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### PUBLISHING & ADVERTISING

Amanda Graves | [amanda@fivetowers.us](mailto:amanda@fivetowers.us)  
*Junior Publisher*  
Michael Nelson | [518-832-3097](tel:518-832-3097)  
[michael@fivetowers.us](mailto:michael@fivetowers.us)

### EDITOR

Tyler Murray

### DESIGN

Kelsey Sherman | [kelsey@fivetowers.us](mailto:kelsey@fivetowers.us)  
*Publication, Ad & Web Design*  
Rosetta Annino | [rosetta@fivetowers.us](mailto:rosetta@fivetowers.us)  
*Publication, Ad & Web Design*  
Katherine Kressner | [katherine@fivetowers.us](mailto:katherine@fivetowers.us)  
*Ad Design*

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Amanda Blanton  
Amanda Graves  
Megan Kelly  
Michael Nelson  
Tandi Orluk  
Megin Potter

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518-798-1761 | [AdirondackChamber.org](http://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.

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[bmny.micromentor.org](http://bmny.micromentor.org) | [Support.businessmentor@esd.ny.gov](mailto:Support.businessmentor@esd.ny.gov)

### EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT

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### NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

518-457-9000 | [dol.ny.gov](http://dol.ny.gov)

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# *Another Strong Year*

## FOR THE ADIRONDACK REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

*The ARCC reflects on another year serving the business community.*



*Pictured above: The ARCC team at their annual holiday mixer. From left to right: ARCC Member Manager Ava Kanninen, VP Marketing & Communications Amanda Blanton, President & CEO Tricia Rogers, Finance Manager Karen Mattison, and Director of Events Carol Ann Conover.*



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

*Photos courtesy of the ARCC.*

alternative hiring opportunities. By February the Chamber had announced the application period for their Leadership Adirondack program, a dynamic, interactive experience that provides skill development and community immersion experiences enabling the participants to grow personally and professionally as they explore issues and opportunities in Warren & Washington County, New York. This program would foster and develop 14 individuals through the months of September – December, with help from facilitator and business consultant Brian Rollo. Wrapping up the program, the Leadership Adirondack Class of 2024-25 will be celebrated at a graduation ceremony on February 4, 2025 in Heritage Hall at the Cool Insuring Arena.

The celebration continued as the ARCC honored their 35th Annual J. Walter Juckett Award winner Robert Nemer, co-owner of the Nemer Auto Group and supporter of many nonprofits. Mr. Nemer's passions include protecting the health & safety of Lake George, supporting healthcare and youth in our region.

Sprinkled throughout the year were many meetings of the minds, as our Women's Business Council, Nonprofit Business Council, Workplace Health & Wellness Council and Veterans Business Network planned programs to benefit the full membership of the ARCC. The Women's Business Council SUCCESSION Summit continued a conversation on business continuity and succession planning for businesses of all sizes. The Adirondack Nonprofit Business Council presented a panel discussion on planned giving and legacy donations. Focusing on the health of body and mind, the Workplace Health & Wellness Council hosted a panel discussion on health resources available

**T**he end of the year brings about many thoughts and feelings as it represents an ending as well as a beginning. Businesses and organizations are finalizing budgets, putting together annual reports, celebrating accomplishments and making plans for the new year. The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) experienced a strong year of growth, with the support of their membership and greater community. It is with gratitude that the ARCC can continue their mission of supporting the business community through advocacy, education, connection, and collaboration.

### 2024: A YEAR IN REVIEW

The ARCC jump started 2024 with ribbon cuttings, an incredibly well attended mixer with over 180 guests, and a very important panel discussion on



ARCC Business Awards at The Queensbury Hotel.

in our communities. And the Veterans Business Network hosted their 4th annual Walk for Veteran Suicide Awareness & Prevention and raised funds for the veteran programs of Kee to Independent Growth.

Each month the Chamber hosted a networking mixer, with the biggest being the Triple Chamber Mixer held in June. For a few years in a row, the ARCC has partnered with the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, and the Bolton Landing Chamber to host this summer mixer at the Sagamore Resort. This mixer brought together over 450 attendees combined from all three chambers for an evening of decadent hors d'oeuvres, fabulous drink specials and epic views of Lake George.

## COLLABORATION & EDUCATION

Collaboration on multiple initiatives took center stage in 2024 as the ARCC partnered with many organizations to offer educational opportunities to the greater community. The month of October specifically sticks out as the ARCC collaborated on four events in addition to their already planned events. Partnering with the Saratoga County Chamber, the ARCC participated in a workshop exploring how a sense of belonging in companies and communities affects talent recruitment, workforce retention, and community investment. This workshop featured a keynote speaker and two separate panel discussions, featuring many ARCC members. To satisfy the marketer in all of us, the ARCC partnered with Trampoline Design to host a discussion on rebranding vs refreshing with lots of takeaways. The third event, in partnership with SUNY Adirondack, focused on AI in the workplace – its impact, application, and how AI is reshaping our economy and workforce. To round out the month, the ARCC partnered with TD Bank to bring together two panels focused on access to capital and strategies for growth for small businesses.

## ADVOCACY FOR BUSINESS

Beginning with the annual Lunch with Legislators event, the ARCC brought together close to 140 people for a dialogue with elected officials. This moderated discussion featured topics such as affordable healthcare for small businesses, accessibility & inclusivity for differing abled individuals, childcare challenges, and more. In addition, similar events were held on a county level for Warren & Washington counties allowing each county to share updates and future plans affecting our communities. And lastly, the ARCC wrote 19 letters of support for members looking for assistance in their individual fields.

## ARCC BY THE NUMBERS

Data can speak volumes and the ARCC, like most businesses and organizations, tracks a few things throughout the year. In 2024, the Chamber hosted 98 events with over 3,000 people in attendance. These events included mixers, council meetings, educational seminars & workshops, ribbon cuttings, and more.

Two of the ARCC flagship events saw record numbers in 2024. The annual ARCC Business Awards received a record number of nominations at 44 businesses in 7 categories – a true testament to how incredibly supportive the business community is. Shortly after the business awards the ARCC Business Expo sold out at a record 88 exhibitors, taking over the first floor of the Queensbury Hotel for an impressively well attended business showcase. And last, but certainly not least, the ARCC experienced some incredible growth in membership welcoming over 150 new members in 2024. This growth brought the ARCC to a total of over 850 members, a number that the Chamber hasn't seen in many years.

## A FINAL CELEBRATION AND A LOOK AHEAD

The ARCC ended 2024 with an extraordinary mixer in the Carriage House of the Fort William Henry Hotel in early December. Welcoming over 275 guests, this annual holiday mixer serves as a celebration of the holiday season, and for some a chance to reconnect before the new year. This year's event was extra special in that the ARCC announced their 2024 Ambassador of the year – Holly DeKleine, Sales Associate with nePROMO. Holly joined as an ARCC Ambassador in 2015 and continuously shows up for the Chamber and her community. Her warm presence, passion for helping others, and enthusiasm shows in everything she does. This is Holly's fifth time achieving Ambassador of the year.

In the spirit of what it means to be an ARCC Ambassador, the ARCC also changed the name of the award to honor a dear friend, a huge ARCC supporter, and the biggest community champion - the late John Marcantonio. With heartfelt gratitude, we invited Shelly Marcantonio and their son Christopher to present the newly named John Marcantonio Ambassador of the Year Award to Holly.

*As the ARCC looks ahead to 2025, we are beyond excited for the opportunities that await. The first quarter promises to deliver multiple events designed to foster connection & collaboration, inspiring educational opportunities, and more celebrations of business and community.*

# How to Win the Google Game

## A GUIDE TO IMPROVING YOUR SEO AND ONLINE PRESENCE



by Michael Nelson,  
Partner & Co-Founder  
at Five Towers Media

**Are you looking to kick off 2025 with strategic focused efforts geared towards bringing in new business? Looking for the one magical thing you can do to increase brand awareness and bring potential clients your way? Tired of social media chewing up your budget without much ROI? Then focus on one thing: Winning the “Google Game.”**

Winning the “Google Game” often seems like some sort of magical contest, where only a chosen few are able to rise to the top. The simple truth is that there is nothing magical about it, like any other game it is a simple matter of understanding the rules, and using them to your advantage. Before we get into what some of the rules are, or ways to use them to your advantage, let's first define what Google's Search Engine does.

