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## GLENS FALLS TODAY BUSINESS REPORT

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# Resource TOOL BOX

## ADIRONDACK REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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](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.

518-668-5755 | [LakeGeorgeChamber.com](http://LakeGeorgeChamber.com)

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111 Washington Avenue, Suite 400, Albany, NY 12210 | 518-465-7511 | [bcnys.org](http://bcnys.org)

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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

New York's chief economic development agency. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits and other forms of financial assistance, Empire State Development strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State.

625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12207 | 518-292-5100

## NEW YORK STATE CONTRACT REPORTER

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## NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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

## NEW YORK STATE DIRECTORY OF SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS

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[esd.ny.gov/business-pandemic-recovery-initiative](http://esd.ny.gov/business-pandemic-recovery-initiative)

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# ARCC *accepting applications for* Leadership Adirondack Program

PROGRAM TO RUN SEPTEMBER 2024 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2025



*Photos provided.*



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

The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is excited to announce the application period for their Leadership Adirondack program for 2024-25. The ARCC Leadership Adirondack program is designed for individuals who demonstrate a potential for community leadership and a sincere commitment, motivation and interest in serving the community in which they live or work.

“We are thrilled to welcome applications for our 2024-25 Leadership Adirondack program,” said ARCC President & CEO Tricia Rogers. “Strong communities are built and sustained by effective local leaders, and our region is a testimony to this. We have seen past Leadership Adirondack participants go on to do great things.”

Leadership Adirondack is a dynamic, interactive program that provides skill development and community immersion experiences that enables participants to grow personally and professionally as they explore issues and opportunities in Warren & Washington County, New York.

Through a combination of class time and industry tours, Leadership Adirondack develops the leadership potential of participants and builds

a solid foundation of informed, action-orientated, productive employees and citizens.

Participants can anticipate gaining an increased understanding of the challenges and opportunities affecting our region, as well as creating new and lasting friendships from a network of participants who come from varying backgrounds and diverse interests. Many graduates of the program have been appointed to the most senior positions in their organizations and to numerous commissions and board of directors.

The program previously ran in 2022-23 and consisted of 16 individuals, from varying industries, with an interest in growing their leadership skills and making a difference in their communities. Through leadership training and classroom sessions, to business and industry tours, these individuals dedicated over 16 weeks to their professional growth.

Through a very successful community project, this class raised over \$23,000 for Family Service Association of Glens Falls, a nonprofit dedicated to providing services and support to families in crisis or in an emergency situation.



For the 2024-25 program, the ARCC has partnered with Brian Rollo, founder of Brian Rollo Consulting, to offer a comprehensive program on leadership development. Brian, a distinguished graduate of the Leadership Adirondack program, brings two decades of local business and leadership expertise from his tenure at Arrow Financial.

Over the past five years, he has successfully helmed his own training, speaking, and coaching company, mentoring and shaping hundreds of leaders. Brian is also the accomplished author of the book “The 10 Habits of Influential Leaders”.

Individuals who demonstrate potential for community leadership and a sincere commitment, motivation and interest in serving the community in which they live, or work should consider applying. Applicants must be an ARCC member in good standing to be considered.

Applications will be accepted through May 24, 2024. Information on eligibility, program details, and application can be found on the ARCC website: [www.adirondackchamber.org/leadership-adirondack](http://www.adirondackchamber.org/leadership-adirondack) or scan the QR code below to learn more! ■



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About The ARCC:

Founded in 1914, the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce (ARCC) is a membership organization representing businesses in New York State’s Washington, Warren, Essex, and Northern Saratoga Counties. The ARCC is a 501c6 not-for-profit corporation, governed by volunteer Board of Directors, and does not receive any funding from local, county or state governments. Our mission is to support our business community through advocacy, education, connection, and collaboration.



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# AI FOR BUSINESS:

## *Top 3 Tips for Getting Started*



by ADNET Technologies

### Artificial Intelligence, or “AI,” is rapidly entering the business space.

It's an exciting time, and many organizations are enthusiastic about getting started with these productivity enhancing tools. The IT industry has been using it for a while, and it can be a huge part of your business's digital transformation journey. But it's important that you use the tools safely, in a way that benefits your business and your team.

Here are ADNET's top tips for getting started, and how you can securely enhance your business productivity using AI.

#### Have the right policies and protections in place.

An acceptable use policy that informs your team of what's acceptable with AI is an essential piece of your AI strategy. This has to be defined at an organizational level, so that each team member is aware of how they can use the technology appropriately.

Ask yourself, what can you use it for - and what shouldn't you use it for? While some of this boils down to common sense, policies like this can ensure people

are using AI responsibly, ethically, and securely. At the end of the day, you want people to consider exactly what they're using AI for. Taking a thoughtful approach will help keep your organization more secure, and set clear expectations for your team.

We're using AI at ADNET, and we know a lot of other people and organizations are too. A few ways we use it are for summarizing technical issues, helping refine documents, generating design ideas, and turning notes from meetings into actionable items. This is just the tip of the iceberg, but our team is aware of how we can use AI, and how we can't.

#### Here are some sample AI acceptable usage guidelines based on best-practices:

- Never use AI tools (such as Microsoft Copilot) with any administrator type accounts.
- Never use client data or identifiable, sensitive, or proprietary data in AI platforms that have not been properly secured. For instance, a tool like Microsoft Copilot can be configured securely to work with your Microsoft 365 license.
- Implement measures to protect sensitive/protected data and ensure compliance with relevant data protection regulations.
- Do not use AI to infringe on the rights of others, including privacy and intellectual property rights.

The goal here is not to pass any of your sensitive data into AI models. AI should help you enhance your own work, while respecting the work of others. You should aim to help your team use the tools ethically and responsibly, in a way that makes sense for your organization.

Keep in mind, you'll need to regularly monitor and evaluate AI systems for effectiveness and adherence to guidelines with processes in place for continuous improvement.

Having the correct technical protections in place before rolling out any AI tools within an organization is critical. This helps safeguard against potential risks and ensures the effective and secure deployment of AI systems. These protections serve as the defense mechanism against threats like data breaches, algorithmic biases, system failures, and malicious attacks. Organizations can mitigate these risks and enhance the reliability, privacy, and integrity of their AI applications by implementing technical measures such as encryption, access controls, data anonymization, and thorough testing procedures.

Establishing a strong foundation of technical protections instills trust among stakeholders, promotes compliance with regulatory requirements, and ultimately enables the organization to leverage AI technology to its fullest potential, while minimizing potential harm or disruptions.

#### Get your team on board and standardize.

We're certainly encouraging people to use AI in the IT industry. Recently, several of our team members have attended conferences dedicated to AI for business. Our experts have been on panels and participated in speaking engagements to help organizations leverage AI. It's exciting that we can harness these tools to improve our professional efficiency and even our personal lives. We encourage our teams to learn more about AI, and to try using it within our organization.



We just want to make sure that everyone's doing it in a secure, controlled way.

