

BUSINESS RECOGNITION 2017



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A recent shot of the St. Johnsbury Academy campus taken by a drone.

175 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... Local Education In An Age Of Globalization

BY TAYLOR REED
 Staff Writer

John Tyler was President. The country featured only 26 states. Its population was 17 million people.

It would be nearly 20 years before the Confederacy fired its first shot on Fort Sumter, igniting the American Civil War.

It was 1842, 175 years ago. And the private St. Johnsbury Academy, like The Citadel and The University of Notre Dame, opened for classes.

Consistency is the school's key to longevity, said Academy Headmaster Tom Lovett.

"Our mission has not changed much since 1842 in that we are dedicated to serving local youth, to teaching a comprehensive and relevant curriculum, to preparing hearts and characters as well as minds, and striving to form an educated, responsible and active citizenry empowered to lead the world's democracies," said Headmaster Tom Lovett.

The key to consistency is the school's private status, Lovett said. The school is managed by a board of directors and accepts tuition for local teenagers and for boarding students from abroad.

"Our independent governance ensures institutional stability, and our tradition of 'Those who go before take care of those to come after' has resulted in a very generous alumni body," Lovett said. "Our independent financing through entrepreneurial programs and other private funds has helped us stay in business even in tough times."

Despite rock-solid consistency, Academy educational focuses periodically shift. For example, the school under former Headmaster Bernier Mayo, who died last year, successfully enlarged its Advanced Placement offerings.

Now, globalization is the word, Lovett said.

"What has changed within the last decade is our role in global education as a renowned international boarding school and as a partner with the founding of St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju, we have established a global presence and send students all over the world," Lovett said. "The Academy has always seen itself as an educational leader, and we continue to play a leading role among independent schools and in the educational landscape of New England."

St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju is on Jeju Province in South Korea.

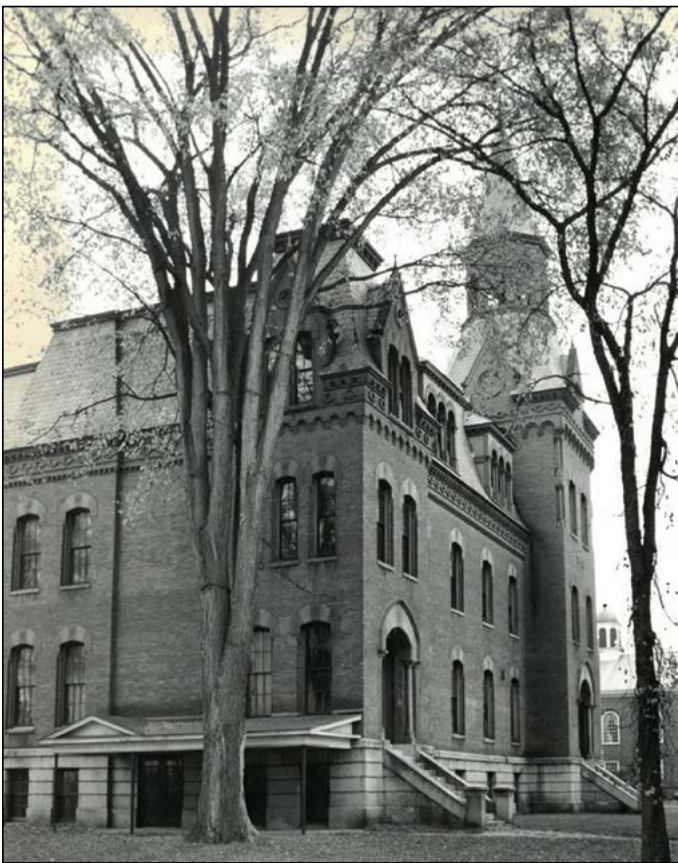
Academics aside, the Academy's benefit to St. Johnsbury is measurable by the dollar. The school in 2012 contracted economist Art Woolf for an impact assessment.

It determined that the Academy annually contributes more than \$700,000 to the community via volunteer efforts, facilities use, monetary contributions, and operation of the St. Johnsbury Recreation Department for only \$10,000 annually to the town.

"[Woolf] stated the Academy employs 283 workers, one out of every 20 workers in St. Johnsbury; pays \$11.2 million in wag-



A group of students with E. H. Twombly, headmaster from 1951 to 1964.



A historic photo of North Hall with Fuller Hall in the distance from 1956.

"I think St. Johnsbury Academy is part of the nucleus of this entire town. St. Johnsbury would not be what it is today without St. Johnsbury Academy."

- Selectman Jeff Moore

es, \$1 out of every \$20 earned in the town; generates more than \$12 million in export earnings for the local economy, and has a multiplier effect that leads to an additional 135 jobs and an additional \$4.9 million of income in Caledonia County," Lovett said.

Jeff Moore, chairman of the St. Johnsbury Board of Selectmen, said the Academy's impact is immeasurable. It transcends finances to represent the very fabric of St. Johnsbury, he said.

"I think St. Johnsbury Academy is part of the nucleus of this entire town," Moore said. "St. Johnsbury would not be what it is today without St. Johnsbury Academy."

St. Johnsbury Academy was

founded by Erastus, Thaddeus and Joseph Fairbanks. The school's mission was to provide "intellectual, moral, and religious training for their own children and the children of the community."

In 1873 it reincorporated to widen educational opportunities to include technical training in addition to college preparation.

"With this change the founders created a school that was unique among New England academies, greatly changing the character of the school, and enabling it to serve the educational needs of St. Johnsbury and the surrounding communities," according to the school's website.

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Drama coach Miss May Campbell directed the play 'The Patched Coat' performed by the senior class in 1947.

150 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... Past, Present & Future Of Education

BY AMY ASH NIXON
Staff Writer

LYNDON CENTER - This is a very big year for Lyndon Institute: 2017 marks the independent high school's sesquicentennial.

On Nov. 20 of 1867, LI's charter was signed. The LI community will be celebrating the anniversary all year, according to spokeswoman Gloria Bruce.

It was founded as The Lyndon Literary and Biblical Institution and was made up of clergymen of the Freewill Baptist denomination from around the area, along with other prominent citizens.

In its August 1870 catalog, the first term for the school, board with local families was advertised for \$3.25, including the use of a room and washing.

About 50 pupils were in attendance for the first term, according to the school's history.

The school hit financial trouble in 1881, when the fall term had to be suspended, leading to a Lyndon man Dudley Hall, Esq. creating the school's first endowment.

Two years later, Summer Thompson bought the school for the liens upon it. He added a provision that the school be maintained on a non-sectarian basis; his conditions were accepted and the school opened in the fall of 1883.

T.N. Vail, a trustee for many years, and generous benefactor who managed the school, purchased property in the middle of the village and developed the campus between 1911 and 1915.

The school began its first baseball team in 1920, and in 1921, LI was the Vermont State Football Champions.

It was not until May 5, 1923 that the school legally changed its name to Lyndon Institute.

The campus served as home to the Lyndon Commercial College from 1886 and in 1910, Theodore Newton Vail, the first president of New England Telephone Company and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) founded the Vermont School of Agriculture on the campus.

Vail served on the Board of Trustees for twenty years. As chairman, he saved the institution from financial ruin in 1912.

Elmer Darling also served as president of the Lyndon Institute's Board of Trustees.

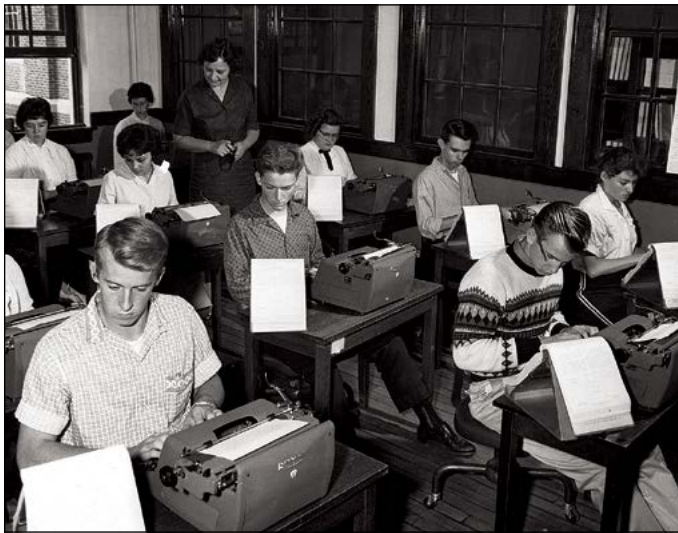
When the Institute's main building was completely destroyed by fire in 1922, Darling led a successful campaign to raise funds to replace the building.

In 1923, the school was officially renamed Lyndon Institute.

From 1923 to 1951, the Institute provided both secondary and post-secondary educational programs to area students. In 1951, the post-secondary programs moved to the newly founded Lyndon State College.

In 1931, local benefactor Elmer Darling died and left two funds to the school, one in memory of his sister Louise, the other in memory of his brother, Scott.

The school has long seen investment from local citizens, and has flourished because of its community support, while it has also



The 'computer' age of 1960 consisted of manual typewriters shown here with the instructor, Mrs. Winifred King.

reached out to the world to fill its dorm program, today drawing students from around the nation and the globe.

Celebrating 2017
Headmaster Daren Houck, in the fall-winter magazine the school produced, said, "I am honored to be the Lyndon Institute Headmaster who celebrates this historic event with all of you. But these celebrations will not just be about the past. No; it is also our duty - all of us call Lyndon Institute our school, our alma mater and our vocation - to ensure that we too invest in our school as our forefathers and mothers did."

Kicking off formally on Jan. 27 with the LI annual J Term, there will be courses highlighting the school's history and unique community, and an exhibition night will begin the showcasing of LI's history and place in the community and the towns it serves.

Gillian Sewake, one of the two co-chairs of the LI 150th Celebration Committee with Melissa Hall, said the school will host a Past, Present & Future Ball on Nov. 4, the actual anniversary date. It will be open to the community, with vintage-inspired costumes welcome and encouraged.

Bruce said the staff involved in planning the anniversary events have been scouring the museum in the Thompson Cottage, which overflows with historic archives, photos,

the holiday break, the school was dressed up for the start of the 150th celebration, said Bruce, complete with huge blown-up vintage photos as art installations, chosen from the photography archives. The theme of the year-long celebration is "Reaching For The Stars," she said.

"We really are invested in the community," said Bruce, saying a mailing was going out to all the towns in the region inviting people to be part of the many events this year. "LI feels very much a part of the community as a whole."

LI's Roots
According to a special newspaper insert published for the school's 100th anniversary in 1967, LI was "founded with a religious denomination acting as an agency."

The yearly meeting of the Freewill Baptist denomination led to the church deciding to found a school in 1855, and they appointed a committee to get to work on that goal.

The committee chose the present site for the school and by 1867 the school charter was signed.

A Boston architect, George Ropes, was hired on Nov. 22, 1869, to plan the new school on the 10-acre site in Lyndon Center. By February of 1870, "voting continued on matters of materials and it was decided that the window caps of the Institution building be arched and constructed of brick. "On July 26, 1870, the Executive Committee was instructed to secure a board of instruction, and that the school be opened the coming fall."

At the annual meeting in July, 1872, the incorporators and trustees convened for the first time in the chapel at LI, where creating a library for the school was one of the main orders of business.

The school's mission, summed up in its newspaper supplement in 1967, would ring much the same today, "We feel that these goals can best be achieved by providing a balanced program in the educational and vocational fields, in extracurricular and athletic programs, and in shared living experiences. With this total approach, we hope to provide each student with his right and privilege: an educational opportunity designed to meet his needs."

More information on the year-long celebration of LI's 150th anniversary can be seen online at www.LyndonInstitute.org/150.



graduation gowns, sporting outfits, band uniforms and more, culling the extensive collection for inspiration.

One of the ways the school was inspired to mark its anniversary is by having a vintage-inspired collection of clothing created, which will debut this month, said Bruce. When students came back from

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PHOTO BY LEAH CAREY

Mark (left) and Todd Smith (right) are the third and fourth generations of the Smith family to head the Caledonian-Record.

180 YEARS IN BUSINESS...

The Caledonian-Record Remains Independent

BY LEAH CAREY
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — On Aug. 8, 2017, The Caledonian-Record will celebrate the 180th anniversary of its first printing.

