**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Ulster County Economic Development Alliance Announces Recipients of**

**Jump Start Funds in Ellenville/Wawarsing**

*Ellenville Million Funds Will Be Used to Support New Puerto Rican Restaurant*

*in Napanoch and Fitness Center/Gym in Ellenville*

Kingston, NY—Ulster County Executive Mike Hein and The Ulster County Economic Development Alliance (UCEDA) announce the completion of the Jump Start Competition funded by the County Executive’s innovative Ellenville Million initiative. Two businesses—Carmen’s Sabor Latino and Humble Gym, Inc.—were selected from a pool of 20 applicants, and each will receive $51,980 to fund the development of their businesses.

“We have implemented several successful projects for economic development purposes since 2015 when County Executive Hein established his nine component Ellenville Million fund,” said **Julie Cohen Lonstein, Chairperson of the Ulster County Economic Development Alliance, Inc.** “One original component known as the ‘Economic Development Fund’ was renamed ‘Jump Start Fund’ to provide grants for developers and new business enterprises within the Village of Ellenville and the Town of Wawarsing. Our goal at the UCEDA has been to help the people and the economies prosper in these communities and to make funding available for new and growing businesses. We’re very pleased to award Jump Start Funds to two new businesses, who plan to fill up to 15 new jobs and will offer distinct services to area residents.”

Guidelines for the disbursement of the Jump Start Funds were established and applications were solicited beginning in March 2018. Twenty applications were received prior to the June 1 deadline and ten applicants advanced to the second phase of the competition, which required the submission of a concise three-year business plan by July 27. Applicants were encouraged to contact the Mid-Hudson Small Business Center for assistance with their preparation and presentation before the UCEDA Board members on August 23.

Following careful deliberations, the UCEDA Board voted on September 4 to split the funds remaining in the Jump Start component of the Ellenville Million to award Carmen’s Sabor Latino and Humble Gym an equal sum of $51,980 each to “jump start” their new business ventures.

**Carmen Oquendo and Eric Abraham**, employed respectively by Ellenville Central School District and the NYS Eastern Correctional Facility in Napanoch, will operate their new restaurant, Carmen’s Sabor Latino, out of a new building to be constructed at 1 Clinton Street in Napanoch. The lifelong Ellenville residents, who have raised their children in the area, have been active in many community projects and both work for Abraham’s Five Star Landscaping business as well.

“Our restaurant fits in with the diverse mix of family-run businesses in the Village of Ellenville and its surrounding areas,” said Oquendo. “Many in our tight knit and supportive community have expressed the need for a local Puerto Rican eatery so they do not have to travel to Middletown, Kingston or Sullivan County to enjoy the food they love. Our property is on a business highway district, which is a key location, and we anticipate serving the hardworking officers, teachers and medical staff who work at both Eastern and Ulster Correctional Facilities, Ellenville Regional Hospital, Ellenville Central Schools, and all our friends and the families who have lived here alongside us all our lives.”

“We were very honored to have been selected,” Oquendo added. “Since Eric and I were born and raised here, we’ve seen our beautiful community change, and receiving this funding really gave us a warm sense about how people are always trying to make it better. When we met with the people in the [UCEDA] office in Kingston, it was an amazing, warm and friendly feeling. I had been looking into grants and hadn’t found anything—but the knowledge everyone carries in that office, and the resources they opened us up to, things I didn’t even know existed, were life changing. The atmosphere there was so welcoming, and it was really nice to work with them.”

Humble Gym, Inc., a new fitness center/gym, will offer weight training, cardio, stretching and personal training at a recently purchased building in the Village of Ellenville. Jump Start funding will be used to renovate and restore the building, and Humble Gym will be the only local facility that offers affordable fitness services to residents of Ellenville and nearby communities.

Following completion of building and renovation plans, both businesses anticipate opening their doors to serve the public by the end of the year.

For more information about Ellenville Million, please visit <http://ulstercountyny.gov/economic-development/ulster-county-economic-development-alliance/ellenville-million>.

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