



BUSINESS RECOGNITION EDITION 2021

A special supplement to the Caledonian-Record, highlighting the many successful businesses of the Northeast Kingdom & North Country

Inside:



St. Johnsbury AthenaeumC2
 Fairbanks MuseumC3
 Quality MitsubishiC4
 Hayes FordC5
 Creamery RestaurantC6
 Maple Center MotorsC7
 Begin RealtyC8
 Companion Pet CareC9
 Dads 4 ByC10
 STJ Dental D1
 Dalton Mt. Motorsports D2
 Caron's Gateway D3
 Easy Autos D3
 All Around Rental D4
 Performance Powder Coating D4
 Gale Insurance D5



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150 YEARS

St. Johnsbury Athenaeum's Latest Chapter Is Pandemic Perseverance

BY DANA GRAY
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — The latest chapter in the 150-year story of the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum is one of fortitude and resiliency in the midst of a pandemic.

Nov. 27, 2021 will mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Athenaeum. It's a reason to celebrate, said Athenaeum Director Bob Joly, and a celebration there will be as long as COVID-19 counter-measures prevail.

"I'm hoping come anniversary date we can have a bash," he said. "It's going to be a drag if that comes and goes and for some reason we don't feel like we can have an open house and have gatherings."

Despite the virus and the restrictions related to it, the Athenaeum has been open since Gov. Phil Scott lifted a lockdown order on libraries last June. It's taken support from the Athenaeum board, commitment by staff, safety compliance by visitors and extra cleaning precautions, Joly said, to keep the doors open.

The Beginning

There was no global health crisis happening when Horace Fairbanks commissioned the building of the Athenaeum. Work commenced only three years after the Civil War, and for St. Johnsbury it was a time of growth spurred primarily by the Fairbanks family.

Horace was the son of Erastus and Lois Fairbanks. His Uncle Thaddeus invented the platform scale which led to massive economic growth that helped build the town. The family was responsible for St. Johnsbury Academy and churches, and Horace's brother, Franklin, would later build the Fairbanks Museum. Horace became a leader in the E & T Fairbanks Scale Company and would serve as governor of Vermont.

On Nov. 27, 1871, Horace spoke about his gift of the Athenaeum to the community. His words were published in the Dec. 1, 1871 edition of The Caledonian-Record.

"Fellow citizens," he began, "it was early a much cherished purpose of mine to place at the disposal of



Athenaeum Director Bob Joly sits in the Athenaeum gallery on Monday, Jan. 25, 2021. (Photo by Dana Gray)

the citizens of this town in my life time a Free Public Library ... it gives me profound satisfaction and sincere pleasure to present to you and your children and to all who may come after you, the free use of this building and its contents."

Designed by John Davis Hatch of New York, the building was to serve as a library and assembly hall. The style of the Athenaeum structure is French Second Empire and features a mansard roof. It was unique for the region at the time, Joly said.

The Athenaeum was described in a July 15, 1870 Caledonian-Record article. "It is perhaps sufficient now to say that it is unique in design, elegant in workmanship and probably the most expensive private building in the state," the newspaper noted.

Three second floor balconies that were a prominent part of the original design were removed in the 1950s. It was from the largest balcony, affixed to the front of the Athenaeum, that President Benjamin Harrison addressed the people of St. Johnsbury on Aug. 26, 1891.

The Athenaeum hosted its second U.S. President on Oct. 9, 1912, when President William Howard Taft spoke to a crowd of people numbering in the thousands.

Two years after the Athenaeum's opening Horace added an art gallery, which still features the collection he created, including the signature painting Domes Of Yosemite. An original suspended framework in the gallery upon which newer lighting is mounted still has the original pipes through which gas flowed to fuel lamps before electricity.

The Present

In the future when people reflect on the Athenaeum's 150th year they'll see what it was like for a library to exist in a pandemic.

When the doors were shut because of COVID last March, the Athenaeum board committed to paying the staff through April. It was a blessing, Joly said, that board members provided that time for staff to remain employed while the virus and its impacts were evolving.

The Athenaeum was later able to access Paycheck Protection Program money. At no time during the pandemic were employees laid off.

When the lockdown lifted, Joly said, the Athenaeum crew was as ready as it could be. Grants provided funding for all sanitizing supplies and personal protection equipment, including plexiglass at the customer service counters and six air filtering floor units.

Entering the Athenaeum requires passing through the front doors laden with COVID-related alerts. There are six sheets of paper taped to the glass and five sheets address virus requirements. Once inside, the COVID prevention measures continue. A slide show on a large screen features Athenaeum workers demonstrating proper distancing, mask wearing and hand sanitizing. Once past the screen, visitors are required to sanitize their hands and provide contact tracing information.

Joly, whose has worked at the Athenaeum since 2003 and has served as director since 2013, said it's hard work to stay open to the public in a pandemic, but he's glad they've been able to.

"It's a place to go and it's been important to be one of those place that's actually open," he said.

Joly said most libraries in the state aren't open to the public the way the Athenaeum is. Out of 183, "only 38 are open like we are and that's it," he said.

The staff has a meeting every Friday to discuss how things are going related to pandemic precautions.

The opening happened in stages. When the doors first opened in June there were no chairs. "If you wanted to read the paper you stood at the table and flipped the pages," Joly said.

Over time they began adding chairs. Then they turned the publicly-accessible computers back on. "We phased in and watched what happened," said Joly. "It worked out."

One other safety precaution that the Athenaeum maintains deals with the books that are returned. Before being returned to the shelf; they are set aside for four days. Joly said a volunteer is maintaining that process.

The Athenaeum hasn't offered in-person group programs since COVID hit, and Joly said he doesn't expect that to change anytime soon.

"We won't have any programming where we'll have groups of people here for probably six months," he said.

Youth Service Librarian Becky Hatfield has started providing some one-family-only story times, said Joly, but that is it for in-person events.

"We're tip-toeing into some live programming but to have 50 to 60 people upstairs to see a lecture, that's not going to happen for awhile," said Joly.

The Athenaeum has been offering programs online, including lectures as part of the Vermont Humanities Council First Wednesdays series.

One recent change that Joly said he resisted for a while is that the Athenaeum is no longer charging fines for late returns.

"There's a movement in the library world to remove as many impediments as you can to whom it really matters," he said. "You don't want a kid to come to your circulation desk with a pile of books and you say 'you owe us six bucks.' That kid will never forget that. That's a mistake."

He said, "We want the stuff back; we don't want the money."

Athenaeum Costs

The operating budget is about \$560,000. Funding sources include endowments, fundraising appeals, grants and a special appropriation request from St. Johnsbury residents. Joly said it's an annual challenge to piece together the revenue to cover costs.

"A lot of people think 'oh, it's Fairbanks money and it's always been here; it's what feeds the place, but that stuff was gone by the 1920s,'" said Joly.

The appropriation request this year is \$115,000. In fact, Joly said, the amount has not increased for the last 14 years. It accounts for about 20 percent of the annual Athenaeum need.

Joly said the appropriation amount is a big number in terms of other appropriation requests but it's less than one percent of the total town budget. He couldn't recall a time in the past when voters rejected the request, but he said he never takes the vote for granted. Joly always waits for the voting results at the polls on Town Meeting Day.

"Every year we're super dependent on the town," he said.



The St. Johnsbury Athenaeum as it appeared in the late 19th Century. (Photo Courtesy of Peggy Pearl)

Moving Forward

Within the next two years exterior wooden decorative pieces will be repaired to address rot, and the outside of the building will be painted. The Athenaeum will be seeking grant funding to help pay for the job, which Joly estimates could be as high as \$70,000.

"Then I think the exterior will be in pretty good shape," he said.

Joly said libraries will continue to play a role in communities into the future. It's not the exact same role as before. "This place doesn't own an encyclopedia anymore," he said. When he wants to fix his chain saw, Joly doesn't reach for a book; he opens YouTube.

Still, it will remain a source for books for many people, he said, despite the ease of online ordering. Some people don't have the Internet connections necessary and some people can't afford to buy books. He also said big, colorful children's books "will never be replaced and you can put that in writing."

Survival is about relevance, Joly said, and Athenaeum staff aim to deliver what people are seeking. He said programs that appeal to a cross section of people are important. "We need to do programs that interest people," he said.

Joly said throughout its 150 years, the Athenaeum has been a prominent fixture in St. Johnsbury, and staff members intend to keep it that way by doing what it takes to survive during a pandemic and by planning for the future.

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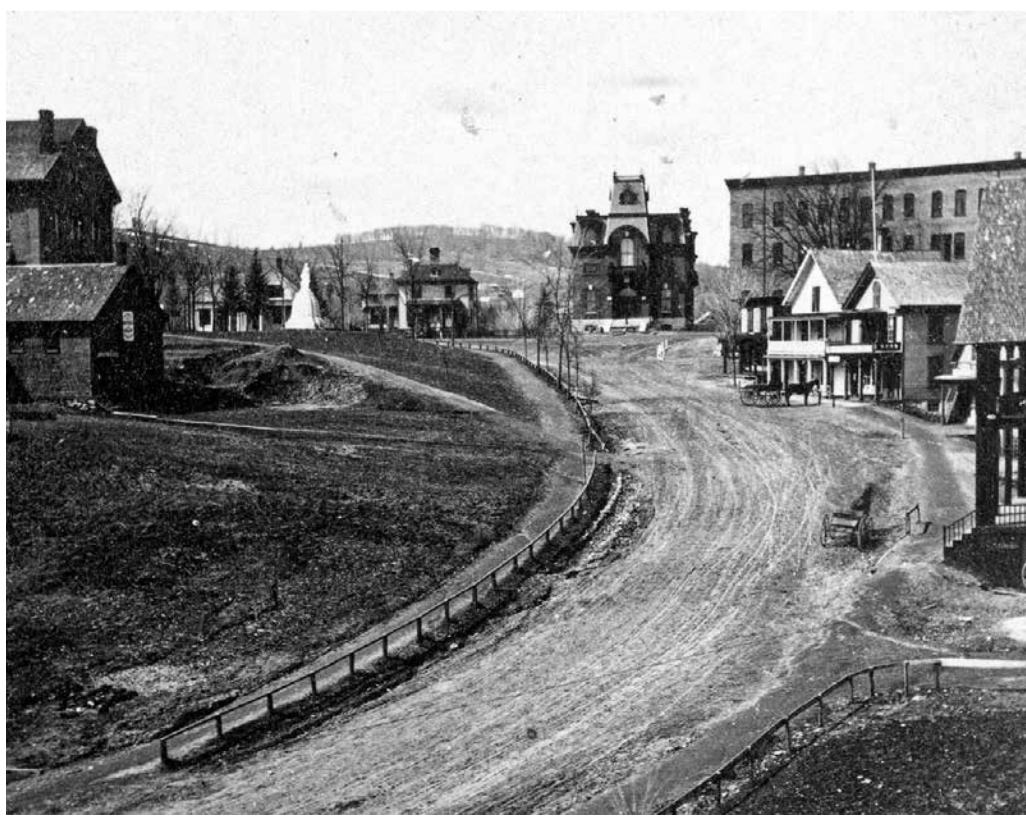
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The Athenaeum is seen at the top of Eastern Avenue about 1875. (Photo Courtesy of the Athenaeum)

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130 YEARS

The Fairbanks Museum Just Getting Warmed Up

BY ANDREW MCGREGOR
Staff Writer

While a business with well over a century-long history would often see myriad changes throughout the generations, for the Fairbanks Museum part of its allure is how consistent its presence and mission have been.