First, some history

In 180 years, the Caledonian has had only nine editor/publishers.

Albert G. Chadwick began the newspaper as a weekly called the St. Johnsbury Caledonian. Under Chadwick's editorship, the masthead on every edition read: "Here shall the Press the People's rights maintain, Unawed by the influence and unbribed by gain; Here patriot Truth her glorious precepts draw, Pledged to Religion, Liberty and Law."

From 1855 to 1910, the Stone family owned the newspaper under editors Charles M. Stone and his son Arthur Stone. Walter J. Bigelow purchased the paper in 1910 and held it until 1918 when he sold it to William Dudley Pelley. Under Bigelow, on Sept. 6, 1918 the paper became a daily. Pelley was at the helm for only a year before turning it over to Herbert A. Smith.

Smith also purchased the Barton Record and 1919 marked the merging of the St. Johnsbury Caledonian and Barton Record into the Caledonian-Record.

The paper has remained in the Smith family for the past 93 years under the leadership of four publishers: Herbert A. Smith, Herbert G. Smith, Mark Smith, and present publisher, Todd Smith.

The current location on Federal Street in St. Johnsbury was built in 1949. Mark Smith remembers Labor Day weekend of that year when they moved from their location at the corner of Eastern Avenue and Main Street. "They went to press early Saturday morning [on Main Street], then immediately started ripping everything down and went to press Tuesday at 6 p.m. with the same equipment [on Federal Street]."

A family affair

Both Mark Smith and Todd Smith began their newspaper careers before most of us knew what a career was.

"I was born into it," said Mark Smith. "The morning my mother went into labor and called my father, he said he'd be home after they went to press that evening." His father did get home in time to get her to the hospital and Mark began his first paper delivery route at 8 years old.

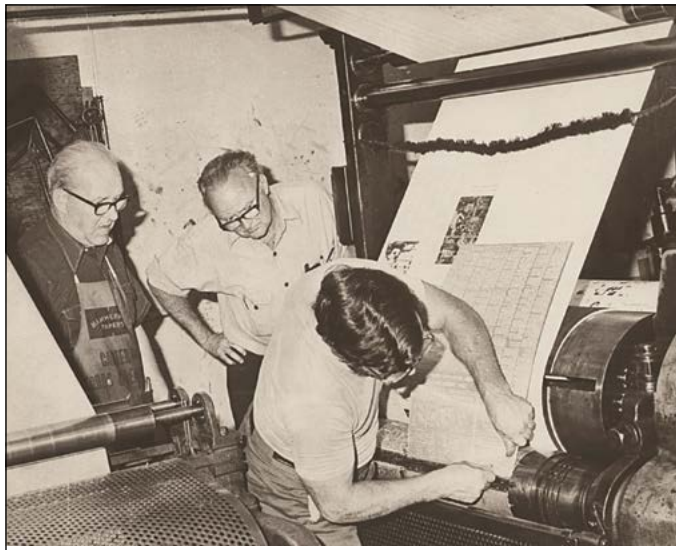
Todd Smith has memories of stuffing inserts into newspapers at age five. "I got a penny a paper. When my dad left the room, the pressmen would stuff a bunch of papers and put them on my pile so that when my dad came back, I was surrounded by huge stacks of papers." The line between family dinner and family business was also blurred. "We had public policy debate-style meals. I definitely think there's something to growing up in a newspaper family and being connected to the community."

Both men grew up learning a particular work ethic. "My father's attitude was don't expect anybody to do anything you haven't done and that you don't know how to do," said Mark. Both Mark and Todd worked their way up through the various departments, learning each of the tasks that goes into



CALEDONIAN-RECORD FILE PHOTO

Then-Caledonian assistant publisher Mark Smith sips coffee while watching over the linotype machines in the newspaper's production area in the spring of 1978. The space now serves as the newspaper's newsroom. Below: Then-publisher Gordon Smith, center, watches pressman John Brosseau load one of the first Napp plastic plates on the press in August 1978.



creating a complete newspaper.

The intersection of technology and theory

The work ethic has never changed, but the way they get work done has changed significantly in the last 25 years.

"Technology totally changed how we do things ... A newspaper is a tangible object and less than a decade from now people won't have a need for that," said Todd. "But in a democratic society there has to be a future for objective third party content providers."

His father Mark agrees. "News-papers have a future, but you have to adapt from the concept of newspaper to being an information provider and get customers to recognize the importance of local information." He notes that while the younger generation wants things in digital format, that's simply a change in the method of delivery.

"It bothers me no end that politicians would love to see the death of the newspaper. There'd be no one there to challenge what they're doing. That's being done by local newspapers and television stations. When someone stands up and challenges their right to go into executive session, who do you think that is?"

The march of technology affected how quickly the younger Smith came to the helm, according to the elder Smith. "I gave Todd way more responsibility much quicker than I got from my father," said

Mark. "It's because we went from one generation to the next with very few changes in technology. Now there are technology changes that I can't keep pace with."

"It's pretty unusual to be my age and running a daily newspaper network," Todd added. "That only happens in a family newspaper."

An independent local source

When asked how the newspaper stays truly independent in a local community, Mark pulls out 1967 and 1994 police log clippings that he keeps in his desk. They chronicle his and Todd's own youthful brushes with the law. Do you really think that if we don't protect members of our own family that we're going to keep something else out of the paper? he mused.

"The only thing we have to sell is that we're honest about what we do and we play no favorites. It doesn't matter if you don't buy a paper or you're our biggest advertiser. Our integrity is our only guarantee."

As people transition from getting their news on newsprint to screens, Todd is confident that the Caledonian-Record suite of papers can stay ahead of the curve. "The future will be an amalgamation of different end use receivers: phone, tablet, desktop, streaming on your television set, or a technology we don't know yet. We're going to be there. We're in a good position to meet the challenges that technology poses."

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PHOTO BY TODD WELLINGTON

The Vianor Tire & Service Center on Memorial Drive in St. Johnsbury.

120 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... Vianor Spells Customer Service

BY TODD WELLINGTON
 Staff Writer

The Vianor Tire & Service Center on 1836 Memorial Drive in St. Johnsbury Center has long been changing tires and performing vehicle maintenance at its tire showroom and repair shop facility next to the Green Mountain Mall.

Store manager Kip Doyon says it's no mystery what the main ingredient and winning formula are.

"Customer service," said Doyon while the mechanical sound of high speed wrenches whir in the nearby service bays. "That's the first priority. Good service generates repeat business."

He then moves to work the counter in the tire showroom section of the building which stands out as a landmark along Route 5 due to its distinctive curved facade. It includes a customer waiting area and extensive displays of tires and other products used by Vianor. Doyon moves fast in processing paperwork and dealing with a customers.

"Don't worry about it," he tells one customer with a billing question. "We will get that figured out."

During a break in the action Doyon says it's important that the focus on customer service extends beyond him to all five of his employees. He says it's doubly important when things don't go as expected, because sometimes those situations can present important opportunities to build on the store's relationship with its customers.

"If you turn something negative into a positive and they trust you then the rest of the business of takes care of itself," said Doyon.

Doyon said Vianor bought the store from Goss Tire about a decade ago. He has been store manager for six years after transferring in from the Vianor Store in Montpelier. The St. Johnsbury location has four technicians that operate out of the service bays in the back of the building, which is located between the Green Mountain Mall and the Center Tower gas station on Route 5.

"We supply tires to all makes and models of vehi-

cles," said Doyon. "We provide the service that customers want. We try to do a full maintenance service shop as well. But preventive measures are one of our big focuses. Brakes suspension - routine stuff, like oil changes as well as changing a head-light bulb. Any major stuff - it's based on the comfort of the technician. We try to be a one-stop shop and fulfill what the customers' needs are."

Doyon is a Kingdom guy who grew up in Woodbury and has lived in Walden since the 1980s. He worked his way up from tire technician to mechanic to shop foreman then to assistant manager and finally manager.

Doyon said he tells his employees that creating customer satisfaction is a goal everyone has to be working toward together.

"One thing I always try to stress is the customer is coming here for the service, so as an individual you represent not only the company but yourself," said Doyon. "Remember to treat the customer the way you'd like to be treated and things will work both ways."

According to the company's web site, Vianor Tire & Auto Service sells and installs snow tires, all-weather and all-season tires from manufacturers like Nokian Tyres, Bridgestone, and Firestone at over 1,400 stores in 27 countries.

Their service centers offer everything from performing factory scheduled maintenance, oil changes, suspension work, air conditioner service and transmission flushing to cooling system maintenance, exhaust repair, brake repair and computerized alignments.

Vianor is owned by the Finnish company Nokian Tyres which has company-owned and franchise outlets around the world in countries such as Switzerland, Russia, Norway, Finland and Sweden. Its 12 stores in the United States are located in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York and Massachusetts.

Vianor stores can be found in countries including Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria.



PHOTO BY TODD WELLINGTON

The Vianor Tire & Service Center on Memorial Drive in St. Johnsbury.

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In 1882 George M. Stevens and his son George E. Stevens purchased the Kent Agency which dated back to 1859, thus the tagline still in use today, "Insurance Since 1882." The firm has expanded over the years with acquisitions of agencies such as Langley Agency in Groveton, Kelley-Baker in Littleton, Woolson & Clough in Lisbon, Geo. Noyes in Bethlehem, and Collins Insurance in Colebrook. Today, Geo. M. Stevens has offices in Lancaster, Littleton, Lisbon, and Colebrook. The firm is licensed in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine and is able to serve a wide variety of personal and business insurance clients throughout the region.



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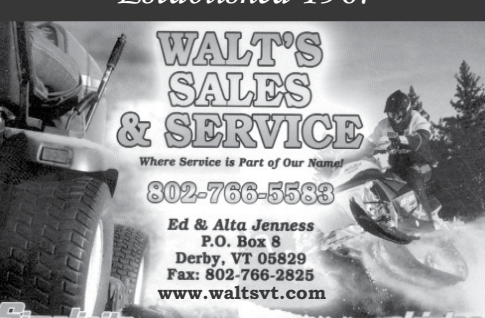
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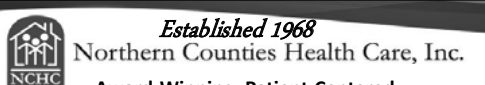
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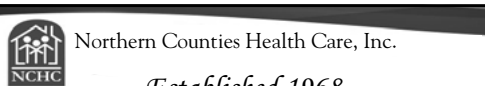
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110 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Community Involvement Helps Littleton Regional Hospital Thrive

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

Littleton Regional Healthcare has grown a lot in 110 years.

But it remains true to its roots.

"What you're really doing at a small community hospital [is] taking care of your friends, your loved ones, and your neighbors," said Warren West, LRH past president from 2006 to 2015.

Littleton Regional might be small when compared to medical facilities elsewhere, but it makes a big impact in the North Country.

LRH now employs about 525, pays about \$37 million in annual salaries and wages, and contributes an estimated \$74 million to the local economy each year.

Beyond its economic impact, LRH is the North Country's care center, where babies are born and adults are screened for wellness, where injuries are diagnosed and diseases are treated.

In 2016, Littleton Regional admitted 1,900 patients and had 10,780 emergency room visits, with private practices on the LRH campus reporting an additional 72,000 patient visits.

Those numbers reflect growth at Littleton Regional.

The hospital began on Cottage Street, where it was located from 1907 to 2001, growing from a small 15-bed facility to a 64-bed complex with a maternity ward, operating room, laboratory, pharmacy, radiology and emergency departments, and more.

Toward the end of the 20th century, LRH had outgrown the old hospital building. So a new hospital was built.

Littleton Regional moved into a state-of-the-art 174,000 square foot facility at 600 St. Johnsbury Road on Jan. 25, 2001.

A three-story, 63,000 square foot Medical Office Building was added in 2010.

One-hundred-and-ten years after it began, Littleton Regional has become the area's health care hub, offering a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services, with nearly 20 private practices on site.

In 2012 the organization changed its name, from Littleton Regional Hospital to Littleton Regional Healthcare, to reflect its transformation into something more than a place where the ill and injured seek treatment. Today LRH is also focused on wellness, healthy living and preventative measures.