“

**Winning the 'Google Game' is a marathon, not a sprint.**

”

Google's Search Engine is in the business of matching up search queries with search results. If these results were unfavorable, people would look elsewhere for the information. Google has successfully built a system that understands when people are happy with their search results, so the next time someone has a similar search it shows the “better” results. It incorporates things like Bounce Rate, Load Speeds, and Backlinks to

differentiate good search results from poor. To be fair, the list of things Google takes into consideration is not short, and can be a bit technical. The amount of time, money, and resources needed to look after them all can seem daunting so here are a few items (not all) you can use to help your business win the "Google Game".

**1 FOCUS ON YOUR WEBSITE FIRST.** While a good web designer can quickly spot deficiencies on a web site it is not always in the budget to bring one in. There are plenty of tools out there, both free and paid, that you can use to scan your current website and see what adjustments to make. For readers interested in exploring our favorite free tool, scan the QR code below or visit this link: [website.grader.com](http://website.grader.com). This tool will scan your website in seconds and give you back a score on each of the following:

- Performance
- SEO
- Mobile Devices
- Security

It will even break these down into smaller chunks with potential actions to take to get you to a 10 out of 10. There are many others as well, some focus



Scan here to explore our favorite FREE tool to grade your website in seconds, then learn how to improve it.

on SEO, some on website structure, etc. Start simple and move to more sophisticated tools as your knowledge base grows.

**2 MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE.** Having an up to date and active Google Business Profile can often be a huge traffic driver. It's free, it's fast, and everyone uses these to get to your website, find your phone number, or get directions. Add a bunch of 5 star reviews to it and you have a simple lead generation tool to help 'make it rain' in 2025.

**3 GOOGLE MAPS** is commonly overlooked as a part of people's SEO strategies, but it can be a game changer for many. When a search is made there is often a google map business listing that pops up. It is super important to be on the list, and most of the things you do to build a better Google Business Profile will help your position on the maps list. Here is a quick link to the Google Maps "how to" from Google.

So, are you ready to play the "Google Game" and win? Remember, it's not a "one and done" strategy – you need to keep at it and be patient. The behaviors needed to win require ongoing monitoring and updating. If you don't, you will fall off the list, and your organic ranking will drop. Like all things in Marketing, winning the "Google Game" is a marathon, not a sprint.

# Kaitlin Russitano

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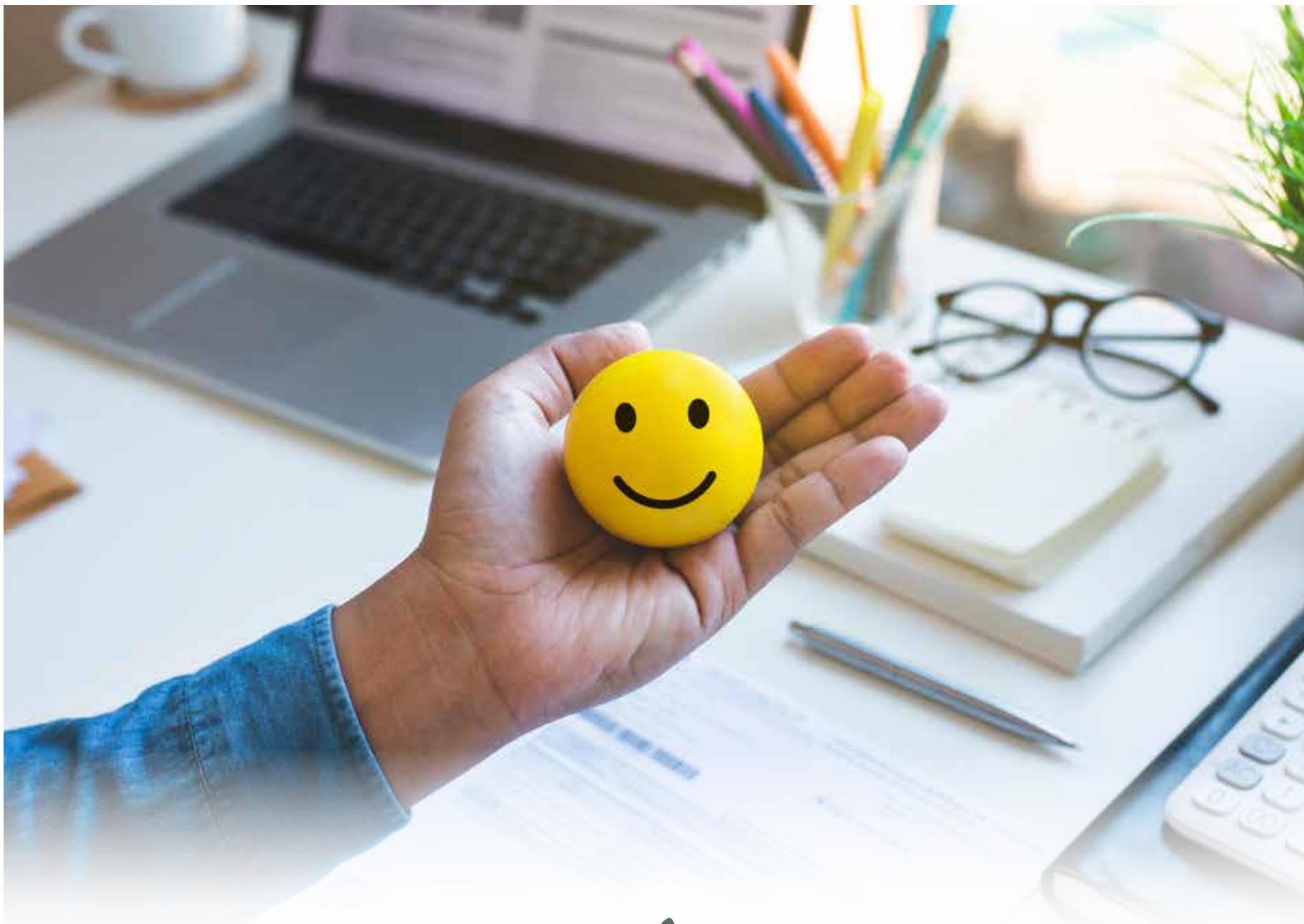
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# Scale Up Your Business

with a Mental Health Approach to the New Year

by Tandi Orluk, LCSW, *Set Free Counseling PLLC*

We all strive to have a successful business. Sometimes we try and fail, and other times we try and succeed in our business goals for the year. All of which is good. Failure provides us with humility and resilience and success provides us with joy, hope, and excitement.

“We cannot operate our busy lives, and business, if we are crashing into the waves of life instead of surfing them.”

—TANDI ORLUK, LCSW



So how do we approach the new year from a mental health perspective regarding our business? First, reflect on your business accomplishments from 2024. Identify what made you proud, grateful, and excited. Then give yourself and your fellow colleagues praise for those accomplishments. Finally review and reflect on your daily systems that keep you operating at your best. I know that I feel my most inspired and creative when I am well rested, calm, not hungry, and do not have what seems like a million thoughts running in the background of my mind. As a Mental Health Professional here are 3 effective tools that can help you put in place daily systems to improve your mental health and scale up your business practices.

