

Central New York's EXCLUSIVE Women's Magazine

S Y R A C U S E  
**WOMAN**  
*magazine*

**COVER STORY**

**JOY  
RAFFERTY**

**California Closets owner  
reflects on leadership,  
family and giving back**

**FOR A GOOD CAUSE**

Carrie Large

**WISE FEATURED ENTREPRENEUR**

Nicolette Havrish

**IN HER OWN WORDS**

Caron Grossman

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

Dianne Vitkus brings determination home

**HEALTHY EATING**

Gut-friendly living

**HEALTHY WOMAN**

Colorectal cancer: An overview

**INSPIRE**

Steffani Williams

Darlene Hackworth

Janice Abdo Rott



A photograph of two women sitting outdoors, smiling and talking. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and a purple hoodie, with her hand on her chest. The woman on the right is wearing a pink shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and water.

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# march

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Mary Gohl-Thompson

## Breaking the concrete ceiling

For the past twenty years, I have been representing the residential construction industry and have learned a lot about an industry that is proud to build, remodel, maintain and improve the housing stock in Central New York.

Although I am not actually out on the jobsite for the majority of my work, I am glad to know that more women are picking up a hammer, operating a backhoe, or running the electric for a house. Yet, we still have a long way to go, which means there is enormous opportunity!

Construction is an industry with one of the lowest percentages of gender diversity in the workforce. The number of women working in the construction industry edged only slightly higher in 2022, rising to 11%, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most women in the industry remain involved in office and administrative positions, with less than 4% involved in the skilled trades, where workers are sorely needed. There, we most often see women filling roles in painting and finishing work, as well as on the final cleanup crew. More recently, we've begun to notice women on jobsites as equipment operators driving construction equipment like bulldozers, forklifts, backhoes, and dump trucks. These are higher-paying roles, and it is great to see this becoming more common.

Now, let's be honest, being a female in any industry that has always been male dominated can be challenging. There are times when you have to remind yourself to not take matters personally, "just do the job" and sometimes, call someone out on their disrespectful, or even rude behavior. Often woman's views, opinions, and ideas are brushed off or deemed insignificant just because we are female, living in this male-dominated society. Our voices are essential, and we must have the courage to advance our industry.

### Other Steps Forward

My organization is part of the federation of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB); currently Alicia Huey, a woman home builder is chair of NAHB Board of Directors. NAHB has a strong 'Professional Woman in Building' council, and is also working to introduce children, particularly girls, to STEAM and construction careers, in an effort to enhance women in the industry.

Two examples are:

- In 2022, Builder Books (NAHB's publishing arm), released a new children's book, "The House That She Built." The book was inspired by the team of real women who came together from around the country to build a one-of-a-kind home in Utah.
- Girl Scouts across the country can now participate in an exciting new patch program for building. The intent of this program is to build self-esteem and develop skills through curiosity and hands on activities.

### Each step forward helps.

Now is the perfect time for women to explore the construction industry. There is a need for the unique talents and dedication that women bring to any field - including strategies for working smarter, and for giving their all to whatever they set their minds to, and by nature, women are innovative and detail-oriented. The opportunities for women to enter a career that promises great quality of life, earning a good living, having value in the work they do and pride in being a contributor to each project. Residential construction workers consistently express high job satisfaction and average salaries in Central New York remain competitive with other industries.

I love the quote "Change is inevitable, growth is optional." Breaking the 'concrete ceiling' will provide change and as women continue working side by side with the men in the residential construction industry the opportunity for growth will thrive.

P.S. Please come see us at the 2024 Home & Garden Show at the NYS Fairgrounds, March 15-17, where you will have the opportunity to meet many businesses – including a number of businesses who have woman owners or in principal roles.

Mary Gohl-Thompson is the chief executive officer of the Home Builders & Remodelers of Central New York.

## S Y R A C U S E WOMAN magazine

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## PAST EVENTS

## Chocolate Discovery to support the MOST

More than 200 people turned out to the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology (MOST) for their Chocolate Discovery fundraiser, presented by Byrne Dairy & Deli. The event featured thousands of delectable chocolates from Sweet on Chocolate, food from Lemon Grass, sparkling wine, and a Star-Crossed Lovers planetarium show in the National Grid ExploraDome.





## Galentine's event helps promote female entrepreneurs

The CNY Women's Network recently hosted a Galentine's event at Salt City Market where local female entrepreneurs could network while promoting their goods and services. The CNY Women's Network, founded by Alex Canavan, is on a mission to connect, promote and amplify Central New York's small business economy.

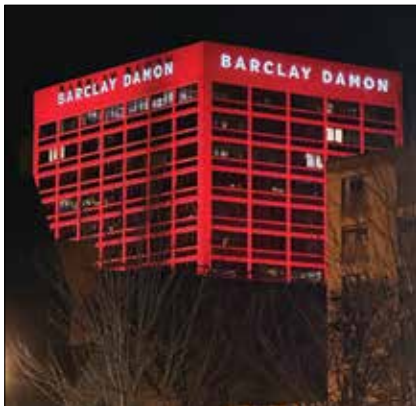




## PAST EVENTS

## Syracuse turns red for heart health

On Feb. 2, the city of Syracuse turned red to spread awareness for women's heart health. Businesses throughout town encouraged their employees to wear red for the annual event, and a number of buildings around town, including the JMA Wireless Dome and the Barclay Damon building downtown were lit up in red for the occasion.





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# Dianne Vitkus brings determination home

Lori Ruhlman

Three years after her life-altering fall, Dianne Vitkus came home to Central New York to spend nearly a month over the holidays. She brought the determination and happy spirit she was known for on the playing fields and in the hallways of Skaneateles High School. She brought new-found independence in the form of a compact motorized wheelchair and an accessible SUV that she has worked hard to be able to get in and out of independently, and to drive, as a quadriplegic. And she brought the optimism and wisdom that have earned her grants, awards, notoriety, and intense admiration as she has worked hard to recover as much mobility and health possible while living in Boston.

While here for her longest visit home to Central New York since her accident, Vitkus drove herself into Syracuse to meet with friends, and – thanks to the Kelly Brush Foundation – took off a week to fly to Colorado where she skied in Breckenridge at the Hartford Ski Spectacular with Move United, an adaptive outdoors foundation.

Being back for that month was the first time CNY felt like home again, she said, “because I finally have enough comfort with this new identity that I am no longer clinging to the remembrance of things past.”

When she fell 12 feet from the rooftop of her Syracuse apartment after watching a sunset in 2020, Vitkus was 27 years old and working as a surgical physician assistant at St. Joseph’s Hospital. After college years as a lacrosse player at Brown University, she had attended LeMoyne College to become a PA, and was living her dream.

As a healthcare provider, Vitkus said she knew immediately after falling that her life had changed forever.

She couldn’t move or feel her legs.

“I knew the control and freedom I once had over my life was gone,” she said.

She spent four weeks in the intensive care unit in Syracuse – with chest tubes, a feeding tube, respirator, and tracheotomy – before being transferred to Spaulding Rehabilitation Center in Boston for two months in intensive inpatient rehab.

With the optimism and perseverance that she used on athletic fields, she recovered enough to live independently in Boston, where she started a new life.

Many have followed her on Instagram (@vittysvoyage) since the accident and marveled at how much she has done and all that she has become. She is an ambassador for Wings for Life, a foundation with one mission:

“to make spinal cord injuries curable.” She is also a mentor and ambassador for SCI Boston, and is co-founder of a SCI support group. She is a sought-after speaker and is featured in an upcoming documentary called “This is NOT a dream.”

Dianne has received a citation from Massachusetts Governor Maura T. Healey in recognition of all that she has done for others, “and for providing inspiration with your commitment to your own recovery.” In the proclamation, Healey commends Vitkus for her “unwavering willpower” to overcome obstacles.

Indeed, those words are used often by friends, family members, and others who know Dianne. Her commitment is awe-inspiring. Her parents, Jim and Suzanne Vitkus of Skaneateles, marvel at her determination and perseverance every day.

“If we say it once a day, we say it four times,” Jim said. “She manages to start each day fresh, leaving whatever happened yesterday behind her as best she can.” Their heartache over Dianne’s loss is clearly also intertwined with nearly indescribable pride.

Her parents had seen this resilience before: Dianne has been managing her type one diabetes since being diagnosed in her senior year of high school. She is on an insulin pump to manage her blood sugar.

*Continued on page 14*

Skaneateles native Dianne Vitkus came home to visit over the holidays, bringing focus and determination with her.



**Dianne Vitkus from page 13**

In addition to gaining independence and strength after the accident, Vitkus worked hard to recover use of her hands so that she could return to her job as a surgical PA. As that dream disappeared (six surgeries haven't recovered the use in the way she hoped) she found a new path in the field of mental health. She works for Boston Neurobehavioral Associates and brings "a lived experience with trauma" in her quest to help other people. Now, in addition to being an advocate for people with disabilities, she is also campaigning for better and more mental health care.

