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## GLENS FALLS BUSINESS REPORT

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# Resource TOOL BOX

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The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a 100% membership funded organization with the mission of supporting our business community through advocacy, education, connection and collaboration. The ARCC offers numerous benefits intended to help businesses grow and thrive, including resources in the following areas: business and professional development, money savings, marketing and promotion, ribbon cuttings, and sponsorships.  
518-798-1761 | AdirondackChamber.org

## LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CVB

The mission of Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, Inc. is to drive tourism to the Lake George region year-round while fostering a vibrant business community. The Chamber seeks to promote growth and development of its member businesses by offering networking events, educational programs, ribbon cuttings and other opportunities.  
518-668-5755 | LakeGeorgeChamber.com

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111 Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Albany, NY 12210 | 518-465-7511 | bcny.org

## EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT

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## NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

518-457-9000 | dol.ny.gov

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esd.ny.gov/business-pandemic-recovery-initiative

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# THE ADIRONDACK REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## Welcomes New Leadership

### Four New Board Members and Chair Announced



**CHRIS THOMAS**

Owner,  
Elite 9 Talent Solutions



**CRAIG SEYBOLT**

Senior Vice President & Regional  
Corporate Banking Manager, NBT Bank



**MAURICE O'CONNELL**

HR Specialist,  
Adirondack Studios



**RYAN HAIG**

Account Executive,  
Amsure



by **Amanda Blanton**,  
ARCC Vice President,  
Marketing & Communications

*Photos Courtesy of the ARCC*

**W**ith a new year comes new opportunities, and the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is pleased to welcome four new members to their Board of Directors in 2025.

“The ARCC looks forward to the opportunities that our new board members will bring. Each of our board members bring something unique to the organization, which we are incredibly thankful for,” said ARCC President & CEO Tricia Rogers.

#### JOINING THE ARCC BOARD IN 2025 ARE:

##### **Ryan Haig, Account Executive for Amsure**

Ryan Haig is uniquely positioned to champion the ARCC values and initiatives in the North Country business community. He previously served as an Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) intern, employee, volunteer, LADK Alum, mentor, and advisory council member.

Ryan earned his associate's degree in business

administration from SUNY Adirondack and a bachelor's degree in business from Skidmore College. Having achieved his Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC) designation, Ryan now serves as a trusted advisor at Amsure, providing risk management services for commercial clients primarily in Warren, Washington, and Saratoga counties. His connection to a variety of businesses throughout the geographical footprint of the ARCC positions him well to understand the unique needs of the ARCC business community. As an active member of the ARCC, Ryan is passionate about creating community and modeling servant leadership. Ryan has personally experienced the continuous generosity of this business community that has benefitted him both personally and professionally, an experience he wishes to share with others.



### **Maurice “Mo” O’Connell, HR Specialist with Adirondack Studios**

Maurice “Mo” O’Connell has over 35 years of experience in various aspects of Human Resources, Business Development, Theatrical Administration, Museum Management, Event Creation, Civic Service, and Volunteer Coordination. His extensive local career includes Museum and New Business Development for Adirondack Studios, General Manager/Director of the National Museum of Dance and Hall of Fame, and House Manager at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC).

Mr. O’Connell has actively participated in the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce, and he is a well-known entity with local business leaders and not-for-profit agencies. His involvement can also be attributed to being an advocate and host to the ARCC Leadership Adirondack program and a panelist for the joint ARCC and SCCC venture titled “Building Belonging” held at SUNY Adirondack a few months ago.

He is a past President of Lakes to Locks Passage (the Lakes to Locks Passage is designated as a New York State Scenic Byway, a National Scenic Byway, and an All-American Road), as well as Past President of the Friends of US Grant Cottage on Mount McGregor. He has been involved with many other local civic and not-for-profit organizations, including the Feeder Canal Alliance.

### **Craig Seybolt, Senior Vice President and Regional Corporate Banking Manager for NBT Bank**

With over 18 years of professional banking experience, Craig Seybolt has worked closely

with regional leaders and the commercial relationship team to support commercial customers throughout the North Country and Glens Falls/Saratoga region.

Mr. Seybolt was born and raised in South Glens Falls and holds a Bachelor of Science degree from The State University of New York at Plattsburgh. Active in his community, he has served as a board Trustee for The Hyde Collection, President of the Moreau Community Center, President of the Glens Falls Kiwanis Foundation and member of the South Glens Falls Youth Baseball Board of Directors. In his free time Mr. Seybolt enjoys spending time with his family and cheering on the Buffalo Bills!

### **Chris Thomas, Owner of Elite 9 Talent Solutions**

Christopher J. Thomas is a seasoned executive leader with over two decades of experience in developing innovative strategies to drive success in complex organizations. With a strong background in leadership methodologies and concepts, he has built a reputation for talent acquisition and team building expertise, leading numerous teams across various industries to achieve exceptional results.

As a retired senior executive in the U.S. Marine Corps and current owner of a recruiting and workforce development company, Chris has consistently delivered impactful results, leveraging his analytical prowess to exceed client expectations. He has worked with businesses of all sizes, providing tailored solutions to drive prosperity and success.

Chris is committed to ongoing learning and professional development, pursuing a Doctor of Education in Leadership & Innovation (Ed.D) degree, in addition to holding a

Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and Master’s in Public Administration. He is also a certified Resilience-Building Leadership Professional Trainer and Everything DiSC Practitioner, equipped to develop resilient teams and leadership programs that drive organizational excellence.

### **ARCC APPOINTS NEW BOARD CHAIR**

In addition, the ARCC appointed their new Board Chair, Damian D’Angelico, General Manager of Fitzgerald Bros. Beverages. Mr. D’Angelico was promoted to General Manager of Fitzgerald Bros. in November of 2024 and has over 30 years of achievements in the multiple positions he has held there. He has served as an officer on the ARCC Board for four consecutive years.

“I am very excited about chairing the ARCC Board of Directors,” said D’Angelico. “I believe in the mission of the organization and what it brings to the local business community.”

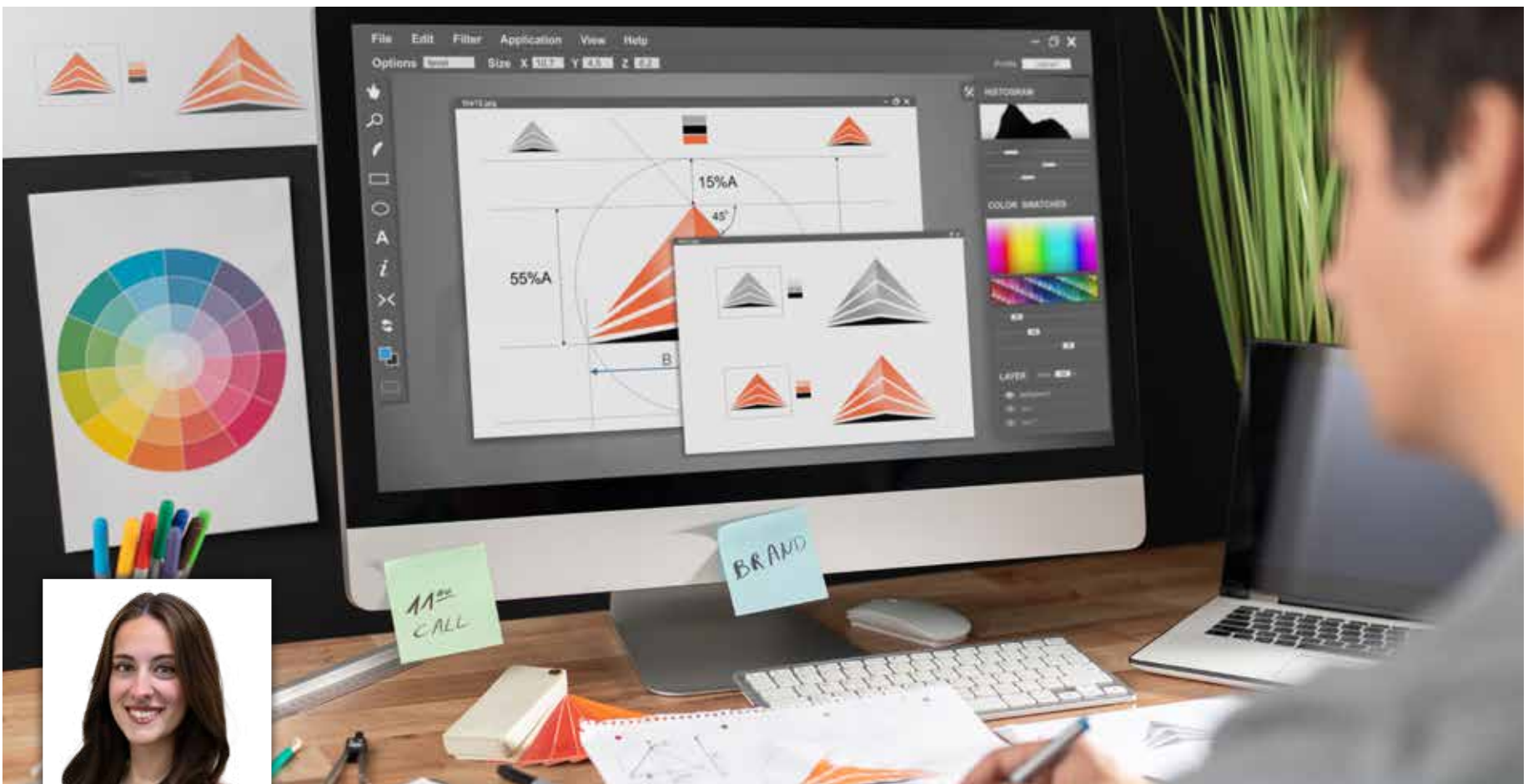
D’Angelico succeeds Marc Yrsha, SEVP, Chief Banking Officer for Arrow Financial Corporation.

