

cevo[®] WACC

creating entrepreneurial opportunities



ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the CEO Class is to provide a comprehensive educational experience, equipping our students to become enterprising individuals and entrepreneurial thinkers who will contribute to the economic development and sustainability of our community.

class of **2026**

WEST



EAST



GREETINGS

FROM THE DIRECTOR...

Greetings,

It is my honor to share this annual report with you that highlights the many successes of our program over the past year. The WACC CEO program is now in its 13th year, and better than ever! It has been my pleasure to work with the many bright and innovative CEO students this year. I have always been impressed by the cooperation, comradery, and ingenuity the students exhibit on a daily basis. I have realized that CEO is truly a valuable investment for the future of the Sauk Valley Area. The program has grown so much it is now sustaining two robust programs, one in Sterling and one in Dixon.

There are three goals of the CEO program. First, this program exposes CEO students to the employment and career opportunities in our local communities. This is an opportunity for students to make great connections for later in life. Second, this class allows the local employers to guide potential employees and/or future business owners. Third, this program affords students the opportunity to learn about business from the perspective of business men and women currently in the field. For these reasons, it was crucial to have the continued support of local business and industry. To date, the WACC CEO program has over 75 investors which you will find listed later in this report.

Students dress in business attire every day and must conduct themselves in a professional manner. The class encourages students to think outside the box, communicate effectively with others and execute a personal business plan while problem solving as a group. It is exciting to see what the future holds for the program and our new CEO alumni.

Sincerely,

Josh Johnson
WACC Director

FROM THE CHAIR...

Hello,

On behalf of the WACC CEO Advisory Board, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Whiteside Area Career Center, Sauk Valley Community College, our local high schools, and the many businesses and individuals who continue to support the CEO program. Your commitment as investors, partners, and tour hosts plays a vital role in making this program possible. We are also incredibly thankful for the mentors and guest speakers who dedicate their time and share their real-world insights with our students.

The CEO program continues to shape the next generation by fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and encouraging innovation. It provides students with meaningful, hands-on experiences that allow them to explore career opportunities within the Sauk Valley area while building lasting relationships with business and community leaders. Through these experiences, students gain confidence, develop critical thinking skills, and learn the value of taking initiative and learning from both successes and challenges.

This program is a true reflection of our community's dedication to investing in its future. By supporting these students today, we are helping build tomorrow's leaders. It is our hope that CEO alumni will continue to contribute to the Sauk Valley area—whether by starting businesses, leading organizations, or strengthening the local economy.

It has been a privilege to be part of this program and to now serve on the advisory board alongside such a committed and passionate group of individuals.

Sincerely,

Josh Knie
Chair - CEO Advisory Board



GREETINGS

FROM THE FACILITATORS...



**LEANDRA
HARTMAN**
WACC WEST
CEO
FACILITATOR

Dear Becca, Brady, Brecken, Charlie, Emmy, Haleigh, Jenna, JJ, Lilli, Olivia, Paige, Samara, Trail, Tynlee, and Wyatt,

When a facilitator is with students daily, it is sometimes difficult to notice growth. But with each of you I have seen the changes and there is nothing more rewarding than that for an educator. Thank you for taking the risk of being a CEO student and trusting the process. I asked you to do hard things...and you stepped up. You will always be special to me because you are my last team. ♥ All the best to you, Le

Dear CEO community,

Where to begin...I am very much appreciative of the kind words as I retire, often thanked for building this program. While I acknowledge it took some effort; that was my job! The real thanks goes to each and every business owner, employee, non-profit, speaker, mentor, etc. After all, they were volunteers! I asked so much of so many over the past 13 years and because YOU said yes, WE built something really amazing. My support team included facilitators Emily, Grace, Margo, and Norm, CEO Advisory Board members, WACC directors, and Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship. The unchanged office staff of my 13 years, Cece and Dawn, offered immeasurable support. School personnel and parents, you're on the list too! When I think of the students and memories, it brings smiles, tears, laughter, and pride.

Having mentioned all that, it would seem we should have a party! If you are reading this, you are invited! Friday, May 22 from 5pm-10pm at Champs Banquet Venue in Sterling with program highlights at 6pm. Hope to see you there!

With much love and gratitude,

Leandra Hartman, WACC West CEO Facilitator



**GRACE
JOHNSON**
WACC EAST
CEO
FACILITATOR

WACC CEO is such a unique program and I am excited to complete my first year as the Facilitator for CEO East. I honestly did not know what I was getting myself into when I decided to apply for the position 15-minutes after knowing it was open. That 15-minute decision changed things for the better in the year to come.

I always was a passionate supporter of CEO inviting students into my own business for tours/presentations, having conversations with those that I had a personal connection with that participated, including my nephew, and the Trade Show - let's not talk about how much money I spent there over the years! The experiences and opportunities that are offered to the students is something to be proud of throughout the community. It is something so unique to learning and education that elevates its participants to a different level.

Over my first year and all the conversations about CEO to others, I lost count of the number of times that I heard "I wish something like this was around when I was in high school". I feel the exact same way!!

To the 16 students that I had my first year, did you ever set the bar high for years to come! What a spectacular, mature, fun, sometimes irritating group we became - from day one. The creativity that flowed through this group was astounding. And the support you all showed each other gives me chills. You should be proud of the environment and culture you cultivated. I hope for many years of your success and hope to have each of you be a part of CEO going forward.

To the parents, thank you for trusting me with your students. I know it was probably difficult to step back and give full control to your student. They are better for it! Even if it stressed you out!!!

To the Board, Whiteside Area Career Center, Sauk Valley Community College, and all others that are involved in CEO, thank you for setting the expectations and goals, then allowing me to be myself for the betterment of the students. I hope that my personal experiences, connections, way I handle pretty much everything, led to a relationship of trust amongst all entities that support our growing youth. We have a community to be proud of. And programs like this are the reason!