"A big hole in the Spinal Cord Injury community is the lack of mental health resources," she said. "We get hurt and put so much emphasis on rehabbing the physical body. But the toll the injury takes on mental health is just as debilitating." It took time and determination for her to realize that even without the hands needed to be a surgical physician assistant, she could still be a professional, and still help other people.

"At the core I'm still me, and with some strengths lost I have gained others which has shifted my passions," she said.

This deep knowledge has helped her evolve to live in the moment and to accept what she can and cannot do.

This doesn't mean she will stop pushing, but there is also a peace in accepting.

In 2024, Vitkus said she will willingly let some doors close. She will embrace all that is within reach and charge through the doors that she can. She will continue to work hard to improve and to maintain her health.

She goes weekly to Journey Forward, a paralysis gym in the Boston area, where she works out hard for three hours. It is expensive at

\$10,000 a year and affordable through grants and money donated by many people in the fundraising campaign right after her injury. It is a favorite spot for many reasons.

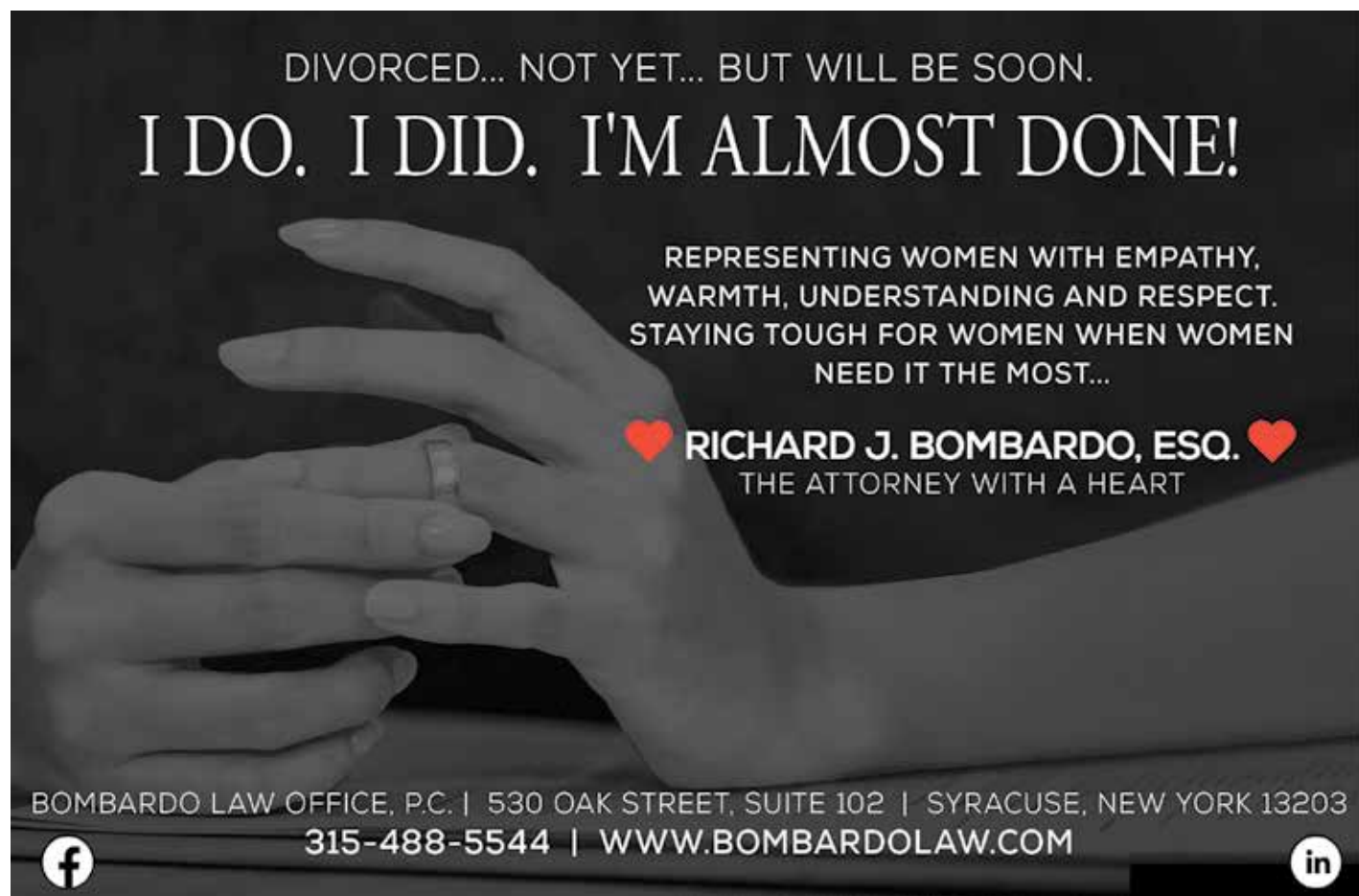
"I've always made friends around physical activity," she said of her lifelong focus on sports. At Journey Forward, while working her body hard, she has made close friends with the trainers and other chair users. It is a favorite social time. While accepting that "this might be my body for a while," Vitkus has started putting greater emphasis on finding the technology and access she needs to lead an independent life.

She has learned lessons that take many people a lifetime.

"I don't take any of this for granted any more," Vitkus said. "I enjoy this moment. I want to live and appreciate what I still have," she said. While she once had regret and reluctance about needing to accept help from others, she now understands it is a circle. "I accept help so that I can help others in return – and pay it forward," she said. "We will all at some point need help."

She shared pictures of her just-lived ski experience in Colorado. While she would rather be able to ski the way she once did, or to at least "mono ski" without having to have someone tethered to her, she now appreciates that it is "about the whole experience." Even with the necessary adaptations, she still experiences the camaraderie the sport brings as well as the excitement in the lodge, the views, and the fresh crisp winter air.

"I can still get to the top of the mountain," she said. "I just need a hand to get there." SWM





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# Providing a ‘Disney’ experience while championing conservation

David Tyler

Carrie Large loves her job.

The executive director of the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo sees endless possibilities for the zoo to capture the imagination of its visitors while serving its dual mission of protecting from extinction species from around the world. Plus, she said, her kids think it's cool.

Carrie, who describes herself as an animal person from an early age, took the role in 2020 and in the three-plus years since has been developing a team of innovators to bring the zoo to new heights. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is actually two organizations that work hand in glove to move the zoo's mission forward. The facility and animal-care side of the zoo is owned and operated by Onondaga County and the Friends is a separate not-for-profit that is responsible for the guest experience, including membership, the gift shop, food and beverage, events, education, fund-raising, marketing and public relations.

"It's so exciting and innovative – how do we impact environment, conservation, animals in the wild – and how do we actually give our community members that might not be able to fly to Disney, that kind of experience. I didn't understand what a great opportunity this truly was," she said. "It's just the opportunity of a lifetime. It's truly been a dream job."

At first glance, Carrie's background wouldn't necessarily seem to lend itself to the management of a zoo. A native of Fairport, after graduating from college with the hopes of being a physical education teacher, she took a job with the arena football team in Rochester. She then moved to Syracuse and spent 17 years in community health at ACR Health, where she started as a care manager on the front lines treating clients who were HIV positive before moving in development and eventually taking the role of deputy executive director of operations.

"You put those two together and it's the perfect background to become the executive director of a zoo because you want that guest experience, you want that enhancement, but you also want that community outreach, that connection," she said. "It's actually the best background I could ask for ... shooting t-shirts out into the crowd to working for ACR health and finding out what are the needs in the community and how to tackle those needs."

In the three-plus years since Carrie took the post, she has focused on building a team of directors and staffers and leaning into their expertise to continually innovate the zoo's programs and offerings. The core tenets of the work culture Carrie is building are fun, innovation, empathy and communication. "That's what we hold each other accountable for," she said. "If you don't invest in your team, and you don't make sure that they're enjoying it and they're having fun, how are they going to do their work, day in and day out. It's a great honor to have a team that is absolutely working at such a high level."

Like any workplace, there is a lot to do and it can be overwhelming. When that happens, Carrie said she makes sure she takes a moment, goes for a walk in the zoo, sees the guests and makes sure they're having fun and engaging and "having those Disney experiences that we're trying to achieve." Those moments help her stay grounded and not take her role for granted.

"You can get pulled in here pretty strongly and just get engulfed by it. But we make sure that everyone takes a break and enjoys their family," she said. "But also – you're at a zoo and how can you not have fun."