Give your team access to your preferred AI model – ours is Microsoft Copilot, since it securely integrates into the Microsoft 365 tools – and the tools they need to be successful. Help them understand how you expect them to use AI. Share the policies, secure your systems, and encourage people to get creative with the technology. You can accomplish some incredible things with AI.

### Understand the limitations of the tools.

Some of the tools have safeguards built in, some do not. AI right now is a bit like the Wild West – there's a whole lot of opportunity and competition, but not much regulation and governance.

AI tools are made to amplify talent and help increase productivity – not to replace your team and their talents. Creations made by AI need to be reviewed, edited, and understood by humans. It's a balance, and often it's a starting point or can help you polish something. AI can create amazing things – if you're willing to go back and add that personal touch – but it's not going to take the place of a skilled professional with decades of real-life experience.

Have realistic expectations about how you can reasonably use these tools. Understand how they can integrate into your existing workforce and how they can add value, but don't expect AI to do everything.

It's important to remember that AI is very powerful. If security settings aren't configured correctly for your organization, or policies aren't in place to clarify what AI can be used for, it's easy for sensitive data to become available. Working with a trusted, experienced IT partner can help ensure your environment is configured properly to keep security at the forefront while leveraging AI for your business.

### Need help getting started securely with AI?

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# THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF *Finding Your Voice*



by **Katherine Kressner, Jr.**  
Creative Director  
of Five Towers Media

*In the bustling world of marketing & advertising,* where competition is fierce and attention spans are fleeting, finding your voice is not just an option, it's a necessity. Your brand's voice is the unique melody that sets it apart from the cacophony of messages bombarding consumers daily. Let's explore the importance of **discovering and honing** that distinctive voice to create a harmonious connection with your audience.

## 1 *Authenticity Resonates*

Authenticity has become a rare and valuable commodity. Your brand's voice is not just about the words you use but the sincerity behind them. Consumers today are savvy; they can discern between a genuine brand and one that's merely putting on a facade. When your marketing and advertising reflect an authentic voice, it builds trust and credibility, fostering a deeper connection with your audience.

It becomes a recognizable element that sets you apart, making it more likely for your audience to remember and choose your brand over others.

## 3 *Build an Emotional Connection*

Humans are emotional beings, and emotions often drive purchasing decisions. Your brand's voice can tap into these emotions, creating a connection that goes beyond mere transactions.

## 2 *Stand Out In The Crowd*

Imagine a crowded marketplace where every brand is vying for attention. To cut through the noise, you need a distinct voice that captures the essence of your brand. Whether it's through humor, sincerity, or a touch of sophistication, a unique voice helps your brand stand out in the minds of consumers.

By aligning your voice with the values and aspirations of your target audience, you create a bond that extends beyond product features. This emotional connection not only fosters customer loyalty but also transforms consumers into brand advocates who willingly share their positive experiences.



## 4 Consistency Breeds Familiarity

Consistency is key when it comes to brand communication. Your voice should be consistent across all channels, from social media and advertising to customer service interactions. This uniformity helps in building familiarity and trust. When consumers encounter a consistent voice, they are more likely to remember your brand and associate it with positive experiences, reinforcing your identity in their minds.

## 5 Adaptability in a Dynamic Market

The business landscape is dynamic, and consumer preferences are ever-evolving. Your brand's voice should be flexible enough to adapt to changing trends while maintaining its core identity. Being adaptable allows your brand to stay relevant and resonate with different demographics, ensuring that you don't get left behind in an ever-shifting market.

### *In Conclusion:*

In the symphony of marketing and advertising, your brand's voice is the melody that lingers in the minds of consumers. It's the key to creating a lasting impression, fostering authenticity, and building a connection that goes beyond transactions. So, embrace the journey of finding and refining your voice—it's not just a marketing strategy; it's the heart and soul of your brand.



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# *Is NAR's Settlement Enough to* **SAVE THE SINKING** **REAL ESTATE SHIP?**



by **Dan Wade, Esq.** of  
*Ianniello Anderson, P.C.*

On January 2, 2024, the Glens Falls Today Business Report published an article I wrote entitled *"Is the NAR lawsuit verdict good for the housing market?"*

You can check that out here:



**Since that time, much has transpired which requires us to revisit this topic.**

As predicted, numerous copycat lawsuits were filed in various states against the National Association of Realtors (NAR), mimicking the successful lawsuit in Missouri that claimed the NAR and other national real estate brokerages conspired to create a system that artificially inflated real estate agent commissions. The defense of these numerous lawsuits from all angles was driving NAR to the brink of bankruptcy.

On March 15, 2024, a proposed settlement agreement was announced by NAR to settle all litigation brought by home sellers related to real estate agent commissions. The settlement, which is still pending court approval, would require NAR to pay \$418 million over four years, as well as a requirement that NAR not publish offers of real estate agent commission compensation of the multiple listing service (MLS), where almost every home is listed for sale.

In addition, any MLS participants/subscribers working with prospective buyers would be required to enter into written agreements regarding scope of service and compensation/commission expected. Under the terms of the settlement, NAR members would begin implementing these practice changes in July of this year.

**NAR continues to deny any wrongdoing.** The proposed settlement agreement not only makes that clear, but also seeks to release liability for most of its members and real estate brokerage partners. According to NAR, the "MLS cooperative compensation model rule," introduced in the 90s, was in response to consumer protection advocate groups' calls for greater buyer representation.

On April 5, 2024, a federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., sided with the Department of Justice (DOJ) in a separate antitrust investigation, allowing the DOJ to reopen a previously settled investigation that focused on real estate agent commissions and how they received compensation.



With the added wrinkle of a further probe by the DOJ, it may be some time before the proposed settlement agreement above is approved by the court. No doubt, the DOJ will seek to have some say in any final version of settlement reached with the NAR. Some believe that the proposed settlement does not go far enough to uncouple the current commission compensation structure between a seller's agent and a buyer's agent.

For example, under the terms of the proposed settlement, a seller's agent would no longer be able to list any offers of commission compensation to buyers' agents on the MLS, but there is nothing preventing the agents from communicating outside of the MLS regarding commission compensation. If the DOJ's agenda is to truly separate which parties negotiate and pay for their respective agent's commissions, then more changes in practice may need to be installed into the proposed settlement agreement in order to muster court approval.

However, one of the largest issues with completely uncoupling the commission compensation structure is that it puts a disproportionate amount of strain on a prospective buyer's ability to come up with the closing costs, in addition to a reasonable down payment needed to purchase a home.

The argument is that the seller is in a greater position to absorb the commission since they have control over the asset being sold, and their closing costs are not coming out of their pocket directly the way they would be for the buyer.

Some good news in this area came from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac on April 15, 2024, where they issued a notice stating that buyer agent compensation will not be treated toward any seller concession limits required by a buyer's lender. This helps buyers in that any seller concession agreed to can be used toward other closing costs of the buyer,

even if seller agrees to pay buyer's agent's commission as part of the sale, without chewing up the entire concession limit with commission compensation.