Finally, to Le. There are truly no words for what you created. There are other people and entities involved over the 13 years of development. Although you are the heart of WACC CEO and always will be. The path you paved for the students is undeniable and the passion you express is contagious. Thank you for the many years of hard work and dedication to making CEO spectacular. You think you are retiring...no no no! I will make sure to keep you as part of this program for years to come!

With gratitude,

Grace Johnson, WACC CEO East Facilitator

WEST CEO *class of* 2026

BRADY BERLIN

Junior | Sterling High School



Brady is a motivated student graduating with the Class of 2027. He is a varsity athlete in football, basketball, and track. He is also an honors student with a strong interest in entrepreneurship and personal development. Outside of school, Brady runs a window cleaning and power washing business, gaining real-world experience in customer service, time management, and responsibility. Through the CEO program, he is excited to further develop his entrepreneurial skills, explore new business ideas, and build valuable connections within the community. After high school, he plans to pursue a career in business and continue strengthening the skills needed to succeed as a leader and entrepreneur.

SAMARA BIELENBERG

Senior | Fulton High School



Samara is a member of Key Club and FCA, and also holds leadership positions as FFA chapter vice president and as a BLIND leader. She is passionate about working with children, so Samara is undecided on where she is going to college but wants to pursue a degree in Speech Pathology with a minor in Business. Her goal is to one day open her own clinic, combining her career with her passion for helping children. Outside of school, Samara works part-time at Foreway and enjoys spending time with her friends, reading, babysitting, and going to church with her grandma. Samara's individual business "Charmed by Faith", is a customizable charm necklace bar that connects personal faith with individuality. The biggest takeaway Samara has gained from CEO is that leadership starts with believing in yourself. She has learned that when you trust your vision and stay consistent, you can build something meaningful from the ground up.

REBECCA BOESEN

Junior | Newman Central Catholic High School



For the past two years Rebecca has participated in cheer but this year she participated in golf and continues her love for the arts by doing her school's musical. For her senior year Rebecca will be attending both Newman and Sauk because she has been accepted into The Sauk Academy. Rebecca is a family-oriented person, which makes her eager to start her future family. She loves to help others. After high school Rebecca plans to major in Fashion Marketing, Nursing or Meteorology, but is also interested in Law and minoring in history! Through the CEO program, Rebecca has expanded her knowledge about the business world, making valuable connections and friendships. Her favorite thing about CEO so far is how it is pushing her to be more outspoken and teaching her new things. Rebecca is excited to tour the remaining businesses and work towards the class and personal businesses.

EMMALINE BURGER

Senior | Newman Central Catholic High School



Emmaline, known to her friends as Emmy, is a High Honors student, 1 Varsity Singles for her high school tennis team, a member of Key Club, Ambassadors Club, Knitters Club, Science Club, along with being the Student Director of the new House System implemented in her school this year. Outside of school Emmaline enjoys playing pickleball, grabbing her favorite drinks from Starbucks, shopping with her friends, and traveling. Additionally, you can find Emmaline serving up a smile at Culver's Dixon or beautifying a bouquet at Flowers Etc Dixon. Following high school she plans on attending The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, in which she is looking to major in Biology with a minor in Business. Emmaline has had many key takeaways from the CEO class, specifically she has improved her networking and groupwork abilities. At the upcoming CEO tradeshow, Emmy will showcase her individual business, "Ryse & Shine", a homemade artisan bread business that she is passionate about. With a commitment to quality and freshness, her slogan, "Baked Fresh, Worth the Rise", reflects her dedication to delivering delicious, handcrafted bread. Emmy is excited to continue learning from the businesses she will tour and to participate in the tradeshow itself, where she looks forward to sharing her creations and expanding her entrepreneurial journey.

WYATT CARROLL

Junior | Eastland High School



Wyatt plays basketball at the varsity level at his school and plans to be a student athlete after high school by playing basketball in college. During the spring and fall, you can catch him training and hanging out with his friends. He also likes to golf in the summer with his close friends. During college, Wyatt either wants to major in business or law. Wyatt joined CEO this year to better his communication skills and knowledge with the business world. His personal business is a homemade pie business originating from his grandma's recipe called Patty's Pies. He's learned so much this year, but most importantly how to operate in the business world with a team around him. His favorite part about the CEO program is meeting new people and learning how to create a successful business.

OLIVIA CASTILLO

Junior | Sterling High School



Olivia is an honors student, as well as a volunteer for the Sauk Valley Impact Program where she has accumulated over 75 hours of volunteer work. She plays softball at the varsity level and enjoys practicing softball and working out in her free time. She enjoys spending time with family and friends either traveling or being outside. As far as her future, Olivia is unsure of her plans after high school, however, she is hoping to spend time traveling and gaining valuable experiences. Olivia truly believes there is always something new to learn which is why she joined the CEO program. Her favorite part of the CEO program is listening to people's stories and hearing what knowledge they have to share. She also wants to get outside of her comfort zone and determine whether working in business is in her future plans. Olivia's favorite thing she has learned throughout CEO is that in order to grow you have to put yourself out there. For the tradeshow Olivia's booth named Your's Truly will be selling handmade patchwork hoodies and crewnecks. Your's Truly combines handmade quilt work with a functional piece of apparel. Each piece is completely unique, people aren't able to find any pieces like it, besides Yours Truly. Olivia is aspiring to put herself in a good position to achieve her goals and contribute positively to the world around her. Overall Olivia is excited to see what's to come in the future!



HALEIGH DALE

Senior | Newman Central Catholic High School



Haleigh will graduate as a high honors student who cheers at the varsity level and is actively involved in BLIND, National Honor Society, Community Leader, and more. She also works part time at Coco's Prom and Homecoming. Through CEO, she has strengthened her communication skills, gained confidence in stepping outside of her comfort zone, and learned so much about her community and all that the Sauk Valley area has to offer. She has especially enjoyed touring local businesses and building connections with new people, which has broadened her understanding of the opportunities around her. Haleigh plans to major in Marketing at Sauk Valley Community College before transferring to a four year university. At the CEO tradeshow, she will showcase her individual business, Daleigh Slimes, where she offers three different slimes under her slogan, "Made by Haleigh, Played with Daleigh." Outside of school and work, she loves spending time with the people who are most important to her.