### BODY SCANS

You can identify what is going on with your mental health by checking in with your body to see what it is doing. Our bodies are always communicating with us, and reacts well before our brains ever catch up. I have learned to identify this by doing daily body scans. To practice this start from the top of your head and scan down your body all the way to your toes. What do you notice? I notice, every single time, that my jaws, fingers, and toes are all clinched. As I am scanning those parts

of my body, I intentionally unclench them. When I do this daily check-in with my body, I can stay ahead of days, weeks, months, and yes, even years of keeping my body in a tense state of fight or flight. Life happens to us every day. Stress piles up within us, our families, and businesses. If we are not listening daily to our body, then we are missing the signs it is trying to signal to us. We cannot operate our busy lives, and business, if we are crashing into the waves of life instead of surfing them.

### BRAIN DUMP

A brain dump is simply taking our thoughts and writing them out on paper. Write everything that is currently bothering you. I find this is best to do right before bed as this skill also helps ensure a better night's rest. It really takes less than 10 minutes to implement this into your routine. Pay close attention to how you feel prior to doing this exercise versus when you have completed it, notice that you are calmer and more relaxed.

### PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Did you know that when we implement a daily practice of gratitude our mood improves drastically? In fact, research shows that a single act of thoughtful gratitude produces an immediate 10% increase in happiness, and

a 35% reduction in depressive symptoms.<sup>1</sup> Here are ways you can implement gratitude in your daily systems. You can keep a gratitude journal, there are even apps that remind you to complete this exercise. A secondary boost of happiness comes from practicing gratitude when we are having a bad day. We can look back on what we wrote from that morning and remember that there are good things in our lives, and that whatever has stressed us out for today does not take away from the positive things that do exist in life.

In conclusion, as entrepreneurs we have much to reflect on and grow into for the new year in our businesses. Implement the mental health systems that set your future self and business up for success. Have an incredibly Happy New Year.

To learn more about improving your mental health and setting your business up for success in the new year, visit [setfreecounselingllc.com](http://setfreecounselingllc.com).

*Disclaimer: This article is a whole health approach and not meant to treat any specific diagnosis.*

### REFERENCES

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<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2022/11/practicing-gratitude/>



# NDAKINNA EDUCATIONAL CENTER:

## *Keep the Fire Burning*

by Amanda Graves | Photos courtesy of Awasos Entertainment



### FOR OVER 30 YEARS,

the Ndakinna Education Center has been connecting the people of Saratoga County to the traditions and practices of the Indigenous people that lived here.

Their programs cover subjects like survival skills, wilderness knowledge, and even language reclamation.

However, with temperatures dropping and outdoor programming slowing down, the center is reaching out for community support to ease some of the hardships of winter.

Needed renovations and bigger heating bills are challenging, but with the help of the community, the Ndakinna Education Center can continue to provide the essential and educational programming and classes.

### A FAMILY'S DEDICATION TO CONSERVATION

The Ndakinna Education Center has been an important part of Jesse Bruchac's family for many generations. Jesse is a full-time instructor at the center and an expert in the Abenaki language.

He explained, "The land was property that had been in our family for many generation. Our grandmother, Marion Bowman Bruchac decided to keep it forever wild and to be a place for education."

In order to preserve the integrity of the land, it became the first conservation easement in Saratoga County. Since then, it has served as a place for people of all ages to immerse themselves in the culture and history of the Indigenous people.

The property utilizes several different barns, now turned education centers. "The first of the Ndakinna barns was constructed by my paternal 5th great-grandfather, Holtham Dunham, during the Revolutionary War in the 1780s."

"Since then, they have remained in the family, expanding and evolving with each generation," Jesse said.

Every year, over 300 children participate in programs that teach them about essential wilderness skills and bushcraft techniques.

They are especially proud to offer two classes a day, every day of the year, teaching the Abenaki language, free of charge. The Abenaki language is one of the three Indigenous languages of Saratoga County.

"We are really proud to be able to have these folks offering these classes and we see several hundred people take advantage of the online classes," said Jesse.

## SURVIVING THE SEASON

While the online classes have experienced a lot of success, it is no replacement for the value of gathering together in person.

"Our focus is a real connection back to this place," Jesse said.

"Drawing in large part on the wisdom that has been held in our family, and other families, from the original inhabitants here, from the Indigenous people of the region."

In order to continue their in-person programs, it takes hard work and constant renovation. "The number one challenge is keeping not only the lights on but the heat on," said Jesse.

Over the years, they have worked on replacing windows, adding insulation, and will be adding a heat pump; but there is still so much more that needs to be done.

## THE CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

As a nonprofit, the Ndakinna Education Center depends on community support to continue their efforts. Ndakinna is able to provide documentation for corporate matching gift programs, and all donations are a tax write-off.

"We've had some great success and wonderful support from the community in the past as a non-profit," Jesse explained.

These donations allow the Ndakinna Education Center to get through the cold winter and continue to provide in-person programming for people of all ages.

To learn more about how you can get involved and make a donation, visit [www.ndakinnacenter.org/donations-and-sponsorships](http://www.ndakinnacenter.org/donations-and-sponsorships).



**Scan here to learn more  
about the Ndakinna  
Educational Center & how  
you can get involved.**



# A New Lease on Life

## REDBUD REVIVES THE PAST WITH PURPOSE



by Amanda Graves | *Photos provided*

As one of the Capital Region's oldest cities, Saratoga is known for its architectural beauty and rich charm. Many of its buildings carry the same character they did when first constructed. However, like any old structure, preserving the architecture requires unwavering attention to detail and a continuous effort in restoration and upkeep.

Since 1977, the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation has worked tirelessly to protect the architectural history of the city. Every year, the organization recognizes those who invest in preservation projects at their Preservation Recognition Awards ceremony.

This year, the Exterior Rehabilitation Award was presented to owners of 42 Circular Street, Julie and Thomas Furey. This project would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of the Fureys, SD Atelier Architecture, and Redbud Development, Inc.

### A COMMITMENT TO TIMELESS BEAUTY

Celebrating their 20-year anniversary in August of this year, Redbud Development is a design-build firm owned by Geffrey (Geff) Redick and his wife Karen Redick.

Founded on the principles of creativity, integrity, and reliability, Geff and his team have always focused on keeping the client's needs and interests at the forefront of every project.

"We're very focused on collaborating with our clients to understand who they are, what their goals are, and then creating a design that reflects their vision, shared Geff. "And ultimately, implementing the construction of the project to make sure all details are correct."

When he was approached about the house on Circular Street, he knew it would be challenging, albeit rewarding.

"It's one of only seven houses that overlooks Congress Park. The house and property were in very bad shape, and the owners had a desire to completely renovate the entire property and bring it back to its original glory."

The property is in one of Saratoga Springs' historic districts, which means it must adhere to a set of rules that are more strict than for other properties in the city. This means that both the Saratoga City Planning and Zoning Office have oversight, as well as the Design Review Commission. The Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation can also influence the design, by providing feedback and recommendations to the Design Review Commission.

The Italianate-style residence was originally built in 1872 by Mary Shepherd. The stately structure has pitched roofs, wide overhanging eaves with decorative brackets, symmetrical facades, tall narrow windows, and a square fourth-story tower reminiscent of an Italian farmhouse.

Mary Shepherd passed away only three years after completion, but the property remained in the Shepherd family until 1902.

It was then owned by several private and institutional owners over the years, including Skidmore and Verrazzano Colleges. In the mid-1970s, a private owner converted the house into apartments. The house and property were not maintained well during this period. When the Furey's purchased the property in 2020, it was in severe disrepair, but they were determined to restore the house.

During the initial design consultation, Geff learned that in addition to restoring the house, they also wanted to add an addition to the rear of the house and build a carriage house that would include a small gym, single-car parking, and a second-story storage space. The Furey's also desired an English-style garden space in the backyard, vehicle parking, the ability to drive off property without backing out onto the street, privacy to the neighbors, and miscellaneous other elements.

"Once we really understood the client goals, we collaborated with SD Atelier Architecture and the homeowner to come up with a comprehensive design for the property," explained Geff.

## CRAFTED COLLABORATION

SD Atelier and Redbud coordinated with the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation to ask for their input on the architectural details, fencing, hardscaping elements, and plant materials. The design team then presented the drawing package to the Saratoga Springs Design Review Commission, and ultimately received their approval.