"We help to be a partner in their health now, as opposed to them just coming when they're sick," West said.

"We've gone from taking care of an illness after it happens, and taking care of the immediate impact, to being part of a person's life and keeping them well and happy," said current LRH president Nick Braccino.

Moving forward LRH has entered into a four-hospital regional partnership, North Coun-

try Healthcare, in order to tackle the economic challenges of rural health care in northern New Hampshire.

In 2016 four hospitals — Androscoggin Valley Hospital in Berlin, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital in Colebrook, Weeks Medical Center in Lancaster and LRH — entered into a four-year partnership to consolidate administration and purchasing costs in order to bring down health care costs and health insurance premiums.

It was a necessary step for LRH which saw its operating margin shrink from \$2.8 million in fiscal year 2006 to \$104,000 in 2016.

"By putting the four hospitals together, you have a lot larger population that can deal better with the funding mechanisms that are available in health care," said West, now CEO of North Country Healthcare.

"The environment continues to change and we can't survive on our own, so we've joined our forces with the three other North Country hospitals, to make sure we position ourselves to continue to be financially viable."

LRH is also looking to partner with local home health agencies and federally qualified health clinics (Ammonoosuc Community Health Services and Indian Stream) to streamline and improve health care.

Those efforts represent change.

But one constant at Littleton Regional is the auxiliary, which has been around since the beginning, and which in recent years has provided nearly \$30,000 annually to support numerous programs, services and scholarships.

Another constant is the hospital's volunteers, who currently number around 250, and include greeters, shredders, patient visitations, and various types of alternative therapies including art, music and dog therapy.

"They are an indicator of community involvement," West said.

So how is LRH doing at 110? Great, according to Braccino.

One measure of how great, he said, is patient feedback.

He said patients consistently gave the hospital high marks for its quality of care. And one recent patient stood out.

"About two weeks ago, I had a retired New York first responder to [the Sept. 11 terror attacks], a policeman, come in and he felt so great about the care he received, he had to tell somebody about the doctor he saw, the way he was treated, about all the nurses, even the housekeeper," Braccino said. "He said 'I've seen it all and I've never seen a place like this, and I just had to tell you about it.'"

It was a heartwarming story, Braccino said.

And after 110 years it proves that Littleton Regional — no matter how much it grows or changes — remains true to its founding principles.

Said Braccino, "To me it's about caring for people."

70 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Lord's of Littleton

60 Chiswick Avenue, Littleton, New Hampshire
603-444-5336

Owners:

Bob and Glenda Iles

In business since:

1947

Type of business:

Interior design

A brief history of your business:

Lord's of Littleton was started by the family of Roger Lord in 1947. As third owners, Bob and Glenda Iles have grown the business for 36 years.

We prefer to describe our business as a service rather than a retail store. Every sale involves building a relationship with each customer to select the right look for their lifestyle and home. We try to educate the customer as to the type and quality of fabrics, furniture and design. Some designs might not be appropriate for some situations. And we work together until we find just the right one. While the majority of our business is custom upholstery and custom draperies, we do sell and install shades and blinds. We also have a large selection of fabrics and trims from many distributors.

Thank you to all our customers who have supported us over the years.

Bob and Glenda Iles have been operating Lord's of Littleton for the past 36 years.



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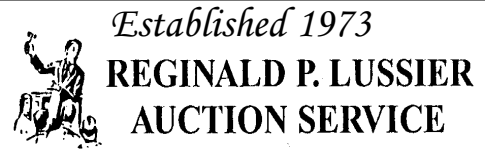
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PHOTO BY PAUL HAYES

Caplan's Army Store has been serving customers for 95 years and at its present location since 1946.

95 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Work, Winter & the Wild Outdoors

BY PAUL HAYES
Staff Writer

For nearly a century, Caplan's Army Store has been where the Northeast Kingdom gears up for work, winter and the wild outdoors.

Need hiking boots? Go to Caplans. Need hip waders? Go to Caplans. Need work pants? Go to Caplans. Need to stay warm, dry, and comfortable in any conditions?

Well, you get the idea. Founded by second-generation Lithuanian immigrant Abraham "Al" Caplan in 1922, the store was born out of the family business: Buying military surplus in Plattsburg, New York, and then selling it on barnstorming tours of the northeastern United States. St. Johnsbury had been a particularly successful stop — so successful, in fact, that Al gave up barnstorming and opened a store.

The business (originally called the U.S. Army Surplus Store) began on Eastern Avenue and relocated twice along Railroad Street, once in 1933 and again to the current location in 1946.

There were tragedies along the way. Al's wife died in the early 1930s and his 19-year-old son, Myron, was killed while serving with the U.S. Marine Corps at the Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945.

A year later, in 1946, the second Caplan's location (a shared space with an IGA supermarket) burned to the ground.

But the business survived. After the fire, Caplan's moved into its existing location, built on land owned by Al.

Nine years later, in 1955, Al was stricken with tuberculosis and his other son, David, returned to take over the business.

David was raised in the store. "It used to be my playground, I'd come down, run through the aisles, and hide downstairs," he said. He was in his third year of a business degree program at American International College in Springfield, Mass., when he came back.

David was a two-sport athlete at St. Johnsbury

Academy, playing football in the fall and outdoor track in the spring, but during the winter, he said, "I didn't do much because my father wanted me in the store."

Now 83, he continues to run Caplans and remains involved in its day-to-day operations.

Working alongside him is store manager Gary Ely, who has worked there for nearly as long — 63 years.

"I love this store, I love the customers, I can hardly wait to get here in the morning and hate to leave at night," said Gary, 79. "I'd rather be here than home. I don't know if that's a good thing."

Over the years the store has weathered many storms: economic recessions, a decline in hunters, and increased competition from the Internet and big box stores.

In response Caplan's has focused on providing superior customer service and offering high-quality warm, weatherproof and rugged clothing and footwear for work and play.

"It's been a struggle but we're still here," David said. "It is getting more difficult with all the online buyers and we have Wal-Marts on three sides of us, it's not as easy as it was."

Added Gary, "We probably try to work harder and serve the customer. We're battling the Internet and different things so we do alterations, extra services for people, and people appreciate that."

"I remember in 1961 or 1962, when Ames opened its second store in St. J., those were the original discount stores, we just sidestepped and carried something they didn't carry, the higher quality items, and you have a following of people that want a higher quality."

So what's the secret to maintaining a business for 95 years?

Hard work, for one thing. And the ability to adapt to any circumstances, Gary said.

"You just kind of roll with the punches," Gary said. "We think we'll be successful this year. We have to buy a month in advance and hope the economy stays stable. But we've rode with the waves for quite a long time."



45 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Lamplighter Lounge

212 Hastings Hill, St. Johnsbury, Vermont
802-748-2205

Owner:

Scott Bijolle

In business since:
1972

Type of business:
Lounge / cabaret

A brief history of your business:

Lamplighter Lounge, located inside Gold Crown Lanes, in St. Johnsbury, was established in 1972 by then-business partner, Jim Heath. The space formerly housed pool tables. Current owner Scott Bijolle purchased Gold Crown Lanes and Lamplighter Lounge in 2012.

After purchasing the bowling center and lounge,

Scott had an idea to make over the lounge to make it more customer-friendly with easier access and viewing. So he went to work. He moved the lockers to the far corner of the center and the wall where the lockers were was opened up with two windows on either side of a service window located in the middle of the wall for customer access from the lanes side. Also, he added counter space on the lanes side with stools for watching the bowling action or just to hang out.

The Lamplighter Lounge is a great place to gather for small company parties or other gatherings or just grab some friends, a drink and do some bowling while here. Gold Crown Lanes and Lamplighter Lounge is a fun family environment.

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An antique sign hangs at Brighton Garage.

PHOTO BY ROBIN SMITH

65 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Small Town Family Business Has Big Impact At Brighton Garage

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

ISLAND POND - You don't have to spend your day wandering from dealership to dealership looking for that right vehicle.

The Goulet family at Brighton Garage on Cross Street has put 65 years of experience together with modern online search tools to make the vehicle hunt work for customers.

Brighton Garage will celebrate 65 years in 2017, and yet for brothers Albert and Craig and their sons, it hardly seems like time is moving at all.

They've found a niche in the world of car sales and service that works for them, and for their customers.

On a recent cold day in early winter, Craig, 71, and Albert, 66, were sending off two very happy customers.

The couple had looked for that special pick-up truck and weren't finding what they wanted in the price range they could afford.

Craig took over. He checked the online searches and found a year-old truck that still had its warranties and mileage of only 15,000 miles.

"They paid \$37,000," Craig said. "It was \$50,000."

People like buying new vehicles, but sticker price gets in the way. Buying these at auction makes everyone happy.

The dealerships have to move last year's vehicles to make room for the new, and these vehicles go to auction. The right place and the right time means a happy customer and another sale for Brighton Garage.

Fifty percent of the vehicles that are sold at Brighton Garage are through GM Finance. It's a good source, he said.

Albert said that they will travel thousands of miles to find the right vehicle. He credits Craig for getting a good idea of what a customer's needs, and then finding it.

"People tell me what they want. They trust you," Craig said.

And they come back for the service too.

The company remains a family business through and through. The brothers' sister Claire does the books and their sons, Jamie and Justin, work there too.

The garage itself still harks back to its original days, from the street-level entry to the second-story garage and offices, and the antique Mobile sign with the big red horse flying over the floor.

The old wood floors are still there under the protective coverings.

In the offices, a pencil drawing of their father and company founder, Al Goulet, hangs among mementos, family photographs, clippings and awards.

Outside, an "Al Goulet" sign emblazons the side of the facade over the gas pumps, where customers get quality service.

The Goulets have been recognized by local newspapers before, and are bemused that they are still operating much as they have been.

Some people still remember the company's days as a Chevrolet dealership, but that ended six years ago. They don't have to carry a line of vehicles on the property, because they source what they need for customers online.

They own downtown properties, and are feeling optimistic about the future in Island Pond. Craig points here and there on the main street, to the hotel that is open again and operating by local owners, to



PHOTO BY ROBIN SMITH

The Goulet family celebrates 65 years in business in Island Pond. Justin, Craig, Albert and Jamie Goulet stand in front of their downtown Brighton business.



PHOTO BY ROBIN SMITH

Brighton Garage is a full-service dealership.

a range of businesses doing fine and several restaurants that are popular.

And snow is back this year, keeping everyone excited about the return of snowmobile tourists again after several years of drought.

60 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Service Credit Union

603-422-7832

Owners:

Members of Service Credit Union

In business since:

1957

Type of business:

Financial institution

A brief history of your business:

In 1957, eight individuals met and founded the Portsmouth Air Force Base Federal Credit Union which eventually became Service Credit Union. The credit union continues to provide affordable credit to soldiers and their families worldwide as well as serving anyone who lives and works in the state of New Hampshire. In 2015, Guardian Angel Credit Union of Lancaster and Berlin became a part of Ser-

vice Credit Union. The credit union has more than 50 branches worldwide including 24/7 contact centers in both New Hampshire and Germany. Year after year, Service Credit Union has demonstrated exceptional growth in member numbers and assets.

Service Credit Union focuses on local member service and community giving while providing all the financial services of a large bank. The credit union prides itself on corporate citizenship, and is dedicated to helping its members achieve financial success but also giving back to the communities. Service Credit Union's focus on member convenience and service is strongly dependent on its state-of-the-art technology and expanded access to products and services.

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Jeff Berwick is the second generation owner of Peacham's Berwick Agency, founded by his father.

60 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Coverage For All

BY AMY ASH NIXON
Staff Writer

PEACHAM - The Berwick Agency, a second-generation local insurance company, is marking its 60th year of serving the community this year.

Jeff Berwick bought the family business from his father, Francis, in 2005, he said.

The agency has long provided coverage for many small, hobby and commercial farms, and personal service is the agency's old-fashioned trademark in a business where online competition has become increasingly fierce.

For example, Berwick sends an agent to every property they insure, to inspect it and meet the owners, so that the property has the proper amount of coverage. These days, a lot of companies just rely on photos they get online and offer a quote without ever stepping foot on the property they offer a quote on, said Berwick.