JENNA GRATER

Senior | Morrison High School



Jenna is involved in many extracurricular activities including, Student Council, The MHS Pom Poms squad and she dances competitively outside of school at Cassie's Dance Academy. After high school, she plans to major in marketing with a minor in communications, although she is undecided where she wants to go. In Jenna's free time she enjoys practicing nail art on herself and friends. This developed skill plays into her personal business Jems N Gels, where she will be selling homemade press-on nails. At her booth you will be able to purchase pre-made designs, as well as build your own set using her build your own board. Jenna joined the CEO program to get outside of her comfort zone and improve her communication skills, as well as learn important business skills she will take with her to college in the fall. With the year coming to an end, Jenna's favorite part of the whole year has been seeing herself, along with all of her classmates, grow throughout the year. She also really enjoyed the whole process of the class business and learning to work as a team. She found it very rewarding to see the Global Gala come together and be successful.

BRECKEN HAYDEN

Junior | Eastland High School



Brecken likes to stay busy while he's not in school by participating in both football and baseball at the varsity level. In the winter you would probably find Brecken snowboarding, as that is his favorite winter hobby. As far as Brecken's future goes, he is unsure what he will want to pursue in college. Brecken joined the CEO program, not only to take a step out of his comfort zone, but to get an insight of everything related to working with a business. His favorite part about CEO is the ability to see what goes into owning and running a business, and also the opportunity to meet many people that give him good advice. Brecken's individual business is called "What's Poppin'" He sells different kinds of popcorn such as caramel, kettle, and cheese corn. This popcorn is packaged in a unique fun package. The biggest take-away Brecken has had from the CEO program is how much it has helped him get out of his comfort zone. The changes from the start of the year to the end have been drastic and have helped him out so much.

class of 2026

West CEO

PAIGE LASHELLE

Senior | Morrison High School



Paige is involved in multiple extracurricular activities including: Swimming, Track, Student Council, as well as being a B.L.I.N.D leader. Outside of school she's involved in the Sauk Impact Program in which she does a lot of volunteering. After high school, Paige plans to attend Sauk Valley Community College and study Human Resources. After attending Sauk for two years, she will transfer to a larger school to finish her degree. In her free time she enjoys spending time with family and friends. She also enjoys traveling with family, especially to the beach. Paige joined the CEO program to build communication and life skills. She wanted to step out of her comfort zone and meet new people. The CEO program has done just that for her. Her favorite part of being in the program was seeing all of the progress within herself. She has found it easier to connect with new people and feel comfortable having conversations with them. Paige's tradeshow business is a car air freshener business called ScentStop. All of the scents will be crafted uniquely by Paige.

CHARLES NAWROCKI

Junior | Sterling High School



Charles enjoys challenging himself in school, especially in math and English. Charles is also on the Sterling swim team in the winter and swims year round on a local team. He enjoys running and lifting in his spare time. Charles wants to pursue a career in finance, accounting or actuarial science at a school that isn't too far from his home. The reason he joined CEO was to network and build better social/conversation skills. His favorite part of CEO so far is getting to meet people and discover businesses he would otherwise not have gotten the chance to discover. His business is called "Homegrown Heat" and is a packaged salsa business, which offers a sweet and fresh flavor. During his experience in CEO he has learned that you should always ask. If you don't ask someone you will never know.

JOHNATHAN PODOLSKI

Junior | Sterling High School



Jonathan is a student athlete who is dedicated to wrestling, Jiu-jitsu, and long distance track. These sports help teach him discipline and to see how far he can push himself. Outside of sports he loves to eat often at Chipotle with his friends and napping. Jonathan hasn't fully mapped out his future yet, but he's thought about the idea of a career in trade school, with the particular thought of plumbing. Jonathan's favorite part of CEO and why he joined it was to see what the world of business has to offer. He enjoys his time visiting different individuals and their own unique businesses. One thing Jonathan learned was to never be afraid to shake hands. Jonathan was always intrigued by food businesses, which is why he decided to sell mac n cheese for his individual business, called Smackin Mac. Ultimately, Jonathan is ecstatic about the opportunities ahead in CEO and in life.

TRAIL STONITSCH

Junior | Rock Falls High School



Trail enjoys setting new short term and long term goals for himself. He enjoys going to the gym and spending time with friends and family. Trail wants to start his own business one day and pursue a career in business. The reason he joined CEO was to get better at speaking clearly and more confidently. He also wanted to join because it's a business class and that's the route he wants to take in life. His favorite part of CEO is getting to do different things everyday and meet new people, especially business owners in the area. His business name is "T Gainz" and his product is protein balls.

LILLIAN SWATOS

Senior | Prophetstown High School



Lillian enjoys staying active and spending time with the people who matter most to her. Lily loves playing both softball and volleyball, and outside of school she often spends time at the gym or with her family. After graduating, Lilly plans to attend Sauk Valley Community College, where she will continue her education while also continuing her athletic career as a member of the softball team. Lilly joined the CEO program because she wanted to challenge herself and learn how to turn her creativity into something meaningful in the business world. Through the program, she started her own photography business, Captured by Lilly B, which focuses on creating special photo sessions that help families capture important moments. One of her favorite parts of CEO has been meeting local entrepreneurs and learning from their experiences, which has helped her grow more confident in both business and in herself.

TYNLEE WILLIAMS

Junior | Sterling High School



Tynlee serves as Sterling FFA Vice President and Director for the Illinois Quarter Horse Youth Association, showing leadership and commitment to agriculture and the equine industry. She participates in Sterling Golf and trains at Drinkall Performance Horses, honing her riding skills and competitive edge. Alongside academics and activities, Tynlee founded "Shore Scent", a beach-themed candle business that blends creativity with entrepreneurship. She donates one dollar from every candle to the WOHF Therapeutic Riding Center in Morrison, Illinois. Tynlee values professionalism, time management, and embracing challenges to grow as a leader and businesswoman. She aims to attend California Central College and become an international flight attendant. Eager to learn and meet new people, she excels at building connections and meaningful relationships. Her strong communication skills and ambition prepare her for future success.