This year Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium will celebrate its 130th year of operation gracing St. Johnsbury's Main Street in the historic and magnificent structure.

The natural science museum, founded by local philanthropist and industrialist Franklin Fairbanks of Fairbanks Scales fame, was originally and continues to be a "cabinet of curiosities" housing Fairbanks' enormous collection of natural history specimens and artifacts from his world travels. This year, though, will mark a major milestone as the venerable institution prepares for a major expansion.

"Institutions like the museum ground a community," said Adam Kane, Executive Director of Fairbanks Museum. "St. Johnsbury, or any town, changes as times come and go, businesses come and go, but the museum, and places like St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury Athenaeum and Catamount Arts, they are the bedrock that things get built around. Hopefully those businesses and institutions are here for the



Executive Director Adam Kane looks over new displays at Fairbanks Museum. (Photo by Paul Hayes)

long-term and provide a baseline cultural, intellectual, and educational setting that allows everything else to flow out from it."

Kane said from a business and operations standpoint running the museum is not without its challenges. The museum currently operates on about a \$1.1 to \$1.2 million annual budget and has 15 FTE employees, up in the last few years from around 13 FTEs.

As a nonprofit institution, the museum operates on a combination of earned revenue through admissions, planetarium ticket sales, store sales and a variety of educational and weather services, as well as un-earned revenue that it collects through memberships, donations and grants.

"We run because people believe in us at every level," said Kane. "And I do mean at every level, that \$25 gift is just as important to us as a \$100,000 gift."

Above and beyond the annual operating budget, the museum in recent years has invested significantly in infrastructure projects to position it for a more efficient, greener and mission-focused future. Solar energy, heat pumps, building upgrades and other projects, funded with grants and donations outside its operating budget, have helped the museum lower operating expenses and reinvest in its core mission of providing the citizens of St. Johnsbury and beyond a premier science museum experience.

"Lowering our operating expenses means we can have more impact and spend more on people, programs, classes and experiences," said Kane, noting that 10 years ago the museum spent \$15,000 on electricity and in 2021 it won't spend any money on electricity and has transitioned two of the auxiliary buildings on the museum campus off heating oil.

Kane credits the museum's long history with easing much of the work that goes into fundraising and operations. "The Fairbanks Museum does great work and we are an institution that has a really strong track record for generations that well precede me," said Kane. "That type of track record makes fundraising much easier."

Kane and his team have now embarked on the process of positioning the museum for its next century.

"The challenge that I get the most joy out of - you have this institution that is beloved in the community - and it looks much the same now as it did in 1981 and 1951 and 1931 - it's a place that has continuity. So to me the great joy is understanding that continuity yet making sure it is relevant and it's evocative of the past but not stuck in the past. It's a kind of joy."

To that end, the museum has introduced a number of revolving exhibits, hands-on experiment installations and begun redesigning some of the historic display cases as well as modernizing the planetarium space. While that has all occurred within the museum's original footprint, which hasn't changed since Fairbanks funded the construction of a "new" south wing in 1895, this year the museum will construct a new 6,000-square-foot Science Annex on the rear of the building to house hands-on exhibits in astronomy and meteorology as well as provide better accessibility to the original building and provide classroom and office space for hoped-for tenant Community College of Vermont.

This addition would be the first fundamental change to the museum structure in over 125 years and is estimated to cost up to \$2.5 million.

"This addition will help us draw more visitors - providing additional space for hands-on stem-based

exhibits - that's the expectation of a modern science museum," said Kane. "The expectation is to be experiential - and we want to provide more of that, but since that's not the way the museum was originally designed, the annex allows us to keep that cabinet of curiosities aesthetic while having this other area of the museum that gives this experiential stem-based experience."

Kane believes the Annex will not only further the museum's mission and help it evolve into a modern destination, but also strengthen the economic impact the museum can have on the community - by creating space for a tenant to increase the museum's earned income, boosting attendance and through the construction project itself.

Kane cites a study commissioned by the American Alliance of Museums that describes the outsized effect museums have on a local economy through the multiplier effect seen from its employment and operational budget, as well as an analysis by the Vermont Agency of Community and Commerce Development of the Annex project for the importance of the museum in St. Johnsbury.

In a non-pandemic year, the museum typically serves 10-12,000 students a year through field trips and educational services, and hosts another 30,000 visitors - many tourists - at the museum.

The Annex is slated to open late fall, just in time for the 130th anniversary of the museum's grand opening in late 1891.

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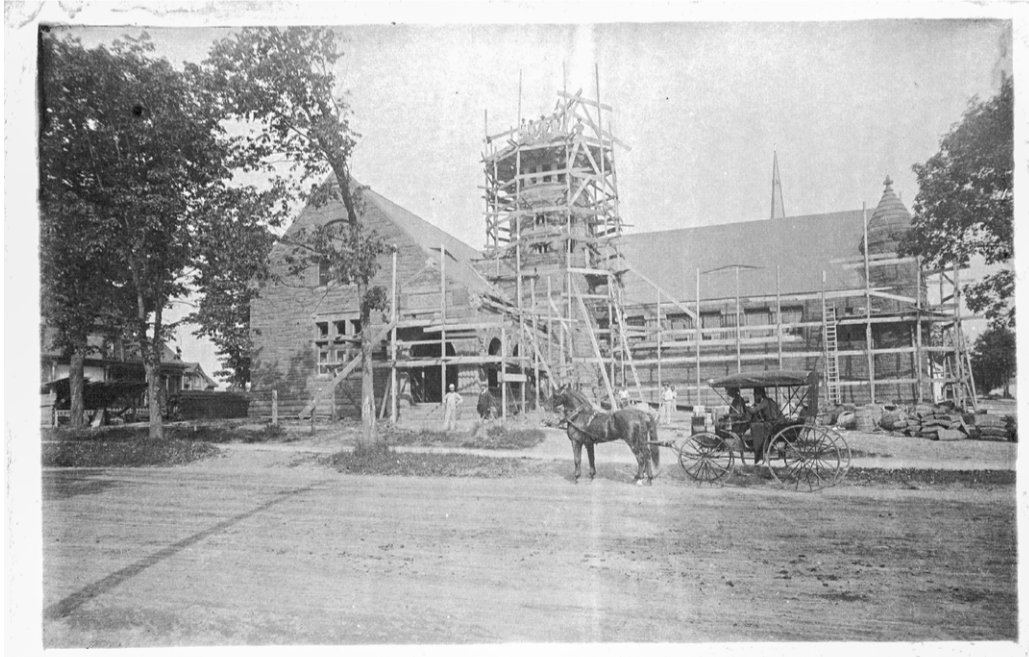
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Construction at the Fairbanks Museum prior to its opening in 1891. (Courtesy of the Fairbanks Museum)



An architectural rendering of the proposed Science Annex on the rear of Fairbanks Museum.



Fairbanks Museum educator Bobby Farlice Rubio gives an astronomy lesson during a Stargazing Party on the United Community Church lawn in St. Johnsbury in August, 2018. The event set a world record for largest astronomy lesson with 1,701 in attendance. (File Photo by Paul Hayes)

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BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

There are a lot of car dealerships on Memorial Drive in St. Johnsbury.

Big, expansive car dealerships spread-out along the main thoroughfare on the north end of town.

And then there's Quality Mitsubishi. "It's just a nice, smallish, friendly place," said Abel Toll, whose company "Autosaver Group" purchased the property in 2005.

At the time, it was a used car dealership which had been operating under the name "Quality Motors" since 1966.

When Toll and his partner - the late Ronney Lyster - bought it they turned it into a Suzuki dealership.

"We had the opportunity to get the Suzuki franchise and we needed a place to put it," said Toll. "We weren't looking to buy it, we were looking for a place and it just worked out."

When Suzuki decided to stop selling cars in the United States, Toll and Lyster switched brands to Mitsubishi.

Toll says Quality Mitsubishi continues to do well because Mitsubishi cars remain a popular product despite being located in the middle of what many consider to be truck country.

"It's a good buy," said Toll. "The appeal is they are affordable. They come in front-wheel drive and all-wheel drive and you can switch back and forth in between. And they have a ten year, 100,000 mile warranty."

Quality Mitsubishi (which still operates under the corporate name Quality Motors) is located at 36 Memorial Drive, has 18 employees and has been managed for years by Mike and Shelly Martin.

And even though Toll didn't buy it until 2005, his connection to the dealership goes way back to his childhood while growing up in St. Johnsbury.

"My first job was with Quality Motors when I was twelve or thirteen-years-old," said Toll. "I'd ride my bicycle down and wash cars."

Back then it was owned by a partnership of Ernie Thurston and Paul Leonard - and later Ernie Thurston and Bill Dimick.