That's not the way they do business, he said. Berwick, who runs the business with his wife, Cindy, and two other employees, said his father began Berwick Agency back in 1957; the agency has long been affiliated with the Co-operative Insurance Companies but is moving out from under that umbrella this year and will have more flexibility in shopping the entire marketplace and getting customers the best possible insurance at the most competitive rates, he said of what that change will mean.

Berwick offers home, auto, farm and business insurance, not health or life, said Berwick.

In addition to operating the business, and having run the family farm, Berwick has also served on the Peacham Volunteer Fire Department for many years, marking his 30th anniversary as its chief in 2016, he said. The agency insures a number of area fire departments.

The agency insures many homes, farms and businesses, mainly Peacham, Danville, Barnet, Ryegate, Hardwick and St. Johnsbury, in addition to a few other communities in the local area as well as across the river in New Hampshire.

The business has changed through the years, said Berwick.

For example, in the early days when his dad was starting out, he'd drive around and go up to people on their properties to ask them if they had insurance,



that was the way he grew his customer base, said Berwick.

"He'd see a house going up and he'd ask them if they had insurance," he said. "Nobody ever thought about insurance. He'd stop by and tell them, 'You need insurance.'"

The business's goal is to help preserve the wealth of people they work with.

"We're protecting their asset, their equity and their lifestyle and their way of life," said Berwick of the critical importance of full insurance coverage on your property, as well as liability insurance should something happen. "We try to put them back to where they were before a loss occurs," he explained.

Having liability insurance if something happens, like a dog bite, is very important to protect one's assets, said Berwick.

"The biggest thing is the liability part of it, to have a company defend you," and preserve your finances in the event of an unforeseen problem, explained Berwick.

There are limits on policies, of course, and the agency works with each client to determine what is the best policy for their needs.

The old-fashioned, neighborhood service is something Berwick plans to keep doing, even as things become more and more internet-based.

"I don't see how I can insure a house without seeing it, and making sure what's there," he said.

Berwick can offer customers the best of both worlds - they'll do the shopping around to get the most competitive rates in the marketplace, and they'll be right around the corner to help you, and come right out if you need them.

"We still do the person-to-person, hands-on service," said Berwick.



COURTESY PHOTO

The crew at Abbott Rental and Party Store. Pictured from left are Leslie Sonia, Judy Abbott, Velma Coontz, Nate Brown, Ann Hucksohl, AJ Brown.

45 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Abbott Rental & Party Store

502 Union Street, Littleton, New Hampshire
603-444-6557

Owners:

Judy Abbott, Bill & Jean Abbott

Type of business:

Party rentals and sales

A brief history of your business:

In 1972, Bill and Jean Abbott and family were in the auction business, with auctions under a large tent at the former Dalton Grange Hall in Dalton, New Hampshire, by their home. After numerous requests to rent their tent, they bought another tent and started Abbott Rental Service. They soon outgrew the Hall in Dalton and moved to Cottage Street in Littleton, where they rented and sold party goods, along with homeowner tools and equipment. They continued to grow and purchased a building at the corner of Union and Redington Streets, where they expanded to include a service shop and rented larger equipment, and also added delivery trucks to accommodate larger weddings

and events. With the party rental side of the business thriving, they made the hard decision to concentrate solely on that. They purchased a church adjacent to their business and opened the present rental showroom and retail area.

We are the largest party rental supplier in northern New Hampshire and Vermont. Whether you are planning a wedding, backyard barbecue, fundraiser, trade show, commencement or just a small dinner party, ARS is equipped to assist you in planning your event and providing you with all your rental needs. A number of our team have grown with the company and are asked for by our loyal clientele of businesses, B&B's, resorts, schools, churches and local families. We understand the importance of clean and working equipment, timely deliveries, and friendly, knowledgeable service from start to finish. Our goal is to make you look good.

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PHOTO BY ROBIN SMITH

The Jenness family celebrate the 50th anniversary of Walt's Sales and Service in Derby. Seated are Ed and Alta Jenness. Standing from left are sons Scott and Chris, employees Eric Smith and Robert Bean and son Tim.

50 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Three Generations Of Family, Business Success At Walt's Sales And Service

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

DERBY - Walt and Joyce Jenness started Walt's Sales and Service on Main Street in Derby Center 50 years ago.

Today, the business involves the second and third generation of the Jenness family in a new and expanded location.

Ed Jenness says he has worked in the business for 48 years. He and his wife Alta, who does the books and runs the office, and their sons keep the business growing and adapting to the times when it comes to recreational and work off-road vehicles and the parts, products and services that go with them.

Scott handles service, Tim leads the technical department and Chris handles parts. They also are active in local sports clubs.

Their employees, technicians Eric Smith and Robert Bean, are considered part of the family.

Walt's Sales and Service is located on Route 5 north of Derby Center. The business needed more space and moved there in 1986. In 1988, they added the new warehouse in the back.

The main building used to be half shop and half showroom.

In 2013, they turned the whole main building into a showroom but kept that emphasis on service with a service center in the big warehouse in the back.

The company sells Bombardier Recreational Products, known as BRP.

But the type of products "have changed incredibly," Ed said, reflecting the changing climate.

"We are getting the weather southern New England used to be getting."

Where once snowmobiles by Skidoo dominated the product lines, today ATVs and side-by-side off-road machines account for 40 percent of the sales at Walt's.

Included in that are Spyders, three-wheeled motorcycles that are increasingly popular.

And the company also sells Toro and Simplicity products for lawn and garden, and Seadoos for summer camp season.

ATVs are for solo off-road riding, while side-by-sides are prized for riding together.

Each type of product has its own accompanying



PHOTO BY ROBIN SMITH

Helmets line one wall in the showroom at Walt's Sales and Service.

line of clothing and gear, also on sale in the showroom. And there are products for different sizes and ages as well.

The options range from riding jackets and pants, boots, the essential helmets, gloves, gear and accessories, in a rainbow of colors.

What sets Walt's apart, the Jenness family believes, is the full service that they provide.

You find your ride, and all the gear you need to go with it. And Walt's team keeps that valuable piece of equipment running and keeps the family outfitted for years to come.

Service means a lot when some of the products are as valuable as today's on-road vehicles.

Service is key to Walt's operation, Ed said.

The company motto says it all: "Walt's Sales and Service - Where Service Is Part Of Our Name."

40 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Styles By Patty

223 Pearl St., St. Johnsbury, Vermont
802-748-8584

Owner:
Patricia Russell
In business since:
1977

Type of business:
Hair styling salon

A brief history of your business:

I started my career in 1975. I went to work at Styles By Sally purchasing the business after Sally's death in December 1977. I was 22 years old and borrowed half the money from a local bank and the other half from my supportive Dad and somewhat skeptical Mom. I enjoyed working with stylists new to the business and many went on to own their own salons. After being the "boss" for 24 years I downsized and have been working alone at my property on Pearl Street.

My salon is decorated to be homey and cozy. I believe my clients are very comfortable with the setting and the privacy it allows. I am amazed and grateful for the connection I have with each of my clients. They have shared their lives with me for a very long time through many ups and downs. We've gone through births, deaths, marriages, divorces, sad and happy times together.

I hope that I haven't become stale and still have my creative juices flowing. My biggest strength has been my communication skills and willingness to accommodate my clients and their schedules. I am frequently asked when I am going to



Patricia Russell has been in business styling hair at Styles By Patty for the past 20 years.

retire. If I ever get to the door of my salon and don't want to be there, I'll know it's time. Meanwhile, I am so fortunate to still love my job.

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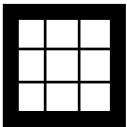
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PHOTO BY SALLY COOK
Parkway Realty Associates office in Lyndonville overlooks the spacious park and common.

50 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Parkway Realty: 5 Decades Of Getting People Home

BY SALLY COOK
News Correspondent

Parkway Realty Associates has been successfully navigating the often unpredictable waves of the real estate business for five decades. Collectively its native Vermont staff of three has about 100 years of experience contributing to the company's "top producer" status.

All three real estate agents are optimistic about the future, as they staff the St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville offices.

President Maurice Chaloux, with 45 years of experience, warns that the current buyers' market and low interest rates probably won't last much longer. "Buyers have to act quickly or they will lose out," he said. "Real estate interest rates are still so low, it's ridiculous. I thought back in the 1980s, if interest rates were under 10 percent, we'd be golden," Chaloux added with a laugh.

While he described current real estate sales trends as an urban recovery, rural local areas will soon be experiencing the same uptick, he noted. The market entered a buyers' market in 2009 following the last major economic downturn.

Indications of a price rebound have already begun in some places like Danville and Burke where good news about the ski area continues. Property on lakes like Harvey's in West Barnet and Joe's Pond in West Danville have continued to hold their own, even as other existing homes have taken big hits during the 2002-2008 period when buyers needed to sell them, Chaloux noted.

A graduate of St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon State College where he earned a business administration degree, he has served local communities as a lister, moderator, selectman, a House representative for St. Johnsbury and as president of the Northeast Kingdom Board of Realtors since 1984.

Chaloux is joined at Parkway Realty Associates by Patricia Emery with more than 40 years of experience and Danica Rolfe, who is a third generation real estate agent with 11 years at Parkway. The realty, founded by Realtor Ernie Begin in 1967, has operated under different names. It became Parkway, named for the big neon sign in front of the rooming house in St. Johnsbury where its first office was located, Chaloux said, explaining Emery is also an owner of the business.

"It's definitely better than it was," said Emery of the real estate market from her viewpoint as office manager of the Lyndonville office. "One thing I am really excited about is that snowmobilers are back in the market. We haven't seen that since 2005, and they are more affluent so they're not buying camps."

Land sales are still slow. There really is more value in existing housing than building new, because of the cost of building supplies, she said. In the Lyndonville office, there is a strong market for second homes.

"It doesn't hurt that the United States Ski Team is here," she said. "That's a reason to be optimistic."

The part of being a real estate agent that Danica Rolfe likes best is the daily variety. She lives in Kirby but grew up in Lyndonville.

"It's fun to help people search for their dream house or crunch numbers for them to find the perfect investment opportunity," she said. "It was really fun in 2005 but by 2008-2009, it was not fun anymore – that's when the bubble burst. But, now there are some rays of hope. In 2016 there's been a little more activity."

Chaloux said his office was the first in the region to join the Multiple Listing Service (MLS). He has also developed an extensive direct mail program, ads in the local newspaper and regular publications, plus developing a personal web site and relocation booklet that all contribute to Parkway's reputation as being one of the top producing real estate offices.

35 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Shear Sensations

102 Depot Street, Lyndonville, Vermont
802-626-8200

Owner:
Amy Bean
In business since:
1982

Type of Business:
Hair salon
A brief history of
your business:

I started in 1982 in a very small apartment building owned by Fred Bona - it's now the parking lot of the White Market, as it was torn down to make room for the growing store. At the time we had a staff of two.

We relocated to Depot Street in 1989 and increased staff to four stylists and, after major renovations, we were comfortable there for about nine months when the block was set on fire. We lost five businesses in that fire. Shear Sensations temporarily relocated to Church Street (the former Carlene Smith's hair salon) for about a year until the block on Depot Street was rebuilt. Once it was remodeled we went back to Depot Street and stayed in that location until 1999. The Western Auto store was going out of business and I decided that business was growing so fast that it was time to increase staff and move to a larger building. We went from 800 square feet to almost 3,000 square feet. I increased



COURTESY PHOTO

The women of Shear Sensations from left to right are: Lori Theberge, Holly Pierce, Heather Powers, Mickey Antonucci, Calie Pal, Amy Bean (center), Kara Kadamus, Natalia Leduc, Kattie Smedley, Carla Bailey (missing from photo: Kathleen Iselin)

my staff to 11 and we added the spa (manicures, pedicures, massage) to our menu of services. Now we are celebrating our 35th business anniversary.

I think my business has been so successful because of my staff. We work as a team - we treat each other like family - and we support each other at work and outside of work.

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45 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... Experience Fun Local Shopping At Sunshine

BY ROBIN SMITH
 Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY - It's a time of change for many small locally-owned businesses and that includes Sunshine Boutique on Eastern Avenue.

But change and growth is nothing new for the 45-year-old family business owned by Fred and Robin Little.