Unfortunately, not every lender or type of loan will allow for seller concessions to be part of the transaction. In addition, most lenders require the buyer to pay for mortgage insurance (PMI or MIP) in instances where the buyer does not yet have at least 20% equity in the home. This could cost the buyer roughly \$75 to \$125 more each month, in addition to their mortgage payment. So, if the NAR settlement requires buyers to pay for their own agents as part of their closing costs, will they have enough left as a downpayment to avoid mortgage insurance? Or, will we only see their monthly mortgage payment increase with the addition of PMI?

The thought is to try to curb the rising costs of home purchases. However, it's not that hard when you look at the bigger picture and break it down. The inventory of homes for sale is at an all-time low. At the same time, demand for homes to purchase remains high.

Simple economics of supply and demand would tell us that with low supply and high demand, the costs will continue to rise. And again, not discounting the importance of keeping antitrust actions in check, but is going after the NAR and real estate agent commissions going to solve the problem we currently have? Or, do we need to look at the supply side of things and see what can be done to spur sellers to sell and/or encourage new homes to be built?

Surely, there will be more to come over the next few months as the DOJ continues to probe the NAR while the housing market continues to crawl at a snail's pace. If owning a new home is to remain part of the American Dream, then we need to ensure that it does not become unattainable or unaffordable and turn into a **nightmare**. ♦

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by Megin Potter

Ordinary Days. Photo by Jim McLaughlin

## We are a generation nourished by brave and innovative work.

### Will the next generation be so lucky?

Thirty years ago, the Adirondack Theatre Festival (ATF) took the risk. They focused on creating new work. After being fed a steady diet of professional productions with top-level talent, the local audience began growing accustomed to the brilliance of this cultural delicacy over the next quarter century.

Then, the pandemic hit, and again, the risks loomed large, threatening to devour non-profit theater groups by forcing them to close their doors while competition from other forms of entertainment intensified.

Fortunately, this is not another pandemic heartache story. Rather than submitting to being swallowed up whole by mainstream commercialism, local theater is again punching above its weight class, beating the odds, and shouting ACTION! They are reintroducing the striking presence of inventive, fresh new plays and musicals to the next generation.

“The only way to succeed, in any endeavor worth trying, is to be willing to experiment, to try new things, to express ourselves, and to think big,” said Producing Artistic Director Miriam Weisfeld.

### *Birth of a Legend*

The Adirondack Theatre Festival was founded by Producing Director David Turner and Artistic Director Martha Banta (a husband and wife team), along with Lake George RV Park owner David King. The year was 1994, and they would find success very shortly after teaming up.

After reading an article in the Glens Falls Chronicle puzzling over how to bring the city back to life, they peeked into the windows of the then-abandoned Woolworth's Five-and-Dime store on Glen Street, wondering if the building could work as a performance space.

In 2004, that space would become the Charles R. Wood Theater, where the ATF now performs. Its opening changed the face of the city, and breathed fresh air into the region by attracting a diverse selection of people (who might not otherwise visit) to fill their beautiful 294-seat auditorium, eat in the city's restaurants, visit their shops, and occupy their rooms.

“It has been hugely successful at bringing so much life, vitality, and energy downtown. It's really moving to hear them talk about how the city sprang up as the theater came to life. It's become legend now,” explained Weisfeld.

### *Raising Our Expectations*

Folks have embraced the Adirondack Theatre Festival's intense, vibrant experiences, calling it the ‘best kept entertainment secret in Upstate New York,’ said Weisfeld.

By nurturing new work, including 30+ world premieres, educational workshops, and discussions, ATF became a trusted research and development laboratory, expanding the imagination's boundaries and creating new sensibilities for an audience hungry to go on the ride with them.

“Theater magically incorporates every other art form; literature, art, dance, video. We already know young people embrace so many of those forms in different ways and have an appetite for participating in, and co-creating, that content,” stated Weisfeld, continuing, “There's a striking appetite for musical theater in this region. We're seeing such enthusiasm for live performance.”

Attracting students interested in connecting to audiences through storytelling -- including from local colleges such as Skidmore, Middlebury, and Union— many of ATF's works have gone on to enter the larger theatrical canon. Plays including Fully Committed, Murder for Two, Mystic Pizza, Pump Up the Volume, and The Life and Slimes of Marc Summers, among others, have reached larger off-Broadway, Broadway, national, and international audiences.

“Creating new work is what moves our entire art form forward, and it's happening in the unlikely of places, in a smaller town in an area with a somewhat rural population,” said Weisfeld.





The Chinese Lady. Photo by JC Lines



## Increasing the Value of Creativity

During the pandemic, theaters across the US saw attendance decline by 40%. At ATF, the live subscription series went dormant for two seasons. Since Weisfeld came on in 2021, they’ve restored the subscription series alongside single ticket sales.

### ADIRONDACK THEATRE FESTIVAL



Theater **magically incorporates** every other art form; literature, art, dance, video.

We already know young people embrace so many of those forms in different ways and have an appetite for participating in, and co-creating, that content. **There’s a striking appetite for musical theater in this region.** We’re seeing such enthusiasm for live performance.

– *Miriam Weisfeld.*  
PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
OF THE ATF

“We weren’t sure how people were going to respond, so it’s been astonishing to see admission recover by 38%,” she said. “Plus, it’s a fantastic value. People can reserve their favorite seats ahead of the regular season and save 12-13% on the price.”

They have also launched their most aggressive fundraising campaign in ATF history. This year, in addition to their anniversary celebrations and annual benefits, they are hosting the “Stories Start Here” Campaign, the first multi-year fundraiser since former Producing Artistic Director Mark Fleischer’s tenure in the mid-2000’s. By tapping into a dedicated coalition of visionary supporters, ATF has already raised \$367,000 of the \$500,000 goal they hope to reach by the end of 2026.

“The economic reality of coming out of the pandemic is that there’s more economic pressure than ever before to meet rising costs,” said Weisfeld.

## The Show Must Go On

The Adirondack Theatre Festival’s dedication to paying a living wage while meeting union obligations to the talented actors, directors, designers, and those behind the scenes is evident in this season’s line-up, starting with a one man show from Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair, the creators behind the wildly popular Murder for Two (2010).

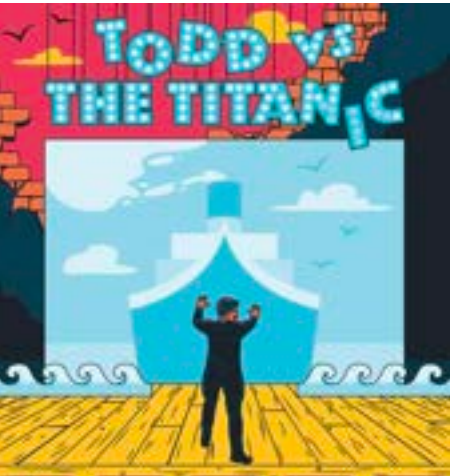
Todd vs the Titanic, running from June 27th- July 3rd, a musical comedy about one man’s struggle to play all the roles by himself after an apocalypse, will undoubtedly ring true to an observant audience.