When the Furey's were notified by the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation that they would be receiving the Exterior Rehabilitation Award, they knew that they wanted Redbud Development, SD Atelier, and

ACW Builders to receive the acknowledgment they deserved for all of their hard work during the design and renovation of the property.

"The owner wanted to make sure that we were there for this presentation because she recognized that all of us were integral to the success of the project," Geff says.

"The ceremony demonstrated how many people care about the preservation work that occurs in Saratoga as they all celebrated together. I realized how involved the community is with the Preservation Foundation.

"There were almost 100 people there who are very interested in preserving the history of Saratoga. It was actually quite rewarding to be a part of it."

He went on to explain how much it means for his business to receive this kind of recognition. "We take a lot of pride in what we do, so when a prominent association recognizes what it takes to design and construct a project of this magnitude and then gives it an award, it really feels fantastic. It was a great event for us."

## STANDING THE TEST OF TIME

With two decades of excellence and multiple prestigious awards, Redbud has been setting the standard in landscape design, curating stunning yards and outdoor spaces throughout the Capital Region, including the Hudson Valley, Great Sacandaga Lake, and Lake George areas.

With a trusted network of subcontractors, Redbud delivers unparalleled quality and a refined, tailored approach to every project.

**To learn more about Redbud Development Inc. and their award-winning design process, visit their website at [redbuddevelopment.com](http://redbuddevelopment.com).**



# BUSINESS MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

We specialize in tailored business management consulting services designed to empower every level of your organization, from entry-level employees to senior executives.

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# Call Him Santa Nick



## The Veteran Bringing Christmas to Life



by Amanda Graves

Photos courtesy of  
Heather Harrigan  
Photography.

*There's no mistaking him.* In his bright red suit, thick black belt and a beard as white as snow, Santa Claus is the timeless symbol of holiday joy, beloved by generations young and old. But Santa doesn't always just fly with reindeer.

Before Nick Casey ever donned the red suit, he was a munitions systems specialist in the U.S. Air Force. What began as a favor to a friend quickly turned into a deep passion for spreading holiday joy to kids of all ages. Today, Nick is more committed to being Santa than ever, with years of training under his belt and a real beard to prove it. To him, being Santa is about much more than just wearing a costume—it's about ensuring that everyone he meets leaves with a smile on their face.

### From Pole to Pole

When he was younger, Nick dreamed of being an astronaut. "As a child in the 70s I always wanted to be an astronaut, only I wasn't great in school," he shared.

Nick soon figured that the closest he could get to his dream was enrolling in the U.S. Air Force. He began as a munitions systems specialist where he worked on explosives. Nick enjoyed his job and was deployed several times, visiting Antarctica and even the North Pole.

"I'm probably one of the few Santas that have been above the parallels for the North and the South Pole," said Nick. He was offered the opportunity to cross-train, which allows a person to learn new skills and take on different

roles within the Air Force. He accepted.

He was assigned to the Stratton Air National Guard Base and was a hydraulic systems mechanic on C-130s. From there, Nick became a supervisor for the help desk at the base.

During this time, he began working on computers in his free time and found he enjoyed that work. After leaving the military, he worked as a contractor for about a year before getting a job at the N.Y.S. Office of the State Comptroller.

Today, he works as a manager for the information security management team ensuring information security management automations can come into fruition to help them do their job.

## Serendipitous Santa

In 2013, Nick received a call from Nel Deidel who needed a favor. The Santa for the Lights in the Park in Albany, N.Y. had cancer and they didn't have a replacement. Nick was already having a tough holiday season, as his mom had recently passed the year prior.

"My mom had passed, just at her birthday in December of 2012, so it wasn't going to be a good Christmas morning," explained Nick.

However, despite his disinterest in dressing up as Santa, Nick agreed to help his friend. Nel lent Nick everything he needed, including the red suit and even a fake beard. The first people to approach Nick were a little girl and her mom, and this experience has stayed with Nick to this very day. "This little girl looked up at me in such awe. I just saw the joy that it gave her, and her mom," he shared.

After the event, Nick called Nel, who wasn't surprised to hear that he wasn't ready to retire the red suit. "I don't know what it was, but he knew," said Nick.

## Crafting the Perfect Claus

After that experience, Nick dedicated himself to learning all that he could to become a better Santa. He has attended the International University of Santa Claus, Santa Camp, several Christmas performers workshops, storytelling classes, and more.

Additionally, he is a member of the worldwide Santa Claus network. He has even committed to the role by growing out his beard and is a member of the Real Beard Santas. All of this information allows him to be able to answer even the toughest questions that a child may ask.

"I can go toe to toe and tell a child why Rudolph's nose is really red; I can give him the exact path I take when I travel around the world on Christmas Eve."

Additionally, he learns what many other Santas in the world say, so their answers remain consistent.

"The training has given me so much. It gives me the knowledge, and the networking because there are people who have so much more knowledge and experience than I do, and I'll always be in awe of them," shared Nick. "It's a fantastic community and I am a better person for it, I've learned a lot from everybody."

## Spreading Joy Across Generations

He is surrounded by people who support his passion and love for being Santa, including his wife. "My wife does not want to be Mrs. Claus, which is fine. I'm kind of thankful because she does everything else in the background and I don't think I could do it if she was Mrs. Claus. She is Mrs. Claus, but not taking the moniker," explained Nick.

His current job also understands how important being Santa is to Nick and they allow him the flexibility he needs with his schedule. "There was a caveat that if I took this position they would give me broad leeway to take time to be Santa," said Nick.

He even works as the Santa for the Toys for Tots at the comptroller's office. While the Lights in the Park event no longer exists, Nick stays busy attending different gatherings all over Glens Falls, at the Stuyvesant Plaza, different day cares, the Palace Theater, and nursing homes.



*Photo courtesy of Chelsea Sylvester Photography.*

He meets people of all different ages, but sees the child in all of them.

"I consider them all children really, because when you come up to Santa that's how you feel," shared Nick,

"There's so many things that I've learned, and it brings joy to everybody. No matter if they're eight months or eighty-eight years, there's a child in everyone."

## Holiday Magic, Year After Year

Spreading joy is what motivates Nick to continue being Santa, and he finds himself lucky to be in this unique position.

"For anyone to give someone joy, especially in this day and age can be tough, and to be able to do that with just a look or how you look is awesome and can be a huge responsibility too," he said.

He knows how memorable meeting Santa can be for someone so he tries to make every experience positive and memorable for all.

"I go into every encounter with every child and every parent thinking to myself, 'I am privileged!'" said Nick, "I may not know it, when they do it, but they will at some point pull out that picture and they will smile and remember what kind of time they had. That's why I try to make every single one, every single visit, special!"

Nick plans on being Santa until he can physically no longer continue. For him, there is no better way to spread Christmas cheer and show everyone, young and old, the true joy of the holiday season.

**For more information about Santa Nick, to learn more about his journey and book an event, visit his website: [www.santanickc.com](http://www.santanickc.com).**



# From Paperwork to People

## Investing in the Exponential Potential of Human Capital

by Megin Potter | Photos courtesy of Lauren Kirkham Photography

**Every business wants to do right by its employees, but with growing technology and a more diverse workforce, striking a balance between employer and employee interests can be difficult.**

Twenty years ago, Human Resources was viewed as an organization's policing department. Outsourcing the role of HR was considered a "low-cost play" that would save an organization money (and the hassle of

completing time-consuming paperwork that slowed you down and made it harder for you to do your job).

Meanwhile, workplace demands increased. So did employee dissatisfaction, as relentless cost-cutting got in the way of advocating for worker wellness.

Then, in just a few years, the attitude toward HR shifted in Fortune 50 companies, as leaders learned more about the high costs of employee turnovers and struggled to fill vacant positions. Reallocating resources to eliminate waste, enhance the employee experience, and generate revenue became the way to achieve operational excellence. Outsourcing HR became a "value play" while increasingly strategic HR professionals became valuable members of the C-suite executive team.