“We are so grateful to have such passionate and dedicated board members and appreciate the hard work of past Chair Marc Yrsha, who supported the team immensely throughout his tenure,” said Rogers.

The ARCC also expresses their gratitude for the service of the following Board Members, whose terms were completed in December 2024: John Jablonski - Vice President for Academic Affairs for SUNY Adirondack, Pat Suprenant - Vice President for Stewarts Shops Corporation, and Immediate ARCC Board Past Chair Marc Monahan - Regional Executive SVP of NBT Bank.

# Do You Really Need a Degree in Design?

## UNPACKING THE DEBATE



by Katherine Kressner, *Creative Director at Five Towers Media*

In the ever-evolving landscape of creative industries, the question of whether a degree in design is essential often sparks heated debates among aspiring designers and seasoned professionals alike. While formal education undoubtedly offers valuable insights and skills, the necessity of a degree in design is not as black and white as it may seem. Let's delve into the nuances of this topic and explore whether a degree is truly indispensable in the world of design.

### MAKING THE BEST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

First step to success is to make the best of your experience. Embarking on a design journey without a formal degree doesn't mean you're devoid of learning opportunities. In fact, many successful designers have honed their craft through hands-on experience, internships, workshops, and self-directed learning. Design is a field that thrives on creativity and innovation, and these qualities are often nurtured outside the confines of a classroom.

### CONNECTIONS

Networking plays a pivotal role in any career, and the design industry is no exception. While pursuing a degree can provide access to a network of

peers, professors, and industry professionals, it's not the sole avenue for building connections. Engaging in design communities, attending events, and leveraging online platforms can facilitate meaningful connections that transcend the boundaries of traditional education.

### CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ABILITIES

One of the primary benefits of a degree in design is the validation and confidence it instills in your abilities. Formal education offers a structured curriculum, mentorship, and feedback mechanisms that can bolster your confidence as a designer. However, self-taught designers also have the potential to cultivate confidence through perseverance, experimentation, and a commitment to continuous improvement.



While a degree in design can certainly provide valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and personal growth, it is not an absolute prerequisite for **success in the field.**

### ROOM FOR GROWTH

Design is a field that thrives on constant evolution. Whether you hold a degree or not, there's always room for growth and development as a designer. Embracing a growth mindset, staying abreast of industry trends, and seeking out new challenges are essential ingredients for personal and professional advancement in the world of design.

### CRITIQUE

Constructive critique is something you must get comfortable with! Critiques are a cornerstone of the design process, helping designers refine their work and push boundaries. While formal education often provides structured critique sessions, self-taught designers can seek feedback from online communities, mentors, and peers. Embracing critique with an open mind is

crucial for honing your skills and elevating your design practice.

### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Now to address the elephant in the room... It's essential to acknowledge the financial aspect of pursuing a degree in design. College tuition fees can be substantial, and for some individuals, the cost may outweigh the perceived benefits of formal education. Alternatives such as online courses, workshops, and apprenticeships offer more affordable pathways to acquiring design skills. Take liberty in the path you choose and find the benefits in it all.

### THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY

Diversity of thought and experience enriches the design community and fosters innovation. Embracing individuals from diverse educational backgrounds contributes to a dynamic and inclusive design ecosystem. Whether you have

a degree or not, your unique perspective and creativity have the potential to make a meaningful impact in the world of design.

### IN CONCLUSION

While a degree in design can certainly provide valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and personal growth, it is not an absolute prerequisite for success in the field. Making the best of your experience, cultivating connections, building confidence, embracing critique, and fostering a growth mindset are essential regardless of your educational background. Ultimately, the path to becoming a successful designer is as diverse as the designs themselves, and there's no one-size-fits-all answer to the question of whether a degree is necessary. What truly matters is your passion, dedication, and willingness to push the boundaries of creativity, regardless of the educational path you choose. After all, there is a reason why everyone in the art field fits the stereotype of a "free mind".

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# BUILDING LEGACIES

## Phillip Vacchio Champions Estate Law and Community as Herzog Law Firm's New Partner

by **Amanda Graves** | Photos by *Todd R. Bailey*

**P**hillip Vacchio, the proud son of an Italian immigrant and one of nine siblings, understands the importance of perseverance and hard work. He has always believed in standing up for what is right, which encouraged him to pursue a career in law.

After years of practicing law in Long Island, Phillip joined the Herzog Law Firm in 2023. This year, Phillip achieved a significant milestone by becoming a partner at the firm. Recently, Phillip achieved a significant milestone by becoming a partner at the firm. He is excited to further integrate himself into the community and advance the firm's mission of educating others on

estate law. Excitingly, Phillip's promotion coincides with the opening of a new Herzog Law Firm in Queensbury.

Phillip initially enrolled at the University of Maryland with the intention of becoming a doctor. However, during his sophomore year, he began to have doubts as to whether that career was right for him. Considering his interests, Phillip decided to change his major to psychology. "I was always a very logical thinker and I was good at listening and solving problems," he said. Phillip earned his bachelor's degree in Behavioral and Social Sciences and began to think about a future career. Realizing his strong sense of justice and ability to connect with people were well-suited for a legal career, Phillip attended Hofstra University of Law graduating cum laude and earning his Doctor of Law (J. D. Law). From there, he began working in a general practice and quickly discovered how much he enjoyed estate planning and elder law. "It's a type of law that's not abstract. It's useful information for everybody," explained Phillip. "Estate planning is something that no matter what your situation in life, if you're low income, have kids or you're young and just got married, or



We pride ourselves on explaining complex legal terms in a very understandable manner, which not every law firm does.

— PHILLIP VACCHIO, PRINCIPAL



you're older and you're very wealthy, everyone needs estate planning in some sort so it's nice to have information that literally everyone needs. It makes you a very useful person that can help a lot of different people."

A few years later, Phillip had two opportunities, the first coming from a large insurance defense firm and the second from a smaller firm that focused on estate planning. His experience at the general practice made his decision clear and he decided to join the smaller firm - narrowing in on estate planning. "I took a risk and I went with the smaller firm and I started really focusing on just estate planning and elder law and didn't look back from there. I love that area of law. I focused on it, learned it in and out, and became a partner of that firm at the time," Phillip explained. After becoming a partner of the firm, Phillip made the decision with his wife to move out of Long Island. As a New York registered attorney, he knew he wanted to remain in the state but was looking for a change. After visiting different areas, they settled in Saratoga Springs. Phillip continued to work for the Long Island-based firm for a few years until he was approached by someone at Herzog. "At the time I had no real intention of leaving where I was but I always think that you should hear out every opportunity that comes your way," he explained. After having several interviews and learning more about the Herzog firm, Phillip decided to join. "Everything that I heard about the firm within the community was very positive," he said, "Everyone has the same values and is really client focused."

Phillip's decision to join Herzog Law proved to be

the right one, and he is now a partner. He is excited to continue the Herzog mission and help even more clients. "We truly want to make the clients understand what we're doing with them. We pride ourselves on explaining complex legal terms in a very understandable manner which not every law firm does," explained Phillip. "There's a lot of misinformation and a lack of information about this area of law. People don't know what options they have." Phillip and the Herzog Law Firm strive to dispel common misconceptions about estate planning, such as the belief that it's only for older people or that having assets disqualifies someone from government assistance for long-term care. The firm even hosts a live call-in radio show every Sunday at 8 a.m. to answer questions and provide information. Listeners can tune in to Magic 100.5 fm or 590 am to hear the show.

In addition to educating the public about estate planning, Phillip enjoys hearing different people's stories and helping them prepare for the future. "I get exposed to many different individuals in different walks of life and I get to hear their life stories," he shared. He has always been a good listener and his degree in psychology gets used every day when he meets with clients. "One of the biggest skills of being a lawyer, which some people might not think of, is listening," he explained, "a lot of times I consider myself to be like a part-time therapist in addition to being an attorney, through listening and I like that. I like listening and I like helping people." In this area of law, clients are oftentimes in tough situations or dealing with a variety of heart-breaking scenarios. Understanding this, Phillip

enjoys being part of a firm that prioritizes each individual client and meets their specific needs. "They try to figure out a million things at once and they have no idea which direction to go in and we can be that guiding light where we can guide them through this, give them their options, and help them," Phillip concluded.

Eager to expand their efforts and reach even more people, the newest Herzog Law Firm location will be located at 19 Bay Road in Queensbury. While the office is still under construction, they have access to space within the same building to meet with clients until the building is complete. Phillip explained that the opening of this new building is, "Serving a potentially underserved population." He continued to share, "I think there's a big opportunity to do that and help more people."