In a new one-woman play written and performed by star Jessica Frances Dukes, Worth: An Intimate Exhibition, explores the relationship between the performer and the spectator during its July 12th-14th showing at LARAC’s Lapham Gallery.

Bringing on the heat July 19th- 21st, The King’s Wife is a lush pop musical about the searing bond between King Henry VII’s wives, Anne Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon.

By reimagining the space from August 1st-7th, audiences can enjoy a fresh take on the deliciously suspenseful Alfred Hitchcock film noir that gives the steamy Dial “M” for Murder its unpredictable twist.

For tickets and more information, go to [www.atffestival.org](http://www.atffestival.org)





# NORTH COUNTRY PIANO & GUITAR

— STRIKING A CHORD OF GROWTH —



by Megin Potter

Photos courtesy of  
North Country Guitar.



Anthony "Nino" Minissale, owner of  
North Country Piano and Guitar

## HOW STANDING YOUR GROUND CAN HELP YOU RISE ABOVE CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES AND TRIUMPH IN ROCK & ROLL.

In the David and Goliath parable, David defeats the massive giant with a well-aimed pebble. In Queensbury, Anthony "Nino" Minissale, owner of North Country Piano and Guitar, is the giant slayer heroically defending his flock and proving that small, independent music stores can still beat the odds.

"I can't wait to get here in the morning. The light switch goes on and bam! I'm ready to go. I'm naturally wired to love my job," said Nino.

### FINDING HIS PEBBLE

There isn't a time that Nino, 62, can remember when music wasn't a part of his life. By 1969, Nino, then seven years old, had a guitar in his hands. By the age of 12, while attending St. Mary's school, he played lead guitar and sang in a band called Spectra, with friends Billy Nelson and Bobby Vandetta. After their first performance, at a public-school dance, he was hooked on the experience.

By the time Nino was 18 years old, he was playing in the band EYZ with his brother, Frankie, Steve Camlin, and Pat Parenzin.

In 1984, the legal drinking age changed to 21, transforming the music scene Nino had grown up in.

"It eliminated 75% of the college students that came to our shows, and we lost a whole aspect of the business. You couldn't go to play and have a few beers anymore because of the chance of getting a DWI," remembers Nino. Although he continued to play music, Nino decided to focus his energy behind the music counter instead. Because he also has a head for math, in 1984, Nino earned a bachelor's in accounting from the College of Saint Rose.

### POLISHING THE STONE

Courageously, in 1986, when a legend in Albany's storied music history, Art Hilton, former owner of Hilton Music in the Westgate Plaza, was selling loads of equipment, Nino took out a \$10,000 loan, bought the lot, and opened New Music in the old JB's Theatre building.

By 1988, New Music Sound Studios opened as a rehearsal and recording space. They operated until 2014, with the help of partners Pat Hussy (Nino's martial arts instructor

and bandmate in the group, Hussy), Argyle drummer Scott Smith, and former Hilton Music District Manager Don Diehl.

The 5,000 sq. ft. store featured a 100' x 20' guitar wall with high-end \$10-\$20,000 instruments, including a 1960 Gibson Les Paul Flame Top (worth more than the rest of his inventory combined). As well as the well-respected G&L brand instruments, which are still made in the historic Fender Avenue factory in Fullerton, CA.

"I was in the store from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and then in the studio recording until 4 a.m. One-hundred-hour weeks were my whole beginning. In brick and mortar, you had to work a million hours back then," said Nino.





## TAKING A STAND

In 1989, North Country Piano and Guitar was founded by Art Hilton's nephew, Bob Hilton, across the street from its current location. The following year, it moved to its home in Northgate Center.

Acting as a silent partner, Nino was a distributor supplying the store with merchandise until he purchased the property in 2004 (Bob left in 2009) and ran both the Queensbury and Albany stores until 2014.

"That's when the Bloods and the Crips started establishing gangs in Arbor Hill," recalls Nino. "We still had great customers but it got dangerous."

"I also had a hard time finding quality employees," he continued, "so I decided to pull the plug, brought everything up here, and made a powerhouse of a little shop."

Because he buys in bulk and accepts trades, this store is crammed to the gills with new and used merchandise, organized in a way that inspires exploration. The 4,500 sq. ft. property includes four lesson rooms, an office, and a 1,500 sq. ft. storage space. String, woodwind, and percussion instruments, keyboards, harmonicas, amplifiers, speakers, records, CDs, lesson books, and every accessory imaginable fill it to overflowing.

"I can't wait to get here in the morning. The light switch goes on and **BAM!** I'm ready to go. I'm naturally wired to love my job."

**- ANTHONY MINISSALE**  
OWNER OF NORTH COUNTRY PIANO & GUITAR

## FACING THE GIANT

Nino was first introduced to the awesome power of the internet when it lost him a sale. That's when he realized online retailers were selling instruments at a mere 10% over cost (a profit-margin that couldn't maintain a brick-and-mortar model).

"Basically, it became a free-for-all and it made it very difficult to make a profit selling the volume we were selling," said Nino. Pulling in a million dollars annually in revenue (the equivalent of twice that in today's market) was no longer enough.

That's when the advantages of being a small, local business really began taking shape. "In order to be a brick-and-mortar store today, you either have to be a big, huge retailer, or the only person doing everything."

"I'm the owner, the janitor, and everything in between," said Nino. He answers the phones, attends the trade shows, is a fountain of knowledge, and services the instruments.

North Country Piano and Guitar customers, which include everyone from beginners to professional musicians, benefit from the 100+ years of combined experience between Nino and his one other employee. "Basically, they come in and not only get their questions answered, but they get a funny story, a song, or some cool rock and roll information first-hand," said Nino.

## READY FOR ROUND TWO

While the plaza started losing tenants around him, the neon signs at North Country Piano and Guitar stayed lit. In 2005, Nino would join his brother and his brother-in-law in Darrell & Darrell, playing at Lake George's Depe Dene Lakeside Resort. Coincidentally, that was also the same year he and his wife, Kathleen, welcomed a new arrival— their daughter, Alexa.

"It was the most successful period for entertainment in Lake George. On Wednesday nights, everybody was on that beach. It was incredible. We entertained everyone from the 3-year-old to the 90-year-old grandmother. It was magical," said Nino.

In 2011, Nino accidentally cut the tip of his finger off, and became a DJ overnight. Today, after breaking his hands 16 times competing as a black belt in martial arts, he still DJs at the school Alexa attended, Arongen Elementary School in Clifton Park.

## STAYING STRONG

When the pandemic deemed his business as non-essential in 2020, Nino stayed in the fight. "I'd been working side jobs for my parents since I was 7 years old. Taking PPP money and unemployment was not in my vocabulary, so I sold on the sidewalk and a new store was born," said Nino.

Scaling down his hours and having all calls routed through his cell phone made it possible for Nino to double down on service and answer questions at all hours.