One of the first initiatives the zoo took upon Carrie's arrival was the renovation and rebranding of the café. Initially a Burger King and then the Jungle Café, the menu and décor of the restaurant had become stale and dated. The new Honeybee Café brings a brighter, more modern feel, with a wider menu selection that features healthier offerings. There's also an educational component. In the wild, elephants will often forage on sugar cane crops, creating conflicts with humans. To prevent crop damage and conflict, humans will create bee barriers around the edge of their fields to keep the elephants from entering. Soon, she said, they will announce the expansion of the Honeybee Café into Skaneateles, continuing the mission of zoo outreach into the community.

Having now gotten its liquor license, the zoo is also now doing monthly pairing dinners – either a beer or wine paired with a five-course meal – each themed around one of the animals. Several other fun, educational and themed events are also on the calendar, including Party for the Planet, Fall Conservation Bash, LGBTQ day, Senior Day and Elephant Day. This year, there will also be large life-like dragons – some as large as 25 feet tall – displayed throughout the zoo. With the dragons in house, Carrie said they will host events targeting Pokemon and Dungeons & Dragons enthusiasts.

Soon, with some seed money the Friends secured from National Grid, botanical gardens will be planted at the zoo's main entrance, the main courtyard where the duck pond is currently and on the hillside between the tiger and elephant exhibits. Carrie said she anticipates there will be plants grown in the botanical gardens that will be enriching for the animals at the zoo as well as things that can be used in the Honeybee Café.

All these initiatives are having an impact. Annual attendance at the zoo has grown to more than 350,000 and the zoo now has 10,000 members, up from around 7,500. Stronger attendance means the zoo has a wider audience for its conservation message.

"That's our biggest thing – we want people to connect with the animals; to understand why we want to save them. What does it mean for our whole world if some of these animals going extinct?" Carrie said. "These animals aren't here just for show. There's a reason, there's research happening. We're making sure they don't go extinct and we are their protectors. We're here to take care of them." swm



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# wise

WOMEN IGNITING THE SPIRIT  
OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## FEATURED ENTREPRENEUR

**Nicolette Havrsh**  
AIA, NCIDQ, LEED AP BD+C, NCARB  
CEO & Founding Architect, Nourish Architecture, DPC

Nicolette Havrsh, the visionary CEO and Founding Architect behind Nourish Architecture, DPC, isn't just designing structures; she's crafting environments where sustainability, creativity, and compassion intersect. At Nourish Architecture, the focus extends beyond mere green initiatives, aiming to create spaces that nurture the well-being of all occupants. With a background in sustainable design and a love for animals, Nicolette envisioned a firm where her values could take center stage.

Nourish Architecture was officially established in December 2022, but the journey to entrepreneurship began when she was a child. Born a Navy kid in California, her family eventually landed on a 100-year-old family dairy farm in Upstate New York. This experience fostered her love for animals, and appreciation of biodiversity that would later inform her architectural career.

While working in the corporate world, Nicolette stumbled upon a unique opportunity to design a fear-free veterinary facility. It was here that she realized the profound impact architecture could have on both animals and humans alike. There are not a lot of architects working to design spaces that consider how animals experience the world, and how to maintain biodiversity inside of buildings and out. This pivotal project ignited her passion and revealed the niche where her business would thrive.

Nicolette had always envisioned owning an architecture firm. Driven by her values and a desire for flexibility, Nicolette took the leap to establish Nourish Architecture in December 2022. Certified in fear-free design, she prioritizes her own health and wellness while empowering her clients to thrive. Collaborating closely with clients, Nicolette relishes the opportunity to solve their challenges through innovative design solutions.

Navigating the business landscape can be daunting, but Nicolette found solace and support in mentorship and community. "Having mentors who believe in you is important," she emphasized. Through organizations like WISE, Nicolette found invaluable resources and guidance that helped her business thrive. A WISE Accelerate Business Plan Intensive graduate, Nicolette shares, "The classes that I took through WISE helped define my mission, vision, and values," she shared. "I'm so grateful that the WISE center exists locally. I couldn't have figured it out alone," she adds with gratitude. Through meetings with her WISE business counselor, Nicolette was able to traverse challenges, such



Photo Credit: Shandley Wells at Moonfall Design Co. LLC

as processing payroll as a business owner, and learning to outsource certain tasks to leverage the expertise of others when needed.

Embracing the spirit of mentorship, Nicolette is passionate about paying it forward and nurturing the next generation of entrepreneurs. Nicolette embraces the opportunity to share her story and the environmental harmony that is possible through architecture by presenting at architectural events. In addition to speaking engagements and running her business, Nicolette is also a college professor. She shares her wisdom with students and aspiring business owners, advocating for thorough research and understanding before embarking on the entrepreneurial journey. "Make sure you do your homework and understand [what starting and managing a business entails]," she advises those looking to start a business.

As Nicolette looks ahead, she envisions growth and expansion for Nourish Architecture. With hopes to continue to grow her business, she remains steadfast in her commitment to making a positive impact through her work. With passion, purpose, and a commitment to making a difference, Nicolette is building a sustainable future where design meets compassion, and innovation meets impact.

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Mary Nelson has worked in the radiology department at Upstate University Hospital for 25 years, and is a well-known youth advocate in the Central New York community. She also is a member of the Upstate Legacy Society, established as a tribute to donors who have included the Upstate Foundation in their estate plans. Someday, her legacy gift will benefit children with disabilities.

"Leaving a legacy is something I always wanted to do, to be able to give back to special needs youth in our community. I'm inspired by my grandchildren," explained Mary. "I have two grandchildren with disabilities and I want to make sure other children with disabilities can receive excellent care."

Mary added that she wants her grandchildren to be successful in life, and not look at their disability as a consequence to allow them not to strive. Her mantra is, "Don't let your circumstance become your consequence."

Mary's advice regarding legacy giving? "Find your passion for which you want to be remembered. My legacy is always giving back and not looking for anything in return."

Please join Mary in making a legacy gift today!

To read Mary's complete story, visit  
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to be able to leave a legacy."*

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# JOY RAFFERTY

CALIFORNIA CLOSETS OWNER  
REFLECTS ON LEADERSHIP,  
FAMILY AND GIVING BACK

*Kate Hanzalik*

“I am someone who can pivot. If I had to work harder on other days or do work at night when the kids were in bed, that was fine. [What was] most important [was] for me to be able to be a part of my kids’ lives.”—Joy Rafferty



## Joy Rafferty from page 23

At one point in her life, Joy Rafferty felt like she was a hamster running on a wheel. Every morning, she'd drop her two-year old twins off at daycare, then spend the rest of her day working in sales at a pharmaceutical company. She'd pick up the kids, make dinner, get ready for the next day...again and again and again. It wasn't until her husband's company asked him to relocate to Brazil that the wheel stopped.

"I gave up my role and my job to move to another country for his business, where he thought he would become a part of the executive team at some point. We were fully immersed in a small city with no American community." Two-and-a-half years later, the business took them to Louisiana, then finally back to New York. "But then my husband's company talked about moving him again and we said, 'No, this was it.' We want to put roots down in New York State. And the opportunity for this business came up."

This business is California Closets, a successful franchise that creates custom closets and storage systems for any room in the home. "It's completely custom and every project is different. It's stuff that makes people happy."

The couple owns showrooms in Syracuse and Albany, and they service customers all over Central and Upstate NY. "I have loved working in this business so much. I mean, who would have ever thought, a closet company?"

Joy has been the owner of California Closets Syracuse/Albany since 2003. She works in the front end of the business, managing the showrooms, which she describes as a "lovely, calm, organized place to be." Joy also handles all marketing, human resources, payroll, etc.





Her husband, Sean, works behind the scenes managing the manufacturing and financial aspects of the business.

“We took a huge leap to buy this business and to leave our previous careers. Our number one goal was to make it work.” Joy’s skills in sales and marketing easily translated to the work that she’s done for California Closets, but she’s learned a lot as well, especially about flexibility. “Don’t get your mind stuck on one thing, life throws us curve balls. And the important thing is to be decisive and move forward and try something, and don’t be afraid to fail because we don’t know unless we take a chance and try something.”

Joy attributes her persistence and caring nature to her father. She’s also inspired by Joanna Gaines from Fixer Upper, who is a working mom, running a home improvement/design business with her husband. But more than anything, Joy’s the kind of businesswoman who doesn’t want to be like anyone.

“It’s really important to be a self-starter and figure things out,” she said. Over the years leading California Closets, she has found ways to adapt to changing times and advancing technologies, such as connecting with customers for Zoom design appointments during the early days of Covid. “We figure out what works for our customer.”

As for managing employees, all she sees are opportunities. “My approach is to use mistakes as opportunities to teach/train. It’s so important for employees to know how important their role is in the company, and that [I’m] there to help make them improve and be more confident in their role.”