Toll, who now owns more than a dozen car dealerships across the region, said buying Quality Motors decades after working there was a special experience for him.

"Yeah, it was kinda cool," said Toll.

Toll has been in the car business since he graduated from Boston University 44 years ago. He started his first used car dealership on Portland Street (Route 2).



Abel Toll, Autosaver Group owner. (Courtesy ASG)

"When I got out of college I didn't know what I was gonna do so I bought the building out on Route 2 that has been the Autosaver Outlet building for a while," said Toll. "That was my first location."

He then worked for the former Wayne Ford new car dealership in St. Johnsbury where he met his future partner - Ronney Lyster.

"I hired him as a salesperson at Wayne Ford," said Toll. "He was a good guy."

Together they would end up building Autosaver Group into what it is today.

Lyster died unexpectedly in 2018. Autosaver Group now owns three car dealerships on Memorial Drive.

In October, the company purchased St. J Buick-GMC and St. J Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram. Toll said it was a good opportunity at the right time.

Autosaver Group also owns Littleton Chevrolet-Buick and Crosstown Motors in Littleton, N.H. as well as Capitol City Buick-GMC and Capitol City Volkswagen-Mazda in Montpelier.

The company now has over 500 employees but Toll said his approach has always been to maintain a local feel at all his dealerships.

"The stores are run on an individual basis," said Toll. "They have their own personalities."

Autosaver Group also owns dealerships in Newport, Bennington, North Springfield and South Burlington, Vermont; as well as Comstock, N.Y. and Newport, N.H.



The original sales building at Quality Motors is seen in the early '80s. (Courtesy Photo)



David Rapoza (left) and Quality Motors General Manager Mike Martin (right) at work in the dealership sales office in St. Johnsbury on Jan. 29, 2021. (Photos by Andrew McGregor)

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Mark Hayes, owner of Hayes Ford, is in mobster garb with an antique Lincoln in August 2017 for the Lincoln parade as part of the 150th anniversary of the Orleans County Fair. Hayes holds the only Lincoln dealership in Vermont. (File Photo)

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BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

NEWPORT CITY — Hayes Ford at 50 years old is a landmark in Newport City.

And it is unique in Vermont. Owner Mark John Hayes III holds the only Lincoln dealership in Vermont.

He's proud of the Hayes family tradition and his role in seeing the business to its 50th year.

His father, Mark John Hayes II, known as John, started the car business in 1958. They moved to the East Main Street site formerly owned by Fernand Poutre in 1971.

The rest is history. Mark and his brother Michael took over from their dad. And then Mark took sole responsibility 12 years later after his brother left for Washington, D.C. Mark bought the business from his father in 1994.

Mark, now at 69, is the only Hayes involved in the company. He has no children to carry on the name but he considered it a family business just the same.

Hayes said it's important to keep as many good people as possible in a company, and he practices what he preaches.

Six people have been with the company for more than 30 years and another 10 or more for 20 years, Hayes said.

He is proud of the health insurance and other benefits he provides his 36 employees, most who are full-time.

"I am very proud of that."

"For this part of the world I am a good economic force," he said.

And he believes customers keep coming back for more than just the Ford and Lincoln brand but because of what they find at Hayes Ford, Hayes said.

"We are there to give the best deal possible and

unsurpassed service after the sale."

The dealership keeps up with the advances in technology. Long gone are the days of backyard mechanics, he said.

Hayes said the dealership is featuring the first hybrid Ford F series pickups.

For years Hayes did not sell electric models, with Hayes saying that the market just didn't exist in this part of the world where freezing temperatures limits the range and uses for electric vehicles.

But now with the home charging stations, charging stations on the road, and the mileage range increasing, Hayes sees a market opening in this area for more hybrids and electric vehicles.

Ford already succeeded with its 2015 redesigned F series pickups with aluminum box and body, which Hayes called revolutionary. That deals with the rust problem plaguing vehicles in a region dominated by salt on winter roads.

Hayes also sees demand for Lincolns, especially with the emphasis on luxury for younger buyers that Ford Motor Company has placed on the brand in recent years.

Lincoln is a local name, and Hayes is proud of it too.

Henry Leland, an automobile engineer from Barton, started luxury brands like Cadillac and Lincoln. He sold Lincoln to Henry Ford.

Hayes anticipates a good year ahead with more to come.

"I am at a good spot in my life" with a viable business that's not glamorous but features good old-fashioned values, Hayes said.

He and his wife like living on the border, within a day trip of Montreal or Boston, which will be accessible again once the pandemic recedes and the border reopens.

"I am a young 69. I really don't have any retirement plans," Hayes said.

"It's not in my current vocabulary. I like my family dealership very much."



The iconic Ford Mustang shows its style in front of Hayes Ford on East Main Street in Newport City.

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45 YEARS

The Creamery Restaurant... 'Where Everybody Knows Your Name'

BY ROSIE SMITH
Staff Writer

DANVILLE — We've all heard the expression, "it takes a village to raise a child." In the case of The Creamery Restaurant in Danville, celebrating its 45th year of operation, the optimal expression should be "it takes a family to establish a successful business!"

For owner, Marion (Beattie) Cairns, the support and loyalty of her family has been evident throughout all the years The Creamery has provided dining service to its multitude of faithful and new customers.

In 1959, the old Creamery building, located on Hill Street in Danville, was shut down, and then purchased by Marion's parents, Harold and Catherine Beattie. The Beattie's owned the McDonald Farm on Route 5 and for years were considered the patriarch and matriarch of the town.

When Marion was only five years out of high school, she decided she wanted to open a restaurant business: "That's what I wanted," she said. "I thought it would be nice to have a restaurant in Danville." So the decision was made to turn the old creamery building into a dining establishment.

There wasn't a lot of work involved in the way of construction. At the time, the building housed trucks for the State of Vermont Highway Department. The building was pretty sound, with only a portion of it



Because of diminished business hours and capacity due to coronavirus regulations, the waitstaff is down to two at The Creamery Restaurant. Shown above with owner, Marion Cairns (center), is Holly English (at left) and Alysia Vance. (Photo by Rosie Smith)

— that had come into disrepair — being torn down. Marion was already knowledgeable about the restaurant business, having worked at the former Aimee's Restaurant in St. Johnsbury. What she also brought to the enterprise was a family with a reputation for their cooking abilities, inherited from a mother who knew her way around a kitchen. Marion was no exception. The seventh in line of a family of 10 siblings, Marion was well-trained to begin the new culinary venture. She hired people to work with her in the kitchen, but the wait staff, in the beginning, was all family members. That's the history of this family — they are always there to support each other.

Marion starts her day early in the morning, preparing soups, breads and sauces — whatever is needed to fill the menu demands for evening diners. Since the beginnings of the restaurant, her and her family members have worked on menu ideas, with help from the public on what would be popular dishes. Favorite meals include fish, such as haddock and salmon, and the Creamery Pasta, which Marion prepares in different variations and is always a hit.

The key dessert of the menu, Maple Cream Pie, was prepared throughout the years by Marion's mother, Catherine, until her passing in 2014. Then younger sister, Gilly Beattie took over, continuing the legacy of this sweet creation, using maple syrup produced by Gilly's son, Jacob Mills, in the sugarhouse not far from the restaurant.

Marion said, "Gilly has turned into mom," carrying on Catherine's legacy of good old-fashioned Vermont home cooking.

The family support involved more than their cooking talents. Gilly and older sister, Jane Kitchel, also supply the restaurant with an abundance of fresh vegetables from their large gardens, during the summer months. Also included in this bounty is an array of flowers, which grace the tables for customers to

enjoy.

When the business opened on July 24, 1976, a menu, designed by an employee, was used. An original is now on display at the restaurant. After a year in operation, a more unique feature was added — the chalkboard menu — the paper version was no longer needed. This method of listing dining options has worked well, especially in the era of COVID, since only staff members are allowed to handle the menu.

At first, The Creamery dining took place on the second floor of the building, which is actually on the same level as Hill Street, where The Creamery is located. The ground level of the building provided an area for special functions. As time has evolved, the downstairs area has turned into the main dining experience.

For 25 years, The Creamery was open seven days a week. That changed to Tuesdays through Saturdays, giving Marion and her staff a break in the work schedule. It has been that way for the last 20 years, before the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic last March, when the business totally shut down until the early summer of 2020.

The Creamery has always supported the Danville community, including keeping the local young people employed. Between Marion at The Creamery, and her twin brother, Marty, owner of Marty's 1st Stop, hundreds of area kids have earned a salary working in the kitchen or doing whatever jobs are available.

Before COVID, Marion employed several locals as waitresses, and family members continued to help out, including siblings, nieces, nephews, and even great-nieces. Now, because of the pandemic, Marion relies on only two waitresses, Holly English and Alysia Vance.

"We don't need anywhere near the amount of staff, because of COVID," she lamented.



The Creamery Restaurant was once the home of the local creamery, used by area farmers, before its closing in 1959.



Members of Creamery staff members in past years: from left, Harmony Berube, Alysia Vance, Jackie Kempton, Sarah Kempton, Amanda Sweeney and Tiffany Johnson. (Courtesy Photo)

Marion attributes the years of The Creamery's success, not only to her family, but to her local clientele as well. On any given evening, community members have been able to enjoy a home-cooked meal while socializing with their neighbors and friends at the same time.

The Creamery's bar, located in the heart of the downstairs, brings to mind "Cheers," an American sitcom television series that ran for 11 years in the 1980s and 90s, where folks share their experiences and lives with each other while sitting around the bar, where "everybody knows your name." Because of COVID the bar is currently closed.

In compliance with Vermont's governor's orders concerning COVID, the restaurant is open Wednesdays through Saturdays, practicing all social distancing, spacing of tables, and only at 50 percent capacity. It is also now necessary to make reservations in advance, which never had to be done in the past.

Recently Marion started offering a take-out menu of The Creamery's specialties, which has proven to be quite successful.

On a very busy night, she said, "there is a fine balance between take-outs and regular customers." It's keeping her and her reduced staff very busy.

Marion, her staff and her family are trying to be optimistic, looking forward to the day when the pandemic is over. Until then, business is carrying on, in the "new normal."