"We still see a lot of people who want to come in and get what they need rather than spend hours searching for it online," said Nino.

Today, after amassing a personal collection of 138 guitars, becoming an Adirondack 46er many times over, and with daughter Alexa attending Sacred Heart University, Nino said he's happy with where he is at and has never looked back.

"People ask me when I'm going to retire and I say, 'Retire from what?' My time here is like what's printed on my gift certificates; expiring when I do."

**North Country Piano and Guitar, 797 Route 9, Queensbury is open Mon-Fri, 1pm – 7pm, Sun 1pm-6pm. For more information, find them on Facebook and at [www.northcountrypianoandguitar.com](http://www.northcountrypianoandguitar.com)**



# THE **SANITIZER** SQUAD

## *Pet Waste Removal*



by **Amanda Graves**

Most dog owners view cleaning up after their dog as an annoyance or chore, but U.S. Army veteran Cornelius Tavarres saw it as a business opportunity. What started as a family joke, eventually evolved into The Sanitizer Squad, Pet Waste Removal. While there were many challenges along the way, Cornelius' motivation and work ethic have earned him many successes in his life and business.

The Sanitizer Squad provides their customers with both residential and commercial services. In addition to cleaning up the poop in the yard, his team goes a step farther to disinfect the area. Their sanitization process is able to eliminate mold and algae and prevent the spread of many harmful pathogens and bacterias. Using a Wysiwash sanitizing system, they are able to eliminate odors and keep the spaces clean. Wysiwash is both EPA approved and pet-friendly, delivering a safe and accurate concentration of a chlorine based-sanitizer.

Outside of backyards, Cornelius can also use it for kennels, dog parks, and more. He also uses CS90X to sanitize spaces from restaurants and offices to cars and porches. Also EPA approved, CS90X is the first, and only, antimicrobial disinfecting coating. Lasting up to 90 days, it kills bacteria, pathogens, and viruses (including coronavirus). No matter how big or small, The Sanitizer Squad has a way to keep every space clean and safe.

Originally from Wisconsin, Cornelius grew up around many people stuck in generational cycles.



**Pictured above:**

**Cornelius Tavarres, Owner of The Sanitizer Squad**  
U.S. Army (retired)

They were content merely getting by in life, but he was determined to do more.

"I knew I wanted to get out of that," he said, "I had a different mindset than the average person."

Following high school, he got the chance to attend a college in Michigan. Dr. Jblz saw Cornelius' potential and somehow was able to get him a year of free tuition. Today, Corenlius still has no idea how Dr. Jblz got him this opportunity. Taking out a loan to pay for transportation, as the college was five hours away, Cornelius began school, but didn't do very well. He wasn't aware of the higher expectations and lacked financial resources. Student loans and scholarships were a mystery to Cornelius and he ended up leaving after that first year.

However, determined to still somehow advance and pursue a higher education later in life, he enrolled in the military. As part of the process for entering the military Cornelius took the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).



This test helps determine a person's strengths and is used to place them in a job that aligns with their skillset. Cornelius did exceptionally well, getting a score that would have allowed him to choose any specialty military occupation (MOS). However, he was unaware at the time of all the opportunities available to him.

"I was the first one in our family to even think about the military," explained Cornelius. He had no one to help guide him through everything, and at the time Motor Transport Operators were being given bonuses so that is the path he chose. However, once he was in the army he began to realize his potential.

"I could've done anything that I wanted to do," explained Cornelius. "At that point I already had an MOS, I already had a job lined up but they actually took me off that job and I started working in finance, and accounting, and budgeting."

Cornelius had discovered his love for accounting before he even enrolled in the military. "When I was in high school I took accounting and I just knew it," he said, "It was so easy to me and a lot of people thought it was challenging." After an injury, Cornelius decided it was the right time to leave the military and begin his higher education. He earned his associates degree from Jefferson Community College where he majored in accounting.

Afterwards, he decided to pursue his bachelor's degree at Empire State College. During the time he was enrolled at Empire State College, Cornelius was also working part-time and had two daughters, Katlyn and Kea. While his wife at the time was in the military, he was often left with the responsibility of watching the kids.

Despite the challenges, his daughters were a huge motivator for Cornelius as he pursued his degree. "I wanted to show them if you work hard and you put your mind to something, set yourself several goals, you can accomplish so much in life," he said. Cornelius excelled at school and earned his bachelor's degree with a major in business administration and a minor in accounting. After graduating, Cornelius worked at the NYS Comptroller's office, where he audited bank statements, mileage on state-owned vehicles, for all departments throughout New York State. He worked his way up to an examiner where he then began to audit school districts, towns, and villages.

In addition to his accounting skills, Cornelius also discovered a love for coaching basketball. He played as a kid, but never imagined he would ever become a coach.

"To be honest with you, I didn't really want to coach," Cornelius said laughing, "My daughters were attending a camp and the directors of the camp asked all the parents if they had played basketball before and they knew the rules, if they would consider coaching. At that point I said I would and once I did that I liked it."

He has coached for both high school and college teams including: Skidmore College, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (ACPHS), and Suny Adirondack where he is currently the head women's basketball coach. His coaching philosophy is academics come first, then family, and then basketball. He wants to provide his players with long-term skills rather than just focus on short-term wins.

"When I'm coaching I provide them with life skills. Give them direction so I go above and beyond when I'm coaching at the college level," explained Cornelius. For him, there are far more rewarding things than winning a game, and he loves watching his players' confidence grow.

"They're like, 'Coach I never knew I could do that' or, 'I never knew I could run this long' or 'I never knew that I could do this drill' and just watching that smile come on their face, it brightens my day," said Cornelius.

He was even inspired to go back to school and obtain his master's degree in sports management from the American Military University, where he graduated with a 4.0 GPA, in case he ever wanted to coach at a D1 school.

"I wanted to have that extra advantage to have that master's in sports management," he explained. Throughout his time coaching he has been recognized several times for his talent. While at ACPHS he was named Conference Coach of the Year for the 2016-2017 season, and more recently with Suny Adirondack was named Coach of the Year again for the 2021-2022 season.

Cornelius always had the drive to be a business owner. "I've always wanted to become an entrepreneur, I just wanted to find that special niche," he explained.

Cornelius discovered what that niche would be through man's best friend, a pugle named Ryder.



After adopting the dog, Cornelius, who was in charge of the clean-up, mentioned starting a pet waste removal business to his family. They all laughed at him and it became a joke among his family.

However, in 2020 when the pandemic began, he started to take the idea more seriously. "When Covid hit at that point I'm like you know what, I'm going to take a look back at this, and that's when I decided to just run with it," he explained.

At the time, he had a second dog, a pug named Clyde, who he made the mascot for the business. Determined to succeed, Cornelius put in a lot of work to see his business grow. "I don't like to fail so I do whatever I need to do to try and be as successful as possible," he said.