She is committed to her employees, and the Syracuse community. “People that hear

about California Closets assume that it’s headquartered in California and all of our products come from there. But we’re a franchise, we’re locally owned and operated. Everyone who works in Syracuse lives in Syracuse. So we have our designers who live in Syracuse. We have our installers who live in Syracuse,” she said, adding, “Part of my goal is to make sure that we are part of the community and giving back to the community.”

California Closets gives charitable donations to several nonprofits in Syracuse and has donated services and products to those in need. Last year, Make-A-Wish CNY asked for help in fulfilling a girl’s wish to have her room redone. “They came to us and said they have a small budget and we decided, ‘No, we’re just going to donate.’” Gratification came in seeing the after-pictures. “It was a great experience . . . What a help it was for the parents of this child to have their room so organized.”

Children have always been a priority to Joy, especially her three children, but being a female business owner and a mom has been challenging. When her twins were young, her career in the pharmaceutical industry didn’t give her enough time to watch them grow up. But being her own boss, being an entrepreneur, she has more freedom.

“When my younger son [was growing up] I felt like it was a second chance. I knew how fast it would go.” With her freedom, she has had more responsibility, she said. “I am someone who can pivot. If I had to work harder on other days or do work at night when the kids were in bed, that was fine. [What was] most important [was] for me to be able to be a part of my kids’ lives.”

“It’s really important to be a self-starter and figure things out.”

—Joy Rafferty

*Continued on page 26*



**Joy Rafferty** from page 25

She learned to delegate in order to be able to spend time with her family. “We have employees who could maybe fill in the gaps if I couldn’t be there for something, because for me, my kids always came first. It was really important to be there, whether it be school parties, or as they get older, athletic teams . . . and now they’re 29 and 22 years old. So that’s awesome. It went really fast. And I have no regrets about the time I spent with them.”

Now she’s easing into the role of an empty nester and her daily routine has changed. “A day in my life starts with a cup of coffee, watching my bird feeders, and some morning reflection at home, then off to a day at the office wearing my many hats (marketing, human resources, payroll, manager, customer service, etc.) I like to do yoga after work several times a week, then dinner at home with my husband,” she said.

The next chapter in her life involves a succession plan. “We’re in our late 50s, getting closer to 60, and we start thinking about, ‘When do we roll out of this?’” She’s excited about the future. “We started over 20 years ago when our kids were little, and now we have the possibility of maybe one of our children taking over at some point. So it’s a really interesting thing to think about, coming full circle like that.”

For women in leadership and entrepreneurship, she has some wisdom to share: “Work hard for what you believe in, be a good example to your employees, and don’t forget to take care of yourself. You’re a better leader/mother/wife if you’re in a good place personally.” *sww*

*California Closets Syracuse has a showroom at 3210 Erie Blvd. East in DeWitt.*

An advertisement for 'the collective cny women's network.™'. The background is a close-up photograph of several hands of different skin tones holding each other in a supportive grip. The text 'the collective' is in a yellow script font, and 'cny women's network.™' is in a pink script font. At the bottom left, the website 'www.cnywomensnetwork.com/membership' is written in a white sans-serif font.



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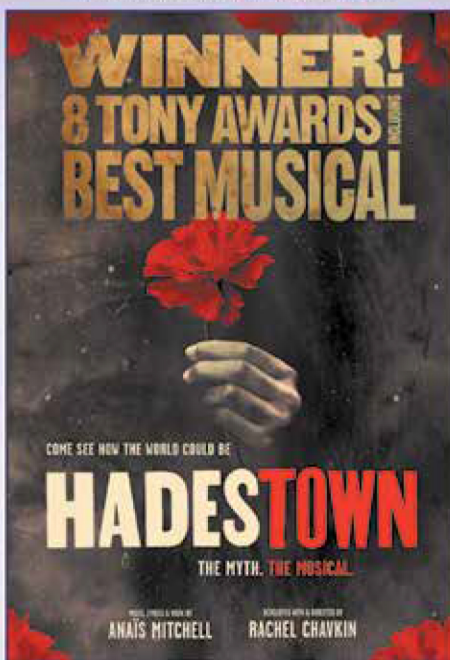
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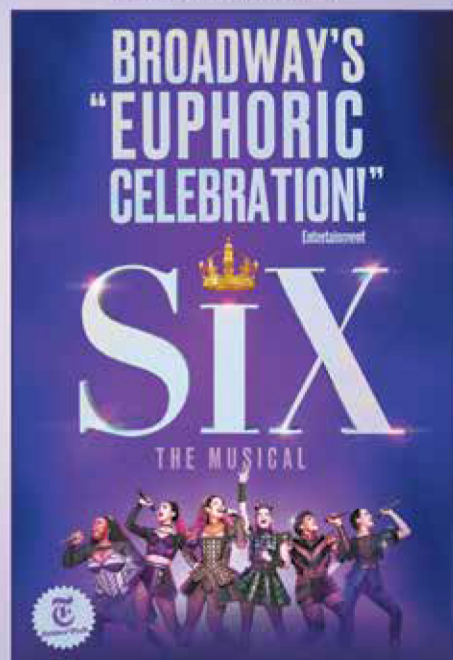
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# Colorectal cancer

## AN OVERVIEW

Steven Duffy, M.D.

**C**olorectal cancer is a huge problem in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society, colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer related deaths in men and the fourth leading cause of cancer related deaths in women. That equals more than 53,000 expected deaths from colorectal cancer in 2024.

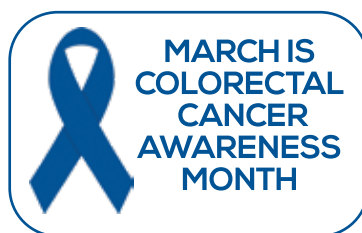
Some good news is that the incidence of this cancer has been going down in people over age 50, presumably due to colon cancer screening. The bad news is that colorectal cancer rates are increasing in people under age 50.

In fact, a couple of statistics related to those younger diagnoses are truly alarming. First, the incidence of colon cancer in people under 50 has been going up by two percent each year since the 1980s. Secondly, a person born in 1990 has double the lifetime risk of colon cancer as someone born in 1950.

Because of these numbers, the panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine, known as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, now recommends colorectal cancer screening in otherwise healthy individuals begin at age 45, rather than 50. As a result, most health insurance companies cover colorectal cancer screening -

a colonoscopy or other colon screening - starting at age 45 with no out-of-pocket costs to the patient.

Therefore, if you are completely healthy, no personal or family history of cancer, no bowel trouble, you should begin getting your colonoscopy at age 45, and every ten years thereafter.



## When to get screened early

However, you need to see your primary care provider and get screened before age 45 and/or before your next scheduled colonoscopy if you have any of the following:

- ✓ changes in stool size or consistency
- ✓ start having new abdominal pain
- ✓ unexpected weight loss
- ✓ blood in the stool, or dark stool
- ✓ a family history of colon cancer

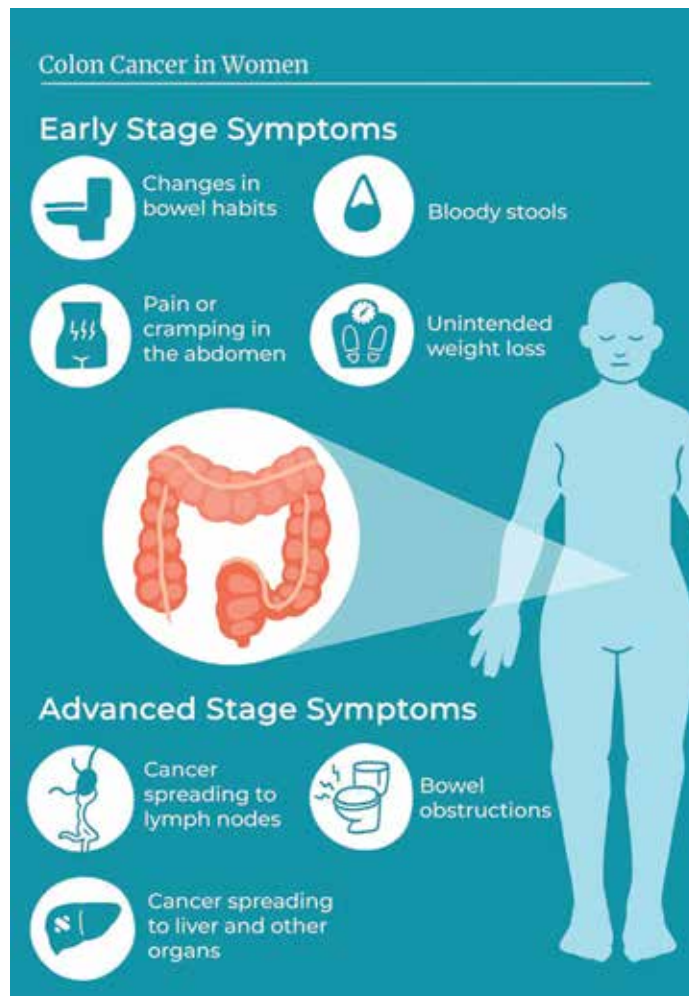
Of course, no one wants to get a colonoscopy. But, it is so important. A colonoscopy can actually save your life!