## ACHIEVING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Today, despite HR's exciting evolution, there are still companies who haven't made the transition.

In 2013, Bill and Katie Tansey opened HR Resolved, a robust platform-based company taking this big business approach and making it available to small, mid-size, and emerging businesses across the country who haven't yet made the switch.

Providing a value never realized before, a Human Resources Professional like Katie works as hard for her clients as she does for herself. She combines her more than 22 years of human resources experience with her passion for wellness – both in and out of the office. A nutrition coach and an exceptional athlete, she has completed more than two dozen marathons, ultra marathons, and ironman competitions. Featured in the 2011 book, "Run Like a Girl: How strong women make happy lives" by Mina Samuels, Katie shows how small changes can help you overcome obstacles in all the arenas of your life.

## COMPETENCY BEYOND COMPLIANCE

Once a company has onboarded with HR Resolved, during the first quarter of the year, they execute a series of activities that go well beyond the simple hiring, administration, and training of personnel.

Their first step is designing practical strategies that align realistic employee expectations with an organization's mission and goals. Then, data is delivered in usable, compatible formats that address challenges while informing hiring decisions, employee training, and retention down the road.

During the second quarter, hiring typically picks up within an organization. Often, the recruitment process includes creating and posting job descriptions, accepting and tracking applications, shortlisting candidates, organizing interviews, hiring, and onboarding new hires. Handling payroll and benefits, such

as travel and expenses, paid vacation, sick leave, retirement, health insurance and others, are an important part of HR's responsibilities at this time as well.

## COACHING AND ENSURING EQUITABLE COMPENSATION

By creating an onboarding process that incorporates competence-building techniques and extended training plans for new hires, companies create a more confident, resilient, productive, and loyal workforce – right from the start.

As mid-year approaches, coaching is put in place so that by the third quarter, any required changes can be made.

Built-in accountability ensures compensation is adjusted accordingly in preparation for end-of-the-year assessments during the fourth quarter.

## PROVEN PROCESSES, LESS PAPERWORK

Providing a holistic approach to business that puts the resourcefulness back into Human Resources, HR Resolved's process made such a substantial difference to one client (a regional distributor of a national brand), that they were awarded for it at a national sales conference.

Even though Saratoga is a retail-heavy tourist town, HR Resolved does not service retail. Instead, since the pandemic, they've concentrated on servicing three markets within the region, from New York City to Lake Placid: manufacturing (or resellers of value-added goods), professional organizations (like lawyers and marketing firms), and private medical offices (including physicians, dental, and veterinarian practices).

Protecting small businesses from the challenges that often drive them to merge with conglomerates, HR Resolved analytical resources and technical assistance helped one physician get back to what she enjoyed most – being a doctor – while giving her the time and flexibility to spend the weekend skiing – instead of buried under mounds of paperwork.

**For more information, go to [HRresolved.com](http://HRresolved.com).**



# Give the Gift of Home & Heart

## This Holiday Season at Southern Adirondack ReStore

by Amanda Graves | *Photos provided*



As the holiday season kicks into high gear, many of us are searching for the perfect gifts for our loved ones. What if your holiday shopping could bring joy to your loved ones and make a lasting impact on your community? At the Southern Adirondack ReStore, you can do just that—finding unique, thoughtful gifts while supporting families working toward homeownership.

Located in the heart of the Southern Adirondacks (just off Exit 17 of I-87), the ReStore is more than just a store—it's a place where you can purchase with a purpose. Whether you're hunting for a cozy housewarming gift, a one-of-a-kind treasure for a friend, or looking to add a little festive flair to your own home, you can do it all at the ReStore, while supporting a cause that helps families working toward homeownership.

The ReStore, run by Habitat for Humanity of Northern Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties (HFH-NSWWC), is stocked with an

ever-changing inventory of high-quality new and gently used items—furniture, home décor, lighting, artwork, vintage finds, jewelry, and more—there's something special for everyone on your list. Proceeds from every sale go directly toward building safe, affordable homes for local families. This means that with every holiday purchase you make, you're not just finding something special, you're helping someone in your community achieve the stability and security of a home.

And it's not just about buying; it's about giving, too. The ReStore welcomes donations of new or gently used items, and they even offer free pick-up for larger donations. Whether you're cleaning out your attic, updating your home, or simply wanting to pass along items that could make a difference in someone else's life, your contributions directly support the HFH-NSWWC's mission.

This holiday season, why not give the gift of helping others? When you shop at the Southern Adirondack ReStore, you're doing more than picking out

beautiful pieces for your home—you're contributing to a brighter future for families right here in our community. With the wide range of items at the ReStore, online store and their Etsy Shop Etsy Curated, you're sure to find something for everyone on your list, all while saving money and supporting a cause that means so much.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Southern Adirondack ReStore is embarking on an exciting expansion to better serve the community (stay tuned!). Plans include creating additional space for inventory and a new community wing dedicated to financial education and community services. This expansion will empower even more families to navigate the path to homeownership while providing an even greater selection of affordable treasures for shoppers.

The ReStore's mission thrives thanks to the incredible generosity of its volunteers and donors. If you're looking for a way to give back this holiday season, consider donating your time or goods. Every act of support helps build homes, strengthen families, and create a brighter future for our community.

So, as you work through your holiday checklist, make the Southern Adirondack ReStore a part of your plans. You'll find beautiful, high-quality gifts at unbeatable prices, while contributing to a cause that forever impacts lives. This holiday season let's make every gift count—because at the ReStore, your purchases help build homes, community and hope.

For more information on how you can get involved, visit [southernadirondackrestore.com](http://southernadirondackrestore.com) or [glensfallshabitat.org/restore](http://glensfallshabitat.org/restore).

This holiday season, let's make every gift count.



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# THE BIG IMPACT of a Small Business



by Megin Potter | Photos courtesy of Matt Smith

**At River Bend Christmas Tree Farm, a decade-long lead time, capped by a blistering sprint into the holiday season sets the stage for a family of tree farmers to grow happy holiday memories.**

During December, the Carpenter family's years of hard work are finally rewarded by the sight of other families visiting River Bend Christmas Tree Farm to pick out a tree. Christmas trees are a big business in New York. Approximately 875 tree farms spread across nearly 19,000 acres in the state, creating a \$14 million impact on the economy, according to the NYS Department of Agriculture, and earning New York its ranking as the fourth-largest Christmas tree producer in the nation.

In the last century, Christmas tree farms have become increasingly popular. They are a source of community pride that strengthens environmental sustainability.

Visiting one is an educational opportunity, as well as a holiday tradition. For successful small businesses like River Bend Christmas Tree Farm, surviving the changing climate and shifts in consumer demand, while maximizing profit and minimizing workload, is a balancing act that takes more than a little dash of holiday magic.

## TREE-MENDOUS TURN AROUND TIMES

River Bend Christmas Tree Farm was founded in 1967. In the 1980s, Bruce Carpenter and his father-in-law, Francis Cancro, started growing Christmas trees on a small plot of land in the Village of Corinth, NY, to earn extra money for his son Jim's college education. As the trees grew, so did the business. Bruce and his wife, Rosann, purchased River Bend Tree Farm from Victor Orto, just across the Hudson River from their existing trees.

Jim grew up in the business. At age 11, he was already excelling at wreath-making, and it has continued to be one of his favorite parts of the business ever since.

For the last five years, Jim has been managing the tree farm. Genetically better trees have allowed him to speed up the time it takes between when a small tree is planted until it can be harvested.



By selecting superior tree stock and fertilizers, his trees have a stronger root system, better shape, and are more drought-tolerant than varieties that were grown decades ago, he said.

Despite these advances, plant survival rates have diminished, so now he must plant two trees for each Christmas tree he expects to harvest. Every two-year-old tree transplant has been carefully cared for in a tree nursery, but once it's planted in the field, all that's left to do is to hope, said Jim.