He rolled up his sleeves, went out and just started. "I started from the bottom. I went out there with my red bucket, with my rake, and then I started the business by myself," he explained. While Cornelius did most of the work on his own during the first year, his family and friends were a tremendous help during his venture into the sanitization field. He was surrounded by support from those he loved, and it helped motivate him to continue pushing forward.

While the hardest challenge initially was finding customers, Cornelius' work ethic, excellent customer service, and perseverance have allowed his business to expand and grow beyond what even he thought was possible.

"At this point now I'm looking at it and it's a business. It's a business that has the potential to keep growing," he said. In the future, Cornelius is planning on separating the two services and creating two businesses, Pet Waste Removal and The Sanitizer Squad. He also hopes to franchise the pet waste removal business as it continues to grow.

When not coaching or working on his business, Cornelius has a full-time job at the Department of Defense, working as a senior auditor. Despite all of his different responsibilities, Cornelius is excellent at time management, and excels at all that he does. "You have to be very disciplined and you have to have a schedule," he said.

He passed down his strong work ethic to his two daughters who have each achieved their own successes. "My oldest daughter got a masters. She's teaching in Dubai, and my youngest daughter just finished her doctorate so she's a doctor now. So she passed me," said Cornelius.

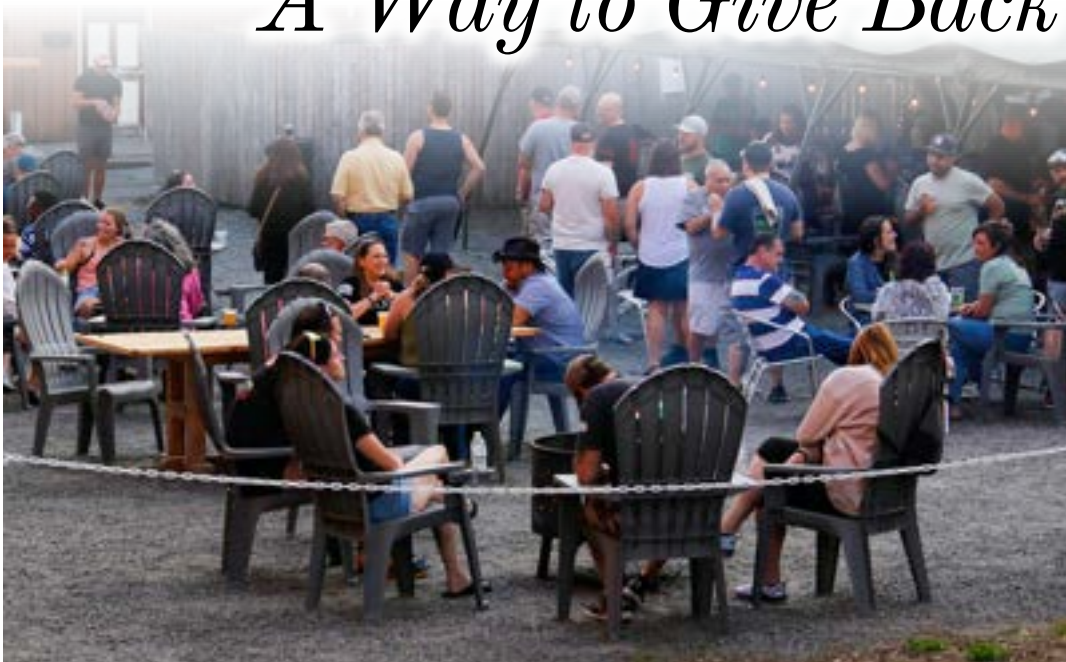
On the rare occasion that he does have some time to himself, Cornelius is a huge people-person and loves having people over. He also enjoys being outside kayaking, hiking, or swimming. He loves traveling and has visited places like the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean Islands. Unfortunately both Ryder and Clyde have passed, but Cornelius still has a french bulldog, Zola.

**For more information about The Sanitizer Squad visit their website at [www.sanitizer-squad.com](http://www.sanitizer-squad.com).**



# Annual Fundraising 'OPERATION'

*A Way to Give Back to Area Vets*



by Mike Piekarski

## A SALESMAN AND A VETERAN WALK INTO A BAR...

No, it's not a setup for a joke, but rather the origin of an ever-growing fundraiser, known as Operation Give Back, that is making life a little bit better for a number of veterans in and around the South Glens Falls area.

The salesman in question is Jacque Ecuyer, a well-known figure in and around his hometown of Hudson Falls who had stopped into Slickfin Brewing Co. in Fort Edward one night about two years ago with his wife's brother in tow. According to Heather March, who runs the brewery along with her husband, Ecuyer told her of his dream.

"We were just talking one day, and he said, 'I would really love to start a fundraiser for veterans,'" said March, who, along with husband Kris and Ecuyer's brother-in-law, is a Marine Corps veteran. "So I said we would love to partner up with you."

The Marches did just that in what became, in 2022, the inaugural event. On Saturday, May 11, the third annual Operation Give Back/Military Appreciation Day will be held at Slickfin's location at 147-149 Broadway from noon to 10 p.m. And Ecuyer has high hopes for it.

That first year, he said, "we (raised) \$3500 in about three hours. Last year, we raised \$7500. This year, our goal is \$10,000." And, he added, at this event, "one hundred percent of the proceeds go directly to local veteran organizations."

Like the first two years of the benefit, Allen LaPell, owner of the Vested Veteran Grill in Corinth, will be providing plenty of food. When he got wind of the venture in 2022, LaPell, a U.S. Army vet, was all in.

"He wanted to be a part of it, to be the food source," said Ecuyer, who was more than happy to accommodate his wish.

This year, in addition to LaPell's enterprise, Carnivore Brothers BBQ and Catering of Hadley will be the primary food vendors at the event, at which a large turnout is expected. Although the number of people who patronized the inaugural fundraiser is not known, Ecuyer estimated that between 500 and 700 people showed up throughout the day for it last year.

"It's growing every year, and we get more and more people wanting to be involved," said Ecuyer. The event will include a silent auction, raffles for numerous donated items, two food trucks (both veteran owned), and seven musical acts (four solo artists and three bands). Two of the musicians, according to Ecuyer, are veterans.

"If you do things for veterans, you try to keep everything, as much as you can, veteran based," Ecuyer said. "That's what brings the whole thing together. When you're bringing military families in, they want to support veteran-owned businesses. When you have a veteran-owned brewery, you have veteran-owned food trucks, you have veteran musical artists, it really solidifies the entire event."

The first year, the beneficiaries were American Legion Post 574 of Hudson Falls and Adirondack Vets House of Glens Falls. Last year, in addition to the vets house, the local American Gold Star Mothers organization received funding.

According to Heather Marsh, at this year's fundraiser, "if we raise more (money), we'd be able to choose more than two organizations," as beneficiaries.



Pictured: Jacque Ecuyer (middle), founder of Operation Give Back.

All photos courtesy of Moni-V Photography.