"I look forward to the day when I see my clientele again, sitting around the bar," Marion added.

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40 YEARS

Maple Center Motors Powered By Satisfied Customers

BY STEPHEN GARFIELD
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — After 40 years in business, Maple Center Motors (MCM) has the same number of employees, six, as when the business got started in 1981.

That's a consistency not often found in the business world, but consistency and quality is what MCM customers find in its inventory. Its website, maplecentermotors.com, breaks down its selection of vehicles by brand and price range.

Junkers won't be found on the MCM lot at 1128 Memorial Drive. "Our niche is newer-model used cars, and our goal is for customers to be satisfied, whether it's with what they've bought or the service we've done on their vehicle," founder/owner Gary Sanborn said. "Our niche is lease vehicles, and newer ones we see at auctions. Typically the cars we see at auctions are from Rhode Island and southerly places, they're better cars down there than in Vermont because of the salt...there's a big auction in Connecticut that runs 3,500-4,000 cars a week. There's Toyotas, Hondas, Subarus, all the GM stuff...there are a lot of lease turn-ins, and as I said, that's kind of our niche. We try to get a price range that's anywhere from \$10,000 on up."

It's harder to find an older car in that price range, he remarked. "With the age, most of the time you



have to spend time and the money in the shop getting it the way we want it. We want to make sure it's going to be inspectable, that when it goes out the door, [customers] shouldn't have to do anything, other than the normal maintenance. We go through our cars and make sure they're ready."

This leads to MCM's approach with customers. "We're looking for people who want to come back and buy their second car from us...it's not all about today, and what we're doing today. We're looking at the long haul. We want that person to buy multiple cars, and we have a lot of customers who have bought multiple cars. They keep coming back because we don't put any pressure on them, and we take care of them."

The company runs all its inventory, he noted, through the Carfax computer program. "It gives a history of where the car came from, service records,

if it's a one-owner car, stuff like that. The biggest thing is, I want to know where it came from. I don't want to go to Connecticut to buy a Vermont car." It's an expensive app, but worth it, he says. "All I have to do is walk up to a car and scan it, and the app comes up...I can show people where the car came from and all that information. It's actually a pretty good selling tool."

MCM hasn't been immune to the challenge of doing business in the Covid world. "When it started, business just dropped like a rock, nobody was buying, and it was [during] spring, which most of the time is your best time," Sanborn recalled. "Luckily it didn't last long - from about May on, it steadily came up."

"It's still different times because the market varies so much, more than I've ever seen it, with what's going on. It's been challenging."

It also shut down the auctions "for about two

months. You could buy online, but you couldn't go there, and it's not quite the same. You can't see online the wear and tear when you open a car door and look it over, and you can see a lease turn-in that's been taken care of, or one that hasn't."

The company typically goes to three auctions a week, the largest one being in Connecticut. "That's where we do most of our buying - we buy about 15-20 cars per month," he noted. "We do wholesale and retail, so we're buying at auctions, selling, buying for dealers, selling at auctions...we do a little bit of everything, but most of the stuff we're buying is for retail."

Sanborn worked at the Ford garage, Wayne Ford, for seven years before going out on his own. The company has been at its current location for all but its first three years. "Started over by F.W. Webb [on Portland St.], in the building where Auto Saver now is, was there about two years, then came down to where Valero is now. That was Bedard's way back. It was good because there was a Midas Muffler and Sanel Auto Parts almost right next door." He built on his current location after that, he added.

In short, MCM knows everything about the vehicles it has for sale, which puts customers and would-be customers at ease when considering a buy. "You can't be right all the time, but we try to make everyone happy when they leave here. That's what we want. We want somebody to come back the next time."

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Benji Wright works in the back room at Wright's Enterprises in Derby. (Courtesy Photo)

30 YEARS

Wright's On Target For All Auction, Adventure, Outdoor Sporting Needs

BY ROBIN SMITH
Staff Writer

DERBY — The auction business launched a household name in Derby 30 years ago, when Ron Wright opened Wright's Auction house.

And the annual ice fishing derby in lakes and ponds across northern Vermont introduced Wright to generations of children, who proudly showed off their prizes for trophies, praise and hot dogs on a cold Saturday each winter.

Wright's Enterprises on Community Circle in Derby's commercial corridor now features much more than auctions, says Cecile Coulombe, the company's manager.

She's worked with Wright for all of the 30 years that the company has been in operation.

Along with the auction business, Wright's includes Wright's Sports Shop and bait shop.

Wright's employs five to 10 people who work full and part-time, expanding during auction season.

An outdoorsman, Wright features everything you might need for hunting, fishing and archery.

The store also features fly fishing gear, including for those who tie their own flies.

The store, like others that cater to hunters, has been doing a brisk business in the gun sales and ammunition area, Coulombe said.

The demand is so high that the store is out of some ammunition, and certain gun makes and models are hard to come by. Where you could order a gun and see it delivered quickly in the past, you might now have to wait, Coulombe said.

They are seeing a slow year for ice fishing season, she said. Wright's has everything you might need for ice fishing, but they can't guarantee that the ice is ready.

Fishermen are out there on the lakes and ponds, but they are not driving out with their four-wheelers or trucks.

The ice fishing derby sadly is a no-go this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, Wright's was able to hold the ice fishing derby before Vermont closed down to avoid the surge of patients that was overwhelming hospitals in New York City.

With vaccines on the way, Wright's is hoping to hold an auction in March.



Cecile Coulombe and Jason Colburn work in the gun shop at Wright's Sports Shop in Derby. (Courtesy Photo)

It does depend on how quickly Vermonters are able to get their vaccines.

Wright's Auctions held several last summer under the tent. The hope is that they will be able to return to the days of auctions inside the big auction house in the back of the sports shop.

There is always a big demand for auctions, Coulombe said.

But that's a business that has changed over the years.

Where in the past people could sell furniture for good prices, including antique wooden sets, those days are gone, she said.

Today people are looking for more modern pieces that they find online.

But everyone loves an auction, and they expect a lot of people to want to participate once the pandemic allows it.

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30 YEARS

Begin Realty Leads The Way Home For Generations Of Local Families

BY ROSIE SMITH
Staff Writer

What began as a real estate business in the basement of Ernie Begin's home in Waterford has evolved into what is now known in the Northeast Kingdom as Begin Realty Associates, celebrating 30 years of operations in the St. Johnsbury and Danville areas.

A lot of events took place between 1969 — when Ernie took a real estate course and passed the test to start this new venture in life — to present day, where he still enjoys the life as a Realtor without all the headaches of being the owner.

Before becoming involved in real estate, Ernie worked for his father, Tony Begin, on the family farm, which was located in the area in Waterford that is, present day, the exit off Interstate 93. When I-93 was built, it split the land up, including the Begin property, making it more difficult to run the dairy farm. Ernie was told by his father that he needed an alternative source of income.

In the late 1960s, it was relatively easy to get a real estate license. Paperwork for courses was sent to Ernie via the US Post Office. Ernie worked on the courses, with the help of his wife, Vivian ("Vivi"), and when the time came, he drove to Montpelier to take the real estate test. One of the prerequisites of taking the test was providing three letters of reference, stating his good standing in the community.



The Begin Realty Associates building was purchased from the Begins by the Gingues in September 2014. Shown at the 309 Portland St. location is, from left, Paul and Rosemary Gingue; Vivian and Ernie Begin. Courtesy Photo

Ernie began his business right away, with a broker's license, running his office in the basement of his home, installing a separate phone line, and hanging a sign outside announcing the establishment of Waterford Real Estate. Most of his advertising was done via the local newspaper, The Caledonian-Record.

After three years, Ernie partnered with Maurice Chaloux and purchased a house on Railroad Street in St. Johnsbury, establishing Begin & Chaloux Realty. The duo would then merge with Coldwell Banker and become Parkway Realty Associates on Main Street in St. Johnsbury.

In January of 1990, Ernie joined forces with Larry Donna, of LR Donna Realty. Prior to Ernie's move, Vivi was already employed by Larry, working in the real estate business for 8 years.

In January 1991, the business name changed to Begin & Donna Realty Inc. and in 1994 the property for the business's current location, 309 Portland St., was purchased. In 1993, Begin & Donna opened an office in Danville.

Rosemary Gingue, the present owner of Begin Realty, came into the real estate picture in 1989 when she started working for Larry Donna, first as secretary, and then in 1994 obtaining her license to become a sales person.

In 1998, Larry left the business to work for Community National Bank, and with his departure, another name change took place — Begin Realty Associates, which remains the same to this day.

Changes Through The Years

In the beginning of Ernie's venture, the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) had not been created. Multiple Realtors® could list a seller's home — an open listing — making it a challenge and confusing for all involved — the Realtor®, the seller and the purchaser. Moving to MLS made the process much more efficient and organized. A Realtor® can now list a property — it becomes a listing in his/her inventory — but other Realtors® can show said property to potential buyer(s) and work through the original lister for a possible sale.

Ernie said that during the 80s, "real estate was booming ... then the recession calmed things down." Throughout the 1990s, the market went up and down. Now, because of the coronavirus pandemic, business has been experiencing a huge uptick.

"Now there is the issue with inventory," Ernie said. "It's a combination of COVID," he added, along with "groups of people in their 50s, with successful careers. They've made good money, the kids are gone, they want to get out of the city ... have a different atmosphere ... People are looking for second homes, and have discovered they can work from home."

Plus, interest rates are really low, with 2.5 to 3 percent rates for a 30-year loan.

Ernie also pointed out that the local economy is better; the education and jobs: "St. Johnsbury Academy and Lyndon Institute are big draws," he said.

New Ownership

In September of 2008, Rosemary and husband, Paul Gingue, purchased Begin Realty Associates from Ernie and Vivi — Rosemary became Ernie's new boss! The Gingues now also own the building on 309 Portland St., purchasing it from the Begins in September 2014.

"It has been a good business to be flexible with," she said. "I can set my own hours, and work for myself and for the business."

Rosemary attributes her career to Ernie and Larry, and how well they taught her the real estate business.