During their eight-to-twelve-year growth cycle, trees are now exposed to a warmer climate that allows fungi, invasive species, and grubs to survive and wreak havoc on vulnerable vegetation.

Although climate is a growing concern, along with the significant time investment in Christmas tree farming, it also comes with greater insulation from seasonal weather fluctuations.

"We don't feel the same pressure when there's one dry year; it doesn't make for a bad crop. We don't live and die by what happens that one season," said Jim.

## FIR-SURE FORECASTING

From the 1960s to the 1990s, River Bend Christmas Tree Farm mainly grew Scotch Pine and White Spruce trees for wholesale markets. Pines have lengthy needles and are long-lasting, but now, consumer preferences have changed.

Today, the farm specializes in cut-your-own trees, and customers predominantly prefer the farm's fragrant fir varieties, including: Fraser, Canaan, Balsam, and Concolor (White) fir trees.

In 2023, River Bend Christmas Tree Farm, which is only open from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, sold out for the year in just *six days*.

In that time, 2,500 – 4,000 visitors made their way through the farm, choosing hundreds of trees. A full 50 percent of the farm's revenue is generated annually during the Thanksgiving three-day weekend.

One thing every customer visiting the farm has in common? They are all looking for a convenient experience, said Jim.

Beginning in October (after the second hard frost), the rush is on to make wreaths, garlands, and kissing balls. Trees are easily cut from the field and transported home to be stood up easily by drilling for their Stand Strait tree stands and netting equipment. They also provide tree stands that hold gallons of water, making maintaining these trees easier.

Inside their small gift shop, a pot-belly stove warms visitors as they peruse the holiday decorations and local products, including the Carpenter family's own maple syrup.

## SWEETENING SEASONAL STRATEGIES

Making maple syrup was something Bruce Carpenter had always wanted to do, and in 2020, he discovered his small operation, located on 50 acres in Minerva, had produced more than ever.

With the help of Jim's husband, Matt Smith, an online store was created with the Saratoga Maple branding, and the family began selling the syrup under both the Minerva Maple and the Saratoga Maple names.

"It's the same maple in both bottles, but it's become a fun game within the family to see which sells more. It's a friendly competition that's grown to be something really special," said Jim.

Held to the "ultra-premium" USDA grade standards, they are extremely particular about the science behind the syrup, he said.

Local customers, as well as those in Texas, Florida, and Kentucky, really like the Adirondack flavor profile in their line of products, which includes barrel-aged bourbon syrup, maple candy, cream, jellies, and spreads.

Sold year-round at local shops — including the Taste NY Adirondack Welcome Center, the Skidmore Campus Store, and the Saratoga Casino Hotel — by diversifying into maple, they generate additional revenue that goes right back into the business, said Jim.

## GIVING BACK & GROWING

Assembling and shipping hundreds of maple gift baskets adds to the holiday's hectic pace, but whether they're harvesting trees or maple, the Carpenter's small business is a joyful one.

To help spread the spirit of the season even further, since Trees for Troops was founded in 2006, River Bend Christmas Tree Farm has gifted trees to hundreds of military families around the world through the program.

Today, they are continuing to grow their agricultural endeavors with a new storage building and more — and newer — equipment. This fall, the Carpenter family is planning to offer pumpkins in addition to their abundant tree and maple harvest.

For more information, visit River Bend Christmas Tree Farm, 164 E. River Drive, Lake Luzerne, on Facebook, at [riverbendchristmastreefarm.com](http://riverbendchristmastreefarm.com) and [saratogamaple.com](http://saratogamaple.com)



# Dr. McKenzie Symons, OD

ADIRONDACK PEDIATRIC VISION & REHABILITATION



by Amanda Graves | Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Kalin Photography

Having blurry vision can be frustrating, and sometimes glasses are simply not enough. Up to 75% of vision problems are missed at a basic screening, but Dr. McKenzie Symons, OD, is passionate about getting to the root of the problem and helping people see more clearly.

She recently started Adirondack Pediatric Vision and Rehabilitation with the goal of helping as many patients as possible improve their vision. Her vision therapy services help the brain and eyes work better together, which not only improves vision but gives people the confidence they need.

From an early age, Dr. McKenzie knew that she wanted to be an optometrist. She had always looked up to her own eye doctor, who just happened to be her next-door neighbor. "My doctor growing up was just such a big inspiration for me," she shared.

In high school, Dr. McKenzie had an eye issue develop, which resulted in her going to the doctor's office every day for several weeks. This experience gave her the drive to pursue optometry as a career.

She began her studies at the State University of New York College at Geneseo, enrolled in a special program that allowed her to complete her undergraduate degree in only three years. From there, she began a four-year graduate program at the State University of New York College of Optometry, located in New York City.

"Being in the city was awesome, and you get to learn so many things from so many different people," shared Dr. McKenzie.

During her education, she had the opportunity to shadow a lot of different doctors throughout Albany, Glens Falls, Queensbury, and Saratoga. Throughout this experience, she discovered many new opportunities within optometry, including vision therapy.

"I discovered that vision therapy was a path that you could take in optometry school, and that kind of opened up a whole new world," she explained.

Vision therapy is very personalized to each individual. Dr. McKenzie compared it to physical therapy but for your eyes, saying, "We do different eye exercises to retrain the brain and eyes to work better together, to focus, to track things, to read, all those kinds of things."

It heavily focuses on eye teaming, focusing, and tracking skills.

Eye teaming is how well the eyes work together, eye focusing is keeping small print clear and in focus, and eye tracking is used for following objects, which is especially important when reading or driving.

According to Dr. McKenzie, these three skills are, "outside of the realm of just the glasses prescription. They're kind of deeper aspects of our vision that all come together to create useful and effective true vision."

In order to treat these issues, Dr. McKenzie uses a variety of different tools and techniques, including lenses, charts, 3D pictures, computer software, patterns, and more.

While treating these eye issues can be life-changing for a person, identifying them is not always easy. Basic eye screenings usually only focus on how well a person can see far away, but there could be another vision-related problem that they miss.

As Dr. McKenzie explained, vision is not simply about seeing, but ensuring our eyes and brain are communicating properly. Additionally, a person could not even realize that the problem they're facing is related to their vision.

"A lot of cases with kids, they have no idea what they're seeing is different from anyone else."

"They might not even tell you they're seeing blurry. Let alone, they might not tell you they're seeing double, or they can't move their eyes, or their eyes feel really tight," explained Dr. McKenzie.

"They truly have no idea what they see is different from anyone else, or how they're completing their work, or how hard or laborious something is. They have no idea—it does not always have to be that hard."

Vision-related problems can create a lot of stress, especially when they go undiagnosed. "It can be really frustrating for the child when they can't express what's wrong," explained Dr. McKenzie.

Her goal is to help children—and anyone—get to the root of the issue so they can reach their full potential. She has seen with her own eyes how much getting the proper help can impact a person.

"It's truly what I absolutely love to do," she shared. "It's so rewarding to see them truly grow throughout the program and change as a student and as a kid. Their frustrations go away."