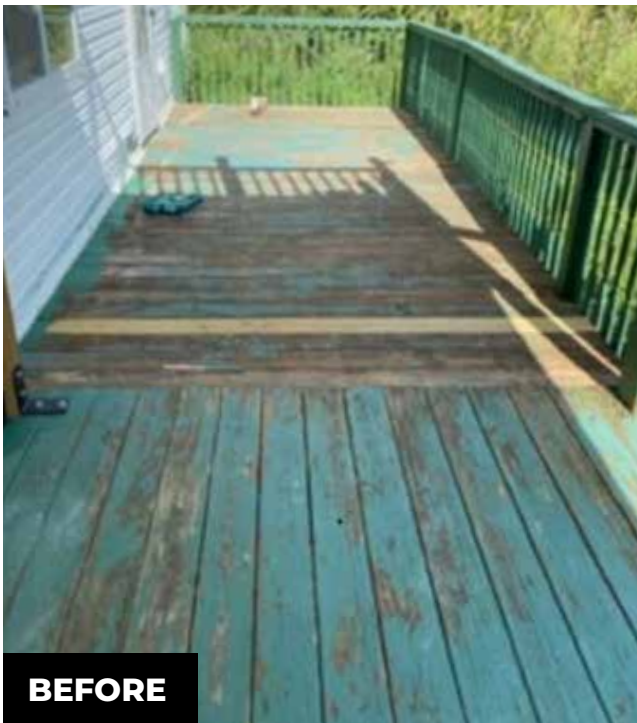
Aside from work, Phillip enjoys spending time with his family. He and his wife have three children: a seven, four and one-year-old. Because they are new to the area, his family looks forward to exploring the region and becoming a part of the community. In the future, Phillip has aspirations of philanthropy should the opportunity arise.

*Herzog Law Firm P.C. has been providing clients with custom legal advice and counsel since 1946. The firm primarily focuses on Estate Planning, Elder Law/Medicaid Planning, Estate Administration, Tax Planning and Real Estate, serving the Hudson Valley, Capital Region and Adirondacks through its offices located in Albany, Saratoga Springs, Kingston, and Queensbury. More information about the Herzog Law Firm can be found at [www.herzoglaw.com](http://www.herzoglaw.com) or by calling 518.465.7581.*

# HOME REPAIRS

## THE HEALTHY WAY

by Megin Potter | Photos Courtesy of Mr. T's Total Home Care



BEFORE



AFTER

**It's common to hear about home owners struggling with anxiety while undergoing renovations, but rarely how these same burdens often fall heaviest on those working in the construction industries. Creating a to-do list, sticking to a budget, and completing work on time (despite any number of unpredictable delays) are challenges that are stressors (if not more so!) for those getting the job done, day in and day out.**

“Remodels are called ‘monsters’ for a reason – you never know what you’re getting into until you open up the area and get to the deeper, darker side of what turns out to be a much larger project,” said Travis Solimanto, owner of Mr. T’s Total Home Care.

With more than 15 years of experience doing light carpentry, home repairs, appliance installation, interior painting, epoxy and cement finishing, landscaping, maintenance, and snow removal, Travis has learned that there may be mold lurking behind the walls, or a multitude of other problems needing remediation, in any job. He calls this the “Uh oh! moment,” but unlike the “aha! moment” that Oprah made famous, the realizations discovered during renovations are usually accompanied by groans rather than welcomed as satisfying moments of insight.

Travis has experienced these moments during renovations on his own Hudson Falls home, as well as the four Airbnb properties and the apartments on Walnut Street that he manages. Nearly a decade ago, after submitting a down payment, the roofing contractor he hired didn’t show up to the jobsite.

“It didn’t look good. The home was disheveled and there was a lot of duress and stress!” he said. Eventually, the work did get done and the matter was resolved, but that experience cemented Travis’ commitment to honesty, reliability, and accountability when he’s completing handyman jobs for others.

“It really comes down to communication, building better relationships, and helping people,” he said.



Travis, Victoria, and Dominic Solimanto.



### Building Healthy, Block by Block

Travis learned the ins and outs of entrepreneurship from his father, Larry Solimanto, owner of the Hudson Falls Treasure Center and the Wizard’s Den, but his knowledge working in the trades is something he, his father, and his grandfather all share. In addition to working for the NYS Office for People with Development Disabilities for more than 20 years, Travis also has three years of clinical nursing school training under his belt. This experience taught him that the key to a successful remodel is a healthy worker.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the construction industry has one of the highest rates of suicide - four times higher than in the general population. Nearly six times as many construction worker deaths are caused from suicide as from work-related injuries.

While construction safety and the physical demands of the occupation (straining, twisting, pulling, bending, and lifting) remain paramount, protecting a worker’s mental health and well-being is equally important, said Travis.

In addition to practicing safe work habits onsite, and being fully insured, Travis protects his physical and mental health in a multitude of ways when he’s off the clock.

Because construction is a physically demanding occupation, he makes a point of eating farm-fresh foods, practices calisthenics exercises

to build strength, endurance, flexibility, and coordination, and receives massage therapy at the Adirondack Salt Caves.

Travis also competes in triathlons and spartan obstacle races with a solid group of supportive friends that push him to excel in an honest and open way, he said. At the center of Travis’ life is his family. Together, Travis and his wife, Victoria, renovated their own home and have completed

“It really comes down to communication, building better relationships, and helping people.”

jobs for others (including laying down 14 tons of stone last summer) who heard about Mr. T’s Total Home Care from previously satisfied customers.

Although he advertises on Nextdoor, Thumbtack, and Facebook, most people find Mr. T’s Total Home Care by word-of-mouth. “It’s one person on

one block telling another person in need that I am someone they can trust,” he said.

### Shaping a Strong Community

A believer in the small-town community approach to doing business, Travis arrives at the jobsite in his Mr. T’s Total Home Care trailer filled with tools, on time, ready to communicate and work with his clients one-on-one, utilizing local businesses (including Burgoyne Hardware and Griffen’s) for supplies, and delivering consistent, quality work, at an affordable rate.

Whether he’s installing flooring, a vanity, or an under-sink filtration unit; completing deck repairs, refinishing, painting, staining, or installing new Trex high-performance decking; spreading epoxy or the fast-curing, low VOC polyurea (that dries incredibly hard - even in temperatures as low as -30F and as high as 140F) Travis strives for dependability and operates with integrity.

“All the money I get goes right back into the local community,” he said.

While bigger contractors prefer larger jobs, Travis likes small ones (that can be completed in a week or less) allowing him to still have enough time to break bread with his family and coach his son’s T-ball team.

The Solimanto’s son, Dominic, even at age 6, seems to be following in his family’s footsteps. “He’s my heart and has helped me shoveling snow. It’s just amazing to watch,” he shared.

# When Time is Money, It's Money in the Bank

The Business Intelligence Platform That Helps Streamline All Aspects of Your Business



by Amanda Graves

***Every now and then, an idea comes along that seems to gather its own momentum, like a snowball running down a hill, to become something bigger. In much the same way, TimeBank, a software application that began with a clear but focused purpose, is now ready to step onto a larger stage and make its mark in the business world.***

TimeBank started as a solution to a small company's problem, but today, it has grown into a tool that helps several businesses save time, increase transparency, and strengthen their business models. When Michael Nelson and Brad Colacino formed Five Towers Media, they knew that having an effective and efficient way to track clients' time was crucial to their operations. After seeing how successful their homegrown application was within their own business, they realized it could be valuable to other companies as well. Now, after years of beta testing, new developments, and improvements, they are ready to release the application to the public.

Before coming together, Michael and Brad each ran separate businesses—Brad with Five Towers Design Company, and Michael with Spa City Digital. For Michael, time tracking was an essential part of his work at Spa City Digital. “We did a lot of managed marketing and so what that meant was we did a flat monthly fee and there was a prescribed scope of work,” he explained, “What we came to find out after a few years of working with our clients is that some clients love that and other clients like to be charged hourly.” However, hourly tracking proved to be extremely tedious and time consuming. “There's plenty of time tracking solutions out there, but none of those solutions were easy and

none of them tracked time the way that we needed to track time and none of them gave us, more importantly, the opportunity to report how much time a client had used, what it had been used on, and how much time they have left,” said Michael. He had to personally go through spreadsheets and reconcile all of his client’s accounts by hand. This meant figuring out how much time a client had used, what hours were billable vs non-billable, and determining how much time a client had remaining. Additionally, there was no way for a client to see how many hours they had left without reaching out to Michael.

Needing to find a solution, Michael pitched his idea to Brad to develop a new program. “My background in software engineering and also website development made it kind of a natural fit,” explained Brad. The two business owners would later merge their companies to create Five Towers Media, and Brad continued working on developing the prototype.

The program was an immediate benefit for the company. Initially, it saved Michael an enormous amount of time when it came to managing client’s hours. “If a client asked me how much time they had left and what they had used it on, it would take me around two hours per client in order to get them a clear and accurate report. Now I can get them that clear and accurate report in 30 seconds,” he said, “I would say anywhere from 5 to 10 hours a week I was spending just on answering this question for clients, and now that time can be spent on other things. On top of that, clients don’t even have to ask me that question anymore. Now they can just log into their account and they can see how much time they have left, and they can see what work we’ve done, and how much time we spent on each task to the minute. It’s been hugely impactful to our business.”

The program worked so well internally that both Mike and Brad found themselves talking about it with other business owners during networking events, and even casual conversation. A few companies became interested and asked if they could try it out for themselves. This was a big lightbulb moment, as it became clear how many other businesses could benefit from the application. Five Towers then used the feedback they received to further develop and strengthen the program. “In the two and half years since then, TimeBank has done nothing but evolve,” Brad explained, “And it’s really just come to meet the evolving and complex needs of not only our



## TimeBank started as a solution to a small company’s problem, but today, it has grown into a tool that helps several businesses save time, increase transparency, and strengthen their business models.

company at Five Towers Media, but some of the other clients that have been helping us beta-test the application.” Looking ahead, Brad talked about the path forward, “We’re making it easier to use while adding additional capabilities to the program.” For example, a recent upgrade introduced the Alerts feature, which can send an email notification as the client’s account balance reaches a certain threshold. Clients can now also budget and limit the time spent on certain focus areas like social media, video production, website edits, etc.