EAST CEO *class of* 2026

OWEN BELZER

Senior | Dixon High School



Owen was a 2025 state qualifier for track and field, along with being on the varsity football team. Owen is a multiple time honor roll student. Outside of school, Owen spends his time enjoying the company of his friends and family and spending time outdoors. Owen is the founder of EXHALE, his very own shower steamers, used for muscle recovery. He has learned skills from this class like social networking, soft skills, and communication. Owen plans on making his business a smashing success.

JOZLYNN CASTRO

Junior | Milledgeville High School



Jozlynn is involved in volleyball, basketball, drama club, spirit squad, academic bowl, yearbook, NHS, and FFA. She is also the Vice President of Student Council, and is her Class President. Outside of school she is involved in Shelly's Dance Studio. In her free time, she plays pickleball with her family, hangs out with her friends, and spends time playing sand or mud volleyball when it's nice out. While in the CEO program, Jozlynn had learned it's important to lead by example and take accountability. She has a better understanding of networking and how to use her social skills outside of class. She is the founder and owner of CHRGD, which produces personalized energy drinks and lemonades enhanced with flavors and visually engaging add-ins such as strawberry boba. Next year, she plans on attending Sauk Academy in her senior year and staying at Sauk to get her associates degree in business. After that she will transfer to a 4-year college.

REESE DAMBMAN

Senior | Dixon High School



Reese is a four-year varsity athlete in both basketball and golf. She is actively involved in several clubs, including Student Council, National Honor Society, and the Impact Program. Academically, she challenges herself as an AP student and is consistently on the Superior Honor Roll. Through the CEO program, Reese created her individual business, BlissBerry, an açaí bowl business focused on promoting health and wellness through refreshing bowls filled with antioxidants, vitamins, and nutrient-dense ingredients. Reese joined the CEO program to diversify her curriculum, strengthen her leadership skills, and grow as an effective communicator, while also gaining valuable experience in entrepreneurship, problem-solving, and real-world business planning. Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with her friends and family, as well as traveling. Her favorite place she has visited is Turks and Caicos. Reese is passionate about making a positive impact by helping others and aspiring to become a dentist. After high school, she will attend the University of Missouri to study personal financial planning while following the pre-dental track.

DAWSON DEETS

Junior | Milledgeville High School



Dawson Deets is involved in Student Council, Junior Class Secretary, Band, Academic Bowl, and Secretary for the Chadwick-Milledgeville FFA Chapter and National Honors Society. In his free time, he enjoys ag-related activities such as cattle showing and volunteering for the Sauk Valley Impact program. He also is Vice President in Chadwick Achievers 4-H Club. At home, Dawson is heavily involved in his family's commercial cow-calf operation which includes breeds such as angus, Limi, and Hereford cattle. In the fall, Dawson also helps with his family's harvest. For his personal business, Dawson is the founder of Blue-Ribbon Cake Pops. His company is focused on Diabetic Education. After high school, Dawson plans to attend Sauk Valley Community College and the University of Iowa to pursue a degree in business. CEO has pushed Dawson out of his comfort zone and has gotten him used to being comfortable with the uncomfortable. CEO also expanded his network in the Sauk Valley area! He is excited to pursue a career in business after graduation.

JAKE DINGES

Junior | Amboy High School



Jake Dinges is involved in the Student Council and the Leos Club. Jake is Class President, FFA Section Treasurer, and FFA Chapter Vice President. Jake also plays on the football team. Outside of school, Jake volunteers for the Sublette Fire Department as a cadet. He works under the Aquatics Department at Woodhaven Lakes. In his free time, Jake enjoys spending time outdoors camping, kayaking, and fishing. Jake is starting an auto detailing business called Detailed By Dinges. He appreciates the connections and people he has met during the program.

MARQUES FLANAGAN

Senior | Dixon High School



Marques goes by his middle name Quinn. He does two sports, tennis and soccer; he has been a captain for the varsity soccer team the past two years. Quinn is a member of student council, Impact Program, the National Honor Society, a superior honors roll student, has taken 4 AP classes, and he is an Illinois State Scholar. Quinn also works part-time at two jobs: a lifeguard at the Dixon Family YMCA and at Somkit. In his free time, he loves to play pickleball, disc golf, practice soccer, ski, and hang out with friends. He heard about CEO through supporting the tradeshow and already has learned so much. He recognizes the importance of proper communication as well as the benefit of being comfortable with the uncomfortable. For Quinn's individual business, he will be operating a quesadilla stand, going by the name of Quinsadillas. His stand will be located in front of the Northland Mall during the tradeshow and will be perfect for quesadilla lovers who either come hungry or want a meal for later. Quinn is looking to attend a 4-year university to major in business but is still unsure about a future profession.



East CEO

KILEY GAITHER

Senior | Dixon High School



Kiley is part of the class of 2026. She plays on the varsity basketball team, varsity softball team, and is in the National Honors Society. Kiley's family consists of her parents, three brothers, and her sister. She enjoys playing pickleball, hanging out with friends and family, and playing sports. She joined CEO because she wants to work on her leadership skills and meet new people. Kiley plans on attending St Ambrose University and continuing both her athletic and academic career. Through CEO Kiley is creating a charm bar for the tradeshow in the spring. Kiley's Charm Bar is going to be a charm bracelet bar where customers can create their own unique bracelets. While being in CEO, she has learned strong skills that can help her communicate and will follow her throughout life.