## Screening is essential

Because colorectal cancer is primarily a slow growing disease, it does not appear out of nowhere. It begins with cell abnormalities that can develop in a normal, healthy colon lining. These abnormal cells mutate and accumulate cellular errors that turn into polyps, and then eventually cancer. Therefore, if the polyps get removed during a colonoscopy, the cancer cannot begin to grow. This is evidenced by the fact that despite the alarming increase in colon cancer numbers, the risk of colorectal cancer is going down in people over age 50. That incidence reduction is almost entirely due to screening colonoscopies.

## Colorectal cancer is very treatable

If a person does have colorectal cancer, it's important to know that it's a very treatable illness, particularly when caught early. It can sometimes be treated just with removal during the time of colonoscopy, or sometimes surgery is required. If the cancer starts to spread outside of the colon into nearby lymph nodes or somewhere else in the body, then we have many more tools in our toolbox for the treatment.



There are several available treatments for colorectal cancer, and significant treatment advances have been made in recent years. Plus, there are always new treatments on the horizon.

## Healthy diet and lifestyle aid prevention

So, screening is one of two essential components for trying to avoid avoiding colorectal cancer. The other is prevention.

Researchers are not exactly sure why there is such a dramatic increase in the incidence of colon cancer in young people. Studies point to multiple different causes. However, diet could certainly be playing a role, and is part of why the World Health Organization classified processed meat as a group 1 carcinogen. This is the same group as cigarettes and asbestos. That means that there is sufficient evidence that pro-cessed meats cause cancer.

While the most common processed meat is cold cuts, other examples include bacon, pepperoni, hot dogs and sausages. Furthermore, red meat is classified as a group 2A carcinogen, meaning the evidence is more limited, but there seems to be a link between red meat and colorectal cancer.

Overall a good recommendation for colorectal cancer prevention is to eat a diet rich in whole foods, fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains - for a 25-30 mg daily fiber intake - and limit meats. Additional recommendations include maintaining a healthy weight, staying active and limiting alcohol consumption. Equally important, you should be visiting your primary care provider every year for a physical exam and update them on your family history of cancer. *SWM*



*Dr. Steven Duffy is a medical oncologist and director of research at Hematology-Oncology Associates of CNY*



# How I built my home décor business

Becka Miller



Becka Miller

discovered my love for paint finishes and interior design when I purchased an old house during my late twenties. With a limited budget for renovations, I struggled to find the finishes I desired but could not afford. So, with paint, textures and tools I learned different faux finishes to achieve the aesthetics I was looking for. If there is a way to DIY a project, I would figure it out. Incorporating vintage pieces and custom paint finishes is a specialty of mine in interior design.

I enjoy the process of finding unique vintage items and incorporating them into my designs to create a sense of character in the space. Custom paint finishes allow me to add texture, depth, and visual interest to walls, furniture, and other surfaces. Whether it's distressing, faux finishes, or hand-painted patterns, I strive to create personalized and unique spaces that reflect my client's style and preferences.

Miller's Crossing Design was established in 2015 when I decided to turn my passion for painting and interior design into a business. Initially, I began offering custom furniture painting services to my friends and family, but my customer base grew quickly as word spread in my local and online community.

In 2017 I started teaching classes centered around home decor and painted furniture which led me to purchase my current building where I have had a home decor shop for the last five years. I recently closed the shop so I can focus on my custom design work and painting classes.

It brings me great joy to inspire people and help them create beautiful homes through the power of art and design. Teaching allows

me to share my knowledge, techniques, and creativity with others, empowering them to express themselves and transform their living spaces into personalized havens. It is very humbling to see the joy and satisfaction on my students' faces as they discover their own creativity.

I offer public and private parties and am also the co-owner and founder of Daydream Apothecary Paint. We started Daydream Apothecary with the intention of offering a unique and eco-friendly alternative to traditional paint and we're excited to be growing quickly on Amazon. Daydream Apothecary is a brand that specializes in clay and chalk -paint. Our chalk paint is made from high-quality ingredients, including artist grade pigments that allow our colors to be more vibrant than other clay and chalk brands.

*Becka Miller is the owner of Miller's Crossing Design. Her paint studio is located in Baldwinsville.*



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# Gut-friendly living

## A MOM'S GUIDE TO BOOSTING FAMILY WELLNESS

Chef Eric Rose



In the bustling landscape of modern Central New York life, where every day feels like a whirlwind of tasks and responsibilities, finding balance can sometimes seem like an elusive dream. For the resilient working women who also bear the mantle of family caretaker, the challenge of maintaining healthy eating habits amidst the chaos of daily life can feel like attempting to tame a storm. However, in the midst of this gale, there lies a glimmer of hope — a beacon of possibility — that with a sprinkle of ingenuity and a pinch of perseverance, one can indeed strike that delicate balance between work, family, and nourishing one's body with wholesome foods.

### The tapestry of daily life

Picture, if you will, the vivid tapestry of a typical day for a working mother. From the crack of dawn until the stars emerge to dot the evening sky, her hours are a whirlwind of meetings, deadlines, school pickups, and household chores. In this perpetual motion, it's all too easy to succumb to the siren song of convenience foods — those pre-packaged temptations that promise instant gratification but deliver little in terms of sustenance or satisfaction.



## A journey towards wellness

Yet, amidst the chaos, there beats a quiet drum — a steady rhythm that whispers of the importance of prioritizing health. For our bodies are not mere vessels to be filled haphazardly; they are temples — sacred repositories of vitality and strength. And so, our journey towards wellness begins with a simple acknowledgment: that investing in good nutrition is a form of self-care — an act of love — that nourishes not only our bodies but also our spirits.

## Navigating the rapids: strategies for success

But how does one navigate these tumultuous waters? How does one navigate the rapids of daily life while still holding fast to the helm of health? Herein lies the artistry of the balancing act, the delicate dance of strategy and spontaneity:

**1. Plan ahead:** Set aside a quiet moment each weekend to chart a course for the week ahead. Plan your meals, make a grocery list, and prepare as much as you can in advance. This simple act of foresight can help you steer clear of the rocks and shoals that threaten to derail your journey towards wellness.

**2. Build harmony** Through Food: Engage your family in understanding each member's dietary preferences and restrictions, crafting menus that find common ground and compromise. Transform your kitchen into a sanctuary of unity — a space where shared meals strengthen bonds and deepen connections. Educate your children on the importance of balanced nutrition, fostering their support as allies on your journey through the currents of daily life.

**3. Embrace the ritual of batch cooking:** Harness the power of the weekend to embark on a culinary adventure — a journey of discovery and creation. Prepare large batches of hearty soups, nourishing stews, and wholesome casseroles that can be portioned out and enjoyed

throughout the week. Let your kitchen become a sanctuary — a haven of warmth and nourishment — that replenishes both body and soul.

**4. Semi homemade but healthy.** When time becomes a scarce commodity, and the prospect of cooking from scratch feels daunting,

seek out a selection of healthier convenience items readily available in the freezer or cooler aisle. Embrace the convenience of pre-cut vegetables, pre-cooked grains, and lean protein options such as rotisserie chicken or easy thaw shrimp. These products serve as the building blocks for quick and nutritious meals that can be assembled in mere minutes. Additionally, explore the array of frozen vegetable blends or pre-made salads, which offer a shortcut to adding variety and nutrition to your dishes without sacrificing flavor or quality.

With these convenient options at your fingertips, you can effortlessly piece together a winning dish, even in the busiest of moments.

## Three of my favorite healthy go-tos:

**1. No hassle stir fry:** Prepare an effortless stir fry by equipping yourself with G Hughes brand sugar-free stir fry sauce and a selection of frozen vegetable blends. Consider stocking your freezer with convenient options such as cauliflower rice, shrimp, and pre-cooked brown rice, portioned and bagged for quick access. Additionally, pre-cook and portion noodles to enhance the versatility of your stir fry repertoire. To expedite meal preparation, microwave the vegetables until they are just warm, streamlining the process for a hassle-free stir fry experience.

*Continued on page 36*





## Gut-friendly living from page 35

**2. Breakfast for the win:** Indulge in the timeless appeal of breakfast with a satisfying frittata. Elevate this classic dish by incorporating frozen shredded hash browns, chopped sausage, and a medley of vegetables for added flavor and substance. Enhance the experience by serving alongside vibrant salsa or creamy guacamole, infusing each bite with an extra kick of flavor and freshness.