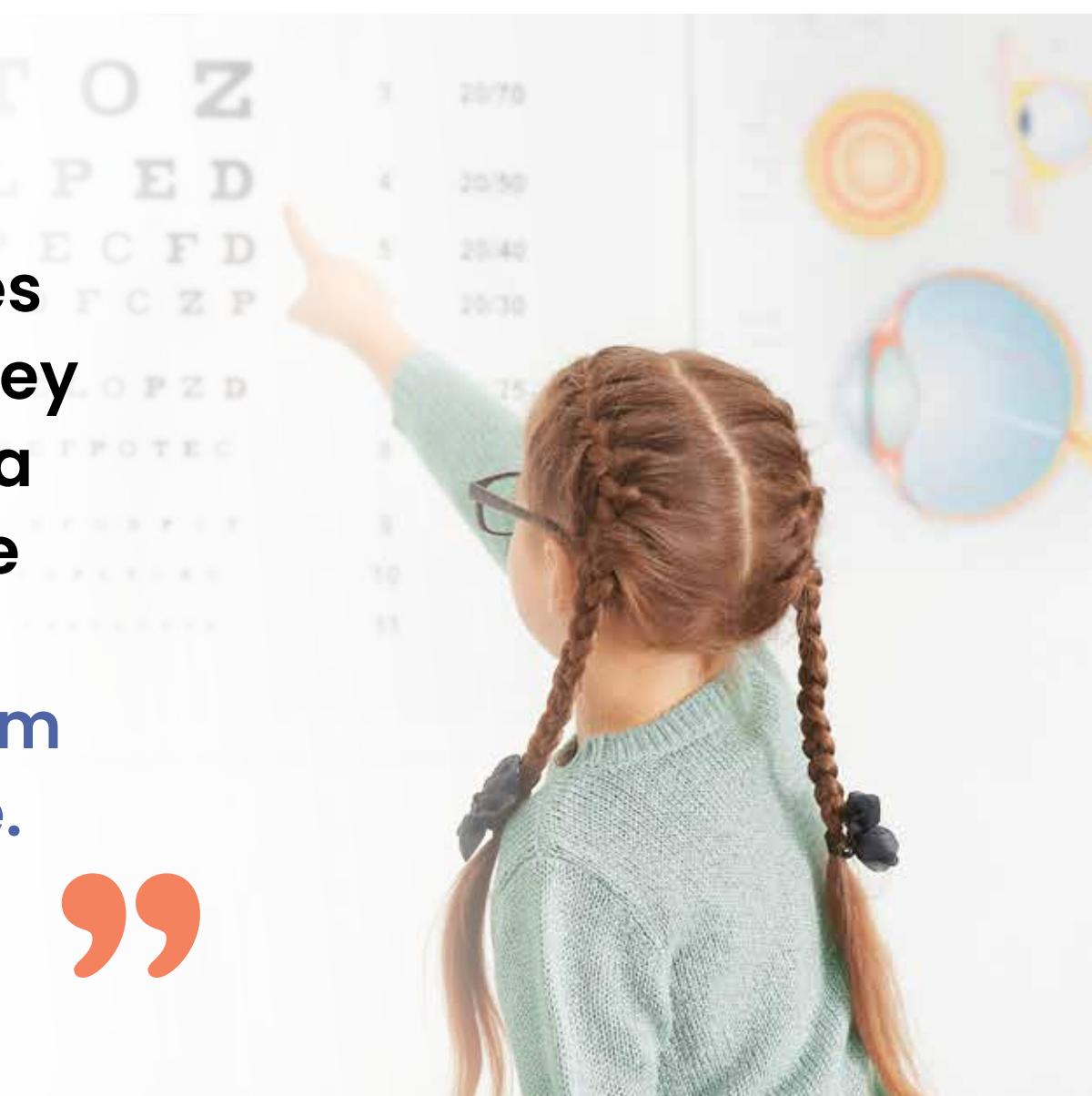
For more information about Dr. McKenzie and her practice, visit the website: [www.adirondackpediatricvision.com](http://www.adirondackpediatricvision.com).

You can also call: 518-350-4044 or email [adirondackpediatricvision@gmail.com](mailto:adirondackpediatricvision@gmail.com)

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**A lot of cases with kids, they have no idea what they're seeing is different from anyone else.**

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# ELDER FRAUD

## *Awareness & Prevention*



by Megan Kelly, CPA,  
CFE, CVA, Director at  
FAZ Forensics

**A**ccording to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center's (IC3) 2023 Elder Fraud Report, frauds targeting individuals aged 60 and above resulted in over \$3.4 billion in losses in 2023. This represented an increase of nearly 11% from 2022. Older adults are a frequent target of scammers as they tend to be perceived as more vulnerable, trusting, less technologically savvy, and tend to have considerable funds saved for retirement. Additionally, elder fraud frequently goes unreported due to shame associated with falling victim to the scam.

Per the IC3's 2023 Elder Fraud Report, the following are the top 5 most frequently reported frauds to the IC3 related to elder fraud:

### Tech Support Fraud

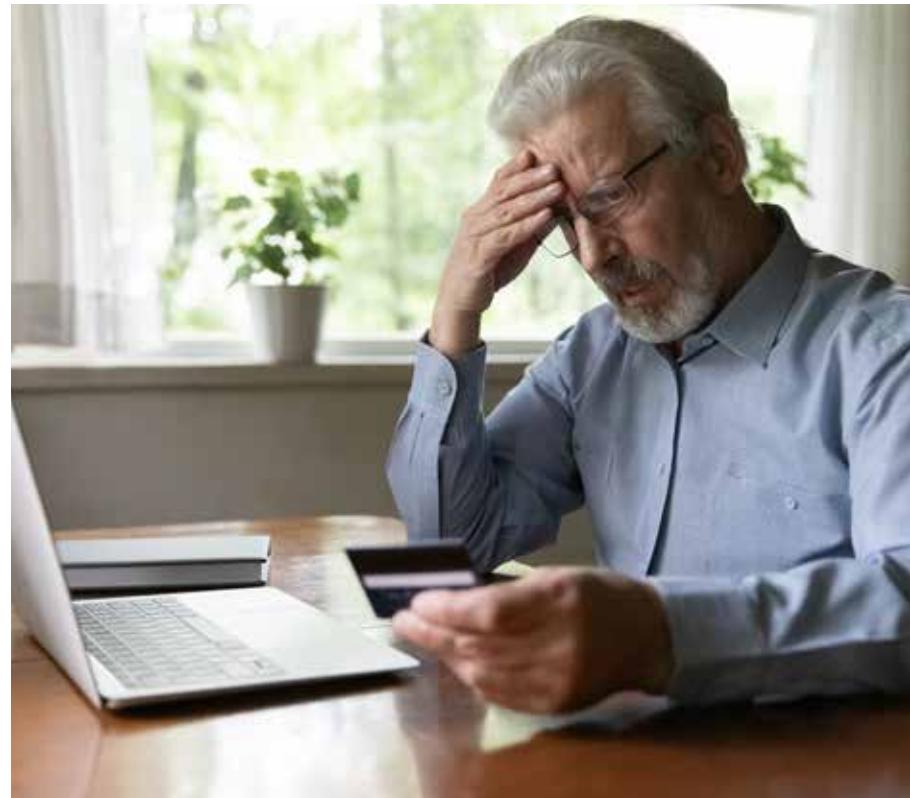
This is a type of scam where a fraudster pretends to offer technical support services, posing as a legitimate

company like Microsoft. In many circumstances, these individuals will use technical terms to make it appear as if there are legitimate issues with your personal computer. They will then ask to gain remote access to your device, allowing them to install malware on your device, giving them access to sensitive data. In 2023, total reported losses were nearly \$600 million.

“

**Being vigilant is key:  
Never share personal  
information or send  
money to unknown  
contacts.”**

”



## Personal Data Breach

A personal data breach occurs when there is an unauthorized or accidental security breach that results in the loss or access to personal data. This can include sending personal data to the incorrect recipient, whether accidentally or unknowingly through a phishing scam, or theft of a device that contains personal identifiable information.

## Romance Scams

Per the FBI, in a romance scam, a criminal uses a fake online identity to gain a victim's affection and trust, then uses the nature of their "relationship" to manipulate and ultimately steal money from the victim. Fraudsters prey on individuals searching for a human connection, and gain access to their personally identifiable information, or convince the individual to send them money directly. In 2023, total reported losses were over \$350 million.

## Non-payment / Non-delivery Scams

In a non-delivery scam, an individual makes a purchase

online, typically sparked by the offer of a deep discount from a website that may be lesser known. The purchased product is then never delivered, and the "seller" of the product is unreachable. This is a scam to especially be aware of as we are entering the holiday season.