Due to the program’s flexibility, the data can be reported at a client level for invoicing and bookkeeping, while also being summarized at an employee level for payroll, PTO and sick time. Additionally, being able to track work done to the exact minute allows for the business owner to see what projects are taking too much time and where there is room for improvement. “It basically gives us a window into our company with relation to our employees and labor and where labor’s being wasted,” said Mike.

This transparency on how hours are being used not only helps the business owner, but the client has a better understanding of what they’re

getting for their investment. “Clients will always want to know how their money is being spent and where those dollars are going when they pay one of their vendors. With TimeBank, that’s fully transparent,” explained Brad, “It’s not common that companies open the window, so to speak, and let their customers know every step of where these hours are going, but that’s our strategy and we’ve seen it work with every client who has been a part of TimeBank as well. It’s not a requirement of using the application, but it’s certainly a feature we think is extraordinarily helpful for the business relationship.”

There is a wide range of companies that could leverage TimeBank for their organization, such as law offices, contractors, accountants, IT providers, consulting firms, and many more. “Any business that has multiple customers, multiple employees, and a need to tie those hours together is a potential candidate for TimeBank,” said Brad.

*For more information on how you can save yourself time while increasing transparency within your company visit: [mytimebank.us](http://mytimebank.us) or contact Michael at: [michael@fivetowers.us](mailto:michael@fivetowers.us).*



# AROXY CLEANERS

*Celebrating 55 Years of Business*

by Tyler Murray

**Aroxy Cleaners, located on Route 9 in Queensbury, has built a reputation as one of the premier dry cleaning and laundry service providers in the area. Known for its commitment to quality and customer satisfaction, Aroxy Cleaners offers a wide range of services designed to meet the needs of both individual customers and other local businesses.**

Founded with the goal of providing superior dry cleaning and laundry services to the residents of Glens Falls and the surrounding areas, Aroxy Cleaners has earned its place as a trusted local business. This year, Aroxy Cleaners is celebrating its 55th year in operation. It is still owned and maintained by the Poladian family, the original owners who first opened the storefront in 1970. Over the

years, the business has expanded its offerings and upgraded its technology to keep up with the latest trends in the dry cleaning industry. However, like nearly all small businesses over the past few years, Aroxy Cleaners was impacted by the pandemic. "We were definitely hurt by it [the pandemic]," said owner Rich Poladian. "I think the turn many companies took to have their employees work from home, or have

more casual attire in the workplace, certainly impacts cleaners like us," Rich explained. "It's not like it used to be, where suits are worn every day to work," he concluded.

After experiencing the loss of several expansion locations in past years, Aroxy Cleaners has found new opportunities in the space to compensate for some lost revenue, and things are looking up. For instance, Aroxy

now collaborates with Airbnb owners in the area to provide cleaning services for their linens and bedding. This allows for a quick turnaround time for guests and ensures a steady stream of business for the store. They've also partnered with a handful of local restaurants to handle their linen needs, including uniforms, napkins, towels, tablecloths and chef apparel. Combining years of expertise with modern methods to deliver top-notch results, Aroxy Cleaners make certain that their customers' needs are met, whether that be to look and feel their best, or help other small businesses in the area meet their cleaning needs. From everyday attire, to delicate fabrics, or specialty items, Aroxy Cleaners provides reliable, professional cleaning that's hard to beat. They were even recognized in 2015 in the Post Star's "Best of the Region" Awards.

Aroxy Cleaners offers a wide variety of services, all designed around their diverse clientele. Some of the most popular offerings include dry cleaning - Aroxy Cleaners uses industry-leading methods to clean clothing that cannot be washed in water, such as suits, dresses, and fine fabrics. Their dry cleaning process ensures that delicate items retain their color, shape, and texture, without the harsh effects of traditional washing methods. For customers looking to keep their everyday clothing fresh and clean, Aroxy Cleaners provides traditional laundry services. This includes washing, drying, and folding clothes, ensuring that items are returned in great condition. Aroxy Cleaners also offers alteration services. Whether one needs a hem adjusted, a zipper repaired, or a garment tailored to your specifications, their skilled seamstresses and tailors ensure a perfect fit. Aroxy Cleaners also specializes in the cleaning of items that require extra care. This includes leather, suede, and fur cleaning, as well as the handling of delicate items like wedding gowns and antique fabrics. These services are tailored to ensure that even the most fragile materials receive the attention they deserve. And lastly, Aroxy Cleaners are proud to serve businesses in the Glens Falls area. They are able to offer commercial laundry services for hotels, restaurants, and other businesses that require large quantities of linens, uniforms, or specialty items to be cleaned professionally and efficiently.

For those in the Glens Falls area looking for a reliable and professional dry cleaning and laundry service, Aroxy Cleaners is the clear choice. With a commitment to excellence, an array of services, and a focus on customer satisfaction, Aroxy Cleaners continues to be a trusted partner for all your garment care needs. Whether you need dry cleaning, laundry, repairs, or specialty services, Aroxy Cleaners provides top-quality results you can count on every time. Aroxy Cleaners is open seven days a week.

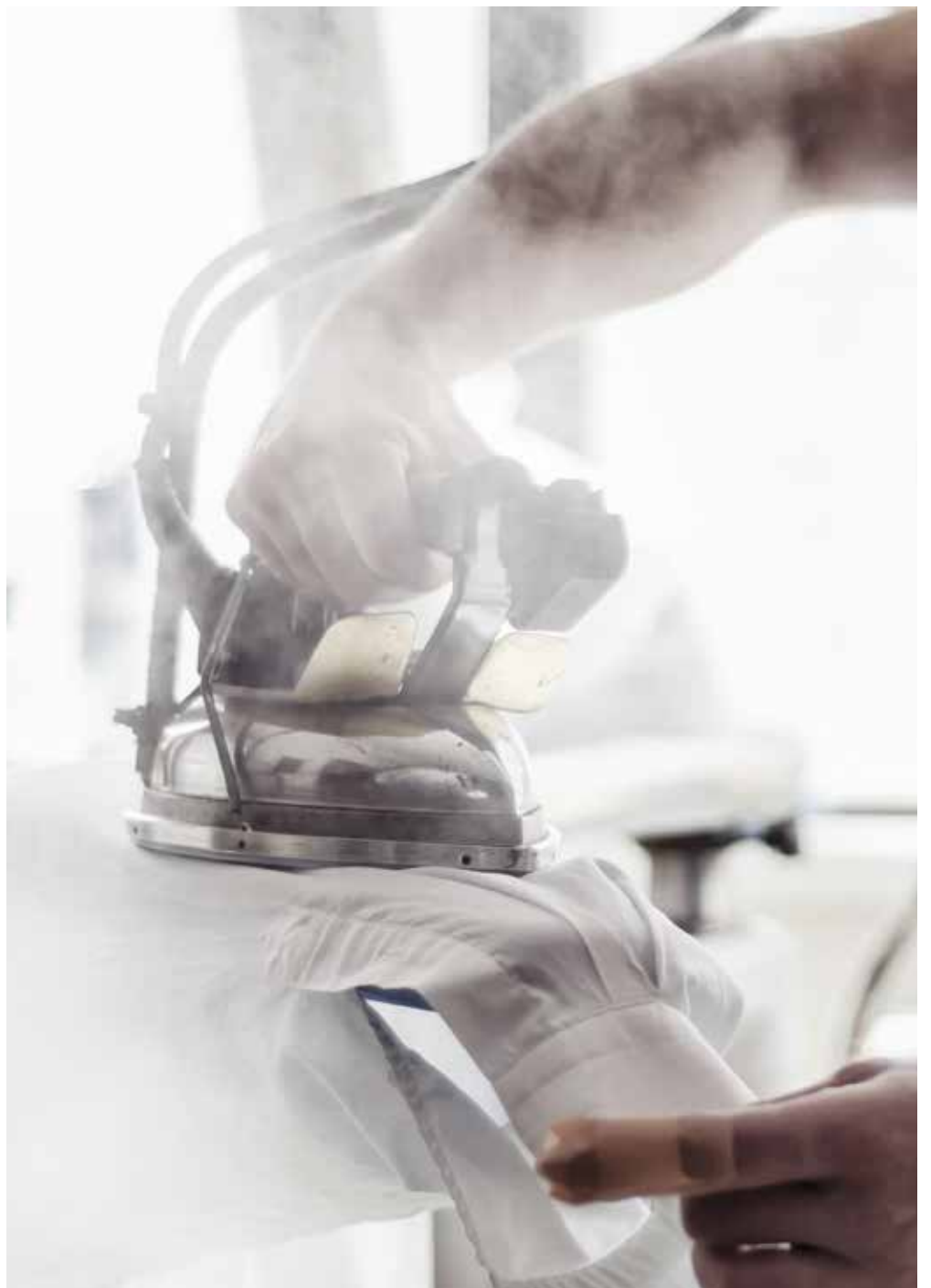
For more information about their services, or specials and discounts—visit their Facebook page @Aroxy Cleaners, or better yet, call the shop at 518-792 6943.

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**I think the turn many companies took to have their employees work from home, or have more casual attire in the workplace, certainly impacts cleaners like us.**

**— RICH POLADIAN, OWNER**

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# Cybersecurity

## PROTECTING YOUR FINANCIAL DATA



by **Brian Stidd, CPA, CVA,**  
*Owner of Stidd CPA*

**I**n our increasingly digital world, where financial transactions and personal data are managed online, cybersecurity has become a critical concern for everyone, both individuals and businesses. Here's a comprehensive guide on what you should do to protect their financial information.