"I started with him [Larry — LR Donna Realty] as a secretary; Larry really pushed me to get my salesperson license and to obtain the 'GRI' credential — the Graduate of the Tri-State Realtor® Institute, which I did in 1997," said Rosemary, "He was active in the Vermont Realtor® Association and encouraged my participation in the local Board, the NEK Board of Realtors® where I was president in 2002; received the NEKBR Realtor® of the Year in 2003 and 2009; I've been a member of the VT Association of Realtors® Board of Directors and am currently a Board member of Green Mountain Association of Realtors®."

Ernie always encouraged Rosemary to keep family first — which included four children and her husband.

"I wouldn't have had the confidence to own the business if Ernie hadn't encouraged me along the way," Rosemary said. "He was always supportive, and he had a way of offering his advice with guidance that would allow me to figure out a solution to a problematic transaction. We still work well together in our reversed roles!"

She added, "without Larry and Ernie's support, I wouldn't be where I am today."

Rosemary said, "We pride ourselves on customer and client service ... we treat people how we would want to be treated," referencing "the golden rule."

Giving an example of this, Rosemary said, "I like working with a young couple; finding them a home ... receiving a picture later on of them in their new home ..."

"It's a generation thing," she added. "Having a good experience with someone ... selling to parents ... people do remember." It can lead to their children coming back to the business when they are ready to purchase a home.

"You make an impact on people's biggest decision in their lives," she added.

When the coronavirus started, everyone was shut down, including the real estate business, from March through June in 2020. When the market slowly opened up, Begin Realty began physically showing properties.

"Everyone has been good with wearing masks — home inspectors, appraisers, etc.," said Rosemary. But it did pose a problem for out-of-staters, because of quarantine restrictions. That's where virtual showings — recording walk-throughs of properties — be-

came popular.

Where once both buyers, sellers and Realtors® could be present for the final sale of a property, it is no longer possible because of COVID. The lawyers don't want a lot of people in their offices, so closings are done online or with a limited number of people in attendance.

As she looks to the future, Rosemary praises the fact that she has really good agents working for her right now, including young adults.

Currently, there are five agents in the St. Johnsbury office: Rosemary, Ernie, Sharon Moore, Kerry Colby and Emily Worden. Denise Briggs is the broker/branch manager in the Danville office. All Begin Realty's agents are members of the Vermont Association of Realtors® and the National Association of Realtors®.

Debbie Allard is in charge of Property Management, an extension of Begin Realty that handles house or apartment rentals, started by the business 10 years ago because of demand.

"I hesitated to become a boss and own a business," Rosemary said. "But now, I love being the boss lady!"

As for Ernie and his new role: "I'm loving what I do without the stress ... it was the right time to change gears, and I didn't have any problem letting go of the reigns!"

He concluded with a word of optimism about the pandemic: "I think within 6 months you'll see a light at that tunnel."

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Present day, Begin Realty Associates at 309 Portland St. in St. Johnsbury. (Courtesy Photo)

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Above left: Billie Winter, owner of Companion Pet Care. Center: Jennifer Kierstead and a client. Right: Becky Proud has been with Companion Pet Care since the beginning. (Courtesy photos)

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CPC staffers, from left, Marianne O'Loughlin, Jennifer Kierstead, Becky Proud, Allison Hall (with clinic cat Nora), and Jackie Williamson (with clinic cat Kneazle).

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BY PAUL HAYES
 Staff Writer

LITTLETON — Companion Pet Care keeps tails wagging.

The small-animal veterinary practice offers a full-range of services — including wellness exams, dental cleanings, routine surgeries, and chemotherapy — for the region's four-legged friends.

The clinic has enjoyed tremendous growth, developed a loyal clientele, and handed out countless dog and cat treats over the past quarter-century.

Now they celebrate a milestone. This year the business turns 25 — or 175 in dog years — which proves its staying power among local pet owners.

Companion Pet Care was founded in the summer of 1996 by Drs. Craig and Sally Calamaio, who owned and operated Companion Animal Care in St. Johnsbury.

Dr. Billie Winter, a graduate of the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine, joined the staff in 2001 and she and her husband, Joseph Casciari, bought the business in 2001.

Companion Pet Care has steadily built its customer base, from 900 visits in its first year to 4,200 exams, treatments and surgeries in 2020.

Since winter took over CPC has upgraded its imaging and laboratory equipment, improved its chemotherapy services, and expanded its surgical, behavioral, and telemedicine services.

"We have come a long way in 25 years," Winter said. "We have grown from one doctor to three since 2003, and our practice volume has increased four- to five-fold in that time."

SHARED SUCCESS

The secret to CPC's success has been its dedicated, trusted, and hard-working staff.

Today, Companion Pet Care has nine employees with a combined 122 years of experience with the practice.

That includes Dr. Winter and associate veterinarians Dr. Eva Goetz (8 years with CPC) and Dr. Anna Hansalik (12 years).

Other staff are certified veterinary behaviorist Marianne O'Loughlin (4 years), certified veterinary technicians Molly Reynolds (1 year) and Jen Kierstead (16 years), receptionist Jackie Williamson (18 years), bookkeeper and office manager Joe Casciari (18 years), and technician Becky Proud, who has been with CPC since the beginning.

Together, they have gone above and beyond, Winter said.

She offered a few examples of their commitment: Once, when a surgical patient was too unstable to be discharged end of day, Proud agreed to stay overnight.

"Becky agreed to spend the night on a cot in front of the patient's cage so she could monitor him all night long," Winter said. "We often stayed long into the evening recovering surgical patients and monitoring critical ICU patients."

More recently, a puppy was brought in with severe symptoms, stemming from rodenticide ingestion prior to adoption.

"With some brilliant diagnostics by our doctors, and incredible dedication from our staff and his new owners for very intense hospitalization and medical management, he survived numerous blood draws and fluids and is now a thriving, boisterous adolescent," Winter said.

Companion has also taken in a half-dozen senior cats whose owners had passed away, and treated more than 15 pets with chemotherapy.

The first chemotherapy patient was a dog with lymphosarcoma in 2002.

"His owners wanted to pursue everything we could

to extend and increase his quality of life. We did two full rounds of chemotherapy," Winter said, noting that each round involved weekly treatments for a six-month period. "We were able to keep him happy and healthy for two full years, when the average survival time is only one year."

"Our goal isn't to win against cancer, but to extend our patients' lives with the best quality possible as long as we can. It's a process that takes a huge commitment from staff to work with incredibly dangerous drugs, and from dedicated owners to help manage drug side effects, but it is immensely rewarding for everyone."

CHALLENGES OVERCOME

In spite of challenges, Companion Pet Care has endured.

"We have weathered ups and downs in the economy by continuing to find ways to increase the value of our services, and making sure to communicate that value to the community," Winter said. "Every staff member pursues continuing education each year to learn new and improved techniques in medicine and management. We work hard to develop lifelong relationships with our patients, and as a result, take care of multiple generations of pets within a family. We also have children and grandchildren of long-time clients bringing their pets to see us. These relationships are what have carried us through recessions and booms and pandemics."

Speaking of pandemics, COVID-19 has created significant hardships, particularly for service-based businesses.

Fortunately, Companion was deemed essential and allowed to remain open throughout the COVID crisis. To keep staff healthy, they have switched to car side service.

"We bring pets into the clinic for services, and communicate with their owners by phone in their cars. We try to take pictures to share with owners so they can see their pets are happy during their visits, but it isn't the same as being there for many," Winter said.

Due to COVID, Companion can only see one patient at a time. That means fewer bookings per day, and longer wait times for appointments. That will remain an issue until the pandemic is brought under control.

As a result, Companion has turned to telemedicine. Through an app called Virtuwoof, clients can send texts, photos or videos. Those conversations allow staff to diagnose maladies and prescribe medications. Other times, they determine an in-hospital visit is still needed. Either way, it protects public health during COVID.

"It provides an amazing opportunity to communicate about problems while staying completely safe, and can even be done if you're traveling out of the area with your pet," Winter said.

Meanwhile, Companion is looking ahead. There are plans to expand Companion Pet Care's behavioral services, once it is safe to do so.

Winter would like to offer more puppy and kitten socialization classes, and bring back trainer Marianne O'Loughlin to work with problem dog behaviors.

In addition, Companion wants to address cat-specific concerns.

"Cats struggle with visit anxiety much more than their more socialized canine compatriots, and appointments are often very stressful for both the patient and the owner. There may be some changes coming to enhance the feline experience at CPC; stay tuned," Winter said, adding, "Perhaps the thing we take the most pride in is our addition of low-stress handling techniques to reduce fear in our patients and anxiety in their owners. Many, many treats flow at CPC when we're examining patients."

For more information on Companion Pet Care call (603) 444-0600 or visit cplittleton.com.

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Kristen Gates, right, and Jennifer Bean work in the Sunshine Paint shop that Dad's 4 By opened last winter.

25 YEARS
If You Can't Find It At Dad's 4 By Tool & Supply, You Don't Need It

BY KATHERINE FIEGENBAUM
 Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — Dads 4 By Tool and Supply, a fixture at 22 Memorial Dr., is celebrating 25 years in business supplying locals with all the essentials and more.
 Doug Bengston started the store with his wife Jane.
 At first, it was located in Lyndonville at the old stockade building. A few years later they moved to Portland Street in St. J.
 In 2003 the current building at 22 Memorial Dr. was built.
 Benjamin Gates, who serves as a select board member in Barnet, bought the business in 2007. At that time, Dads 4 By had two employees plus Gates and his wife Kristen.
 Around 2009, they added a location at 10 Railroad St. in Wells River. Gates' brother Watson runs that store.
 Now, the business employs 15 people between the two stores.