BYRON GROBE

Senior | Polo Community High School



Byron Grobe is the middle child of three, between his older sister and younger brother. In his free time he likes to hang out with friends and family. Byron is also an uncle of two. He has been working for Culver's in Dixon for almost 3 years and Lifeguarding for 2 summers. Some sports he participates in are Cross Country, Basketball, and Track. Some clubs Byron participates in are B.L.I.N.D, FFA, FCCLA, Varsity Club and is President of a new club at his school called N.A.M.I. He has learned bigger and better things out of the CEO program and what his future will look like in the community. Byron's individual business is DOGS CAFE, which helps benefit a dog's lifestyle with homemade treats that use all natural ingredients. Byron is also involved in the Sauk Impact Program for which he has to volunteer 100 hours of community service for 2 free years at Sauk. Byron's plans after high school are to go to Sauk Valley Community College for 2 years and then transfer to an out-of-state university.

JAYVIAN HERWIG

Senior | Dixon High School



Jayvian is a 2-sport athlete playing Soccer in the fall and tennis in the spring. He is a 2-time captain as well as an All-Sectional player for the Dukes Soccer Team. During Jayvian's free time he plays club soccer in Rockford for the Rockford Raptors F.C. He loves to fish, golf, play pickleball, go to the soccer fields, watch movies and tv shows, and hang out with friends. Jayvian loves to travel; this summer he traveled to Lincoln, NE to visit family. He has learned many new things from CEO, such as how to small talk, how to make a business plan, and the most valuable thing he learned was how to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. Jayvian is the founder of Diamond Dining Experience which highlights the luxury restaurants in the area. Jayvian plans to attend Monmouth College to play soccer and tennis while majoring in Business and Finance.

ADDISON (ADDIE) JANSSEN

Senior | Milledgeville High School



Addie is involved in volleyball, basketball, softball, spirit squad, musical theater, NHS, Student Council, yearbook, and is President of her FFA Chapter. In her free time, she enjoys dancing at Shelley's Dance Studio, hanging out with friends, and volunteering for the Sauk Valley Impact Program. She plans to attend Augustana College to major in Chemistry and eventually become a forensic scientist. Addie's CEO business is Cocoa Crave which is a brownie bar business. The brownies will be 3x3x1.5 and will come with a choice of a topping such as chocolate sauce, caramel sauce, or strawberry slices. What she has gained from CEO is more business knowledge, better public speaking skills, and has made new friends.

MADOLYNN KIRBY

Senior | Dixon High School



Madolynn has been involved in many sports in the past including volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball, soccer, and bowling. Although she has done many in the past, the only one she has stuck with through high school is bowling. This season she was chosen to be a captain for her high school team and created the best atmosphere for her teams, and she hopes they carry that kindness into the next years. In her spare time, she loves to read books, drink matcha, make jewelry, and watch Gilmore Girls. She also knows how to do too many crafty projects to count, and she is going to bring that creativity and skills into her business. She has created the business Hey You Literary. This is a business that brings customers joy and relaxation with a surprise blind date... with a book! She will also be selling annotation kits and handmade bookmarks! Her parents are Jeffrey Kirby and Nicci Johnson, and she has three siblings. Her siblings and parents are her biggest cheerleaders and are so proud of her accomplishments. This past summer of 2025 she was a part of Dixon's Petunia Festival as Pinky Petunia. She loves to pursue experiences that pressure her to leave her comfort zone. CEO has been the best experience she has ever had, and her confidence has gotten so much better. She will forever be grateful for this experience with her class and in the hopes to bring these attributes to her future career as a business college student and cosmetologist. She is striving to own her own salon one day.





DANIELA (DANI) LOVETT

Senior | Dixon High School



In school, Dani serves as Class of 2026 President, Student Council President, Key Club President, as well as runs track and field and cross country. Along with her extracurriculars, Dani has taken many AP and Honors courses, is a superior honor roll student, part of the National Honors Society, an Illinois State Scholar, and the Community Engagement Student Liaison. Outside of school, Dani is an intern at her local Chamber and Main Street, Discover Dixon, where she helps with events and online work. She was also crowned the 2025 Petunia Festival Queen. Dani lives with her parents and is the youngest of four, with two older sisters and one older brother. She is an aunt of three. Dani spends her free time doing anything and everything that keeps her busy; hanging out with friends and being active in the community is where she thrives. With aspirations to be a dermatologist in the future, Dani is excited to present her business, STICKW/ME, at the tradeshow in April. STICKW/ME is an eczema-safe lotion stick for convenient and mess free on the go use. Made with natural ingredients STICKW/ME is for all skin types and will offer a 1 oz lotion stick as well as a chap-stick. Being in the CEO program, Dani has learned just how many connections there are in the area and skills she is ready to apply to her own business. The opportunities that CEO has brought to her are greater than she expected, and she is thankful for the endeavor. After high school, Dani is set to attend the University of Illinois to major in biology and minor in business.

DANIEL RAMIREZ

Senior | Dixon High School



Daniel is a two-sport athlete running cross country and track and field. Outside of school he works on growing his business, Glean Team Window Washing, that he owns with his friends and teammates. He also enjoys playing poker, watching football, and fishing, especially when it involves being with family and friends. Daniel is originally from Florida and still visits very often as many close family members still live there. He applied to CEO after many people suggested he would thrive within the program. Through the CEO program, Daniel gained valuable skills that will help him in both business and life. The program helped him build greater confidence in himself and his abilities. After high school, he wants to go back to Florida for college where he plans to go to Florida Gulf Coast University.

AVA SCHLUTER

Junior | Eastland High School



Ava is involved in choir. As an Impact Student, Ava also volunteers at local non-profits, events, and schools. She partakes in golf and her favorite subjects are Literature and Human A&P. Ava also enjoys writing and giving speeches. She loves sharing her faith and goes to multiple youth groups. Ava is currently in the process of being confirmed into the Catholic Church. In her free time, Ava enjoys spending time with friends, spreading the Gospel, baking, and going to concerts. She loves her blended family and has 5 siblings. Her parents are very supportive of her goals and love to watch her succeed. Her best friend Cora, and her other friends are a very big support system for her. Ava is starting a baking mix business called The Tradition Co. At the business, they craft various mixes with real ingredients you actually recognize for your convenience and peace of mind. Their mission is to carry the foundation of food forward and provide local families and individuals food with recognizable ingredients. Ava applied for CEO in hopes of taking and finding more opportunities to become successful and expand her chain of connections in business and political fields. Her main takeaway from CEO so far is to take opportunities, get outside of your comfort zone, and go for it. After high school, Ava plans to become an ultrasound technician and use that to fuel a political career, but most of all she wants to be a mom.