### *Why Cybersecurity Matters for You*

Your personal and business financial data is sensitive and highly sought after by cybercriminals. A breach can lead to:

- **Financial Loss:** Direct theft of funds or identity theft can result in significant financial damage.
- **Reputation Damage:** For businesses, a data breach can harm your professional reputation with clients and partners.
- **Legal and Compliance Issues:** There could be legal repercussions if your data handling practices do not comply with data protection laws.



## Best Practices for Your Cybersecurity

### 1. USE MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Implement multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all accounts where sensitive information is accessed, including your email, financial apps, and CPA's client portal. This significantly reduces the risk of unauthorized access.

### 2. KEEP SOFTWARE UPDATED

Regularly update all software on your devices, especially those used for financial management. Enable automatic updates where possible to ensure you don't miss critical security patches.

### 3. EDUCATE YOUR TEAM

If you run a business, make sure all employees understand basic cybersecurity principles. Train them to identify phishing emails, use secure passwords, and handle data appropriately.

### 4. STRONG PASSWORD MANAGEMENT

Create complex passwords for each account and update them regularly. Consider using a password manager to generate and store these securely.

### 5. ENCRYPT YOUR DATA

Use encryption for storing and transmitting sensitive data. Whether it's on your computer, in the cloud, or via email, encryption helps keep your information confidential.

### 6. SECURE FILE SHARING

Avoid sending sensitive information via unsecured methods. Use encrypted file-sharing services recommended by your CPA or other secure platforms for transferring documents.

### 7. IMPLEMENT BACKUP STRATEGIES

Regularly back up your data, and ensure these backups are stored securely, preferably off-site or in a secure cloud service. This is crucial for recovery in case of data loss or ransomware attacks.

### 8. HAVE AN INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

Prepare for the worst by having a plan to respond to a data breach. Know who to contact, how to contain the damage, and the steps for recovery and notification.

### 9. ASSESS THIRD-PARTY RISKS

Evaluate the cybersecurity practices of any third-party service providers or vendors you work with, especially those with access to your financial data.

### 10. CONSIDER CYBER INSURANCE

Invest in cyber liability insurance to cover potential financial losses from cyber incidents, including legal costs and notification expenses.

## Taking Action

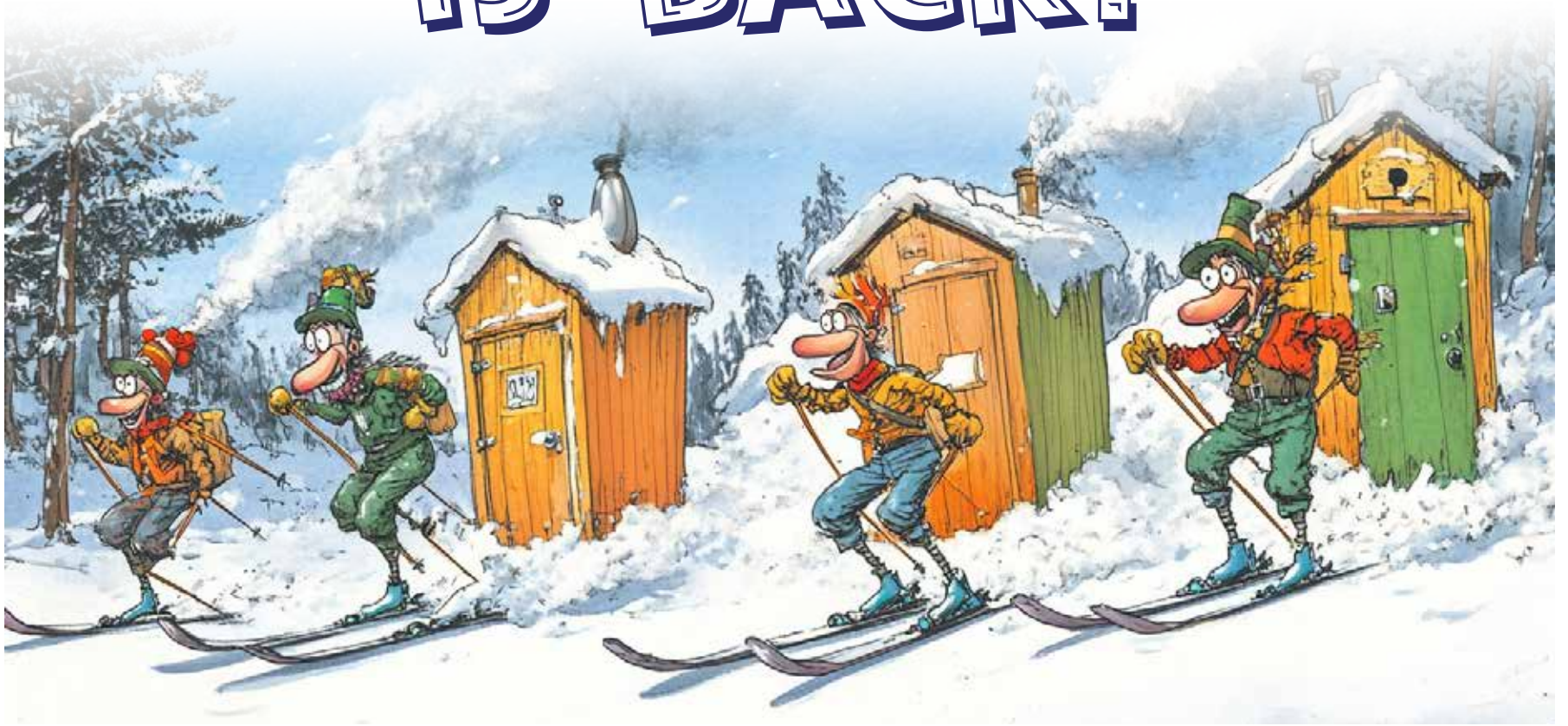
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date with the latest cybersecurity threats and best practices. Your CPA might provide resources or updates on this topic.
- **Engage with Your CPA:** Discuss cybersecurity with your CPA. They can offer tailored advice based on your specific situation.
- **Regular Security Audits:** For business clients, consider periodic security audits of your systems to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities.

## Conclusion

Cybersecurity is not just a technical issue but a business necessity. By implementing these practices, you can significantly reduce the risk of cyber threats, protect your financial integrity, and maintain trust with your CPA firm. Remember, in the realm of cybersecurity, proactive measures are far more effective than reactive ones.

*For more personalized advice on safeguarding your financial data, visit [stiddcpa.com](http://stiddcpa.com) and discover how Brian Stidd can help you protect what matters most.*

# Tinney's OUTHOUSE RACE IS BACK!



## A Fun-Filled Event Supporting Two Great Causes

**T**

inney's Tavern is excited to announce the return of its much-anticipated annual Outhouse Race, taking place on Saturday, March 1, 2025. This fun and creative event

is a community favorite, combining friendly competition, imaginative design, and heartfelt fundraising for two incredible organizations: Expedition Yeti and Folds of Honor NY.

Participants are invited to put their creativity to the test by building their very own outhouses on skis or snowboards and racing them down a two-lane course. With prizes for 1st through 3rd place, People's Choice, and the infamous Red Lantern (slowest team), there's something for everyone to enjoy!

### Event Details

**WHEN:** Saturday, March 1, 2025

**REGISTRATION AND  
OUTHOUSE DROP-OFF:**  
10:00–11:00 AM

**RACES START:** 1:00 PM

**WHERE:** Tinney's Tavern,  
498 Lake Desolation Road,  
Middle Grove, NY 12850

**REGISTRATION FEE:**  
\$100 donation (cash only) to benefit  
Expedition Yeti and Folds of Honor NY.

### Rules for Participation

#### TEAM SIZE AND ROLES

Each team must consist of **five members**, including one helmeted person who will ride inside the outhouse on a toilet seat. Up to two team members may pull the outhouse using a rope that is no longer than 20 feet, while the remaining team members push from behind.

#### OUTHOUSE CONSTRUCTION

Outhouses may be constructed of **any material** but must be structurally sound and **mounted on skis or snowboards** to qualify for the race. Push bars must be permanently mounted to the outhouse, and if the outhouse has a door, it must be locked in the open position. Each outhouse is required to include **one roll of toilet paper**.

**SIZE RESTRICTIONS**

The dimensions of the outhouse must not exceed **8 feet in width** (including push bars), **12 feet in length**, and **8 feet in height**. There is no minimum size requirement for the outhouse.

**SAFETY COMPLIANCE**

Safety is a top priority. All outhouses must pass inspection by the race committee to ensure they are sound and safe. **Any outhouse deemed unsafe or unsound will not be allowed to race.**

**LIABILITY WAIVERS**

All participants must sign a liability waiver. **No waiver, no race.**

**TRACK RULES**

The racecourse is a two-lane track where teams must navigate around a pylon. Any team that hits a pylon will be required to **donate \$10 to Expedition Yeti or Folds of Honor NY**. This donation will be announced over the PA system, and the \$10 bill must be replaced before the team's next race.

**Supporting Great Causes**

This year's Outhouse Race will benefit two outstanding organizations, **Expedition Yeti** and **Folds of Honor NY**, each making a significant impact in the community.

**EXPEDITION YETI**

Expedition Yeti was founded by Rob O'Donnell and inspired by his son Justin's courageous battle with childhood cancer. This one-of-a-kind fundraiser combines Rob's love of snowmobiling with yeti costumes to bring smiles to children and families while raising vital funds for cancer research. Over the past six years, Rob has traveled more than 3,600 miles across New York in a yeti suit, raising over \$50,000. The public is encouraged to "spot the

yeti," share photos on social media, and donate to the cause. These funds are often doubled or tripled by the foundation, amplifying the initiative's impact. Rob and Justin have turned their personal challenges into a mission of hope, laughter, and support for families facing similar struggles.

