

A place for people who **build with AI** in the Southern Tier.

*Five months ago, upstate New York was a blank spot on the map of the world's largest hands-on AI community.
Then SUNY Broome opened a door.*

By **Jason Gardner**, Founder of AI Tinkerers Upstate NY



Kicking off another monthly meetup. The agenda is always the same shape: food, live demos, round-table, done by eight.

I spent about a year and a half driving down to AI Tinkerers in New York City. I loved the format. Real builders getting up to demo working code, then everyone hanging around afterward to talk shop. The four-hour round trip got old, though. So I pulled up a map of every AI Tinkerers chapter on earth and found a giant hole sitting right over central and upstate New York. I applied to fill it, and the Upstate NY chapter got approved.

THE IDEA

A demo-first room, 60 miles wide

AI Tinkerers is a global network of 245 cities and more than 115,000 members, but every chapter is local. Ours is centered on Binghamton and reaches out about 60 miles: Ithaca, Elmira, Cortland, Oneonta, up toward Syracuse and into northeastern PA. That watershed holds more than a dozen colleges and a real bench of engineers, founders, and researchers who were building with AI mostly on their own.

The premise is simple and a little stubborn: working code over slide decks. Each demo is five tight minutes of a real system running, followed by questions from a room full of people who could build the same thing. No sales pitches, no keynotes, no gatekeeping. If you're curious and you're making something, you belong here.

THE LAUNCH

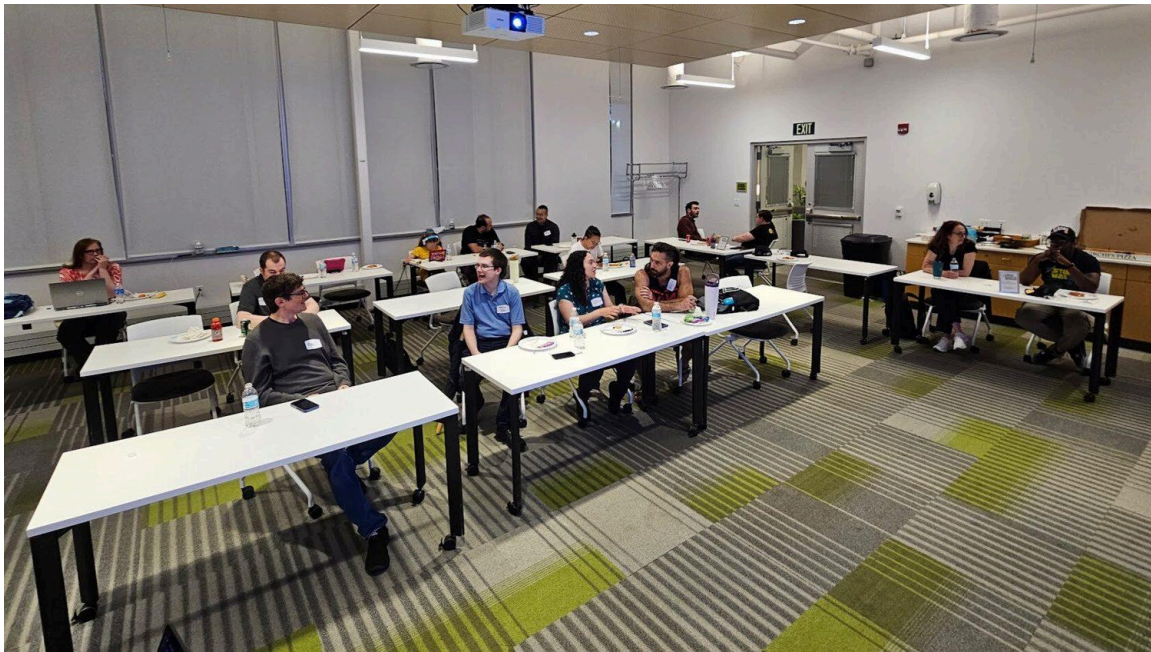
SUNY Broome said yes

When I started cold-emailing everyone I could think of, SUNY Broome answered fast. Dr. Christine Martey-Ochola, the college's AVP and Dean of STEM and Workforce Development, found us a room, learned the format, and hosted our very first meeting in the Applied Technology Building in February. She said yes before we had a single attendee. Attendance was predictably light that first night, but the college showed up for us anyway. Sharlene Provilus, the Assistant Director of Workforce Development, has been on the ground at every meeting since, making sure the room, the calendar, and the small details actually work. None of this exists without them.