Along the way, Fred and Robin married in 1977 and moved their store in 1987. The St. Johnsbury natives raised two children. Son Aaron still works occasionally at the store. They also bought Moose River Lake and Lodge store eight years ago, a nearby store in downtown St. Johnsbury.

Sunshine Boutique started in 1972 featuring natural foods and fine wines that you couldn't get anywhere else at that time, and India Import clothing that was extremely popular.

Today Sunshine Boutique has transitioned to become "the best jewelry store in the Northeast Kingdom," Robin said, while offering fine clothing and American crafts, pottery and gifts.

They feature fine jewelry in white and yellow gold and platinum, plus crafted jewelry and what's called bridge jewelry.

Bridge jewelry runs the gamut between fine jewelry and costume jewelry, including sterling silver and other mixed metals, with natural gemstones.

The products are constantly in demand, because customers appreciate made-in-America items and those seeking one-of-a-kind jewelry and service that a trained jeweler like Fred can provide.

The storekeepers are preparing to expand their Internet presence for both stores, adapting to those who are shopping online more and more.

"One of our goals for this year is an updated web-

site for both stores," Robin said.

They have employees who are "smart gals in their 20s" who keep Robin and Fred abreast of the trends of younger shoppers, Robin said.

"Forty years ago nobody shopped online. Nobody shopped out of town," Robin said.

All that has changed as shopping online becomes the convenient choice.

What attracts customers to go to a brick and mortar store is different than shopping online, she noted.

"Shopping (in person) has become recreational," Robin said.

"We try to make shopping still fun," a reason to come into the store, she said.

That means having quality, name-brand products and a well-respected jeweler to provide the service that one cannot get in a chain store.

Another change over the years is how customers view the products they buy.

Take Native American jewelry for example. In the past, customers cared about the maker, the tribe they came from and where the turquoise was mined, Robin said.

Today's younger customer looks at jewelry as accessories to their outfits, seeking what looks good rather than what has a pedigree, she said.

The same goes for clothing. The boutique's customers do care more today about buying American- or Vermont-made, natural fiber clothing, Robin said. "My customer always appreciates things made locally."

And they shop for quality.

Sunshine Boutique features the Salaam women's clothing line from Plainfield and Fat Hat line from Quechee, really nice and moderately priced and made in Vermont, she said.

Designs have changed, but "not as much as you might think," Robin said.

30 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Magnus & Assoc.

412 Cliff Street, St. Johnsbury, Vermont
 802-748-5555

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 Ed Magnus
In business since:
 1987

Type of business:
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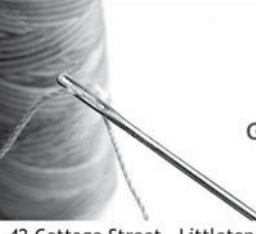
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PHOTO BY TODD WELLINGTON

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital Main Building.

45 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... NVRH Shares Birthday With Valentines Day

BY TODD WELLINGTON
 Staff Writer

Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (NVRH) has come a long way since it admitted its first patient on Valentine's Day, 1972.

45 years later, NVRH sits at the center of its own little medical city on Hospital Hill in St. Johnsbury, treating thousands of patients each year and employing over 500 workers including doctors, nurses, specialists, staff and support personnel.

According to "A History of Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital" by Robert B. Michaud, the first patient was Lyndonville resident Jane Aubin who had been admitted to the Brightlook Hospital Special Care Unit (SCU) on Summer Street two days before NVRH opened.

When moving day came Aubin was the first to be transferred.

"With the help of the nurses of the Brightlook SCU, accommodations for Miss Aubin were made to avoid discomfort of detaching monitoring equipment in a move of hospital locations. The NVRH SCU and all it's equipment was in place and ready for an early move into it."

Two weeks earlier a crowd estimated at 5,000 had showed up for the official NVRH dedication attended by then-Vermont Gov. Deane Davis and tours of the gleaming new medical center.

NVRH was built to consolidate the town's two hospitals - Brightlook and the former St. Johnsbury Hospital on Prospect Street. Construction took nearly two years and was paid for by over \$800,000 in local fundraising, federal grants and loans.

Since that time, NVRH has grown with the medical needs of its community

Today, it's an acute care, critical access hospital, and one of two Vermont hospitals designated as a "Baby Friendly" hospital by the United Nations. It provides primary and preventive care, surgical and specialty services, inpatient and outpatient care and 24-hour, physician staffed emergency services.

Its presence has also driven a medical cottage industry that has risen up around it and into what has become an entire campus dedicated to public health.

NVRH has grown to include The Fresenius Dialysis Center, the Norris Cotton Cancer Center-North, and the Northern Vermont Center for Sleep Disorders. It's also branched out to operate several other family care centers in Caledonia County including St. Johnsbury Pediatrics, Kingdom Internal Medicine, Corner Medical in Lyndon and the Women's Wellness Center.

The Hospital Hill area now includes The St. Johnsbury Health & Rehabilitation Center, the CALEX Ambulance Emergency Services building and numerous physician and medical professional offices.

In the last several years alone NVRH has devel-



oped a new Day Surgery center, a business and conference center, as well as many other upgrades in medical technology.

"With changing technology and changing people and changing expertise you gotta keep up to date - and more than up to date," said NVRH Chief Executive Officer Paul Bengtson. "I'm always a believer you gotta be sort of out in front of a lot of this stuff. We've just had to accommodate and to think and plan strategically over the years."

Bengtson says the next challenge NVRH will face are changing demographics in Vermont that will increase patient needs and stretch the supply of primary care doctors.

"The next thing over the next five years is replacing people who are retiring - not just in the Northeast Kingdom, but all over Vermont. Because Vermont's population is predicted to be flat over the next 15 years - with sharp growth in the over-65 population...the population is gonna be flat but the demand for physicians is actually going to increase over what it is now."

Bengtson says NVRH has already been investing in trying to grow its own workforce by supporting nursing programs through the Vermont State Colleges. Bengtson says NVRH invests about \$100,000 a year into the nursing program and he's hoping to find a similar program to develop primary care physicians.

"I've tried and I'll continued to try to build some creative ideas in this area to start producing our own physicians," said Bengtson. "We have demographic issues, we have work force issues, the technology issues. We'll just have to keep learning."

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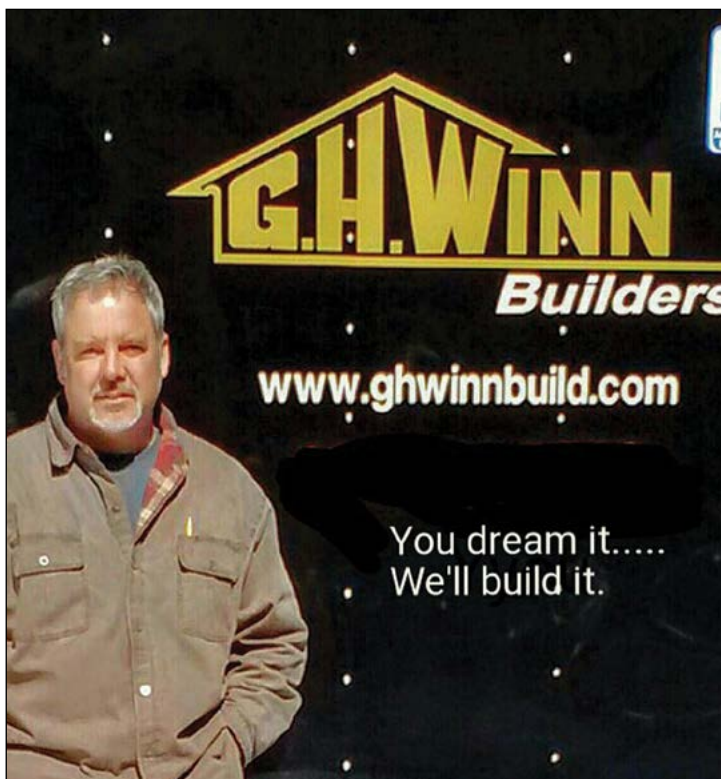
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In business since:
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Type of business:
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A brief history of your business:

When I graduated high school in 1983, I went on to a trade school and studied architectural drafting and construction as well as cabinet making and general carpentry. After working for my parents' real estate business for a couple years, I started my own business in 1987 doing small carpentry jobs. That has now developed into a business building custom homes and remodeling.

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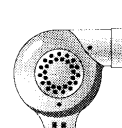


COURTESY PHOTO

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Guibord Funeral Home celebrates 45 years at 15 Main Street in Lyndonville.

PHOTOS BY SALLY COOK

45 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Guibord Funeral Home Celebrates 45 Years Under New Ownership

BY SALLY COOK
News Correspondent

The Guibord Funeral Home is proud to be celebrating its 45th anniversary this year under new ownership of licensed funeral director Stephen Robertson and his wife Helen, who closed on the property in June.

World War II Navy veteran and medic Charles L. Guibord worked as a funeral director in Florida Vermont before founding the Guibord Funeral Home in Lyndonville in 1973.

An active member of the community, Guibord belonged to the Lyndonville Rotary Club, American Legion Post 30, and VFW Post 10038 and went through the chairs at the Elks Lodge B.P.O.E. 1343. He was a Mason and a Shriner, a member of Crescent Lodge 66 and Mt. Sinai Temple 3, as well as the First Congregational Church in Lyndonville where he served on various committees.

The Guibord Funeral Home joined with the Sayles Funeral Home in St. Johnsbury under the ownership of Derochers and Sayles Inc. in 1996. The funeral homes continued to serve the communities under the ownership of former Guibord employee Rod Sayles and his wife Karen.

Sayles said he learned a lot about the business from Guibord, and that there was a lot of cooperation and mutual assistance between the two businesses dating back to 1975. Rod co-owned and operated Sayles Funeral Home since 1978, after graduating from St. Johnsbury Academy in 1971, the University of Vermont 1975, and New England Institute in 1976.

The Sayles lived above the funeral home at 525 Spring Street where they raised their family of three children and ran the business on a 24/7 basis as a “way of life.”

They sold the combined business to the Robertsons in June. Sayles said the Robertsons seem to be a perfect fit for the business.

“Steve is just the kind of person I have been look-

ing for, the kind of person who will serve the needs of the people first and the business second,” Sayles said in an interview in January 2016. Robertson joined the business in the summer of 2015, and Sayles explained he would continue to work for the business for five years, so the transition would be smooth in a “transitional walk together.”

There are three full-time and two part-time employees including Sayles, but there are many other people in the area who can step in to help when business is too busy and they have multiple funerals or services at one time, Helen Robertson said. The Robertsons have eight children, including four grown and the rest at home and helpful at ages 16, 13, 11, and 9.

Both funeral homes offer full services as explained on their web sites, but the new name of Caledonia Life Services Inc. foreshadows future plans for the businesses that are doing business as Guibord Funeral Home and Sayles Funeral Home.

“The reason we chose the name Caledonia Life Services is because at some point in time, maybe in 10 years, we would like to expand to all life services with a large hall for weddings, receptions, funerals and other events. It’s being done now in California,” she said they learned while attending a business convention.

While business may be busy at the moment, the funeral business is not what it used to be. There is not always enough demand to sustain the business, debunking the idea that the funeral business is recession-proof.

“One of the problems is that people don’t understand the importance of having funerals and memorial services as important family gatherings,” she said. “I find it difficult to see families not doing it – celebrating the person’s life and miss the healing it can bring.”

So the natural extension for funeral homes is to host family gatherings of all kinds.

“A funeral director can plan events in two days, it doesn’t need to take months, so what better field to expand into,” she said.



COURTESY PHOTO

Brad and Kim Before are celebrating 30 years in business at Before Auto.

30 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Before Auto

130 Before Auto Drive, West Burke, Vermont
802-467-8360

Owners:
Brad and Kim Before

In business since:
1987

Type of business:
Auto body repair and car sales

A brief history of your business:

Brad has been fixing automobile bodies in the same spot for 30 years at his garage on Before Auto Drive off Route 5 in West Burke. Brad does insurance work and custom work. His wife Kim does the bookwork and occasionally helps in the shop. She also works at Corner Medical.

Brad learned the trade from his father Vince at a young age. The business suffered a major setback in 1995 when the garage was destroyed by a fire. We bounced back with the help of friends and neighbors. On a cold January day, 31 people showed up to help with a garage raising. “I found out I had a lot of friends that year.”