**FOLDS OF HONOR NY**

Founded in 2007, Folds of Honor has provided over 62,000 scholarships totaling more than \$290 million to the spouses and children of fallen and disabled U.S. service members. Recently, the organization expanded its mission to include America's first responders—police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics—acknowledging their daily sacrifices and risks. With nearly 2 million first responders in the U.S. handling 240 million emergency calls annually, this initiative offers vital hope and support to those who protect our freedom and families. Folds of Honor's work reinforces the belief that the sacrifices made by service members and first responders deserve unwavering appreciation and meaningful support.

**Registration Information**

The **registration deadline is February 21, 2025, at 4:00 PM**. Bring your \$100 donation (cash only) to Tinney's Tavern from **Tuesday through Sunday, 4:00–8:00 PM**, to register. Scan the QR code at the end of this article to download the registration form.

For additional information, please contact Tinney's Tavern at 518.769.1951 or email [office@performanceindustrial.com](mailto:office@performanceindustrial.com) or [bill@performanceindustrial.com](mailto:bill@performanceindustrial.com).



Scan here to download the Tinney's Outhouse Race registration form!



**Prevent Fires. Eliminate Fears.**

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GET A FREE ESTIMATE!



# CULTIVATING

## an Economic Engine



by Megin Potter | Photos Provided

### SELF-PROPELLED, POWERFUL, VERSATILE, AND DURABLE.

These words describe the equipment the Havens sell, their business model, and the family itself.

**I**n the decades following World War II, America experienced a period of significant change. As urbanization swelled and the transition from horse powered to mechanized farming progressed, the evolution of agricultural technology fascinated Tim Havens, owner of Falls Farm and Garden Equipment in Hudson Falls.

Born into a long line of successful entrepreneurs, Tim is a grandson of the Floro family, immigrants from Greece who founded the New Way Lunch restaurant chain. When he was 9 years old Tim's mother, Diamond Havens, dragged him to a home show hosted by the Glens Falls Lions Club at the Glens Falls Armory. It was there that Tim fell in love with farm toys, but to his dismay, all he came home with that day was a catalog.

"I've loved tractors all my life," said Tim. On his 10th birthday, he was given his first toy tractor. Today, his collection has grown to include a whopping 14,000 farm toys. He also cultivated a collection of 132 full-size trucks and 50 tractors (stored in five barns and rented storage spaces) as well as a sizable chunk of Dix Avenue, where he built Falls Farm and Garden's current store in 1988. Since then, he's increased the size of the space twice. Even now, at 30,000 sq. ft., the store is bursting with an incredibly huge inventory of power equipment, including tractors, generators, snowblowers, mowers, pumps, toys, apparel, parts for 50+ brands, and more.

"What you see on display is only about 20% of our inventory," said Tim about the rows of toys by the service counter, where his two sons, Tim Jr. and David, join him helping customers and finding parts for



tractors that Tim sold more than 40 years ago. Across the street is Calamity Janes Firearms and Fine Shoes, which opened in 2016. Named for Jane, Tim's wife of 34 years, this collection of more than 1,000 firearms, 500 types of ammunition, leather goods, and hunting accessories expand the adventure.

### Captivating a Collector

The meteoric growth of the Havens' collections sprouted from a deep appreciation for this equipment and the history it represents. Selling machines since he was 17, by 1982, Tim was 20 years old, and a senior studying marketing and accounting at Adirondack Community College. With only \$3,000, a truck, some insurance, and a dream, Tim rented a space on Burgoyne Avenue where he sold equipment from a small inventory of 13 snowblowers, three Allis-Chalmers tractors, and three chainsaws (today he carries more than 300!).

"We really lived on parts sales that first year," he said. Four months after opening, Tim hired his first employee, Tom Moffitt (who is now the co-owner of Wallace Supply, The Safety Warehouse, and other local businesses). "We were just two scared kids," remembers Tim. Today, he's seen the industry eat up fly-by-night operations and funnel down, from more than 200 brands, to just a few major players, including John Deere.

"We believe in repairing and changing out a part instead of buying a new machine. When people walk in here, they know they're going to leave with what they need. We're a reliable source that people can always count on to have what they need. It's worth the trip. We're not fair-weather friends. We're at the leading edge of technology, with state-of-the-art tools, and on-site technicians that service customers in the field. John Deere is still an independent, American, stock-holder owned company. It's still solid, stable, and among the best there is. I've not been blinded by the light. Since I was a little boy, I've loved them, and I can speak from experience that few others have," he said.

### Reeling from the Right-to-Repair Law

As technology continues to advance within the field of agriculture, a nationwide right-to-repair movement has grown, based on what Tim calls "one of the biggest lies to be perpetrated on the public."

Deere and Co. is one of the world's largest makers of farm equipment. They provide tools, parts, and training, but the practice of "shady mechanics" tinkering with equipment to modify software can void the warranty and its resale value, said Tim. Equipment owners claim their proprietary license

creates a monopoly, and what they consider to be unfair pricing. Tim remembers when charging \$100,000 seemed exorbitant, but today, some tractors cost more than one million dollars. Keeping up with EPA emissions standards is "a game of moving the cheese" that has come at a huge cost, said Tim. He is so passionate about the issue that he contacted NYS Representative Carrie Woerner to share his concerns.

"There's not a better, more respectable brand than John Deere. They were slow to the dance (because they were doing extra research) but that green and yellow paint of the John Deere brand continues to stand out in more than 60 countries. Our reputation rides on everything they do. We have a standard of ethics to uphold and a responsibility to take care of our customers and the brand," he said.

### A Capital Investment in a Changing Culture

Only about 10% of Falls Farm and Garden customers are farmers (the majority are homeowners, municipalities, and commercial organizations) and after spending decades in the business, Tim is more informed about farm machinery and its history than almost anyone you'll meet.

As his knowledge matured, tractors transformed into a treasured part of the Havens family. Tim continues to announce tractor pulls at the Washington County Fair, teaches tractor safety courses, and hosts "Toy and the Real McCoy" on Facebook Live (archived episodes can be found on YouTube @ tractortimandthetoys3543) where he compares toy replicas to the full-size tractors in his collection.

These machines do more than cultivate the soil and provide for his family, they have paved the way for future generations.

"The kids you see doing well are playing with their hands and have their knees in the dirt. It unlocks a part of their brain that allows them to succeed," said Tim.

After studying mechanical engineering and physics at Clarkson University, Tim Jr. returned to the store, and has become a trusted member of the team. Like his father, he supports the community and this December helped raise \$7,000 for Operation Santa Claus. David, a SUNY Cobleskill graduate, was the Captain of the Trapshooting Team founded by Calamity Janes Firearms while a senior at Hudson Falls High School.

"I'm going to continue to teach them more about what I do so I'll be able to leave this outfit and the customers in good hands. These guys are industry professionals, not just the bosses' kids," said Tim.



# *Daigle Cleaning Systems* YOUR NEXT ROBOT JANITOR?

by Tyler Murray | *Photos Provided*



Headquartered in Albany, Daigle Cleaning Systems (DCS) has become a well-established provider of professional cleaning services in the region since 2011. Since then, several expansion branches have opened spanning from downstate in Putnam County, Queensbury to Vermont.

Mostly focused in the commercial space, DCS works hand-in-hand with healthcare facilities, offices, construction companies, and property managers to provide nearly all phases of facility maintenance. They've even begun to franchise, allowing for franchisees to use DCS's proven framework to build out their own business, whether that be in the commercial or residential space. But DCS isn't just your ordinary cleaning company, they've embraced state-of-the-art technology that has, in turn, helped leverage them over other competition in the marketplace. And no, this doesn't mean better mops, vacuums, and cleaning concoctions - we're talking about robots.

For years, automation in the workplace has been a heavily contested topic. Fortunately, or unfortunately, an argument as to the benefits and setbacks of automation won't be found here - and DCS aren't going to sit around and wait for arguments to end. Instead, they are embracing modern technology and utilizing it in a unique way. For Derek Foster, co-owner and founder of DCS, embracing AI is not only beneficial, but a necessity to secure the future of one's business. Working with Dallas based robotics company Clear Focus Robotics, DCS "employs" a fleet of robots to help tackle cleaning jobs for them throughout the North East. Clear Focus Robotics is a robotics and automation technology company that specializes in creating high-performance robotic systems. By combining AI-driven software with state-of-the-art hardware, the company develops robots that are not only "smart" and adaptable but also capable of performing complex tasks traditionally done by human workers. In DCS's case, this means robot janitors - autonomous machines designed to assist with cleaning in commercial, industrial, and public spaces. Equipped with sensors, cameras, and advanced algorithms, these robots can fully navigate and "map" their environments, detect dirt or debris, and perform tasks like sweeping, mopping, or vacuuming. They are often programmed to work independently, operating on a set schedule, or when triggered by specific

conditions ensuring that spaces remain clean, all without the assistance of humans. Once they finish a task they can even find their way back to their charging bay, on standby until needed again. If it sounds futuristic, well, it is - but don't think in terms of a human sized Terminator cleaning the office, these machines are only a few feet off the ground and are rather innocent looking.

One of the most unique machines is named "Violet," an Autonomous Mobile Robot (AMR) that cleans using UV-C light. In essence, the robot uses a disinfection technique in which it shines ultraviolet light to kill or inactivate microorganisms. It's called "ultraviolet germicidal irradiation" and the mechanism inactivates microbes by damaging their genetic material, thereby inhibiting their capacity to carry out vital functions. In the healthcare janitorial space, it is widely considered a breakthrough. Now one of the dullest and most dangerous jobs, that is disinfecting operating rooms, patient rooms, common areas, etc. can be done robotically. Amid worker shortages and cost management concerns within healthcare, automating some of the toughest jobs in an efficient manner, is certainly a benefit.