From there the chapter found its home at the Koffman Southern Tier Incubator. A place sets the tone for a group. Koffman is the most startup-shaped space in the region, and being in it helped us become the kind of community we set out to be: builders in a builder's room, curious and a little scrappy. The crowd has grown every month since.



The Koffman Southern Tier Incubator, Binghamton. Home base for the chapter, and a fitting one. It's where a lot of the region's startups get their start.



The room before the demos. Builders from across the Southern Tier. The “mingle and eat pizza” half of the night is where a lot of the real work happens.

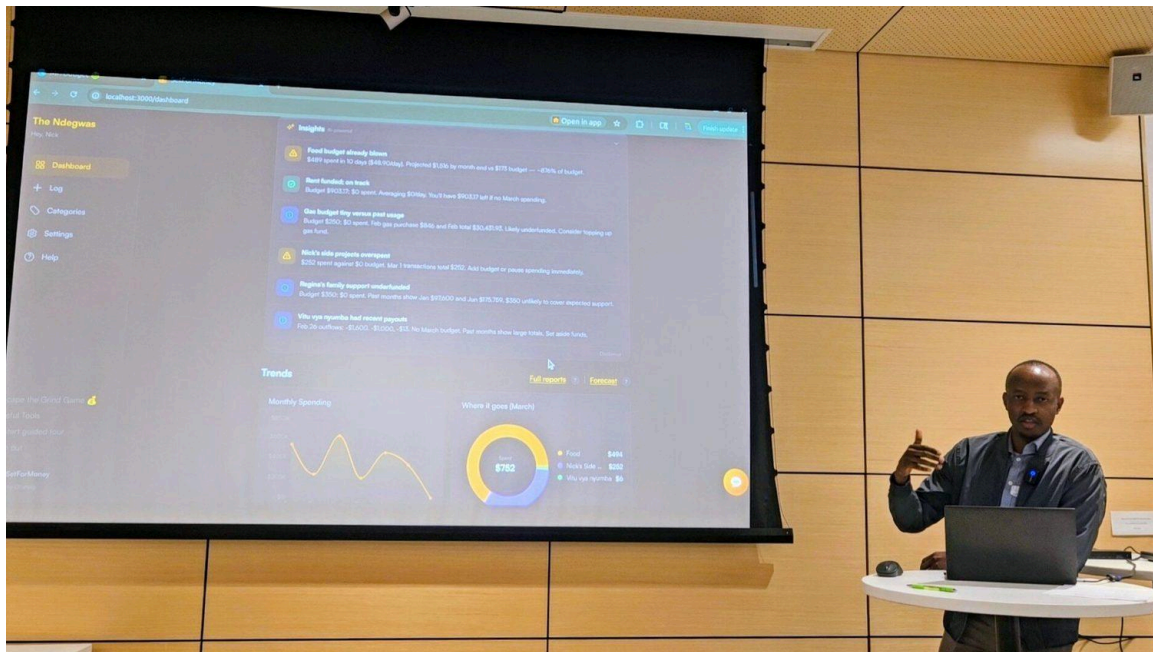
WHAT A NIGHT LOOKS LIKE

Real systems, running live

The best way to explain the meetup is to show you two demos from recent nights. Both are people who got up, plugged in a laptop, and ran something real in front of the room.



Matt Brooker of PostHog demoing an agent loop that takes a production error from “detected” to “fixed” on its own: error tracker to Claude agent to a merged pull request, no human in the middle. April’s meetup was sponsored by PostHog.



Nick Githinji walking through SetForMoney, a household budgeting app with AI-generated spending insights. Text it “groceries 45” and it does the rest.

WHAT WE'RE BUILDING TOWARD

Where this goes next

The goal is bigger than a monthly event. I want a durable community that makes the Southern Tier a place where you can build ambitious things with AI without feeling like you're doing it alone. That means going deeper with the universities and incubators that make this region tick, welcoming more first-time demoers, and keeping the door wide open to anyone curious enough to walk through it.

With SUNY Broome and Koffman behind us, that future feels a lot closer.

NEXT MEETUP

AI TINKERERS UPSTATE NY

JUST BUILD IT!

Monthly Accountability Demos Begin



Tuesday, August 11, 2026



6:00 PM - 8:00 PM



Koffman Southern Tier Incubator • Binghamton, NY