Though Ecuyer, a route salesman for Freihofer's, did not serve in the armed forces, he shares a kinship with vets. Helping them, he said, is "a passion of mine because so many of my friends are veterans, and they just weren't able to (make it) on their own, so I decided to step in and try to do my part."

Veterans, he added, "are sort of a forgotten group as we have moved on through the years. They can't always get the help they need, not only with mental health, but with housing, and so on and so forth. If we can give local organizations a little bump rather than waiting on grants and such, that definitely helps their bottom line to be able to help more and more veterans each year."

His organization, 4s4life, is sponsoring the event (the four "S's" stand for strength, struggle, sacrifice, and survival).



“Veterans are sort of a forgotten group as we've moved on through the years. **They can't always get the help they need.**

— *Jacque Ecuyer*

"I started this organization because I have lived through what I consider the mental health minefield," said Ecuyer. "I was bullied as a kid, I'm 30 years in recovery from drug addiction, I've battled depression, PTSD, and survived multiple suicide attempts. So I decided to turn my pain into my purpose, and that's why I do what I do."

For further information, look for Operation Giveback on Facebook.

Ecuyer can be reached on social media or by phone at 518-926-9018. Heather Marsh can be reached at 518-223-0264.

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# A SWEET Opportunity

*For 25 years, consumers valuing food transparency & desiring products that can reduce their consumption of processed sugars have been turning to Slate Valley Farms.*

by Megin Potter

## Three generations of the Imbimbo family work together at Slate Valley Farms to produce honey and maple syrup.

Both natural sweeteners are sticky, viscous, amber-colored liquids used as alternatives to table sugar. Each offers beneficial vitamins, minerals, and protective antioxidants. Which you choose often depends on what you are creating in the kitchen - but it takes both for this family farm to survive.

"The seasons aren't the same so, in a normal year, you're coming out of maple season and going right into bee-keeping season," said Pat Imbimbo.

### *This Season's Buzz*

This year has not been a normal year. The weather has been "off" in the Northeast, the only place in the country where real maple syrup is produced from the sap of tapped maple trees high in sugar during early spring.

While it's still good quality, the quantity of syrup being generated from his 3,200 maple trees has been much less than for those experiencing cooler weather patterns further north.

Concurrently on the farm, while the sap suffered, the bees thrived. The mild winter had their 44 hives buzzing ahead of schedule.

### *Busy Bees*

During its lifetime, the average bee produces just one-quarter of a tablespoon of honey. Like maple syrup, honey is harvested, manually, in a labor-intensive process.

Now in retirement, Pat says he works harder than before he retired. He'll be ready pretty soon to pass the reins of the family business down to his daughter, Gina Brackeen and her husband, he said.

"Maple is big business in this area. I like selling it and I like when people tell us they enjoy it and come back for more," said Pat.

"The same stuff I sell to the public is what I feed to my own kids and grandkids. It's a great life working with the grandkids, and living on a farm, but it costs a lot of money to live on a farm. We're unique because it's all family, so when times get tough, everyone pulls together."



Gina received a bachelor's degree in horticulture and greenhouse management from SUNY Cobleskill and now lives in a tiny house on the property, handling much of the farm's business.

She has introduced new ideas and products, like Slate Valley Farm's unusual red hibiscus syrup, their intriguing bourbon barrel aged maple syrup, and their popular seasonal lavender lemonade. Additionally, they offer many other traditional and infused maple syrups, maple sugar, raw wildflower honey, and beeswax goods.

### *Eco-Conscious Ingenuity*

In 1999, Pat purchased Slate Valley Farm's 101-acre property in Granville and began transforming it. Originally named New England Farms, they kept getting mistaken for a chain of convenience stores. He changed the name to Slate Valley Farms and began carrying a line of products under the Uncle Pat's General Store label.

The farm, which centers around sustainability, is home to chickens, pigs, and a horse. They produce their own meat and vegetables, and utilize eco-conscious construction methods and energy production techniques. The barn and sugar house are built from shipping containers, and the greenhouse, sap house, and track house have been constructed from repurposed materials (like fence rail).



## Resourcefulness Meets Wherewithal

Because of the unpredictability of the business, Slate Valley Farms is constantly introducing new products to supplement their income stream.

Last year, they harvested 13,000 plants used to produce organic dyes.

During his two-week Christmas break, after spending seven days/week working on the farm year-round, Pat could be found in his woodshop, building oval-shaped Shaker boxes and trays (which they used to create holiday gift packages loaded with farm goods).

## Saving The Hives

Pat had first been introduced to bee-keeping in 1982 while serving as a police officer in Hendry County (Alligator Alley), Florida. During a traffic stop, he discovered stolen hives. After returning them to their rightful owner (and caging the bird that took them) Pat received his first hive as a 'thank you' gift.

"I enjoy the solitude. When working with the bees, no one else comes near you," he said. Pat, who is Italian, said he prefers working with Italian bees because they build-up quickly in the spring and are gentle enough for students and his autistic grandchildren to work with, as well.

## Worker Bee

Bees produce honey from the sugary nectar of wildflowers, imbuing it with the natural floral flavors of their environment. There are 82 different plants and trees at Slate Valley Farms that produce nectar for the bees. Despite his allergies, Pat only mows once a year in the fall to allow the goldenrod and nettle (that the bees love!) to continue to bloom.

For the past five years, Pat, a mason, has also been the Grand Beekeeper tending the hives at the Masonic Care Community in Utica, NY. He started the community with Bill Sardone and Bob Butler to encourage blossom pollination in the community's apple orchard.



Today, their project has grown to include 12 bee colonies, each engraved with the donor's name, and sheltered in a bee house year-round.

Slate Valley Farms' booths can be found at most Washington County Fairground events and in the County Bounty Building during their agricultural fair in August. Slate Valley Farms is also at the Saratoga Farmers' Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the Schenectady Green Market on Sundays, and are very happy to be among the items for sale at the Hicks Orchard Stores in Granville and Glens Falls.

This summer, they will also be participating in the Shirt Factory's Thursday Farm Markets. For more information, go to [www.slatevalleyfarms.com](http://www.slatevalleyfarms.com)

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# Southern Adirondack HOMESTEADING FESTIVAL



Keynote speaker Jill Winger.  
Photo Courtesy of Lindsay Linton Buk



by Amanda Graves

**From April 26-28, people from all around are invited to attend the Southern Adirondack Homesteading Festival.**

The weekend-long event will be hosted at the Washington County Fairgrounds (located at 392 Old Schuylerville Road, Greenwich, NY 12834). Guests can expect to hear from several different speakers, enjoy food trucks, and participate in a variety of hands-on events. The whole family is sure to learn something new, and have lots of fun in the process.

This year's keynote speaker is Jill Winger, traveling to New York for the first time all the way from Wyoming. She bought her homestead in 2008 with her husband, and fell in love with the old fashioned lifestyle.



However, she found it hard to find people who shared her interests, which led to the creation of The Prairie Homestead.