## Investment Scams

In an investment scam, a fraudster promises guaranteed high returns with minimal risk in a fake investment opportunity. Scammers create websites and other informational materials that appear legitimate, and often use language indicating that the opportunity is limited and a sense of pressure is created around making the investment. Seniors are frequently targeted in these types of schemes as these individuals typically have retirement funds available for investing. Recently, these schemes have involved cryptocurrency investment opportunities. In 2023 alone, reported losses to the IC3 were over \$1 billion.

There are several warning signs to be aware of that could indicate that

someone in your life has become a victim of a fraud scheme. Some things to be aware of include:

- Mood changes or heightened levels of stress.
- Abnormal spending behavior.
- Sudden changes in any estate-related documents.
- Excitement related to a new investment opportunity that deviates from that individual's typical investment strategies.
- Mention of any new people in the individual's life.

## Prevention

With the continued advancements in technology, it is more important than ever to be vigilant in not only personal fraud prevention, but being able to identify and communicate this information to protect your older friends and family members.

The following are some steps to take to avoid the scams noted above:

- Do not respond to calls or texts from unknown numbers.
- Never give remote access to your computer to an individual who contacts you unexpectedly.
- Do not send money to someone

you have never met in person.

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- Do not share your personal identifiable information with an unknown individual, especially via e-mail or text message.
- Be aware of where you are doing your online shopping – if you're making a purchase at a new website, do some research before clicking purchase.
- Seek advice from a trusted financial advisor before making any investment decisions.
- Never make an investment decision when pressure is involved.
- Frequently monitor your credit score and report any potential fraud to your credit agency.

If you think that you or someone you know may have been a victim of fraud, it is important to contact law enforcement immediately. Additionally, you can file a complaint with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center.

# REACHING MAXIMUM CAPACITY

**How retired U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Major Chris Thomas teaches what “right” looks like.**



by Megin Potter

**Resilience and effective time management are skills that Chris Thomas learned from his mother, Doretha, while growing up in Greenville, SC. A single parent of four children, she instilled in her son the skills that would later help him navigate any obstacles in his path.**

In high school, Chris was a member of the Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) and by junior year, aspired to join the U.S. Marine Corps. Unlike others who had visited his school, the recruiter he met focused on what Chris could do for the Marine Corps versus what they could do for him – a concept rooted in service that Chris responded to.

“At that moment, I was hooked and I remained hooked for 20 years,” he said.

## REDEFINING SERVICE

In June 2001, Chris joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Although he was well-informed going in, his first day of service was not what he had expected.

“Day one was a culture shock,” remembers Chris. Between the sleep deprivation, fast pace, and the challenge of working together as a cohesive unit with 60-70 people he’d never met (while being yelled at by his superiors), Chris received a crash course in the importance of putting others before oneself.

Chris graduated boot camp on August 31st, 2001. Less than two weeks later, on September 11th, he was returning from a day trip to Columbia, SC to check-in as a Recruiter Assistant when he heard the news that an event had



*U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Major Chris Thomas. Photo provided.*

occurred and the country was under a heightened state of alert.

“I realized the Marines was no longer the peacetime Corps that I had just joined but that we could be deployed at any moment,” said Chris.

## PRIMING THE PUMP

From December 2001 until April 2005, Chris was stationed in the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron in Beaufort, SC, and deployed to Iwakuni, Japan during that time.

After four years in a special duty assignment as a Drill Instructor in Parris Island, SC, from 2009-2010, he performed high-level aviation logistics in Norfolk, VA, and in 2010 was deployed for combat in Afghanistan.

In addition to his military experience, Chris began pursuing higher education and became the first in his family to graduate with a college degree.

After training Navy Officers at Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI, Chris was chosen to serve as First Sergeant, while also graduating with his Master's Degrees in Public Administration. The following year, he became an Adjunct Professor for the Davis Defense Group in Jacksonville, NC. In 2019, he was selected to the rank of Sergeant Major, an Elite 9 status, and served as the Recruiting Station Harrisburg Sergeant Major.

Chris' path toward earning an education and the experience of a senior level advisor in uniform was inspired by mentors including Captain Franklin, Commander Hawkins, Master Gunnery Sergeant Dendy, and others.

"I was very fortunate to have great mentors throughout my career who saw things in me I didn't see in myself and who took me under their wing," he said.

In 2021, after 20 years of service (including non-combat tours in Japan, Romania, and Norway) Sergeant Major Chris Thomas retired from the Marine Corps. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and the Marine Corps Commendation Medal, among others.

### EXCELLING TO GREAT HEIGHTS

In 2022, Chris founded Elite 9 Veteran Talent Acquisition Services, LLC, now called Elite 9 Talent Solutions.

Providing employment placement and resume writing skills, as well as business consulting services, including leadership development training and workplace conflict resolution, Elite 9 Talent Solutions is an Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce member who provides training and customized solutions for clients within flexible 30-day, six-month, and year-long plans (depending on their specific needs).

On February 7, 2024, Elite 9 Talent Solutions will be hosting an Upstate Leadership Series: Organizational Culture & Change Management. This training is for individuals from all different industries looking to enhance their

leadership capabilities and drive impactful change. Beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending around noon at the State University of New York- Adirondack Saratoga campus, attendees will have the opportunity to learn from expert speakers focused on emerging leadership trends, along with gaining tools and strategies that can be applied to their own leadership practices.

Chris is also currently pursuing his Doctorate in Education, the final step to achieving the academic credentials that demonstrate he has completed the path he started on nearly a decade ago, he shared.

In 2021, Chris married his wife, Anne, a Lake George, NY native, and joined the Marine Corps League Memorial Detachment 2, based in Hudson Falls, where he serves as Paymaster. The following year he became a board member of the Vet Voice Foundation, empowering political advocacy for veterans.

Whether in his career in the U.S. Marine Corps, educational pursuits, or civilian life, underlining everything that Chris Thomas has done is his unwavering belief that one must face adversity head-on and complete the mission. Teaching by example, he strives to be a positive role model for his two sons, ages 3, and 6 months old.

"It's my goal to teach them what 'right' looks like," said Chris.

For more information, find Elite 9 Talent Solutions on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and at [www.elite9vtas.com](http://www.elite9vtas.com).



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#### EPISODE 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!](#)



#### EPISODE 57

### AMC Construction & Management

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster chat with Mike Muscolino of AMC Construction & Management. AMC Construction & Management Corp. is a premier commercial contractor specializing in high-profile, complex and one of a kind projects as well as the standard fare. Learn more about AMC Construction on their website [amcconstructionmgmt.com](http://amcconstructionmgmt.com).



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#### EPISODE 56

### Second-Generation Advances at Cerrone Plumbing & HVAC

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Joe Cerrone of Cerrone Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning! Joe is the second person to head the operations of Cerrone, after his father... What advances did he bring to the business? What's stayed the same? What did he learn along the way? Listen to this episode to hear the answers, plus much more!



[SCAN TO LISTEN!](#)



#### EPISODE 55

### Cracking Open Cold Ones at Cornell's

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster talk with Mike Colgett and Casey Cornell of Cornell's Auto Parts! Cornell's is doing something very special... They boast the claim that their auto operation is heavily recycling-based, reusing car oil, parts, metal, carpeting, and more from their cars! How is this possible? How did they get started doing this? Hear the answers to those questions and many more by listening to this episode!



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**LISTEN ON**





**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 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 to talk about their upcoming Fight Fest in Saratoga Springs. 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..



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#### SEASON 3, EPISODE 4

### Alliance Jiu Jitsu Saratoga

Mike Nelson of Five Towers Media is on location at Alliance Jiu Jitsu Saratoga as they prepare to open their doors. He interviews Brazilion Jiu Jitsu Professors James and Jesse Bruchac about what is in store for the new location as well as some of their past experiences on and off the mats.



[SCAN TO LISTEN!](#)



#### SEASON 3, EPISODE 3

### Katie Tansey – HR Resolved

In this episode Mike Nelson from Five Towers Media interviews Katie Tansey about her successful company HR Resolved and her passion for nutrition coaching, fitness, and helping people be the best version of themselves.



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