“[Employee] Charlie Mosher has been here since the first year,” said Gates. “He’s been here for 25 years too. People really come to expect him when they come in.”
 One popular feature of Dads 4 By is their “hardware by the pound” section where one can buy screws, nuts, nails, and other bits of metal by, well, the pound.
 “That’s a thing Doug started and we’ve tried to keep the bulk sections going as much as we can,” said Gates.
 Gates says the main things customers come in for are the essentials, especially propane and pellets.
 “We sell a lot of propane,” he said. “That’s where the slogan on the back of our t-shirts and radio ads came from: ‘Dads Got Gas.’”
 Gates says Dads 4 By’s independence makes them unique from other area hardware stores.
 “We’re locally- and family-owned,” he said. “We buy all the stuff directly from the manufacturers which gives us a little bit of a price advantage. We’re not part of a franchise or big buying group. That gives us a lot of flexibility.”
 He also says that his stores have an easygoing and friendly atmosphere.
 “Employees aren’t afraid to joke with customers and vice versa, things like that,” Gates said.
 Gates says they’ve increased and expanded what



Charlie Mosher helps a customer at Dad's 4 By on Jan. 29, 2021. (Photos by Andrew McGregor)

they sell a lot over the years.
 Dads 4 By has added automotive chemicals as well as farm equipment, sheds, and trailers that can be seen on display around the outside of the shop. However, most of their business is still propane and pellets.
 “We just supply people with the essentials that they need every day,” he said. “We do the extras, but our core business is just everyday supplies that people need.”
 The stores’ name comes from Bengston’s license plate way back in 1996: Doug’s plate read “Dads 4 By” while Jane’s read “Moms 4 By,” referring to their vehicles.
 “It has nothing to do with what we sell, has nothing to do with anything other than the license plate that was on Doug’s truck at the time when he opened the business,” said Gates.
 Last winter, Gates and his wife bought the neighboring building, formerly owned by Enterprise, and opened Sunshine Paint & Brush, which Kristen now runs.
 The couple had been playing with the idea of selling California paint a while ago and things eventually just fell into place.
 “It’s not like [California paint] was never in St. Johnsbury, we just brought back the same line that Mayo’s had before,” Gates said.
 Gates said business has been above normal this past year.
 “Pretty much all of us in the hardware business have done pretty well this year, we can’t really complain too much, other than the struggle to get big-ticket items,” he said. “Actual sales volume has been really good.”
 Dads 4 By Tool and Supply is open Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Sundays and holidays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.



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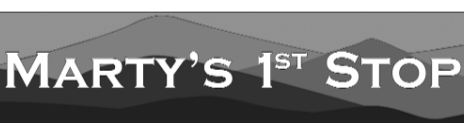
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60 YEARS

Celebrating 60 Years Of Making Smiles At St. Johnsbury Dental Associates

Dr. Darren Boles & Family Continuing Silloway Tradition At Family-Run Practice

ST. JOHNSBURY — This year, St. Johnsbury Dental Associates is celebrating 60 years of service to our patients, while focusing on technological and clinical advancements to continue serving our patients in the future.

St. J. Dental Associates was founded in 1961 by Dr. Frederick and Nilda Silloway. The practice was originally located at the Silloway's home on Main Street. Their daughter, Dr. Katherine Silloway joined the practice in 1993 and became its president after the death of her father in 2003. She served the local community for 25 years and also taught internationally at Dental schools and clinics in Cuba. Dr. Silloway eventually oversaw the move of the practice to its current location at the former Notre Dame Church's rectory from its prior location at the old Hospital on Prospect Street.

Dr. Darren Boles DDS purchased St. Johnsbury Dental Associates from Dr. Kathy Silloway on Sept. 1, 2017. Dr. Boles was happy to acquire a family run business and continue with another family run business. "Buying St. Johnsbury Dental Associates was an amazing opportunity to serve more patients and have associates with specialties to treat patients for most of their oral health needs under one roof. We want our patients to feel welcome and at home here."

Dr. Boles and his wife Suzanne, moved with their daughters Seda, Isla, and Esmé, from the Lakes Re-



Dr. Darren Boles (above) purchased St. Johnsbury Dental Associates (below) from Dr. Kathy Silloway on Sept. 1st, 2017. He and his wife, Suzanne, have enjoyed building relationships locally and look forward to more community outreach and new friends. They have three daughters. Seda, Isla, and Esmé. (Courtesy Photos)

gion in New Hampshire where he had had his own private practice since 2004. Prior to starting his New Hampshire practice, Dr. Boles proudly served as a combat medic with the 101st airborne division, graduated from the Louisiana State University's School of Dentistry, completed an externship in oral surgery in Guy's Hospital in London, and served on mission trips in remote villages in Honduras and Belize. While practicing in New Hampshire, Dr. Boles received plaudits with a letter of appreciation from the New Hampshire state senate for his efforts in starting the dental clinic at Concord Hospital in Concord, N.H.

Together, the entire staff of the SJDA team works to keep the practice running smoothly with a common goal of providing the best patient care and experience that can be imagined. SJDA values the employees at the heart of the practice, including Stephanie, Patti, and Mindy, with over 30 years of service, and Patricia and Sheri, with over 18 years of service.

Suzanne Boles manages the financial aspects of the office and is also a certified health coach. Jamie Kemper, the Practice Manager, has over 20 years of dental experience, is a DANB Certified Dental Assistant and Registered Dental Hygienist with specialty in community health, and a former Treasurer and state delegate for ADHA. Kirsten Keach is a recent welcome addition to SJDA dental family and is the HR Manager.

The Doctors

Dr. Boles is an advocate for all that need dental care. He is kind and enjoys a bit of humor throughout your appointment to make you feel at ease. He enjoys mentoring the younger dentists and sharing his knowledge. Dr. Boles is working on getting certification in sleep apnea dentistry and will be offering that specialty service soon.

Dr. Krystal Kazemba, SJDA's pediatric dentist, and her team of assistants, provide excellent oral care for children from infancy through teenage years. She provides a wide range of treatment options for children and patients with special care needs and maintains surgical privileges at NVHI.

Dr. Markus Richard, Dr. Matthew Schultz, and Dr. David Bogacz are the general dentists providing expert surgical care, painless fillings, same day crowns, laser treatments, dentures, bridges, implants and root canals. The doctors strive to implement the most cutting-edge dental advancements combined with innovative technological advancements implemented since the Boles' acquisition of the practice.

Periodontist Dr. Stephen Boone will be joining the SJDA family in February 2021. Dr. Boone will provide patients with dental implants, bone grafts, and periodontal treatment.



Paula

Patricia

Matt



Markus

Jamie

Krystal

Future

St. Johnsbury Dental envisions a vocational education program in partnership with surrounding high schools to graduate seniors that are registered dental assistants. SJDA seeks to help educate high school students about local job opportunities in the dental industry.

SJDA also intends to become a teaching facility. This would provide learning opportunities for students studying to become dental assistants, hygienists, and dentists. It would also provide more cost-effective treatment options for patients.

The office is also seeking to join the Tooth Tutor program and provide mobile dentistry to area schools to treat children that may otherwise not receive needed dental care. SJDA is also developing dental services for other underserved areas in the community including nursing homes and correctional facilities.

With gratitude, St. Johnsbury Dental Associates thanks the late Dr. Frederick Silloway for founding the business and laying the path upon which Dr. Darren Boles and dental family will continue to serve the great people of St. Johnsbury and the Northeast Kingdom.

St. Johnsbury Dental Associates, located behind the Fairbanks Museum at 1 Place Notre Dame, is where people of all ages celebrate the joy of a happy healthy smile! Experience the Difference today at St. Johnsbury Dental Associates... Call 802-748-9357.

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20 YEARS

Dalton Mountain Motor Sports Celebrates Two Decades Of "Selling Fun"

BY KATHERINE FIEGENBAUM
Staff Writer



Above: Dalton Mountain Motor Sports in Lancaster, N.H. Below: Mia (puppy-in-training) and Charlie (dog-in-charge) are a fixture at Dalton Mountain Motor Sports. (Courtesy photos)

LANCASTER — Many stores you go to because you have to...others are purely for fun.

Dalton Mountain Motor Sports, an outdoor sports equipment dealership which "sells fun," is entering its 20th year of business.

Lisa Nast, the current owner, has worked with the company since "day one" back in 2001. Nast bought the business in 2007 after the original owner, Dean Walts, passed away.

The store, located at 475 Main St., sells snowmobiles, ATVs, utility terrain vehicles, watercraft, boats, as well as trailers to transport all kinds of toys.

Now, Nast says the business is facing the same problems as many shops: a shortage of product. Her suppliers' factories were closed for weeks and, though they're back in production, fewer people are working socially-distanced.

"Even the components that go into building products, of course, all those shut down, that's all in short supply," she said. "We're still seeing a shortage of inventory but thankfully there's good demand! It's not at all what I had figured."

Nast thought the uncertainty would drive people to not spend money but is quite glad the opposite has occurred.

"It's great that people are getting out. You can't go to a concert, you can't go to a sporting event for the most part...you gotta do something!"

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"When you go to purchase a car, maybe you're not as excited because it's a have-to purchase instead of a want-to purchase," said Nast. "Here, more people are buying because they want to buy fun."

In addition to sales, they also have a service and parts department.

The company opened a second location at 245 Jericho Road in Berlin in 2017. The Berlin store also offers ATV and side by side rentals.

Soon, they will offer even more for sale. Dalton Mountain Motor Sports is just starting on a tractor, mower, and small equipment line for homestead and commercial use, to begin sales in a couple of weeks.

The company has 14 full-time employees, and Nast thinks the employees are the main reason why the business has been successful.

"The employees are really what makes the business," she said. "If I didn't have the employees that I have, it wouldn't be what it is. I know and recognize that every day, but I think that's important for other people to realize."

Rick Woodward, lead salesperson, started with the company on April 1, 2005. This means he is going into his 17th year at Dalton Mountain Motor Sports.

Woodward, who sold car insurance previously, also enjoys that Dalton Mountain Motor Sports "sells fun."

"When people leave, they should have a smile on their face and we should too," he said.

"I'm quite successful," Woodward said. "I have a lot of repeat customers from years gone by, and it makes you feel good when somebody comes in looking for you. We've had a lot of good people [work] here over the years."

Dalton Mountain Motor Sports is open Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The company opened a second location at 245



Jericho Rd. in Berlin in 2017. The Berlin store also offers ATV and side by side rentals.

One would be remiss not to mention the company's two "fur mascots."

"Of course, we have Charlie and Mia too [greeting customers]," said Woodward. "They get plenty of biscuits every day."