**3. Salad blend with your favorite protein:** Elevate your salad game with a blend of your favorite protein: In today's market, grocery stores offer an array of convenient compound cabbage salad kits complete with dressing and toppings. Simply cook your preferred protein, add it atop the salad, and voila! You've crafted a gourmet-quality salad reminiscent of those found in upscale restaurants. For an extra boost, consider incorporating cold noodles into the mix to add volume and texture.

In the end, the balancing act of juggling work, family, and healthy eating habits is not merely a destination to be reached, but a journey — a voyage of discovery and self-discovery — that unfolds with each passing day. So, my fellow traveler, let us embark upon this journey together — with courage in our hearts and nourishment on our plates—and may our path be illuminated by the light of wellness and vitality. Bon appétit! *SWM*

## Wok This Way

Eric Rose

Serves 4

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup G Hughes sugar-free stir fry sauce (split)
- ¼ tsp Chile pepper flakes
- 2 tsp Sesame oil or olive oil
- 1 (16 ounce) package frozen mixed vegetables (thawed)
- 1 ½ lbs of favorite cooked protein (shrimp, pulled rotisserie chicken)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chili flakes and ¼ cup of stir fry sauce. Add frozen mixed vegetables; cook and stir until just tender, 5 to 7 minutes. If adding protein add at this time.
2. Remove from heat and fold in soy sauce and remaining stir fry mixture.
3. Garnish with chopped scallions and sesame seeds.

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Hope for Heather - GYN - Ovarian Cancer

# Person of the Year



## Colleen Cullen Richardson

Colleen is *Hope for Heather's* Person of the Year for 2024! Colleen is always working... managing the registration for the Teal Ribbon Run, volunteering for numerous days at the State Fair including set-up and tear down, managing the check in for the fashion show and so much more... Thank you so much, Colleen, for all your dedication and hard work, *Hope for Heather* appreciates YOU!

Hope for Heather  
GYN - Ovarian Cancer

## Events

Save the Date

World Ovarian Cancer  
Day May 8th

Teal Ribbon Run/Walk  
May 18th - 9AM  
Minoa, NY

Teal Ribbon Booth  
Aug 21-Sept 2  
NY State Fair 2024

[Hopeforheather.org](http://Hopeforheather.org)

SAVE  
THE  
DATE

**Hope & Heels Fashion Show & Brunch**  
Sunday, November 17, 2024 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Traditions at the Links  
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AGE ☐ 18-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-34 ☐ 35-39 ☐ 40-44 ☐ 45-49 ☐ 50-55 ☐ 55-59 ☐ 60-64 ☐ 65-69 ☐ 70+

HIGHEST EDUCATION ☐ H.S. diploma ☐ Vocational training ☐ Associate's ☐ Bachelor's ☐ Master's ☐ Doctorate

WORK STATUS ☐ Employed ☐ Self-employed ☐ Intern ☐ Part-time ☐ Unemployed ☐ Homemaker ☐ Student ☐ Military ☐ Retired ☐ Not able to work ☐ Other

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**WILL YOU HELP US WITH  
OUR DEMOGRAPHICS?**



# STEFFANI WILLIAMS





# Autmow CNY founder is selling time

Alyssa Dearborn

"I'm in a partnership with my husband. I own the company, but my husband's kind of the brains behind the technology," said Steffani Williams, co-founder and owner of Autmow CNY, about how she went into business, "So we decided to start this company because we're busy people and my husband hates mowing the law. It's just one of the chores he can't stand. So after years and years of research into robotic mowing, we decided to purchase a mower for our home."

But the story behind the founding of Autmow began with a relatable incident: the demise of a household appliance.

Four years ago, Steffani and her husband, Kip, returned from a vacation to their Fayetteville home to find that their lawn had become unruly. Her husband, a fireman, was on duty that night, so Steffani volunteered for the mowing chore.

"So I get on our riding lawn mower and I'm going around and I'm mowing the backyard, and it's smoking and making popping noises. It's really not sounding right and I'm like, 'Oh no! I'm breaking the lawn mower!' I texted him and said I'm going to stop mowing," she said.

When he got home, instead of taking a look to see what needed to be fixed on the riding mower, Kip went online and ordered a robotic mower - something he had wanted to do for years.

After seeing how well the robotic lawnmower worked, Steffani was convinced that these lawnmowers could not only be viable business but could help other people who don't have the time or the urgency to constantly be mowing their lawn.

"I looked at him and I said, 'We got to do this. We have to do this for other people. This is unbelievable!'" she continued, "So here's me, 'Absolutely not, it's a terrible idea.' And then he proves me wrong by getting this robotic lawnmower and I'm like, 'Oh man, this is great! We have to tell others! We have to tell all the people!'"

Autmow sells autonomous lawnmowers and robotic lawn equipment with a mission rooted in, according to their website, "a deep-seated frustration with spending endless hours on lawn mowing." The products Steffani and Kip offer at Autmow help customers make maintaining their property easier and, most importantly, help people reclaim their time.

"This has been something that they've been doing in Europe for almost 30 years now. So, we're in the United States, we're a little bit behind," she said when asked about the technology. "The robotic mowers that we like the best are Husqvarna brand. We have other brands, too, but this is the one we bought for our home and then we decided that we wanted to become a dealer. We are the only Husqvarna dealer in our area that specializes only in robotic lawnmowers and handheld battery operated lawncare. That's all we do."

Like other sales positions, Steffani and Kip meet with prospective customers, learn about their needs and try to guide them toward the machine that makes the most sense for their property.

"We're not going to sell them something that isn't the right size, because there's different models that do different things," Steffani said. "They have different cutting heights; some can handle slopes and hills. So it's a very customizable experience when somebody buys a mower from us."

When asked about the benefits to the products that Autmow sells, she emphasized that these machines help people reclaim their time from a chore that few people look forward to doing each week.

"You get your time back. My husband was mowing our lawn, it was taking him three hours a week, sometimes six. Right now, the way you think about mowing your lawn, you think, 'Oh, I've got two hours right now on this Tuesday night after work.' And you schedule it, watch the weather... It's always a pain in the neck because you never have enough time to get everything done," she said. "So, the biggest benefit to having a robotic mower, I would say, is getting your time back. I mean, it is a huge time saver." Kip, she said, was mowing at least 12 hours a month - even more when the grass was growing quickly. Now, his lawn care time is devoted only to trimming the areas the robotic mower can't reach, which takes him less than an hour a month.

Going into business selling this technology was a new frontier for Steffani and Kip. Neither expected to like the lawnmower so much that they would want to sell them to other people. When asked if she had advice for women thinking about becoming entrepreneurs, she said, "I am, by nature, super risk averse. So it was terrifying, very terrifying, to start a business and to kind of stick my neck out there. But I really feel like you sometimes have to take a chance. You have to take a risk and if something feels right you just kind of have to go for it," she said. "I was terrified. I mean, we did have to take out loans and financing and different things to be able to kick this off and it was scary. But, you know, you sometimes just have to take a leap of faith. I believe very passionately in what we're doing, too. But if you believe really passionately about what you're doing or whatever it is you're selling, I think you can get people to come on board."

Steffani believes that these products not only help save people valuable time, they also have the real power to help people. Whether a robotic mower is bought to help someone avoid painful allergies caused by lawn work, or help another person overcome serious mobility issues, or even help someone make more time for the people they love, Steffani believes that these products can positively impact people's everyday lives.

"I know it sounds like you can't have a heartwarming story with a lawnmower, but you can. And it means a lot to me that we're helping people," she said. "We're helping people get their time back, we're helping people who can't now, we're helping people who have a difficult situation or a difficult lawn. That's really what drives me to do this for people." SWM



# DARLENE HACKWORTH



# Engineering a successful career

Janelle Davis

Since following a STEM path encouraged by her 11th-grade teacher, Darlene Hackworth has had many prominent careers in the engineering field. She is currently the engineering project manager at Byrne Dairy, the third generation, family-owned company that has been in the dairy business since 1933.

"From the very beginning of my career, I've been fortunate. You could say at one time it was a male-dominated role, but even during my education, there were a lot more women sitting in the classroom than men. I was fortunate to have a job where I was respected, mentored, and coached along the way." She never felt out of place, she said, despite being in a male-dominated field.

Darlene's engineering journey was the result of a lot of hard work. "I went to school in Massachusetts. My first job was in Columbus, Ohio. I worked for Metcalf and Eddy for about a year and a half," she said. "That's when Corning pulled me back to New York."

Fortunate to have a career that she loves, Darlene learned that working in a challenging position while being a mother comes with sacrifices. When she first started at Corning, she was single. She eventually got married and had her first son. Still, her job commitment lived on.

Darlene explained that after 9/11, the telecom industry took a big hit. She wanted to help make a difference, so she commuted over an hour to work because they needed "all hands on deck." As a result of the commute and Darlene's dedication, she was often late picking up her son from daycare. She remembered, "After seeing the look on my son's face from being the last one picked up, I realized I never wanted to see that look again."