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Chimney Sweep II is focused on selling and installing woodstoves and related items.

40 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... Chimney Sweep II Helps Heat The Region

BY TAYLOR REED
Staff Writer

Peter L'Esperance of Walden has the 1970s-oil crisis to thank for his career.

He co-owns Chimney Sweep II in Barre and The Chimney Sweep in Shelburne. L'Esperance manages the Barre store, and his brother manages the Shelburne store.

The Barre store is turning 40-years old. It is beside McDonald's on the Barre-Montpelier Road.

L'Esperance maintains myriad customers in Caledonia County and the Northeast Kingdom.

"We do a lot of business up there," he said. "You have to have a big territory in this business because the product lasts for 25 years."

The company's name is a misnomer. It does not sweep chimneys, but instead sells and installs woodstoves, gas stoves, and fireplace inserts, along with items like grills from companies including Vermont Castings and appliances from Heartland.

L'Esperance followed his brother into the business. His brother established The Chimney Sweep Shop in Chittenden County in 1973.

"He was qualified to be an English teacher but after college there weren't any jobs," L'Esperance said.

The oil crisis quickly arrived. Demand for woodstoves skyrocketed.

L'Esperance skipped college to join his brother in 1977.

"I got into the business putting fireplace doors in at first, and then I took them off during the oil embargo," L'Esperance said.

He quickly gained an ownership stake in the company. The endeavor soon developed into Chimney Sweep II in Barre.

L'Esperance, besides the business' misleading name, has no regrets. He likes the work.

"I've always enjoyed chatting with people," he said. "And we help people install items right. It takes a lot of knowledge."

New technology is fascinating to him as well. Recent EPA-pollution regulations have totally rewritten heating equipment.

For example, old-school woodstoves emit 50-100 grams of smoke per hour, L'Esperance said. Modern EPA-certified woodstoves emit less than 5 grams per hour, he said.

"We're now replacing a lot of the old technology," he said. "With the new stoves you don't see any smoke except maybe a puff when they're started because they re-burn the gasses. They don't make hardly any creosote. You also burn 25 percent less wood." Even stricter pollution standards are expected in 2020, L'Esperance said.

To incentivize traditional-woodstove owners to upgrade, the state of Vermont is offering a rebate program that can result in up to \$1,000 in savings off a new model. Heating dealers handle the paperwork and discount the purchase price accordingly.

Chimney Sweep II sells a 50-50 mix of woodstoves and gas stoves, L'Esperance said. Gas was particularly hot last year because of low fuel prices.

The store features more than 2,000-square feet, and crackling stove displays.

"It's nice and toasty in here," L'Esperance said.



Peter L'Esperance is the owner of Chimney Sweep II.

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Top Carpet has been cleaning local flooring for the last 35 years.

35 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Top Carpet Keeps Floors Clean

BY TAYLOR REED
 Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY – D&S Janitorial and TOP Carpet Cleaning on Memorial Drive is a physician's office for flooring.

Master cleaners Don and Sue Cheney in 1982 established D&S. It specializes in local cleaning contracts at office buildings, and, formerly, at large-scale retailers of yesteryear including Ames, Riches, and King's Department Store.

The Cheneys purchased TOP Carpet Cleaning from a relative in 1994.

"We combined both businesses and are still operating this way," Sue Cheney said. "We are proud to say we've been family owned for 35 years. Owning a family operation is not for the faint of heart. It is hard work."

The business caters to a 30-mile radius. Boundary towns include Derby and Ryegate in Vermont, and Lancaster in New Hampshire.

"We have been in a period of growth for the last three years," Sue Cheney said. "We service numerous businesses in the area and have a staggering amount of residential customer clients."

The growth is attributable to relatively new offerings like stone-and-grout cleaning, plus low-moisture cleaning known as "encapsulation cleaning." The company also embraces environmentally-sensitive processes.

"We always used biodegradable cleaners, but now we offer cleaners with no volatile organic compounds," Sue Cheney said. "Thus the slogan, 'Green Cleaning for Your Health and Ours' ... Do they clean better? We think so."

The rug business is as strong as ever, she said.

"We clean all types of carpets from wall-to-wall, and every type of area rug including but not limited to braids, hooked, flokati, Orientals, and any and all handmade rugs including antiques," Cheney



said. "We do minor carpet repairs in our shop to include fringe replacement, re-lacing of braids, hooked-rug repairs, and some edge repairs. In the very short future we will be offering 'Spa for Your Rug.' This will be a full-submersion cleaning that will be great for problem rugs. We also offer

professional office cleaning."

The company employs several full-time and part-time workers.

A complete list of company services is available on the TOP Carpet Cleaning-D&S Janitorial website. It's at www.topcarpet-cleaningvt.com.

25 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Rick's Gun Shop

77 Brook Rd., East Burke, Vermont
 802-626-1014

Owners:

Rick and Ruby Gorham

In business since:

1992

Type of business:

Sales of guns, archery accessories

Brief history of your business:

Rick and Ruby Gorham opened Rick's Gun Shop in 1992 as a part-time business. They both were working full-time during the day and working at the shop at night. This became too much, so with the support of Ruby, Rick decided to open the shop full time. The husband-and-wife team has operated the business at the same location since. They continue to be open seven days a week, and most years it has been 365 days.

Rick grew up in Kirby and has always lived close to the homestead. He is a veteran of the U.S. Army and loves to spend time hunting, fishing, gardening and working on his old car. Rick continues to enjoy selling guns and visiting with people from all over the world.

Ruby is a native of North Concord where she grew up on the Sorrell farm. Ruby helps out in the shop when needed. She spends the rest of her time working inside and outside of the house and enjoying many summer days playing golf. Ruby and Rick also love spending time with the grandchildren.

Rick and Ruby take pride in their small business and customer service. For years they have stood behind their products and customers. Building relationships with those customers has been satisfying and memorable. They continue to be a one-stop shop for hunting needs and accessories. In addition to sup-



COURTESY PHOTO

Ruby and Rick Gorham have been operating Rick's Gun Shop in East Burke since 1992.

plies, Rick's Gun Shop also has two indoor archery ranges where weekly shooting leagues take place throughout the winter. Seeing people for weekly archery leagues is great fun.

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Dwight Abbott is one of the owners of Stahler Furniture in Lyndonville. He and his brother Stephen bought the business four years ago, adding it to their growing chain of Modern Furniture stores in the Northeast Kingdom and North Country of New Hampshire.

25 YEARS IN BUSINESS ... Only The Finest Furniture At Stahler

BY AMY ASH NIXON
 Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — Stahler Furniture is celebrating 25 years in business this year, under its second owners since the store's founder sold in 2012.

A little more than four years ago, the Stahler family sold their furniture business to brothers Stephen and Dwight Abbott, who already owned several Modern Furniture stores in northern New Hampshire and Vermont.

The brothers run Stahler, as well as a Modern Furniture in Lyndon, and three more Modern Furniture stores in Derby, Newport, Littleton, Lyndon and Woodsville.

Since August of 2012, Stahler has been part of the brothers' furniture operations, following the retirement of David Stahler.

Dwight Abbott said Stahler had approached the brothers, and wanted to make sure the business stayed open, and knew they had the skills and understanding of the industry to keep it going.

"We had the know-how and the skills and the drive," he said, saying few new furniture shops are opening; the ones here are expanding, or some are closing, but you don't tend to see newcomers entering the furniture industry.

Stahler carries fine furniture. The store has long been known for its relationship with the local furniture maker Lyndon Furniture, whose line of hand-made wood tables with names from local Vermont towns are a highly sought-after treasure, in addition to a full line of custom crafted furnishings.

Stahler has an exclusive right with Lyndon Furniture to sell their factory seconds at deep discounts, up to half-off, and the back room at the store on Route 5 is brimming with bargains on the locally-made tables and more.



The line of Lyndon Furniture and the seconds area at Stahler brings people in, said manager Sharon Cote, who worked for the Stahler family and has been with the Abbotts since they bought the store.

The store also carries other lines of fine furniture, said Dwight Abbott, including Berne and Smith Brothers, and mattresses including Serta, Tempur-Pedic and Aireloom, a luxury bedding line. The store features 13,000 square feet of fine furniture.

Adding the store to their Modern fleet, Dwight said, was a move to add a store for a new market for them. "We felt there was a need for our customers for a higher end. It's a beautiful store," he said.

The Stahler store has been updated since the Abbotts took over to include some additions, and re-designing of the showroom, said Dwight Abbott. One change is the recent addition of a new La-Z-boy showroom, including the line of recliners plus other upholstered pieces, he said.

"We've done some remodeling and changing of some brands," said Abbott.

The stores the brothers run are inter-related, he said. "The success of Modern Furniture equals the success of Stahler Furniture."

The slogan for Stahler Furni-

ture is "American Quality - Vermont Values."

In the store's brochure, it states, "Stahler Furniture has been connecting people with quality for years from our location in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom. Our dedication to offering Vermont-made and American-made products has only grown as many domestic manufacturers seek more affordable production elsewhere."

"We are proud to offer you a bit of what Vermont is known for - quality products, hard work and a handshake that means something," the company's brochure states.

The Stahler family had a retail store on Broad Street for 45 years. It was first a farm equipment business locals may recall, R.A. Stahler & Sons.

In 1992, David Stahler began selling unfinished furniture from the family's retail site - where Rite Aid sits today - across the street from the Stahler Furniture building he constructed in 1999.

At the time of the sale, Stahler said, "I think Steve and Dwight are going to continue as we have, because that's their philosophy in their business, too, so I feel great about them taking over."

Visit www.stahlerfurniture.com for more information.

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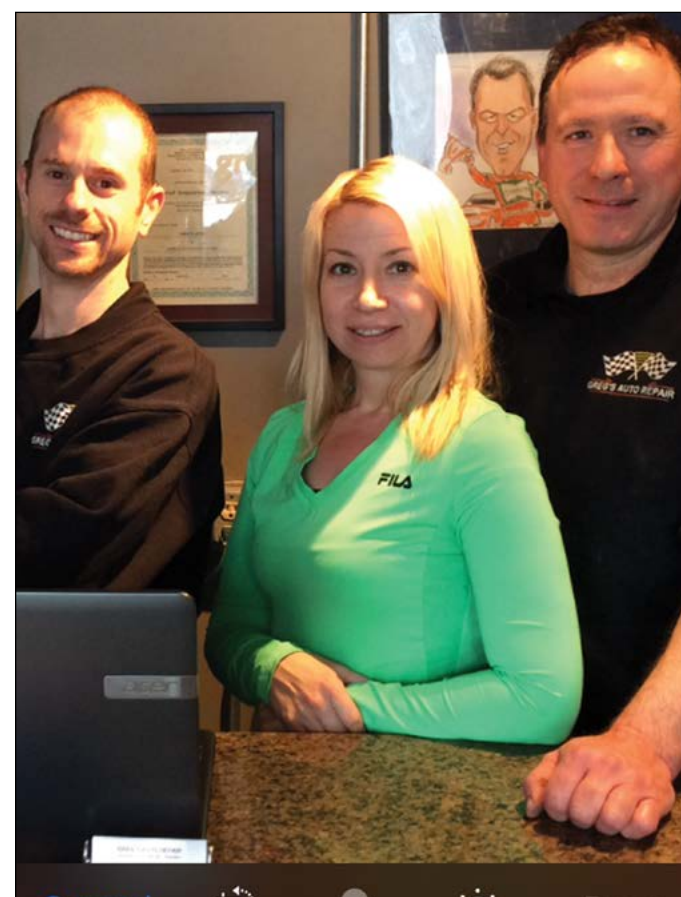
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 Greg and Jelena Gervais
In business since:
 1992
Type of business:
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A brief history of your business:

Greg's Auto, established in 1992, is owned and operated by Greg and Jelena Gervais. Greg is a Northeast Kingdom native with over 25 years of auto service experience. They, along with long-term employee Adam Brault, are proud to be serving the community of Lyndonville for the last 16 years.

Greg's Auto is founded on the principles of honesty, integrity and the need for quality service and repair at reasonable prices. Greg's Auto sells and installs tires, brakes, tune-ups, exhaust, suspension work, heating and air conditioning, diagnostic work and Vermont state inspections.