MICKENNA (MICKI) WORRELL

Senior | Dixon High School



Mickenna is a member of the Student Council as well as the National Honors Society, plays on the varsity volleyball team, and is captain on the girls' soccer team. At home, Micki lives with her parents, her younger sister, her dog, and her pet turtle. Micki has also been an employee at Culver's in Dixon since 2023. She enjoys spending time with her friends, playing pickleball, and going on walks. Through CEO, Micki has developed her leadership and problem-solving skills as well as the importance of networking. Micki is the creator of Sun-Rise Sun-Scents, a homemade candle company that makes candles with fragrances to remind customers of the most vibrant parts of the day. After high school, Micki plans to attend Sauk Valley Community College before transferring to a university to major in marketing.

JAKE ZEPEZAUER

Junior | Dixon High School



Jake is involved in Student Council, Class Officers, Key Club, The Impact Program, and the Dixon High School Broadcasting Club. He plays Football and Baseball. Some of his hobbies include watching football and hanging out with friends and family. Jake is the Junior Class President. He joined CEO because he was recommended too and also because he believes it can open up future opportunities. Jake hopes to go to a four year college and earn his bachelors degree. Jake is the founder of a business called Vintage Vault. In his business he sells high quality vintage shirts and apparel at affordable prices. The biggest thing that Jake has taken away from the CEO class is that no act of kindness is too small, and networking is essential to becoming a successful entrepreneur.

class of **2026**

ALUMNI



CLASS OF 2014

Nicholas Abele, Jacob Ardis, Bryan Arleberry, James Bass, Christopher Bauer, Cory Brown, Kiley Carroll, Jameson Fagan, Abigail Gillette, Sarah Gunderson, Rachel Humphreys, Joshua Knie, Lindsay McCoy, Alan Osterhaus, Brady Reuter, Bryson Reyes, Cody Sanders, Andrew Schmitt, RJ Sharp, Kyle Sinn, Marissa Vesey, Bailey Wallingford, Thomas Wei



CLASS OF 2015

Isaiah Celestino, Kyle Decker, Aaron Frank, Drake Gaul, Christian Hicks, Nick McGuire, Destiny Pontnack, Bailey Russell, Margaret Smith, Brittani Sohn, Ashley Stralow, Farrah Stubbe, Regan Todhunter



CLASS OF 2016

Nicole Arduini, Hannah Atherton, Addyson Bales, Jackson Bauer, Kaitlin Brown, Primitivo Cosileon, Payton Harris, Maura Harrison, Bryana Johnson, Dontae Johnson, Samuel McCullough, Jazzarae McGlown, Bronson Mintun, Nolan Moeller, Mason Myers, Kevin Sigel, Kyle Sigel, Sterling Thornton, Clara Thorpe, Jamyson Trancoso, Michael Willard



CLASS OF 2017

Tristen Aguilar, Dylan Alexander, Eli Blaney, Ross Cady, Karley Crady, Evan Ernst, Drew Gray, Abby Gunderson, Darius McGlown, Natalie Osterhaus, Modi Purvis, Christopher Rademacher, Emily Smith, Ethan Sensor, Faith Sandrock, Noah Tupper, Tessa Vander Bleek, Kody Wetzell, Justin Wiggins, Maddie Wilson



CLASS OF 2018

Kurt Agravante, Isaac Blaney, Jose Castro, Nicholas Clemens, Mitchell Clodfelter, German Delacruz, Victoria Dingman, Jasmine Haggard, Samuel Hildebrand, Gehrig Koerner, Kade Kovarik, Andrew Laub, Anastasia Mallas, Hannah McCarty, Kortney Queckboerner, Brendon Riesselman, Rachel Scidmore, Kallie Timmons, Madison Weaver, Jack Williamson, Cassidy Wilson, Hannah Wilson



CLASS OF 2019

Kennedy Anderson, Jalen Bickett, Hunter Buser, Cailean Davids, Olivia Edmondson, Lauren Humphreys, Camryn Johnson, Sean Lahey, Alyssa Mathews, Grant Minnsen, Elise Moeller, Lauren Moeller, Meghan Morales, Brady Moran, Erin Porter, Nolan Randick, Allison Rhodes, Johannah Ruff, Grace Sandrock, Spencer Schutz, Brittney Shipman, Riley Wescott, Andrew Wilson, Kyle Yde, Justin Young



CLASS OF 2020

Evan Adami, Clair Brodshaw, Shertynne Brown, Carsen Farrol, Sara Hafner, Kaitlin Hanrahan, Clayton Johnson, Maxwell Jones, Sam Lauer, Damon Miller, Liberty Nichols, Josh Olson, Nathan Ottens, Stephen Reifsteck, Cecelia Ryan, Sean Sandrock, Aidan Schmall, Nicholas Simester, Lucas Sotelo, Taylor Spellman, Nathan Strong, Jayden Valdez, Meghan VanBuren, Trevor White, Jacob Wickert, Dylan Winstead, Carol Yingling

CLASS OF 2021

Jesse Arians, Jack Boss, Emily Brooks, Connor Colby, Ashley Crawford, Joe Dukes, Lauren Fagan, Meg Frank, Estella Gardner, Makenzie Glassburn, Daxtun Heier, Connor Hummel, Grace Jakobs, Shannon Kelly, Brooklyn Lachat, Marco Lopez, Dom Lozano, Ryan McGinn, Sydney Minnsen, Autumn Nelson, Nate Neubauer, Elliot Noble, Rosie Reyes, Brooklyn Reynolds, Will Rude, Grace Smith, Nick Smith, Cadence Stonitsch, Ellie Wasson, Emma Watts, Katie Withrow