Nast said the past year has been very strange for her business.

"When COVID-19 first hit, it was probably a month of nothing. Not selling anything," she said. "It was a bit scary."

"Then, towards the end of April people started buying...they wanted to be outside, they wanted to be doing things away from people but still doing things," Nast said. "We actually gained back all that we lost and moved forward."



20 YEARS

New England Home Crafters Manufactures & Delivers Dream Homes To Local Families

BY TODD WELLINGTON
Staff Writer

New England Home Crafters in Lyndon is celebrating its 20th birthday.

It's one of two businesses operated by Mark Bean just outside the village at the junction of Routes 5 and 114.

The company was the next step for Bean after the successful start-up of his mobile home dealership - "Bean's Mobile Homes" - which also operates on the site.

New England Home Crafters sells custom-built manufactured houses that customers can design - from the floor plans to every detail - inside and out.

"This has become the future," said Bean.

The homes are then ordered from a manufacturer and delivered to a pre-determined site. New England Home Crafters works with clients across New England and local contractors to deliver and complete the custom homes.

The company has a strong focus on customer service to the point where it has implemented strategies to continue its tradition of being open for business seven days a week - despite COVID-19 restrictions.

"Under the order of VT Gov. Phil Scott, we must keep 6' social distance and a minimum number of people in one area," reads a notice on the company's web site. "For that reason we ask that one or two people (one couple) at a time view a home. Per the Governors Mandate, as of August 1st (2020) masks will be required. We highly suggest calling for an appointment."

Manufactured homes are built to meet federal standards for safety, installation and construction. They come with features such as luxury bathrooms

and state-of-the-art kitchens with energy-efficient packages available.

"Manufactured homes (Single Section and Multi Section Homes) are commonly available at lower monthly payments than what it costs to rent, providing an affordable path to home ownership for millions of Americans," reads the New England Home Crafters web site.

Bean is a Lyndonville native who began working in the mobile home business while he was still in high school.

Upon his graduation in 1974, Bean went into business for himself. For a number of years, he did all types of service work on mobile homes, including plumbing, heating, aluminum roofs, carpentry and any other work associated with servicing customers' homes.

He bought an old farm truck and began transporting people's mobile homes from one lot to another. Then he bought a fully-equipped mobile home transporter truck and continued to service mobile homes and transport them. He began transporting homes from the factory to dealer sales lots and he added a set-up crew to transport and set them up on lots with hook-ups for water, sewer and lights and skirting around the trailer frame.

By 1995, Bean had opened a new, much larger sales lot near the Colonnade Inn at the intersection of Route 5 and Back Center Road in Lyndon before moving the business to its current location on the north end of town.

The New England Home Crafters showroom is open Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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15 YEARS

Caron's Gateway Real Estate Celebrates 15 Years

BY ROBERT BLECHL
Staff Writer

Caron's Gateway Real Estate, which celebrates a milestone birthday in May, has come a long way in its 15 years.

Launched in downtown Groveton in 2006, it began less than two years before the crash from the Great Recession.

Then, as things got back to normal and the company underwent an expansion with new agents, the COVID-19 recession struck.

Now, though, business is back to booming and CGRE broker-owner Diane Daley is again looking to expand the number of agents and is building a team that capitalizes on the strengths and special skills of each member so they can flourish in a rapidly changing real estate market.

While expanding, she's staying close to her roots. The CGRE sign features her family crest with her maiden name of Caron.

Daley's late father, Ernest Caron, was very instrumental in helping her launch her own company.

She also kept her promise to her brother Paul, not long before he died, that she would start her own real estate agency, as Paul had encouraged her to do.

The business, which handles mostly residential real estate and whose clients include first-time home



Diane Daley

buyers, people buying second homes and vacation homes, as well as home sellers, remains at its original location in Groveton, at the former Ryan's gas station building at the corner of State and Church streets.

Before Daley founded CGRE, she was a real estate broker for the now-defunct Coulombe Real Estate in Berlin.

Today, after a downsizing following the departure of agents who left the area when their spouses took new jobs elsewhere, there are currently four agents - Daley; Nicholas Demers, sales associate who is preparing to take his broker's examination; Kim Crane, a new sales associate; and Hank Dreyer, sales associate.

"I do hope to bring one more on full-time, and there is currently enough volume for that," said Daley. "Nick and I are running ourselves crazy. There's a lot of real estate and everyone is busy, which is a good thing."

To put the current market in perspective, Daley said a year ago there are normally about 40 active listings in the Groveton area.

Today, there are five active listings.

"The market has shifted from a buyer's market, when prices were extremely low, to a seller's market, where sellers are getting top dollar for their properties," she said. "There's been such a shift from a lot of people wanting to get out of dodge."

She described the change.

"When I first came on here in 2006, we had a solid first year and then everything tanked when we had our mills shut down," said Daley. "We were just starting prior to COVID to see things starting to come back to normal in the area. Then COVID hit, and it threw everyone into a standstill for four months."

In July, the state began to relax restrictions on the real estate industry, coinciding at a time when buyers, many from out of the area, began looking northward to buy homes and leave the more densely populated areas and dangerous pandemic hot spots.

"The number of listings has decreased drastically because anything that comes on comes off," said Daley.

Right now, the purchase of land without a home is in demand as many buyers want to be near ATV or snow machine trails, and if the two- or three-bedroom home they are looking for isn't there, they are buying land to build new instead, she said.

"It's been very busy," said Daley.

She also described the nature of a rapidly changing industry.

"We are doing a lot more video tours and selling things over the phone, sight unseen," said Daley. "I walk around with my phone and show them what it looks like. This is not happening just with my agency, but with other agencies."

To meet the technological demand, Demers has invested in a 360-degree camera to give buyers a solid walk-through tour.

Good photography and mapping, a feature in the area that Daley said is unique to CGRE, also give home sellers the ability to promote their home.

"Some of the things we are doing I hope will stay," she said. "We are both in the office less and it's become more of a base station than an office. We are working more remotely, doing a lot more digital and

doing a lot more photography tours and Zoom showings."

Since she began a decade and a half ago, CGRE has completed hundreds of transactions, helping buyers and sellers.

"I'm a people person and enjoy working with people helping them find what they need," Daley said of her love for the job. "Some of us like one facet of the job more than others. I like both sides, helping people find a house and helping people promote a house."

To build a strong team, each person at CGRE has a strong suit, with Demers the technology man who gives 3-D tours and often works with first-time home buyers.

"When you find out what your strengths are, you work with those strengths, and it's a win-win for everybody," said Daley. "I'm hoping we recruit at least one more full-time person in the next few months to help us because it's quite a load sometimes. There is enough money to be had for someone out there who is ambitious."

She is already making a succession plan upon her retirement.

Demers will be an associate broker for a while. "I'm not retiring yet, but when I do, I will stay on as an agent and Nick will be taking over the business as I transition into retirement," said Daley. "It's been a good ride so far. It's interesting and I still enjoy it."

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Alan Brink Jr. in his office at Easy Autos in Lyndonville on Jan. 19. (Photo by Katherine Fiegenbaum).

10 YEARS

Easy Autos In Lyndonville Wants Things To Be, Well, Easy

BY KATHERINE FIGENBAUM
Staff Writer

LYNDONVILLE — Alan Brink Jr. and Jason Webber have worked in the automotive industry their whole lives. However, they weren't happy with their experience staffing big dealerships in St. Johnsbury and Littleton, N.H.

"I got tired of being just a number there," said Brink. "We wanted to get out of that and offer customers real service that is not tailored just around the numbers."

With the support of Brink's father, Alan Brink Sr., the pair have done just that. Easy Autos Sales and Service opened at the end of 2011 and is celebrating 10 years in business.

"Big dealers don't understand that getting work done on your car is scary," Brink Jr. said. "Your car is one of your biggest expenses. And they break a lot, especially with all our weather [in the NEK]."

Brink says the three owners have worked hard to be a community-driven business in a small town.

"We make a living, but we also value giving back to the community and treating them fairly," he said.

"[The business] has been a huge success: we know what it's like to be at those dealers and our customers can see the difference in what we offer," said Brink. "We hope to be here for a long time."

Brink Jr.'s father had a long career at North East Precision and, when he retired, he helped his son and Webber start the business.

"It's been great to be able to spend the last few years working with him," said Brink Jr. "I've enjoyed it tremendously. It's really a family place, and Jason [Webber] feels that way as well."

Brink describes Webber as one of the best technicians in the state. Webber has been doing this work for over 25 years.

Both Webber and Brink grew up in Lyndonville and Burke.

Brink says that Easy Autos mainly relies on word of mouth.

"If you treat a customer right they'll tell 10 people," he said. "If you treat them badly, they'll tell 20."

The store sells and works on pretty much any car,



from diesel to hybrids, foreign and domestic. They offer used parts if the customer prefers and don't work off commission. Additionally, Easy Autos' sales division offers a financing program with guaranteed approval as well as bank financing.

"We're not trying to up-sell," said Brink. "We're just giving customers what they need, and we're honest. Helping customers afford their car is something we strive for."

Easy Autos keeps in stock a wide range of vehicles from SUVs to trucks to commercial vans.

"If it's not here, we can get it," said Brink.

As their name suggests, the shop wants things to be easy: from service to sales to just chatting.

"We keep things easy and simple here and hope no one has any anxiety. We're here for the community," said Brink. "And it helps us that people go home and feel good."

Brink says that business has stayed the same during the COVID-19 pandemic because most everyone still needs to drive their car at least somewhere. However, he laments COVID-19's dampening effect on community events and charities.

Easy Autos Sales and Service makes a point to do charity work. They have worked with the NEK Council on Aging as well as the Kingdom Santa Team. Easy Autos also sponsors kid race car drivers.

"It's great watching the growth of that sport," said Brink.

The store, which is the only AAA repair center from Lyndonville to Newport, is located at 298 Broad St. and is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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All Around Rental owner Phil Brown highlights a fleet of rental rigs at company headquarters.

10 YEARS
Versatility Is Core Strength At All Around Rental

BY STEPHEN GARFIELD
Staff Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY CENTER — There may not be a more aptly-named business in the NEK.