Greg's Auto Repair has been in business for 25 years.



COURTESY PHOTO

25 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Center Tower Features Service In St. Johnsbury Center

BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

Center Tower is more than a gas station and convenience store.

It's also a landmark that has stood for 25 years over St. Johnsbury Center.

The ground floor of the three-level building houses the store. The upper levels are the offices of Center Tower owners Jim and Lorraine Impey - who built Center Tower in 1992 along Route 5 just south of the Green Mountain Mall.

"We wanted an office up and out of the way," said Lorraine Impey,

"We didn't want it in the same floor," said Jim Impey. "We wanted it so you could look down and see everything. So that created another floor and we didn't want to make it all second story so that's kind of how it came about."

25 years later Center Tower remains as an anchor in the St. Johnsbury Center business community and as one of the few independent family-owned and operated gas stations in the area.

In addition to a store packed with merchandise and a full deli and dining area, the Center Tower complex also features Irving brand gas pumps outside and the "Mr. Suds" car wash in back. The Impeys also operate a storage business on-site under the name "Center Storage." The newest addition to the Center Tower array of services is a high-speed diesel fuel island.

The store is a major destination for workers at the St. Johnsbury-Lyndon Industrial park and other businesses and manufacturing facilities on the north side of town.

"We get NSA, Northeast Precision, Twin State Electric, UPS," said Lorraine Impey.

"[There's] traffic back and forth to the industrial park. People either traveling to work that way or coming back," said Jim Impey.

The Impeys own the real estate development company Impey Real Estate - which owns multiple properties in the area. The Impeys have been involved with and owned multiple businesses over the years including Center Tower.

Both have deep local roots.

Jim Impey went to St. Johnsbury Academy and is now a SJA trustee. Lorraine Impey went to Lyndon Institute where she now serves as a corporator.

They met skiing at Burke Mountain and, in addition to building on their various business interests, they've raised four kids.

The Impeys started by buying a building on Portland Street that was later the home of the St. Johnsbury Food Coop. Then they kept building their business and, until recently, owned the Horizon's Deli property on Railroad Street - which they have since sold to St. Johnsbury businessman Ed Poginy.

The Impeys already owned the Center Tower property when they decided to build the Center Tower Building. They had already been operating the original Mr. Suds car wash there when they redeveloped the site.

It made sense at the time because business was booming at the Green Mountain Mall and at other businesses in the St. Johnsbury Center.

But it wasn't actually their idea.

Jim Impey credits business associate Vic Gilding. In the early 1990's, Horizon's Deli was known as



PHOTO BY TODD WELLINGTON

Center Tower on Route 5 in St. Johnsbury Center.

the "Party Tyme" store. The property was owned by the Impeys and the store was Gilding's.

Jim Impey said Gilding wanted to expand to the north side of town and convinced him and his wife to build the store that would become Center Tower.

But Gilding's interest would not last, leaving the Impeys as unexpected store keepers by the end of the project.

"He wanted to run a place up here," said Jim Impey with a laugh. "He talked us into it and then he got cold feet at the end."

Until 2014 the Impeys also owned and operated

another St. Johnsbury gas station - Western Avenue Station on Western Avenue - which offered full-service gas. That full service is now being offered at Center Tower twice a week from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The Center Tower store also features its now-famous Prize Wheel which customers who spend more than \$5.00 can spin to win prizes.

The Mr. Suds car wash behind the store features both a touch-less automatic car wash, as well as two self-service wash bays that are open daily, as well as a vehicle vacuum stations.



PHOTO BY TODD WELLINGTON

The famous Center Tower Prize Wheel.

20 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...



COURTESY PHOTO

Adam Whitcomb, Ty Langtange and Jeff Cleveland are part of what makes PH Landscapes great.

PH Landscapes

96 Mitchell Dr., Lyndonville, Vermont
802-626-0933/802-535-7069

Owner:

Jeff Cleveland

In business since:

1997

A brief history of the business:

Business began in the spring of 1997, mowing lawns in between college semesters. At that time I figured it would be a temporary occupation to get me through school. As years passed, much to my surprise, the clientele grew. Before I knew it employees were needed to keep up with the work demand. Mowing lawns turned into snowplowing, snowplow-

ing turned into landscaping, and landscaping turned into excavation.

Years went by and my idea of "bigger is better" started to decline. In 2014, I had the opportunity to sell the lawn care portion of the business, allowing me to focus on the more enjoyable part of what P H offers: excavation, landscaping and snowplowing.

Working directly with the customer and being eager to please is most rewarding. Each job is different and in most cases we are either helping someone out or beautifying their property.

20 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Little Dippers Doodle Children's Center

1198 Industrial Parkway, St. Johnsbury, Vermont
802-748-3226

Owner:

Betsy Bailey

In business since:

1997

Type of business:

Early childhood care and education

A brief history of your business:

Little Dippers Doodle Children's Center was opened in Burke, Vermont in 1997 by Betsy Bailey, with a license for 12 children. In 1998, Betsy expanded the program to serve 30 children. In 2000, the program grew to serve 45 children. In the years that followed Betsy noticed that the Lyndonville/St. Johnsbury community needed child care options that included expanded hours and a more centralized location. At the time, the St. Johnsbury Industrial Park contained several businesses that operated three daily shifts of employees. In 2007, Betsy constructed a 10,500 square foot child care facility with a license for 150 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years old and that was licensed to operate 24 hours per day. Today

Little Dippers is a 5-STAR, early childhood center that employs 33 employees who oversee thriving preschool, infant/toddler and after school programs.

Little Dippers has evolved over the years into more than a traditional child care program. Since 2012, the center has used an approach designed to serve the whole family. At its heart, the Strengthening Families Framework is about changing how child care program staff interacts with families to support them in building protective factors. Strengthening Families is done through small but significant changes in daily practice, such as helping connect families to needed services and by providing lots of opportunities for families to develop support networks and learn about child development. Our staff is trained to do this work, and do so with dedication and passion. For example, this past fall our center held a "date night" designed to give parents a much needed night out without children. Staff provided activities and dinner to the children while their parents spent the evening going out to dinner or doing shopping.

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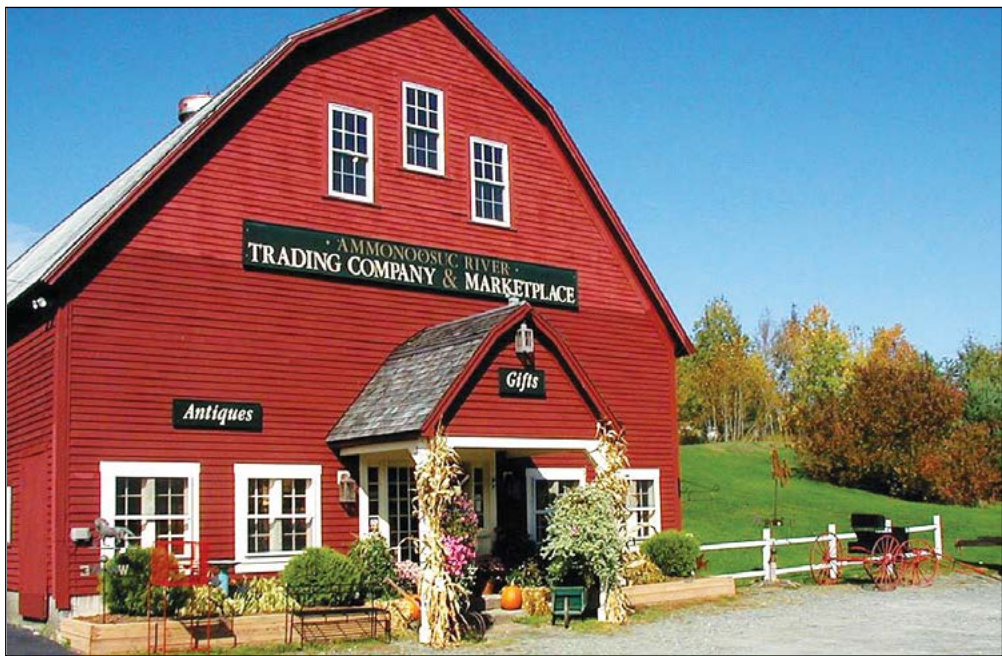
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15 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Finding Buyers For Seller's Stuff

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

LISBON - The Ammonoosuc River Auction Co., a business that does antique, estate, real estate, and farm auctions, is celebrating 15 years. The business was born of the passion of its founder, Mike Carver. "When I was a kid, I worked part-time for an auction company down near Cape Cod," said Carver, who runs the company with his wife, Jan Carver. "I've also been dabbling in antiques for well over 30 years. The auction business is a passion I wanted to start for several years."

He took the retail route first, getting his name out there and then moving on to auctions.

Licensed in Vermont and New Hampshire, Carver is a graduate of the Mendenhall School of Auctioneering in North Carolina.

"I thought they were wonderful," he said. "They give a good base training for auctions, then I started doing them."

He headquarters his business on his Lisbon property, which includes a fully renovated and heated three-story barn, one that was "just a shell" when he bought it but began to take shape after 465 sheets of drywall and ample insulation.

Carver's full-service auction company also does machinery auctions, business liquidations, and estate and insurance appraisals as well as marketing that advertises auctions and other appraisal services specializing in antiques, collectibles, and decorative arts.

Since he opened, he's done at least two auctions a month, and sometimes four or five in one month.

Auctions tend to last four to five hours, though an entire estate can take six or seven hours.

He auctions on site and also conducts them in his barn, and he's done everything from antiques to tractors.

"You just never know what you're going to find," he said.

An Indian basket made of porcupine quills, not much larger than a softball, once sold for about \$1,300.

This past spring, he auctioned a grandfather clock, dated to 1810, with a model frigate ship in its face.

"When I dropped the hammer, it sold for \$9,000," said Carver.

The painted face was on brass and the body made of solid cherry. "It was a nice clock," said Carver. "It has been in the Astle family from Whitefield forever."

A William and Mary breakfront bookcase from Pennsylvania from about 1730 that was owned by Alexander Todd, grandfather to Mary Todd Todd, President Abraham Lincoln's wife, fetched \$10,000.

It had glass doors up top and tombstone panels and had been in the family for generations, said Carver.

"There isn't much I haven't sold," he said. He jokingly refers to himself as "the equalizer," and there's more than a bit of truth to it.

"I just love it," he said. "I represent the seller, not the buyer, and my objective is to get as much as I can for the seller. I can't control the market, but can sway it in my direction, which is nice. Knowledge is power in this business ... If I don't know what it is, I will know before it goes on the block. Every once in a while you get something you've never seen before."

He also does appraisal work for attorneys, and has been doing more as the Baby Boomer generation comes of age and passes away.

His work takes him all over Vermont, as far north as Newport, and New Hampshire, and Carver said, "I've hauled stuff as far south as Pittsburg, Chicago and New Jersey. I'll go anywhere if the work warrants it."

He is also a collector, appraiser, buyer, seller and auctioneer of antiques and home accessories, specializing in 18th- and 19th-century American furniture.

"I'm a collector myself and love the Federal furniture period, from 1800 to 1810," he said.

Though a small company, Carver said his business telephone rings seven days a week. It's a sign, he said, that after a decade and a half he has a business that is working.

"One of my favorite lines is a third [of auctioned items] will go high, a third low, and a third right in the middle, where it's supposed to be," he said.

It's crucial in his business to be honest with people and it's a nice feeling when he can deliver them a good check, he said.

"I want to do people justice and do a good job for them," said Carver. "That's been my thing my whole life."



10 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Day & Night Service For Truckers

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

So your big rig went off the road in the middle of a stormy winter night and you need help?

Don't worry - Dennis Bouffard has you covered. "It's the people part I love," he said. "It's helping people, and I like being able to help."

Bouffard, a former state trooper turned trucker, and his wife, Kathy, run Lyndon Truck Center, a 24/7 emergency commercial towing, recovery and repair business that celebrates 10 years in 2017.

One word could describe its trajectory - growth. "In April 2007, I rented the place in Lyndonville and started my business," he said. "It was touch-and-go for a few months, but then things started picking up and we never looked back."

The native of Newport, Vermont, had been a Vermont State Police trooper until 1981, when he left to follow his passion for trucking.

