day on the job, and that is how she likes it.

"I'm a person who likes variety in my work and enjoys a challenge," Baker says. "I've been exposed to many different facets of the organization. I think having varied experiences helps prepare you for advancement and certainly helps you think more globally."

Meetings via Zoom have increased due to COVID-19 and Baker sees a mix of such virtual interactions, as well as face-to-face meetings, post-pandemic.

Communication is key, she says.

Baker also believes nurturing talent from within the organization is important. The Summit has a strong onboarding process, training and development opportunities and exposure to other leaders in the organization through its emerging leaders and mentorship programs.

In addition, the organization constantly seeks to improve its hiring practices and create a work culture that is equitable and inclusive.

"At The Summit it's part of our culture to welcome differences as opportunities to see various perspectives and use them to develop better solutions," she says. "We embrace diversity, and when there are gaps in representation, we try to figure out why and what we can do to fill them."

Laurie Wiest, senior vice president of human resources and member relations at The Summit, says Baker consistently demonstrates the credit union's values of respect, integrity, high standards and care and empathy.

Wiest describes Baker as a role model.

"When I reflect on Laurie's leadership, I think about her sincerity, integrity and optimism, but I also consider her ability to subtly challenge people as one of her greatest strengths," Wiest says.

"Without telling people what to do, she looks to help people understand their own potential, gives them space to try new things and provides feedback in a way that influences self-motivation and growth."

Cheryl Pohlman, The Summit's vice president of marketing and community relations, says Baker is a great leader who listens to all perspectives and seeks out information while being able to quickly come to a decision with the team.

She also has a unique ability to lead people to come up with answers themselves, which "gives employees confidence to contribute ideas while developing their critical and strategic thinking," Pohlman says.

In addition to working with The Summit employees, Baker most enjoys the ability to make a difference in the community through the credit union.

"To be able to help change people's lives for the better really is a privilege," she says.

To help during the pandemic, for example, The Summit developed an emergency loan fund and additional products to help those facing hardship,

as well as eliminated some fees, granted loan payment extensions and mortgage forbearance.

"Our employees are known for being friendly and having a high level of expertise, but more than that, they truly want to help," Baker says. "We all do."

The most prevalent challenge is providing members with the services they want and need, giving them the most value and improving their experiences, Baker says.

"We need to stay relevant, remain competitive and ensure we are sustainable" she notes.

With a focus on member needs now and in the future, Baker says The Summit will continue to expand and enhance its online and digital offerings, as well as provide exceptional branch service.

"Our members want both," she says.

Baker lives in North Chili. She and her husband, Jerry, have a son, Riley, 21 and daughter, Jenna, 16.

Outside of work Baker enjoys a number of activities, including spending time with her family, watching her daughter play soccer, traveling and reading.

Baker has chaired and is a member of several community and industry boards of directors. She is a board member at the Mary Cariola Center and a volunteer at Villa of Hope. She also sits on the board of the New York Credit Union Association.

"I love to volunteer and have the chance to meet and help people," she says. "I don't consider it work."

Andrea Deckert is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

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