From U-Haul moving trucks to snowmobiles, wedding tents to bounce houses, All Around Rental is likely to have what you need. Indeed, “whatever you need, we’ve got it!” is the first thing one sees on its website (allaroundrental.com).

“Everything from small power tools to excavation, wedding tents, party rentals – we do a little bit of everything,” said owner Phil Brown. “It’d be more surprising what we didn’t have here, than what we do have.”

Now in its 10th year in business under the ownership of Brown and his wife Margaret, All Around Rental is located at 1763 Memorial Drive (Rt. 5), directly across from All Around Power. The business itself has been established for a little over 20 years, Phil says. “When they started up across the street, I was the first employee, and I never left,” he said with a laugh. The Browns are now the sole proprietors of All Around Rental, he noted.

NEK Adventures is a part of All Around Power, slotting in well with the company’s niche. “We’ve always rented snow machines here, so when we purchased the business, we thought, if we’re going to do it in the winter we might as well do it in the summer, so we started NEK Adventures a few years after purchasing All Around Rental for ATV tours in the summer, and snowmobile tours in the winter. It’s become a hugely popular niche for us.” There’s snowmobile access right across the street too, which is where NEK Adventures launches those tours from.

All Around Power is a key seasonal resource. “In spring, we get busy with roto tillers, lawn and garden equipment and excavation equipment. In early summer, it’s our driveable lifts for painting and siding and those things, and the excavators and skidders get even busier. In fall, people look for log splitters, bush hogs and things to try to tidy up be-

fore winter hits.”

Conversely, the U-Haul side of the business “is more year-round,” he noted. “The biggest benefit to the U-Haul is, it brings people into the store. “They’re new to town, they’ve bought an old farmhouse, they need to sand the floors...we’re the first people they see in town, so it’s just another niche.”

All Around Rental is the epitome of a small family business, he adds. “It’s me, my son and my wife. She does all the important stuff that keeps us grounded and out of trouble. My son and I do all the dirty work,” he said with a laugh, adding that his son also guides the NEK Adventures tours.

In short, “we have just enough stuff to keep us busy through all seasons – then you throw in the party rentals which, outside of last year, is generally a growing sector of our business,” he noted. “We used to do five-10 percent of party rentals, now it’s closer to 30-40 percent,” outside of last year. AAR takes care of things like “tables, chairs, linens, the inflatable bounce houses for kids...we do more and more of that every year. We have enough to keep us busy all the time. There’s always plenty to do!”

As with everybody, doing business in the last year of Covid-19 restrictions was “incredibly tough,” he said. “We didn’t open our ATV tours, it was just easier to let that segment go to keep us and our customers safe. Our party rentals, we were probably 80-90 percent off from the year before. I don’t know what to expect at this point.” Covid restrictions did, however, lead to an uptick in equipment rentals, like floor sanders and wallpaper steamers. People had a little more time, they were home quarantining or working from home or businesses, and they had a little stimulus money, so we found they were doing more projects around the house.”

In this, its 10th year, the business is in a good place, geographically and otherwise. “Our competitors are just far-enough away so we have a good little circle of coverage, and honestly, we play real nice with our competitors,” Phil emphasized. “We do re-renting and that type of thing to try to help everybody out, which is how it should be. We’re all small-town kids at heart.”

10 YEARS

From Greenland To The Garden, Performance Powder Coating Has It Covered

BY STEPHEN GARFIELD
Sports Writer

ST. JOHNSBURY — “What a paint job!”

That’s what the uninitiated might exclaim when they look at the shiny carnival red paint on a race car chassis, or how they might envision their bike coated in the aptly-named detonator yellow, when visiting Performance Powder Coating, LLC in St. Johnsbury.

Brushes aren’t found at PPC. Instead, the color has been baked on, using a powder base and a baking process. Located in the Fairbanks Scales building on Rt. 2 (Portland St.), the company is celebrating its 10th year in business. It’s come a long way from its beginnings, says owner/founder Mark Bristol.

“It was just me – ordering, pricing jobs out, then doing the jobs,” he said on Wednesday. “I spent a third of my day with prep work, a third of my day powder coating and a third of my day packing.”

Today, three full-time employees and two part-timers do the work that involves prep work using a phosphate wash, applying whatever color of

See **Coating**, Page D5



Performance Powder Coating owner Mark Bristol displays a just-completed race-car chassis.

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5 YEARS

Roots Run Deep At Gale Insurance Agency

BY AMY ASH NIXON
Staff Writer



Brett Gale

LYNDONVILLE — For Brett Gale, the chance to own and operate an insurance agency bearing his surname came five years ago, and brought him back to the town he's lived in all his life, as well as to a business that's in his roots.

Gale, a 1977 graduate of Lyndon Institute, said his grandfather, Leon Hopkins, and his uncle, George Hopkins, had operated an insurance business in Lyndonville earlier.

Marking his fifth year as the owner and operator of the Gale Insurance Agency - State Farm, Gale said this week that he had worked in retail in earlier positions, both in supermarket management and later in the furniture business, and he always had enjoyed the direct customer contact - and he missed being in his own community.

The position he had prior to opening the insurance agency on Broad Street next to the Lyndonville Post Office was in Barre, so he had been working out of town for a decade.

He said, "I had been really missing being connected to my local community when I found out about the State Farm opportunity in Lyndonville."

"My grandfather Leon Hopkins, and my uncle George Hopkins had owned an insurance agency here in town for many years. The furniture industry not being what it was before the recession of '09, it seemed the right time to make a change, and I was ready for a change from retail management," Gale said. "I had also felt for a while I would like to make the move to self-employment."

Gale grew up in Lyndon Center and in 1983 he married Amy Gale, the principal at the Lyndon Town School. The couple have two grown sons, Caleb and Joshua, and Gale said he and Amy are delighted with their first granddaughter, Lily..

Gale and his wife live in a Lyndon Center home that's been in the family for three generations.

According to Gale, one of the benefits of State Farm is that it is a mutual company, "which means that it is owned by its policy holders, rather than stock holders."

"As such, we exist to benefit our policy holders, not investors," he explained this week.

He said, "The best part of my job is the conversations I am able to have with our policy holders,

understanding their needs, and making sure they are properly protected."

Gale said, "That is what State Farm agents are all about. You can buy insurance yourself online, but we want to build a long-term relationship with you, and serve you as your trusted advisors."

Gale said the fact the agency is locally-owned makes it more personal, "As an independent contractor agent I am a small local business just like many of my customers."

Of course, operating through a global pandemic holds its challenges, Gale reported.

"Covid has been a mixed bag for us. We miss seeing all the customers who enjoyed stopping into the office," Gale shared. "Also, many of the community events we participate in were cancelled this year."

He said, "On the plus side, we are getting good at video conferencing! While this is not as good as in-person meetings, it is helpful for many people who are busy, not having to come in."

"The other big advantage has been people are driving so much less we were able to take a big reduction in our auto insurance rates, and that has brought in a lot of new customers," said Gale. "People are easier to reach at home, and more people are thinking about life insurance which is so important."

Gale praised his staff: Sandy Amadon, Shannon Goodine, Rebecca Lee, and most recently, Diane Roy. "They care, and work hard to exceed expectations," he said.

Coating

Continued from Page D4

powder the job calls for, then spraying, putting the piece into an oven for baking, then removing it for cooling down. The oven in which their colors are baked are heated to 400 F.

The variety of jobs PPC does is "endless," Bristol said. "We get a lot of race car chassis, especially in winter. A lot of that work comes from RSB Racing, in Wentworth, N.H.

"Four wheelers, ATVs, snowmobile parts - all that kind of automotive work, we do. We can take a steel wheel, for example, and make it look chrome using chrome powder."

Also endless are their color schemes. "We have flats, semi-gloss, gloss, wrinkles, textures, glitter, candy colors, translucent-type colors. There's hundreds and hundreds of colors." They can be mixed as well, to get a particular type of color, he added.

The biggest part of PPC's business is industrial, he noted, and they do work for Fairbanks Scales and other businesses. "This is specialty stuff," Bristol said.

"We did a job coating 45 steam radiators for the Lynburke mansion on Darling Hill Road [in East Burke]. Those came out gorgeous."

"The great thing is, you don't get any runs with powder. If you tried to liquid-paint those radiators, with all the nooks and crannies, with all the detail to it, you'd most likely have some runs - at least I would," he said with a laugh.

The word about PPC is out beyond the borders of the NEK and Vermont. "We powder-coated a sculpture of a jack and a ball for someone which is in a park in New York City," Bristol noted. "We did the new Drink Rail at TD Garden in Boston. I believe it's on one of the upper levels. There are 164 post and 492 liner feet of railing. That was a big job."

That job came through Bauer Fabrication, a Middlebury, Vt. company, he added.

"We've done the decorative ceiling panels for the Bank of America headquarters in Times Square. That job came through Appalachian Stitching in Littleton," Bristol remarked.

The farthest a PPC job has traveled is Greenland. "We did a pedestal base, and that's on a mountain in Greenland," he noted. "It holds a glacier melting device on it."

"We also restored a Fairbanks Scale for the University of Oregon Ducks. It's in their football locker so players can weigh themselves on it. That's pretty unique. It had to be just the right color," he said with a laugh. During the tour he also pointed out the framework to a drum kit the company is powder coating.

The process PPC uses is "user-friendly, environmentally friendly - there's no chemicals, no additives, it's baked on," he said.

In short, the company has come a long way. "If you'd told me 10 years ago that this is where we'd be today, I may not have believed you," Bristol said. "When I first bought the equipment, it was one booth, one [spray] gun, one oven, and a wash station. Since then we've added another booth, another oven and another gun. So we can actually have two booths going at once now."

Overall, "I think we're where we want to be," he said of the company's health. "Like everyone else we had a pretty slow summer last summer, but we're getting busier now. We're in a good, comfortable spot." As it is, they occupy 3,000 square feet in the Fairbanks Scales building, which is double what the company started out with 10 years ago.

In short, at Performance Powder Coating, "if it's metal, we can powder coat it," Bristol emphasized with a smile. The company's work can be seen on its new website, www.performancepowdercoatingvt.com.

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