Unlike most small businesses, the pandemic years didn't impact DCS negatively, it actually created more of a demand for their services. As public facilities and healthcare spaces doubled-down on their efforts to sanitize, DCS's portfolio was

expanded. In more recent years, as commercial offices are starting to fill up once again, DCS is yet again ready to take on the challenge. "We're really excited about the future and the current landscape," said DCS founder Derek Foster. When asked about robotics he mentioned, "a lot of these machines are really utilized more around the world, in Europe and particularly in Asia, even at restaurants or hotels, things like that. They really haven't taken off quite as much within the United States, but that's probably just a matter of time," Foster shared. Of course, a fully automated work fleet is quite some time away. In the meantime, DCS and their devoted staff will continue their company mission, providing eco-friendly deep cleaning, or specialized cleaning services, for any office or business. DCS even has a Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) Green Building (GB) certification from ISSA, which underscores their commitment to environmentally responsible cleaning practices. So whether it be by robot or bucket and mop, Daigle Cleaning offers a variety of solutions to meet the needs of its diverse clientele. With a reputation for reliability, attention to detail, and personalized customer service, Daigle Cleaning has built a strong presence in the Capital Region and beyond.

*For more information on Daigle Cleaning Systems, visit their website at: [daigleclean.com](http://daigleclean.com) or visit them on Facebook at [facebook.com/daigleclean](https://facebook.com/daigleclean).*

“

**A lot of these machines are really utilized more around the world... They really haven't taken off quite as much within the United States, but that's probably just a matter of time**

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# FIVE TOWERS MEDIA

## *Welcomes Taylor Stone*



by Amanda Graves

**F**ive Towers Media is thrilled to welcome Taylor Stone - a talented graphic designer with a unique and innovative skill set - to their team. Taylor's entrepreneurial spirit and experience running her own small business, combined with her commitment to lifelong learning, makes her a valuable addition to any company. She has already demonstrated her eagerness to grow professionally and has quickly become an integral part of the Five Towers Media team.

Taylor has always been creative, but it wasn't until her junior year of high school when she really began to think about the possibility of turning her creative gift into a career. While taking a digital media class and working on posters for a local event, she fell in

love with the digital design process and all it entailed. She focused her college search on a school that had a creative community of people she could relate to and learn from. Eventually, Taylor settled on the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz.



“

Seeing that there was the intersection between technology and creativity within Five Towers Media made me think about that relationship and that really inspired me.

“When I toured New Paltz I saw a lot of people that I felt I could see myself around,” she said. Taylor began attending SUNY New Paltz in 2020, the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, so the first few years were a little isolating, but by her junior year she had grown to love the school and community.

In 2022, Taylor received a Cricut, a computer-controlled cutting machine, designed for home crafters. Almost immediately, Taylor began creating different designs for tote bags and t-shirts. Originally, she focused on Twitch streamers and would send her products to the person running the stream. Her designs would get recognized by fans of the streamer and they would inquire about where they could get their own merchandise. Taylor saw the opportunity to create an Etsy shop and thus, “CaptainPawsArt” was born. “A lot of the things that I was selling at that time were for events and for concerts where the artist or the creator did not have other merchandise, so it was kind of

like filling a hole in the market there,” Taylor explained. She continued to share that, “They were my interests and the things that I was passionate about so I had a really big drive to do that stuff.” In 2023, her business experienced its biggest year, but she scaled it back in 2024 to focus on her college thesis. Her Etsy shop is still up and running, but she focuses more on book merchandise creating posters and stickers. “It’s still something I do but it’s on a much smaller level now that I’m trying to focus on furthering myself as a professional and seeing how I fit into a more team-like environment,” Taylor said.

Taylor earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in graphic design with a minor in digital design and fabrication during the spring of 2024. After graduating, she already had a job lined up, but it didn’t quite map onto her creative talents, and she was eager to get involved with a more creative industry. That’s when Taylor came across the Five Towers Media posting on

Indeed. “When I saw the listing for Five Towers, and I looked into the company and what they stood for, I really got excited about it. It was the first time that I had seen a design position locally that I was excited to apply for and was hoping I would get the position,” Taylor shared. She continued to say, “I really liked the emphasis on supporting small businesses as someone who has a small business.” Additionally, her minor focused heavily on 3D modeling so she enjoyed combining technology with creativity and saw the opportunities that Five Towers provided. “Seeing that there was the intersection between technology and creativity within Five Towers Media made me think about that relationship and that really inspired me,” said Taylor.

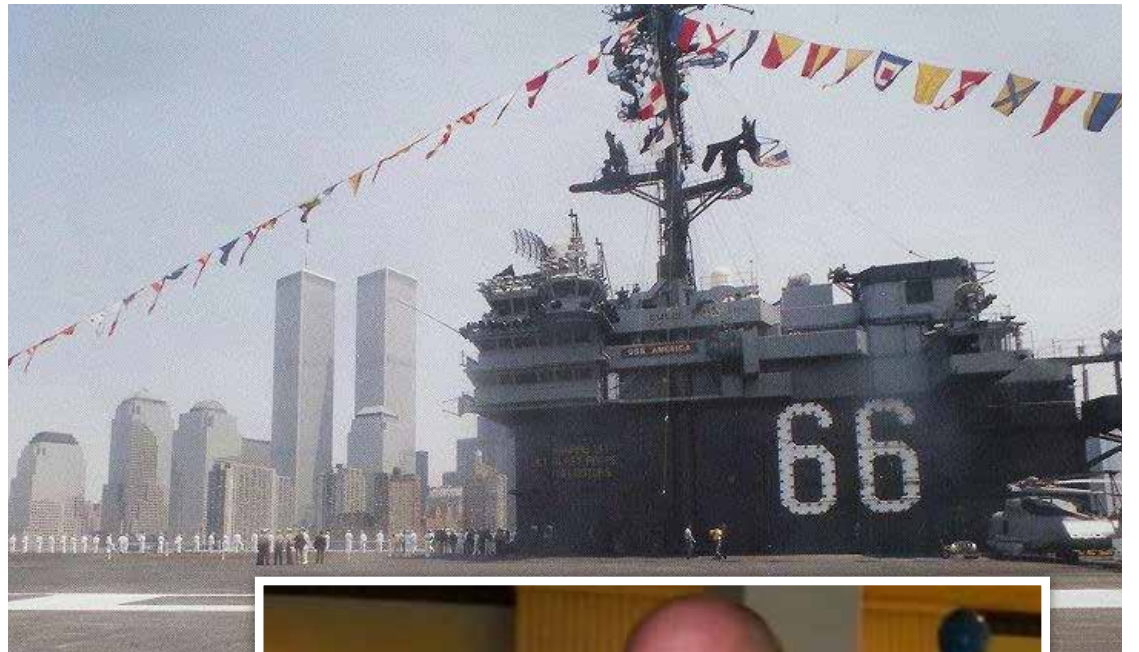
Taylor is already a valued team member and continues to grow every day. Currently, she spends a lot of time working on social media posts, podcasts, ad designs, and more. “The team has been very communicative,

and supportive, and helpful getting me caught up and understanding all the systems and processes that we use,” Taylor said, “It’s been fun to continue to learn after my formal education because I am one of the people who thinks that we never stop learning. Within a group of creative people everyone has ideas and everyone has innovations that need to get discussed and thrown around to make everything better in the long run.”

Outside of work, Taylor loves traveling within New England. “Everything within two hours is fair game for me,” she shared. She is always willing to explore a unique bookstore, castle, or mansion. As an avid reader, she loves creating illustrations based off of her favorite books. She is also the proud owner of both a dog and cat, spending a lot of her down time with her animals. The Five Towers team is happy to have Taylor and looks forward to watching her grow within the company.

# KNOWING THE ROPES

## Keith Prairie's Journey from Navy Service to Advocating for Military Families



by Megin Potter | Photos Provided

**The most common question U.S. Navy Veteran Keith Prairie has heard throughout his career is the same one that he asked before he joined, “What can it do for me?”**

Keith grew up on a dairy farm in Malone, NY, a town with few employment prospects at the time. His brother, father, grandfather, uncles, and cousins had all served, and Keith signed up while still a junior in high school. In 1985, he said goodbye to his mother and boarded the bus for boot camp.

“It was a scary moment because I was trying to let things go, be ready for where I went, and stay focused – I needed the Navy and the benefits it offered,” he said.

### GAINING HIS BEARINGS

From 1986 – ‘87, Keith was Captain’s Office Quartermaster and worked with the navigation department aboard the USS America CD-66 Aircraft Carrier stationed in the Mediterranean when the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps engaged in a military operation against forces in Libya (after escalating terrorism efforts spearheaded by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi occurred throughout the world).

“I grew up very quick and at a very young age,” Keith shared.

Once he returned, Keith worked at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard until 1988 when he joined the U.S. Navy Reserves, an experience that afforded him the opportunity to earn world-class benefits while traveling through the Northern Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean, and the Middle East.

“The Navy taught me how to be ‘cultured’ and to understand different walks of life,” he said.

U.S. Navy Veteran Keith Prairie.

### ON THE STARBOARD SIDE OF HISTORY

Beginning in 1991, Keith’s appreciation for military life informed his service as a U.S. Navy Reserve Recruiter.