CLASS OF 2022

Kenneth Boesen, Lucas Clark, Ally Clevenger, Chloe Coll, Claire Crisham, Matthew Downs, Alexsia Funderberg, Carlos Garcia, Alex Georgiev, Sarah-Beth Hoenitsch, Alexandria Headrick, Katherine Henson, Kacen Johnson, Grant Koerner, Kierra Magana, Morgan McBride, Bridget McCrory, Matthew Megli, Logan Moeller, Kory Mullen, Kaden Mulligan, Rhett Oelting, Marlee Oros, Zachary Pauley, Mason Randick, Molly Riffle, Braeden Ruiz, Lilianna Smith, Hayden Steinmeyer, Isaac Toms-Smith, Luke Valentino, Kelsey Woolard



CLASS OF 2023

Rhiannon Allison, Makenna Arickx, Logan Copeland, Samuel Francque, Josh Greenfield, Carver Grummert, Seth Johnson, Hunter Luyando, Ben Munoz-Ripley, Miles Nawrocki, Payten Newman, Ainsley Reed, Taylor Reyna, Grace Rippy, Beth Roth, Olivia Turner, Kaiyana Washington, Cayden Aiters, Nour Alsamah, Emma Castro, Alec Fulton, Sydney Hargrave, Maddux Hayden, Donovan Kuhlemier, Sean Lauer, Mallory Misiewicz, Jackson Ortgiesen, Isabella Pena, Quentin Seggebruch, Gracie Sleidinger, Hannah Steinmeyer

CLASS OF 2024

Kennedy Burkholder, Eryn Carreno, Destini Chambers, Olivia Clark, Lili Drinkall, Owen Farrol, Maliah Grenoble, Kameron Grobe, Kale Grobe, Kylee Jensen, Ana Jungerman, Makaylah Kirby, Samantha Know, Alease McInn, Josh Minor, Avery Olinger, Makaylee Pipes, Autumn Pritchard, Jason Prouant, Olivia Purvis, Lucas Schaab, Rivers Schafer, Olivia Schurman, Rylan Shenefeld, Emma Smith, Madelynn Taylor-Steffens, Makenzie Toms, Braeden Thorne, Nora Truedson, Brady VanWeelden, Jimmy Wadsworth, Mason Weigle, Tyler Zepezauer

CLASS OF 2025

Adam Ruwender, MaryKay Downs, Lillian Ebersole, Hannah Foster, Ryan Gebhardt, Blake Geuns, Lucas Hacker, Paezleigh Hudgin, Blake Huizenga, Charles Johnson, Konner Johnson, Ellie Kested, Kayden Knutti, Mason Landes, Karter Livengood, Kevin Marquez, Carolyn Masini, Loren Meiners, Ben Oros, Natalie Pilgrim, Arianna Reyna, Macie Rosengren, Andrew Roth, Cullen Shaner, Bella Seachette, Peyton Spears, Hanah Thorne, Brooklyn Thorns, Kaya VanMatre, Wyatt William Widloff, Alayna Young, Hiram Zigler

MENTORS

A mentor is matched with each CEO student. They assist and guide them through the process of creating their individual businesses.

WEST - Jordan Anderson, Alesha Cardwell, Corey Gabler, Rebecca Garland, Mark Humphreys, Nik Jakobs, Bo Mays & Dean Ahlers, Terry McGuire, Suzy Perino, Alejandro Rivera, Bailey Russell, Abby Sandoval, Sean Sandrock & Sena Warkins, Janel & Nathan Stahr, Daniel Swihart

EAST - Karla Belzer, Kirsten Crawford, Brittany Geiger, Noah Grot, Dr. David Hellmich, Dallas Knack, Sasha Logan, Dr. Jon Mandrell, Patrick McBride, Seth Nicklaus, Mary Oros, Lucas Pauley, Brent Reuter, Ashley Richter, Vanessa Wessels, Amanda Wike

CLASS HOSTS

Because CEO doesn't meet in traditional classrooms, we are thankful for the businesses who invite us in throughout the year.



PITCH CONTEST

2026 WINNERS

1ST PLACE (\$450)

Haleigh Dale, *Daleigh Slimes*

2ND PLACE (\$350)

Emmaline Burger, *Ryse & Shine*

3RD PLACE (\$250)

Jake Dinges, *Detailed by Dinges*

4TH PLACE (\$150)

Jake Zepezauer, *Vintage Vault*

5TH - 10TH PLACE (\$50 each)

Addie Janssen, *Cocoa Crave*

Byron Grobe, *DOGS CAFE*

Maddie Kirby, *Hey You Literary*

Quinn Flanagan, *Quinnsadillas*

Tynlee Williams, *Shore Scent*

Micki Worrell, *Sun*Rise Sun*Scents*



A special thank you to the sponsors of our annual local pitch contest.



INNERVIEW LLC



STERLING WOODWORKS
CUSTOM CRAFTED AND HANDMADE WOODWORK

BUSINESS TOURS

7:24 Fitness on the Rock

All Good Things Farms

Astec Industries

BMO Arena

BorgWarner

Boss Roofing

City of Sterling

Country Financial-Katy Selmi

Culvers-Rock Falls

Deer Valley Banquets

Dinges Fire

Dixon Elks Lodge

Dixon Family YMCA

Dixon Fire Department

Dixon Park District

Dixon Police Department

Downtown Dixon Alliance Group

Farmers National Bank-Prophetstown

First National Bank in Amboy (Dixon Location)