"I needed an outlet and so I decided to start a blog," said Jill. As she posted more about her lifestyle, her views began to grow as well. Today, The Prairie Homestead reaches an immense audience and obtains millions of views daily. In addition to her online space, she has released multiple books. In 2019, she published *The Prairie Homestead Cookbook*, and in 2023 she published *Old Fashioned on Purpose* which instantly became an Amazon best seller. In addition to her publications, she also has amassed over 7 million downloads on her podcast *Old Fashioned on Purpose*.

Through owning a homestead and working on her platform, Jill discovered her love for entrepreneurship. She runs Genuine Beef Company, shipping grass-finished beef nationwide. She is also the owner of the Chugwater Soda Fountain, Wyoming's oldest operating soda fountain. "The soda fountain was in pretty bad shape when we bought it," explained Jill, "I wouldn't say it was easy, but it's been really worth wild just to see the community rally around it."

Overall, Jill's goal is to help people realize that becoming a homesteader or living a more old-fashioned lifestyle, is obtainable to everybody.

"If they have this same inclination that I do toward old-fashioned things I want them to know it's possible and they don't have to have a lot of land. They don't have to have a big fancy farmhouse, but there's a lot of really good things that come to us when we start to become producers instead of just consumers," said Jill.

During the event, Jill will be giving two talks. The first focuses on why homesteading matters overall and is a worthwhile thing to do, regardless of where you live. Her second talk will be a more interactive discussion of the secrets to an old fashioned kitchen; centering around how to make more food at home.

There will also be time scheduled into the day for a Q&A with Jill. People should leave the event feeling inspired and more confident in their own abilities, regardless of where they live.

"That's one of my biggest passion points," shared Jill, "Is that you do not need acres of land to do this. You can do so much even in just a neighborhood, even in an apartment. This is really a mindset in my opinion."

The event will kick off on Friday, April 26 with self-guided farm tours. Everyone is welcome to attend and enjoy multiple different food trucks, entertainment, and demonstrations without an admissions charge. Starting Saturday, be sure to register ahead of time and get your ticket to participate in all the different activities. There are many different options for registration such as day passes, family packages, and weekend passes.

Whether you can come for one day or enjoy the whole weekend, there is an option for you. These days will be filled with even more great speakers and hands-on activities including: Gardening 101, Beekeeping, Maple Production, Advanced Soap Making, and more. In addition, there will be several classes covering homestead entrepreneurship, perfect for homesteaders looking to venture into the business world.

This family friendly event is perfect for anyone regardless of their experience level. Whether you are going to learn more about what you already do at home, are just starting, or have no clue where to begin.

The Adirondack Homesteading Festival is a great way to connect with a community of people who share a passion for bringing an old-fashioned lifestyle back into the modern world.

**To buy tickets or see the full schedule of events, you can visit their website at [www.adkhomesteading.com](http://www.adkhomesteading.com).**



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EPIISODE 53  
**One Man, One Plan - Zay Gets it Done**

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Zay DuPree, the one-man mastermind behind DuPree Heating & Cooling! When people think of a one-man operation, they typically picture an old dude with a beat up truck and a couple fans in the truck bed... But Zay couldn't be further from that vision. Fully insured and thoroughly professional, Zay proudly stands by the quality of his process and results. If you need HVAC work done, Zay is the best one-man band in town!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPIISODE 52  
**Dancing Grain - From Field to Glass**

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Rachel McDermott, the second-generation proprietor of Dancing Grain Farm Brewery! Dancing Grain runs a special operation - fully family-owned, they source every ingredient that goes into their brews at their own farm, without using any pesticides... This is as Blue Collar as it gets! Listen to this episode to hear their incredible story - recorded on site!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPIISODE 51  
**A Family Foundation, Built Right**

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Paul Lachar, owner and mason at Top Course Masonry! The whole family's in on this foundational construction dream... But there's no dysfunction here. Paul and his crew have served the region with pride for over 20 years, and there's no end in sight! Listen to this episode to hear about his experience, how he keeps the family in harmony, how he got back to school after an injury, and more!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPIISODE 50  
**Hiring to Your Weaknesses... AND Strengths?**

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Michael Turcotte, proprietor of Turn Cycle Solutions! Michael built and grew his New Hampshire-based business with the usual hard work and hiring team members to cover his own weaknesses... But he also made the unique decision to hire people with similar strengths to his own. Why would he replace his own strengths with a costly employee, and how did this decision help his business grow? Listen to this episode, and you just might find out!



SCAN TO LISTEN

EPIISODE 49  
**The True Meaning of Leadership**

In this episode, our hosts Mike Nelson and Derek Foster interview Dean Leber, a top leadership consultant at The Leaders Group! The corporate world is full of bloated questions - "What's the difference between a mission and vision statement?" and "How do I empower my employees to become good leaders?" These questions seem jejune on the surface, but Dean has real, authentic answers to them that can help you, your team, and your business. Listen to this episode to find out how!



# BUYING LOCAL



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



SCAN TO LISTEN

**EPISODE 57**  
**Saratoga Biochar Fights Back!**

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Raymond Apy, the CEO of Northeastern Biochar Solutions and one of the main figures behind Saratoga Biochar Solutions! The proposed facility’s goal is to process biosolids into carbon fertilizer, but local opposition to the project has been significant... Ray has met every goal and then some, and he wants more people to understand the importance of the project. Listen to this episode to hear his explanations and future plans!



SCAN TO LISTEN

**EPISODE 56**  
**Design & Development, Hand in Hand**

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Geff Redick, owner of Redbud Development! Redbud’s specialty is improving your living space – not just “adding a pool”, but considering every factor of how you live in and use the space! For any project big or small, Redbud’s thoughtful building acumen impresses every time!



SCAN TO LISTEN

**EPISODE 55**  
**Unraveling Financial Mysteries**

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Charles Amodio, a main partner and forensic accountant at FAZ Forensics! Forensic accounting is a little-known but invaluable resource to businesses of all kinds, and FAZ is the premier provider of it in the region! Whether you need a business valuation, financial investigation, or even litigation support, when answers matter, FAZ delivers!



SCAN TO LISTEN

**EPISODE 54**  
**March to Victory – The Men Behind the Melee**

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson interviews Don Walton and Jay Ingleston – former fighters turned promoters at DonnyBrooke Fight Promotions! On March 30th, Vermont-based Donnybrooke is bringing a premier MMA event to New York state for the first time – Adina Hornstra vs. LG Pannell and Carmen Corchado vs. Oriana Bracho at the March to Victory! How did they go about putting together this action-packed event? What were their motivations behind the matchups? What brings them to New York this time around? You’ll have to listen to this episode to find out!



SCAN TO LISTEN

**EPISODE 53**  
**The Real Estate Roundtable Reconvenes**

In this episode, our host Mike Nelson talks with local top real estate experts Dan Wade, Mark Pawlows, and Lori Danussi! It’s been a few years since the COVID pandemic first affected the real estate market... What’s recovered, what still has a ways to go, and what does that mean to prospective home-buyers and sellers? Listen to this episode for the answers to those questions, and many more!

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