

WARREN COUNTY COALITION

*THE NON-PROFIT HOSPITALITY GROUP PROMOTING EVENTS AND
YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LAKE GEORGE AREA*

Founder of Storytown, Early Leader of Fort William Henry and Local Elected Officials to be Honored

*Annual Heroes of Hospitality Dinner
will Benefit SUNY Adirondack Scholarship Program*

LAKE GEORGE — Seven major tourism community leaders, including two pioneers of the industry, will be honored Wednesday, July 31, 2024, by the Warren County hospitality community.

The 2024 Heroes of Hospitality Awards honorees are:

- The late **Charles R. Wood**, on the 70th anniversary of the opening of Storytown USA, one of America's first theme parks and a cornerstone of the Upstate New York tourism community. Mr. Wood established Storytown in 1954. He also founded many other Lake George hospitality businesses and was a philanthropist and co-founder of the Double H Ranch Adirondack camp for seriously ill children;
- The late **Robert F. Flacke**, longtime president of Fort William Henry Corp., operators of the oldest resort on Lake George and the restored Fort William Henry historic fortress, which also opened in 1954. In addition to his role at Fort William Henry, Mr. Flacke served as chairman of the Adirondack Park Agency, commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, and Lake George town supervisor;
- The late **Dennis Dickinson**, supervisor of the Town of Lake George from 2012 to 2024, a professional engineer and surveyor, and respected advocate for environmental protection of the lake;
- **Vincent Crocitto II**, supervisor of the Town of Lake George, operator of the Holiday Inn Resort and other motels and lodging properties, and strong community advocate for youth, recreation and tourism programs;
- **Gene Merlino**, supervisor of the Town of Lake Luzerne, longtime chair of the Warren County Board of Supervisors Tourism and Occupancy Tax Committee, champion of county-wide tourism initiatives, and former owner with his wife Linda of the Lamplight Inn in Lake Luzerne;
- **Sam Luciano**, president of Fort William Henry Corp., where he has worked for 40 years. Mr. Luciano is a longtime advocate for bringing major events to Lake George

to support the year-round tourism economy and employment and was instrumental in bringing Winter's Dream to Lake George for the first time in 2024.

- **Rebecca Wood**, president of Six Flags Great Escape Theme Park (the successor to Storytown USA) in Queensbury and recent recipient of the New York State Hospitality & Tourism Association's Outstanding Tourism Executive of the Year award.

Hundreds of friends and colleagues from the hospitality community and beyond are expected at The Carriage House at Fort William Henry at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 31, in a celebration of the honorees. A welcome reception will precede dinner and the awards ceremony. Reservations can be made at <https://www.fortwilliamhenry.com/hospitality-heroes/>. Group tables and corporate sponsorships are available.

The event will benefit a SUNY Adirondack scholarship program to support students in the college's hospitality management program. Last year's Heroes of Hospitality event raised more than \$5,000 for the scholarship. Hospitality Management is among the five business degrees offered at SUNY Adirondack, which also offers a one-year certificate in the subject. In addition to general education classes, students take event planning, hotel resort management and a variety of electives, including marketing and culinary classes and receive social media training.

"Students learn how vast the hospitality industry is and they receive an education they can take anywhere and get a job," said Dr. Kelli Hatin, professor of business at SUNY Adirondack.

The Heroes of Hospitality Dinner is sponsored by the Warren County Coalition and Fort William Henry. The Coalition is the non-profit local organization established to support Winter's Dream and other events major events in the Lake George area and to support year-round employment opportunities.

"We are honored to host this event honoring the giants of our community who have dedicated their lives to welcoming visitors to this beautiful part of the world, and we're proud to support students who will carry the hospitality tradition into the next generation," said Kathryn Flacke Muncil, chair and chief executive officer of Fort William Henry.