First State Bank of Shannon

Frary Lumber

Fresco on First

Grand Prairie Farms

Greater Sterling Development Corporation

Grit & Grace

Halo Branded Solutions

Hammitt Insurance

IFH Group

Illinois Main Street Conference

Jakobs Brothers Farms

John Thomas Inc

Kitchen Incubator of NW Illinois

Kitzman's Farm Sanctuary

Knie Appliance & Furniture

McCormick Event Center

McCormick Nursery

Micron

Midland States Bank

Moore Tires

Northland Mall

Open Door Community Church

Reagan Run 5k

Refuse to Quit Gym

River Country 101.7

Rock River Grain

Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce

Sauk Valley Bank

Sauk Valley Community College

Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program

Sauk Valley Food Bank

Sauk Valley Jui-Jitsu

Selmi Formal Wear

Selmi Greenhouse and Family Farm

Sinnissippi Centers

Small Business Development Center

Stahr Media

Sterling Federal Bank

Sterling Main Street

Sterling Woodworks

Stone Bridge Running

The Flipside

United Way of Lee County

United Way of Whiteside County

UPM Adhesive Materials

Venier Jewelers

Verifacts

Wahl Clipper

Walmart Distribution Center

Whiteside County Senior Center

Woodlawn Arts Academy

YWCA of the Sauk Valley





SPEAKERS

Senator Li Arellano
 Caroline Arnould
 Sandi Baylor-Schmidt
 Karla Belzer
 Robin Canode
 Laura Garbaugh
 Nick Clemens
 Pam Clodfelter
 Cindy Conklin
 Lori Cortez
 Kirsten Crawford
 Jennifer Dallas
 Norm Deets
 Gary DeVore
 Ken Duncan
 Fischer Excavation
 Aaron Flick
 Michelle French
 Representative Brad Fritts
 Kim Gaffey

Doug Gamm
 Brittany Geiger
 Carter Grummert
 Lynn Hammer
 Elaine Hand
 Le Hartman
 Dr. David Hellmich
 Linda Hellmich
 Scott Hibbard
 Tyler Hodapp
 Kristina Hosticka
 Brandi Hutchcraft
 Julie Jacobs
 Margo Jakobs
 Nik Jakobs
 Josh Johnson
 Sam Kersey
 Dallas Knock
 Jennifer Lang
 Danny Langloss

Bud LeFevre
 Courtney Liggenberg
 Sasha Logan
 Hasen Lott
 Dr. Jon Mandrell
 Dr. Kelly Mandrell
 Laurie McBride
 Travis McBride
 Patrick McBride
 Tony McComble
 Brett Nicklaus
 Kris Noble
 Dawn Olds
 Keri Olson
 Mary Oros
 Paul Osborn
 Lucas Pauley
 Kim Purvis
 Brent Reuter
 Rock River Marketing Group

Allyson Roling
 JoHannah Ruff
 Bailey Russell
 Gary Sandrock
 Sean Sandrock
 Daniel Swihart
 Chris Tennyson
 Megan Thompson
 Tiffany Tipton
 Parker Valdez
 Scott VanOpdorp
 Doug Villhard
 Shirley Vivian
 Chad Weigle
 Vanessa Wessels
 DeAnne White
 Amanda Wike
 Maggie Wike
 Emily Zimmerman



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CITY OF DIXON

PLATINUM INVESTORS

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LEGACY INVESTORS

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SAUK VALLEY MEDIA
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LEE-OGLE ENTERPRISE ZONE
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RAYNOR MANUFACTURING
STEEL RIVER SYSTEMS, LLC
STERLING FEDERAL BANK
STERLING MAIN STREET
TETTEN GRAINS
UNITED WAY OF LEE COUNTY
VALUE LAB

2018 CEO CLASS
2019 CEO CLASS
2020 CEO CLASS
2021 CEO CLASS
2022 CEO CLASS
2023 CEO CLASS

FRIENDS OF CEO

ADVANCE EMS
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DIXON AUTOBODY CLINIC
JACOBS, BRADLEY & JULIE
ROCK FALLS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
STAHR MEDIA
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High School
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Board Member
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Regional Superintendent
of Schools

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creating entrepreneurial opportunities



JOSH JOHNSON

Advisory Member
Whiteside Area Career Center
Director



SASHA LOGAN

Advisory Member
Sauk Valley Community College
Dean of Business, Career
and Technical Programs





The mission of the CEO program is to prepare our youth to be responsible, enterprising individuals who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers and contribute to the economic development and sustainability of our area. It is our hope that these young entrepreneurs will follow in the footsteps of many of the entrepreneurs in our community and will reside in or return here to run their business, raise their families, and give back to their community.

creating entrepreneurial opportunities

Dear Community Stake Holder,

You are the heart of CEO! Your commitment of time, treasure, and energy is critical to the success of the CEO. As a CEO Investor or Friend, you are providing the needed resources for student tuition and other expenses associated with the program, while also ensuring the sustainability of the CEO Class for future students. Thank you for supporting CEO!

INVESTOR FORM

I/We understand that our contributions will be used for the operating needs of the CEO Program in my community. In consideration of the gifts of others for the same purpose, I/We hereby agree to contribute the following (please select all that apply).

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ INVESTOR - \$1,000 per year for 3 years | ☐ MENTOR - Be paired with a student for the course of the class year so that they may call on me with questions and I may offer advice or other support as needed. |
| ☐ INVESTOR - \$3,000 one-time payment in full | |
| ☐ PLATINUM - \$2,500 per year for 3 years | ☐ HOST SITE - Provide a meeting place for the class. |
| ☐ PLATINUM - \$7,500 one-time payment in full | ☐ BUSINESS VISIT - The class may tour my business atleast once during the class year. |
| ☐ TITANIUM - \$5,000 per year for 3 years | ☐ GUEST SPEAKER - Volunteer to speak to the class about my business or life skills. |
| ☐ TITANIUM - \$15,000 one-time payment in full | |
| ☐ FRIEND OF CEO - Amount _____ | |

Business Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PAYMENT METHOD

- ☐ Payment is enclosed ☐ Please send me an invoice for my selected investor level.

Please mail checks payable to Sauk Valley College Foundation, 173 IL Route 2, Dixon, Illinois 61021.

Sauk Valley College Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization. Your investor donation is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

JOSH JOHNSON

Whiteside Area Career Center

815.626.5810

VISIT

www.wacc-ceo.com
for more information

**SAUK VALLEY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION OFFICE**

foundation@svcc.edu

815.835.6329

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