"It was a toss up between trucking and the state police," he said.

He chose trucking, and did it for 28 years, running his own rigs. But he always had a desire to open a shop.

At one time, he had up to 17 trucks and several employees, but in 1995 cut back on his business and resumed trucking by himself, hauling heavy equipment for the military and for Caterpillar Inc., the construction machinery and equipment company.

In addition to 24/7 emergency commercial truck towing, recovery services and emergency roadside repair, he offers local and long-distance commercial towing, A/C charging and repair, pickup and commercial truck tires, Minimizer fenders, and safety products, and is a dealer for ALEXRIMS forged aluminum wheels.

Bouffard also runs a licensed Vermont state inspection facility and a federal truck and trailer inspection station.

When Lyndon Truck Center was first opened, the initial months were slow because not many people knew he was there. Fortunately, the Great Recession that would hit later that year had little impact.

"By September, we were in full bloom," said Bouffard. "By the following March, we were looking for help. We've had steady, non-stop growth for 10 years now."

Last winter, though, was a challenge because of essentially no snow.

"Everybody suffered through that," he said.

But the future looks bright, and Bouffard and his five employees remain busy with 24/7 service calls, emergency road work, towing, accident recovery, and breakdowns as well as general repairs and maintenance in a facility that is open six days a week.

In January 2016, he opened a second location, a parts store at 1838 Memorial Drive in St. Johnsbury, where he also makes repairs and has a warehouse.

His Lyndonville location is at 83 Hemlock Lane.

Between the two stores, he has five truck bays as well as a mobile service shop and a couple of shop rigs.

Bouffard also has a wrecker in each location, two Freightliners, one 30 tons, the other 50 tons.

One wrecker bears the battle scars that sometimes come with the job.

"I've got one in the hospital now," said Bouffard. "We recovered a rig in Lyndonville last week and it got away from us and went down a bank."

Some mornings he rises early, such as at 4:30 a.m. on the day of the interview for this story.

"We don't get to pick our times when we go out," said Bouffard. "People are out there in the bad weather so we have to be, too."

Some calls are seasonal, and the volume depends on the season.

"In the summertime, we'll do six or eight a week, mostly breakdowns," he said. "In the winter, it's not uncommon to do six or eight a day."

Accidents have tapered off greatly in the past two decades, in large part because of the push for driver safety education and better equipment, he said. Other than inclement weather, accidents are mostly few and far between, he said.

Bouffard estimates his customer base in the hundreds, and his business is not limited solely to the Northeast Kingdom.

"We work for companies all over the country and Canada," he said. "We have 14 fleets in Canada we work for."

While business is good, Bouffard is not resting on his laurels.

Having recently established a second location, Bouffard is already looking at another expansion.

"We'll go wherever the business takes us," he said.

And the business has a ways to go yet.

"I may be old and crusty, but I ain't stopping until I die," he said. "At my age, it's not about money. I enjoy what I'm doing. I have good people working for me and have a good customer base and love working with people. And I love the challenge. It's my reason to get out of bed every morning."



FLEK

370 Railroad Street, Suite 4, St. Johnsbury, Vermont
802 748-7113

Owners:

Florence Chamberlin, Keith Chamberlin, Amy Leary Hale

In business since:

1997

Type of business:

Marketing, graphic design and advertising, web development, studio and location photography, media buying

A brief history of your business:

Florence and Keith founded FLEK in 1997. Both had successful careers, but felt the need to strike out on their own. Florence brought years of experience in human services, organizational dynamics and small business management to the table. Keith's many years working as a designer, photographer, copywriter and strategist completed the skill sets necessary to start the business. Northeastern

COURTESY PHOTO BY HILARY DECARLO

Florence Chamberlin, Amy Leary Hale, Keith Chamberlin are FLEK.

20 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Vermont Regional Hospital was one of their first clients, and is still with them today. Needing to expand the team, they recruited Amy in 1999. She brought design expertise and eagerness to tackle web development to the FLEK service roster. The rest is history, 20 years later and they are still a dynamic, creative team.

FLEK is a full-service award-winning graphic design and advertising agency.

We provide high-quality, cost-effective design, advertising and communications services for businesses and nonprofit organizations. Vermont's Northeast Kingdom is our home and is home to nearly all of our clients.

We work collaboratively with our clients. We work collaboratively in our office. And we have fun in the process.

We do logos, identities and design systems; web sites, web banners and social media; digital photography—studio and location; concepts, copy and project management; books, magazines and periodicals; brochures, posters and calendars; advertising, marketing plans and media buying; displays, signs, apparel and packaging.

All these services are offered in support of one simple goal: to help our clients compete successfully in their markets, whether their customers are down the road or half-way around the world.

At FLEK we believe in family, community and fun. We are proud to have made our lives in the NEK. We look forward to many more years working with the great and talented people in our community.

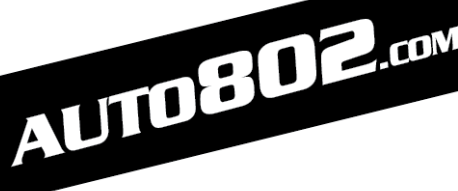
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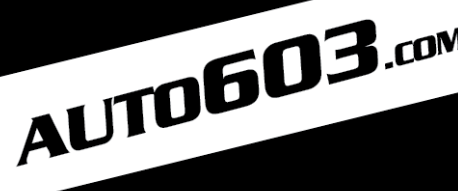
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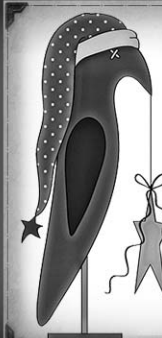
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COURTESY PHOTO

Absolute Powersports sells a wide range of ATVs and tractors for work and play.

10 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Keeping The North Country Busy Outdoors

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

WELLS RIVER - Lee Foster spent many years in the ATV business and had just about retired.

But about a decade ago, a friend of his sold one business with a plan to open one like Foster's.

"He asked me about it, one thing led to another, and we ended up going into business together," said Foster, owner-president of Absolute Powersports, which sells a wide range of ATVs and tractors for work and play. "Now we have two stores."

That friend, Jim Tees, runs the store in Gorham, New Hampshire, and Foster runs the one in Wells River.

The Vermont store has seen good times since it opened in June 2007.

"We've added a lot of product here and I think we probably have four times what we started out with," said Foster. "We've added tractors and different manufacturers, so we have quite an array of stuff to sell."

The business was born when he bought out a Polaris dealer in Groton who was going out of business.

"We bought this building and renovated it and moved it here next to the highway," he said.

He launched it at a dicey time - at the start of the Great Recession.

"We started relatively small and so didn't have as much exposure as the existing businesses," said Foster. "We weathered it fairly well and we've increased every year by adding different products. This past year has probably been a little slower for us, because of the election."

The shop that is located at 70 Industrial Park Road, at the Junction of Route 302 and Interstate 91's Exit 17, sells and services Polaris and Ski-Doo snowmobiles, Polaris ATVs and Rangers, Can-Am

Commanders and Mavericks, CFMOTO Side-by-Sides and ATVs, Slingshots, RZR's, and Rangers.

Absolute Powersports also carries Mission utility trailers for customers to haul machines, toys and equipment.

The store also carries Yanmar compact tractors and has added Mahindra, the world's best-selling tractor.

The business website sums it up: "We look forward to becoming the absolute best place for you and your family's powersports needs. We have the ability to meet all of your powersports needs and dreams year-round."

In addition to new products, pre-owned inventory is available.

Customers, too, can take advantage of factory promotions.

Foster said his customer base runs the gamut and includes local residents as well as people coming up on the weekends, some with second homes and from states as far away as Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, seeking recreation.

"It's surprising how many people travel here to play in the North Country," he said.

Technology has also boosted some sales.

"With the Internet, we have business from far away that you probably wouldn't normally have in days past," said Foster.

The business, which is open six days a week except for Sunday, employs a staff of seven. Foster's wife, Deb, runs the office.

Foster said Absolute Powersports is not likely to expand, at least not any time soon.

"I think it will stay this size for now and we'll see how everything shakes out in the next year or two and decide what to do from there," he said.

"Everything we sell is motorized," he said. "We have everything for what you want to do outdoors."

15 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Sanderson's Wooden Bowls

2902 VT Route 114, East Burke, Vermont
802-626-9622

Owners:

Sam and Weeza Sanderson

In business since:

2002

Type of business:

Craftsperson

A brief history of your business:

We started out sawing lumber at our sawmill and delivering to furniture manufacturers, one of whom was doing some turning. It looked interesting so we decided to try it. We made a few bowls for ourselves then someone wanted to buy one. Over the years we have gradually improved our shop and equipment. We have three lathes in our shop now. We have a website and put in a showroom.

Every bowl is one-of-a-kind, hand-turned from local wood. We turn our bowls from green fresh wood and dry them for a year. After the drying period, we re-turn the bowl to it's final shape, oil it with food-safe linseed oil and put it in our showroom for sale. A special part of



COURTESY PHOTO

Sam and Weeza Sanderson began turning wood bowls out of interesting pieces of wood 15 years ago.

our business is to make a bowl or some other item from someone's own wood. A piece of wood that has a special meaning to someone can be made into a gift that will be cherished for years.

When people come to our shop, they like to meet and pet the mini-donkeys that we raise here. The donkeys are very friendly and love the attention.



COURTESY PHOTO

Over the past 15 years, Aubin Electric has expanded from one truck to three.

15 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Aubin Electric Inc.

235 Davis Lane, Lyndonville, Vermont
802-626-4556

Owner:

C.J. Aubin

In business since:

2002

Type of business:

Electrical contracting

A brief history of your business:

I started out in 2002 by myself in a bench seat pick-up truck. Now I have three trucks, two full-

time workers and two part-time workers. My wife Becky is VP and bookkeeper. I built this company as a journeyman and am now running it as a master electrician.

We are a local business that people can trust and rely on. Our priority is the customer. We love and enjoy what we do.

Thank you to the community for the support they have been giving us.

15 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Benjie Tessier, CPA

802-626-5603

Owner:

Benjie Tessier

In business since:

2002

Type of business:

Certified public accountant

A brief history of your business

In 2002, when I became a CPA, I decided to start my own business. I did not have any clients at that time. I noticed that there was a professional building on Tulip Street in Lyndonville. When Bill Cote, the owner, showed me the available office space, I knew immediately that was my space.

My husband and I purchased the building at 18 Tulip Street in 2003.

Owning my own business as well as owning my own office building was an awesome experience. My husband and I made many improvements to the building. I met so many wonderful local people. My only regret is that I did not do it sooner.

In August 2015, we sold the building and I moved home (semi-retired) with about a third of my clients. The sad and yet exciting part is that I am going to fully retire this year.

What makes my business special is that most of the same clients return every year. Because I need to know so much about my clients personally, it makes it very easy for conversations to flow. Clients tell me things about their lives that they probably would not



tell anyone else. I always enjoyed this confidentiality.

I want to thank all my past clients for believing in me and for trusting me with their tax returns. I enjoyed all of it. If I could have changed one thing about my business, I would have started it at least 10 years earlier.

I also want to thank Janice Solinsky and Lisa Holmes for being a part of my business.



COURTESY PHOTO

Lindsey Bresnahan, Samantha Rossi, Carolyn Morrison and Lynn Whitcomb are part of the successful Morrison's Feed Bag team.

10 YEARS IN BUSINESS ...

Morrison's Feed Bag

1186 Memorial Drive, St. Johnsbury, Vermont
802-748-0010

Owner:

Les Morrison

In business since:

2007

Type of business:

Retail pet and farm supplies, animal feeds

A brief history of your business:

Morrison's Feed Bag opened in 2007 as a location to retail our bagged livestock feeds made in Barnet at the Morrison's Custom Feeds plant. Our customers' requests over the years have shaped our store into not only a feed and farm supply but also

a respectable source for premium pet foods and supplies, wild bird seed and a greenhouse in the spring.

The dedicated staff which makes up the Morrison's family is what sets us apart from other stores that offer pet foods and livestock feeds. We genuinely take pride in offering honest, sound advice, quality products and the best care we can offer our customers, both two and four legged. We will bend over backwards to make every shopping experience a positive one.

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