When school began, Darlene's son was identified as being nine months delayed in his fine motor skills and needed occupational therapy. This is when she knew she had to make a change. "When I heard 'nine months delayed,' I was on a project site in Pennsylvania," she explained. "It made me realize that I was a 'weekend mom.' It touched me to my core."

Back then, it was about "breaking the glass ceiling," she said, but despite moving to advance in her profession she knew she had to be more present for her son. So after 11 years, Hackworth voluntarily resigned from Corning, whom she says was very generous in her resignation. "My resignation led me to find a new position closer to home," she said. "And that was in Ithaca, at Cornell."

After 20 years at Cornell, Hackworth retired. "After I retired from Cornell, I started my own engineering company, but it was

challenging to take on all of the roles as a business owner, for example, marketing and accounting," she said. "So, I decided to look for another engineering job."

Darlene saw an ad posted by Byrne Dairy for an engineering project manager position. She applied for the position on a Sunday night and Monday morning she received an email in response, beginning her 14-month appointment at Byrne Dairy. At Byrne Dairy, she joins Allison Maxwell as the only two female engineers in the 13-person engineering department. She explained that she is living in the world of engineering project management. "I have a certified professional engineer license, but I am currently managing engineering projects. I do more designing, there's a difference. I'm in a different role than I have been in the past."

The engineering department that she is a part of is the glue that helps keep Byrne's production going. "Typically, I work with a lead person or process engineer on a capital project. I help lead that project from initiation to close out." She moves projects forward by identifying the best way to deliver the project for success. "I'm so happy to be a part of that. Everyone does really awesome, tremendous, and phenomenal work with both their hands and their brains," she said.

Darlene has always been a mentor to those under her. She supported her past replacement at Cornell by offering empowering words of advice and telling her that she was qualified for the job and that she could do it. And she credits the many mentors and coaches that shaped her success as an engineer.

Even with decades of experience, in her current role at Byrne Dairy she continues to grow through mentors like Ken Carter who grew up in her same community. "I work with a great bunch of folks. I'm happy to be able to come in on the tail end of Ken who has been here for 50 years," she said. "I love being a part of his world. He's a remarkable person. I fully respect him and his experience at Byrne Dairy."

Darlene provides value for Byrne Dairy, but she also finds value for herself. "I love that every day is different. While some days are a little more complacent, some are unexpected and force me to think outside the box," she said. It is the days that provide the challenges that she enjoys the most.

What advice would she give other women who are entering a non-traditional field, or who are mothers? "Follow your heart because your heart will lead you to your truth." SWM



## JANICE ABDO ROTT





# Connecting home and garden

Jason Klaiber

When Janice Abdo-Rott and her husband, John, purchased the village of Manlius' historic train depot in 2012, timeworn remnants of the former stop along the Syracuse and Chenango Valley Railroad were even more readily apparent.

At that point, there was still the railway's boarding platform on the east side of the building, and amid the renovating process, during which a hill on the premises was knocked back, the couple came across buried medicine, beer and ink bottles. While removing the sheetrock from the depot's ceilings to get to the original wood hidden underneath, the passage of years was further shown by the discovery of a bill of lading dated circa 1910—something the two held onto as a neat keepsake.

Built in 1871, the station is the last still standing on the once-thriving, approximately 45-mile branch line's route, which was absorbed by the New York Central Railroad system. Trains making their way from Syracuse to Earlville came to a halt at the depot until 1956, about a decade before the entire Chenango railway line became defunct. In tearing away the drop ceiling and commercial carpeting, the old structure that Janice described as "utilitarian," and which had gone on to house small offices over time, was restored to the quaint charm it had in the 19th century as a train station.

A few years after the couple's purchase came the opening there of The Station 603, a business named as such because the building is located at 603 E. Seneca St., an address within walking distance of the Manlius Village Centre. Making use of the slogan "Where home meets the garden," the shop specializes in decor that gives a personalized touch to either the interior or exterior of one's home.

As the founder and owner of The Station 603, Janice Abdo-Rott has filled the shelves with a little something for everyone, including crocheted nesting bowls, wall hangings, luxury soy candles of different scents, colorful flower pots, cookbooks, mugs, pillows, birdhouses, greeting cards, water-activated lanterns, and bars of soap and lip balm made from goat milk. The Station's selection changes through the seasons, Janice said, with stacks of pumpkins brought in as autumn sets in and Christmas-themed tree ornaments and other holiday decorations displayed as winter looms closer.

What was once a station master's window is now a secondary entryway that looks out onto a plant nursery where the train tracks used to be. There, visitors will find annuals, perennials and shrubbery alongside other furnishings for the outdoors. Janice said she aims to exhibit what she has available in an interesting, "eye-catching" way that isn't too overwhelming to take in, just as any good curator would. After all, she is a landscape designer by trade, and as a direct result of that background, her vision for the layout of the shop is constantly changing.

"I probably will stop designing this place only when I sell it," she said. "I'm always looking to make it better and better."

After starting up The Station 603, Janice incorporated into the operation the landscape design company she began building in 1984, Creative Landscapes, personally running both businesses from the same East Seneca Street location. Creative Landscapes, which she is no longer in operation, was involved in the placement of hardscapes, outdoor fireplaces, planting beds, lighting fixtures and poolscape on people's properties from the conception and planning stage to

installation and maintenance. As she lets The Station take up an even greater amount of her time now, she still does consultation work for those looking to spruce up their land, just without the installation part.

"I still get a lot of people that show up when I'm out in the nursery and they're bringing me pictures of their homes and asking me questions, and I'm telling them things that could go in certain spots," she said. "I'm still meeting with people and designing for them as if I still had a landscaping company in that respect, but I'm not sending crews out into the field anymore."

Apart from being partners in life, Janice said she's also grateful for the day-to-day assistance her husband, John Rott, happily gives her at The Station 603 on the business end. "I couldn't do this without him," she said. "I would have something, but it wouldn't look like this. This is a both-of-us effort."

John, a banker by day and carpenter by night, said he and Janice both have creative sides that they recognize in each other, allowing them to remain on the same page and work hand in hand. "She can look at something and see what it can be and she'll communicate that to me," he said. "Then we work through how to get it there."

In addition to stocking the store with gifts galore, Janice, who also lives in Manlius, makes it a priority to support local Central New York businesses when she can by putting their products out for customers. A charter member and one-time vice president of Manlius' original chamber of commerce, Janice was also the director of her village's parks and recreation department before becoming a Manlius trustee, a position she has held since 2009.

In that role, she has overseen the \$1.5 million HVAC, windows and doors project for the village center as well as the restructuring of the village's trash system, the creation of more municipal parking and improvements to the swan pond that attracts people daily from all over the area. She said her main focus is on boosting the overall quality of life for residents and helping the village look better. She has also been deputy mayor and a liaison to both the village of Manlius' parks and rec department and its department of public works.

With the warmer-weather months in view, Abdo-Rott said she looks forward to having people cross the street out of curiosity after visiting The Yard, the open-air hub at 604 E. Seneca that comprises restaurants, pavilions for live music, and what it calls container shops. She said she appreciates the "lovely feedback" The Station gets and that people often tell her they frequently drive by and become intrigued enough to eventually stop in, adding that her business relies largely on word of mouth.

"It's been wonderful to be part of the village of Manlius and to have the shop, and I've had a lot of loyal people that come in here," she said. "When you walk into these small shops, it's so important because one day they might not be there. If you love having these unique, niche places in your area, you have to support them."

While offering coffee and Middle Eastern snacks like hummus to take outside to the bistro tables she'll have set up, Janice said she also intends to have a side greenhouse constructed and that she wants to host more painting and gardening workshops at The Station 603 to provide yet another reason to stop by. The Station 603 is currently open Wednesday through Friday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. with additional hours depending on the season. *SWM*



## Bousquet Holstein names Madden new chief of operations



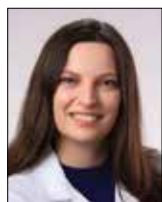
Alicia Madden

Alicia Madden has assumed administrative leadership of the 52-attorney law firm and will oversee all operating departments. She will work closely with the firm's Board of Managers on strategic and tactical planning and implementation, driving continued growth across the firm's two offices. Her expertise lies in financial and capital planning, data analytics, and strategic planning, as well as project and operations management.

Madden comes to the firm with over a decade of financial and budgetary experience in both the public and private sectors. She has held executive positions in higher education and government, most recently streamlining financial processes and managing strategic initiatives at Syracuse University. Before her position at S.U., she was the director of financial operations for the City of Syracuse, where she played an instrumental role managing the city's budget and spending during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She holds a master's in public administration (MPA) from Syracuse University and earned a bachelor's degree from Marist College where she graduated cum laude. Madden currently serves on the board of directors of the Greater Strathmore Neighborhood Association.