Keith excelled at sharing his knowledge and educating others about beneficial career options. In recognition of his outstanding performance, he was chosen from among the nation’s top recruiters as runner-up for the coveted 1996 U.S. Navy Recruiter of the Year award in a competitive selection process that recognizes an individual’s contribution to the fleet’s readiness and capability.

In 1995, Keith was promoted to E-6 rank. The same year, he met his wife, Andrea, and now they have two children, Glenn, 21, a senior at SUNY Brockport, and Sarah, 25, a Siena College graduate, who both paid for college with assistance from the GI Bill, a benefit that helps veterans and their families pay for college.



**Knowing the good that's being done for that particular family, that's what motivates me to help educate them.**

**I just say, 'Hey, you've earned this.'**

*- Keith Prairie*

**KEEPING AN EVEN KEEL**

Working from a foundation of shared concerns and common experiences, Keith relates to those he encounters every day wondering if a career in the military is right for them. He speaks their language, he said, and by the time Keith retired from the U.S. Navy Reserves in 2011, he'd won the Gold Wreath Award (the highest honor a recruiter can receive) 50 times.

"The key is the education piece. It really makes a difference in the field every day," said Keith.

Now, as a U.S. Family Health Plan Benefits Specialist at Martin's Point Health Care, located at 800 Rt. 146, Clifton Park, he shares information about TRICare health benefits, and helps active-duty military, veterans, and their families secure specialists and file claims.

**THROUGH THICK AND THIN**

Looking out for his extended military family's welfare even when he's not at work, in 2014, Keith became a founding member of the Veterans Business Council of the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. The program's goal is to connect veterans with training and employment opportunities. This is done in a variety of ways including holding job fairs in October and May.

Keith also helps veterans and their families secure earned benefits and services through the Saratoga County Veterans Service Agency, and its programs including the Saratoga Veterans Peer-to-Peer Program, and the Saratoga County Veterans Trust Fund (which pays for essential expenses including training, education, health care, housing assistance, and utilities costs). Members are dedicated to raising awareness, honoring deceased veterans, sharing discounted goods and services, and connecting with other veterans' organizations for activities and events. For instance, one mission this year was to help 10 military families visit the Buffalo Zoo.

In addition, Keith shares retirement benefits information with those in the 109th Airlift Wing of the New York Air National Guard, located at Stratton Air National Guard Base in Scotia, New York, a unit whose annual missions support scientific research in Antarctica and on the ice caps of Greenland. They are the only unit operating the C-130 tactical aircraft squadron and employing teams commanding the largest ski-equipped aircraft in the world.

Keith serves in the U.S. Army National Guard in Latham, and as a member at Lt Fred H Clark American Auxiliary Legion Unit Post 91 in Mechanicsville, last winter Keith was among those helping a local family pay rent and make ends meet.

"Knowing the good that's being done for that particular family, that's what motivates me to help educate them. I just say, 'Hey, you've earned this,'" he said.



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**EPIISODE 61**

**Camenga Construction**

In this episode, your hosts Mike Nelson of Five Towers Media and Derek Foster of Daigle Cleaning Systems interview Devon Camenga of Camenga Construction for a second time. Devon goes into depth about his experiences balancing new and old customers, transitioning from the education field, how he takes on apprentices, and more!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



**EPIISODE 60**

**BOCES, Trade School, and Collision Shops**

In this episode, your hosts Michael Nelson of Five Towers Media and Derek Foster of Daigle Cleaning Systems talk with Kaydance about her experience going to the BOCES program in Saratoga, how she landed her job in South Dakota right out of trade school, her family's collision shop, and more!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



**EPIISODE 59**

**Mike and Derek's 2025 Goals**

In this episode, your hosts Michael Nelson of Five Towers Media and Derek Foster of Daigle Cleaning Systems talk about their expectations and goals for the Blue Collar StartUp Podcast in 2025 and talk more about Derek's experience starting a business from scratch.



SCAN TO LISTEN!



**EPIISODE 58**

**Catamount Consulting**

In this episode, our hosts Derek Foster from Daigle Cleaning Systems and Michael Nelson from Five Towers Media sit down with Scott McKenna and Stacy Spector from Catamount Consulting. Catamount Consulting is a national safety training firm with regional representation, ready to build a safety culture for your business. Learn more about Catamount Consulting on their website [catamountconsultingllc.com](http://catamountconsultingllc.com).



SCAN TO LISTEN!

# Local **BUYING**



**Saratoga, Warren, and Washington County** have no shortage of fantastic goods & services to offer! In this podcast, our host Mike Nelson will clue you in on the gems hidden **in your very own community!**



**SEASON 3, EPISODE 8**

## Jason Ingleston

Our host Michael Nelson of Five Towers Media interviews local poetry author Jason (Jay) Ingleston. Tune in to hear the two discuss Jay's newest book, the book publishing industry, imposter syndrome, and more!



SCAN TO LISTEN!



**SEASON 3, EPISODE 7**

## The Operational Excellence Shop

Our host Michael Nelson interviews Bill Tansey, Chief Operating Officer of the OpEx Shop. Join Mike and Bill as they delve into formative childhood experiences that have influenced their professional journeys, explore the dynamics of online versus in-person work environments, and much more.



SCAN TO LISTEN!



**SEASON 3, EPISODE 6**

## Habitat for Humanity

Our hosts Michael Nelson and Katherine Kressner interview George and Fawn from Habitat for Humanity of Northern Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties. Discussion focuses on the change in H4H model, challenges they see in fund raising and more.



SCAN TO LISTEN!



**SEASON 3, EPISODE 5**

## Elite Fighting Promotions

Our host, Michael Nelson, sits down with Don Walton and Jay Ingleston from Elite Fighting Promotions. They chat about Don's recent trip to Thailand with one of his students who is absolutely dominating his age group, local fighting and jiu jitsu, and the upcoming event at Saratoga Springs City Center..



SCAN TO LISTEN!

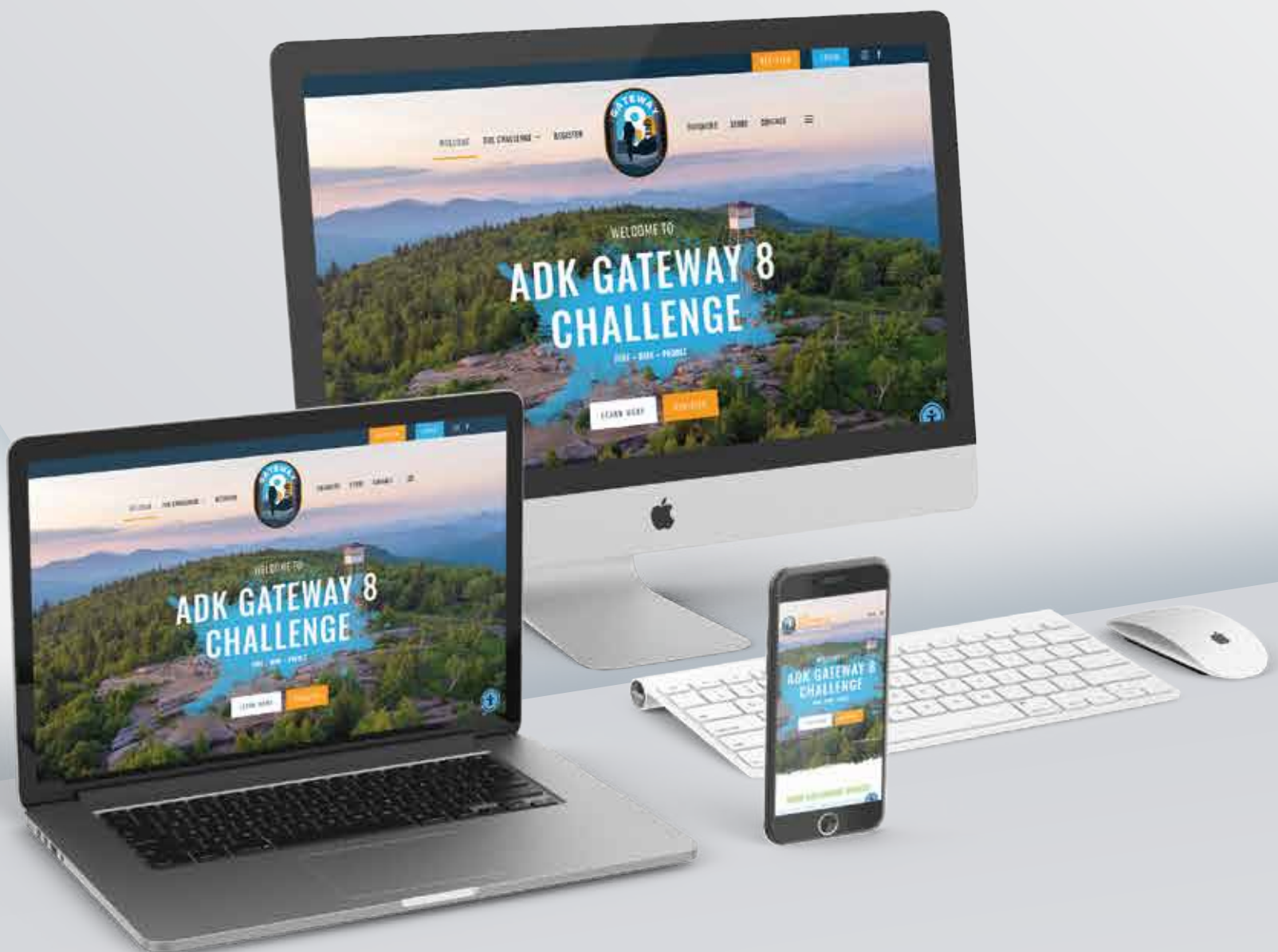
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