## Joins St. Joseph's Physicians as a nocturnal hospitalist



Dr. Sara Johnson

St. Joseph's Physicians has announced Dr. Sara Johnson has joined St. Joseph's Health Hospital as a nocturnal hospitalist. Board certified in internal medicine, Dr. Johnson trained in California at a county hospital with the second busiest ER and a diverse, medically complex patient population.

In her new role, Dr. Johnson oversees the admittance and care of medically complex patients with a wide variety of diseases and degree of acuity during the overnight hours. She brings to the role more than three years' experience in-patient care including ICU, emergency medicine and perioperative/surgical settings.

Dr. Johnson received her medical degree from St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada and completed her internal medicine residency at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, CA. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in integrative physiology with a minor in Spanish.

## Named chief lending officer at AmeriCU



Stephanie McGuire

Stephanie McGuire has become a knowledgeable expert in the credit union industry with a remarkable career spanning 37 years in diverse aspects of lending, complemented by 20 years of regional branch administration. Prior to her promotion, Stephanie was AmeriCU's senior vice president of lending.

As an active member of the CUNA Lending Council and the American Mortgage Association, she has played a crucial role in shaping lending strategies and solutions.

Beyond the credit union, McGuire is deeply committed to community involvement, contributing as a Board Member for the United Way of Jefferson County, the Watertown Local Development Corporation where she served as president and board member, and the Greater Watertown Chamber of Commerce. McGuire is a dedicated community leader, making a positive impact in New York and beyond.

## Moore hired at FMF&E CPAs



Angel Moore

The partner group at Firley, Moran, Freer, and Eassa CPA, P.C. (FMF&E) has announced the addition of Angel Moore to the administrative team. Angel is a graduate of SUNY Morrisville and has formerly worked for D'Arcangelo & Company for six years. Angel joins the FMF&E CPA, P.C. team as the newest assurance administrative specialist where her work will focus on supporting our clients and service team members.

## MOST's Stewart honored by museum association



Emily Stewart, PhD

The Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology is proud to announce that Emily Stewart, PhD, senior director of education & curation, was named winner of the Individual Achievement Award from the Museum Association of New York's annual Awards of Distinction program. The awards program celebrates unique leadership, dedicated community service, transformational visitor experiences, community engagement, and innovative programs that use collections and resources to support museums.

Stewart joined the MOST in 2017 and applied her background as an interdisciplinary historian to better connect museum guests to science and technology. Now serving as the senior director of education & curation, she says, "I spend all day thinking about how people engage with technology in their everyday lives." She put her energy into developing and growing the museum's mission as an educational institution. Her philosophy is that "inclusion isn't just about saying the doors are open to everyone and hoping more diverse people come; it's about going out and targeting specific groups and proactively making space for opportunities."

Because Syracuse has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, Emily spearheaded several new programs that are making a positive impact. Future Innovators focuses on Black, Indigenous, and students of color to get them interested in STEM careers. One Saturday each month, local BIPOC STEM professionals conduct hands-on sessions with kids and mentor them on succeeding in technology careers. There is no cost to participate, and it includes free museum admission for students and their families, a healthy snack, and bus passes to remove transportation barriers. Similarly, the Future Women in STEM program connects middle school girls with female STEM professionals in a different field each month.

## Solvay Bank Announces New Hires



Lydia Coker

Solvay Bank, the oldest community bank established in Onondaga County, has announced the recent new hires Lydia Coker and Sabrina Smith.

Coker recently joined Solvay Bank as a banking associate. Lydia started her career in banking as a sales and service representative at First Citizens Bank. Lydia is continuing her studies remotely at the University of South Carolina where she is working toward obtaining her management degree. She has previous volunteer experience with an organization named A. Bevy and has helped paint schools in Guatemala.



Sabrina Smith

Smith joined the Baldwinsville Office as a banking associate. Sabrina has worked in the customer service industry for years with experience in management at McDonald's and Fastrac. She has previously helped raise money for Disabled American Vets and Baldwinsville Food Pantry. Sabrina graduated from C.W. Baker High School in 2010.

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March 6

### Transforming Ourselves: Real Self-Care with Dr. Shamelle, PhD

**What:** Join the WBOC to network and learn from a panel of female professionals about prioritizing your well-being and cultivating a relationship with yourself.

**Where:** Collegian Hotel and Suites, 1060 E. Genesee St., Syracuse.

**When:** 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

**Info:** [www.wboconnection.org](http://www.wboconnection.org)



March 8

### The SAMMYS

**What:** Join the annual celebration of the local Syracuse music scene. Each year, hundreds of local musicians and members of the music community attend the show and cheer on friends.

**Where:** The Palace Theater, 2384 James St., Eastwood.

**When:** 7 p.m.

**Info:** \$25-\$30. <http://www.syracuseareamusic.com/tickets/>



March 8

### CNY Women's Summit

**What:** Hosted by CNY Women's Network, women in business will come together to explore, inspire and embrace leadership excellence. The CNY Women's Summit acts as a catalyst for business owners in search of fresh talent, recent graduates in need of professional guidance and everyone navigating the diverse stages of their careers.

**Where:** The OnCenter, 800 State St., Syracuse.

**Info:** <https://mailchi.mp/89510eef1ce2/cnywsummit>



March 9

### MACNY's Future Women in STEM Series: Drones

**What:** Girls in grades 6-8 are invited to join Air Upstate to learn from female professionals about high-tech careers.

**Where:** The MOST, 500 S. Franklin St., Syracuse.

**When:** 10 a.m.

**Info:** Free museum admission for the attending girls and their families.



Through March 16

### Muslims in America: Syracuse Edition

**What:** Photographer Mahtab Hussain creates a body of work about the Muslim experience in America, exploring identity, heritage and displacement. View his photography from his visit in Syracuse.

**Where:** ArtRage Gallery, 505 Hawley Ave, Syracuse.



March 16

### St Patrick's Day Parade Party

**What:** Enjoy Irish music and dancers, food, drinks and good craic at Sky Armory.

**Where:** 351 S. Clinton St., Syracuse

**When:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Tickets:** [www.eventbrite.com/e/st-patricks-day-parade-party-tickets-837695468697?aff=oddtcreator](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/st-patricks-day-parade-party-tickets-837695468697?aff=oddtcreator)



March 19

### Friends of the Central Library Presents Author Maria Hinojosa

**What:** Hinojosa's nearly 30-year career as an award-winning journalist includes reporting for PBS, CBS, WNBC, CNN and NPR. Her new book, *Once I was You: a Memoir of Love and Hate in a Torn America*, tells the story of immigration in America.

**Where:** Civic Center's Crouse Hinds Theater, 421 Montgomery St., Syracuse.

**When:** 7:30 p.m.

**Info:** Tickets available at the Solvay Box Office, by calling 315-435-2121, or online at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).



March 23

### Golden Girls Live and in Color

**What:** Four fabulous drag queens will take the stage and reenact the beloved 1980s sitcom *The Golden Girls*. Be immersed in the hilarious antics of Dorothy, Blanche, Rose and Sophia with a musical performance from each character.

**Where:** The Palace Theater, 2384 James St., Eastwood.

**When:** 7:30 p.m.

**Info:** \$28.52 per ticket. <https://bit.ly/goldengirlsliveandincoloritx>



March 24

### 11th Annual Syracuse Half Marathon

**What:** Known as one of the best organized half marathons in the U.S., join a run through 13.1 miles of Syracuse neighborhoods. The half marathon takes pride in supporting several local charities.

**When:** 7:53 a.m.

**Info:** Register at [www.syracusehalf.com](http://www.syracusehalf.com)



March 30

### Jazz on the Rocks

**What:** Enjoy the sweet sounds of The Mix Tapes. Make reservations on OpenTable.

**Where:** The Tasting Room, 330 S. Salina St., Syracuse.



April 3

### Women and Wine Networking Collaboration

**What:** WBOC (Women Business Opportunity Connections) invites the public to participate in an engaging evening of networking with various women's groups in the Syracuse area. Come learn more about:



**Syracuse Women Magazine** - The No.1 award-winning upscale magazine targeted specifically for Central New York's professional, community-oriented women.



**WISE** - Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship - Syracuse's women's business center dedicated to empowering CNY's women entrepreneurs in all stages of business.



**Women's Opportunity Center** - A non-profit that provides work-readiness programs for those facing barriers to gaining or retaining employment.



**WBOC** - Women Business Opportunity Connections - The premier membership group in CNY that supports and advances the success of women in business.

Brief presentations will be provided by each group and will be followed with an opportunity for networking with women leaders and business owners in the area.

**Where:** The Collegian Hotel and Suites, 1060 E Genesee St., Syracuse.

**When:** 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

**Info:** Pre-registration is highly encouraged at <http://www.wboconnection.org/>



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Editorial, Syracuse.com, April 16, 2023

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