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VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 4 | WINTER 2023

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On the cover

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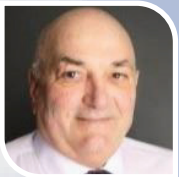
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WELCOME

FROM THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT /CEO



'T is the season to shop locally. What do our businesses say about their commitment to contributing to their community? In this winter issue of Chamber Quarterly, we wanted to give some of our featured businesses a chance to share what they provide locally, how they continue to shop locally and support their community.

As a business advocate, the Dubuque Area Chamber of commerce continues to encourage all to shop locally, this includes local businesses utilizing other local businesses throughout the year.

Why is shopping locally important to them and our community? How can people support small businesses beyond monetary value? Are they sending them a shout out on social media, referring other business partners to their businesses, or utilizing services for their own business growth?

The Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce continues to advocate, connect and educate our members that shopping small has big impacts.

Sincerely,

President & CEO, CCE, IOM
Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce

Welcome New Members



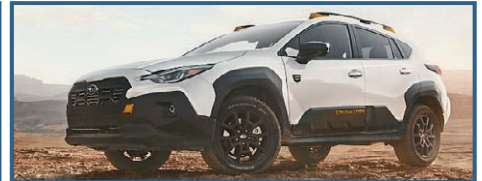
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SHOP LOCAL



Why keeping your dollars local
is key to a healthy community



BY CHRISTOPHER STEINBACH

Scott Wright doesn't even have an Amazon Prime account, and he has a quick answer when asked why.

"Shopping local keeps everyone's money where it belongs," said Wright, president of Lifeline Audio Video Technologies in Platteville, Wis. "Successful local companies keep jobs and money in the tri-states. It's a big circle. It helps support everything from local charitable nonprofit organizations to helping support your child's youth baseball league. Shopping local also helps create relationships that can last a lifetime."

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Traffic moves along Central Avenue in Dubuque.

Lifeline, a 33-year-old company that employs 10 people, is an audio/video contractor that specializes in high-quality audio/video solutions. Its typical customers include schools, churches, auditoriums, conference rooms, training rooms, courthouses, banks, restaurants, banquet facilities, background paging and outdoor spaces.

"If it has to do with a speaker, microphone, projector or TV in a commercial space, then we can create an easy-to-use solution that will meet a customer's expectations," Wright said. "We are a solutions-based company where the relationship is as important as the sale. We sell solutions, not just products."

He isn't alone in his belief about the importance of shopping local.

"Working with me and my business means you're also going to be working with other local businesses to get the job done," said Angie Breitsprecker, owner and sole employee of Dubuque-based Matters of Space by Angie, an interior design, home staging and professional organization business.



Cheryl Rusk, owner of Charlotte's Coffee House, prepares a hot chocolate.

"I have the eye for the design, but I'm not a contractor who builds walls or lays floors," she said. "I hire these people as well as others to help the vision become

a reality.

Jimmy Naprstek, owner and sole employee of Kodiak Creative, said, "Every day, you have the choice of where your



hard-earned dollar goes, so why not spend it with someone local that is pursuing their dream?"

He started his multimedia production agency in 2021. The company provides photography and videography spaces as well as corporate marketing, including website design and management, graphic design and social-media consulting.

"Shopping locally strengthens the local economy, preserves community identity, cultivates social connections, and promotes sustainability, said Cheryl Rusk, owner of Charlotte's Coffee House & Drake House Vacation Rentals in Dubuque. She and her husband, Don, started the business in 2015. They employ about 70 people, including their sons, Ben and Tim, who is the company's chief executive.

"We have been so fortunate to have such a dedicated following, which makes it possible for us to support other local businesses," Cheryl Rusk said.

Spending money isn't the only way, however, that tri-states residents can support local businesses. Most business owners appreciate positive reviews on Google and other such sites when customers have enjoyed good service. Word-of-mouth also is helpful.

"Buying a gift card from a local business and giving it to a potential customer can be huge," said Wright. He also encourages area residents to utilize the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce's B2B referral group.

Said Breitsprecker, "People can support my

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Pure Roots Midwest uses what might be an old-fashioned method to attract and retain its customers.

“We tell people you can put your brand on about anything to advertise and promote your business,” said Stephanie Duve, who owns the Peosta, Iowa, laser-engraving business with her husband, Jordan. “But if you’re not putting it on a good-quality product people aren’t going to use it, so what’s the point?”

The Duves started their business by branching off from the woodworking business owned by her dad, Dave Burkart.

“He had a laser engraver that he used for his wood projects. I expressed interest in learning how to use his machine the spring of 2018,” Stephanie Duve said. “When looking into all the things that

can be done with a laser, I learned about lasering drinkware. This became the primary focus of our business.”

The designs they create on a computer are sent to the laser, which removes the powder coating from a tumbler, exposing the stainless steel and creating a permanent high-end design on the drinkware. The Duves started out by making fairly simple items for personal use and have since moved more into engraving more sophisticated products for local businesses.

“The first small business to place a bulk order with us was (Desirae Gillies) with Trendsetters Boutique,” Stephanie Duve said. “Desi is a huge supporter of other local small businesses. We’ve just kept growing from there.”

Trendsetters and many of Pure Roots Midwest’s earliest customers are supporting her business, Duve said.

“But we are branching out so much more. We recently started working with

Cottonwood Custom Tees & Signs (in Farley), making their leather hat patches. We are also doing more work with my dad’s wood products.”

As natives to the area, the Duves say their connection to the community matches their focus on delivering high-quantity items to their customers.

Wright and Naprstek agree with the Duves on the importance of connections and building relationships.

“Meeting with customers, getting to know what they want and their expectations and forming face-to-face relationships with customers is very important,” Wright said. “It’s how we insure we will meet the customers’ expectations.”

Added Naprstek, “The next time you support a local business, don’t keep the secret to yourself. You easily know five to 10 other people who could also benefit from that businesses’ services or products.”



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Holly Lovell launched the Lovell Group – a new @properties-elleven | Christie's International Real Estate office – in May, but she thinks of herself as a concierge. “Our team focuses on white-glove service. We offer staging and cleaning and professional photography,” said Lovell, broker at the new firm at 467 Bluff St. “We have more of a collaborative team experience (as opposed to) one solo agent trying to do it all.”





Lovell, who has sold Real Estate for 12 years, oversees a team of six people, plus one independent real estate agent. "We reach from Dubuque County and Jackson County, all the way to Madison (Wis.) and the surrounding area," she said. "Bringing a new brokerage to Dubuque

is very exciting," It's a seller's market, but buyers are beginning to see more opportunities. "It's cooling off enough that buyers can come in and say, 'You know what? I'm going to buy this house, but I'm not just going to throw an extra \$50,000 at you in order



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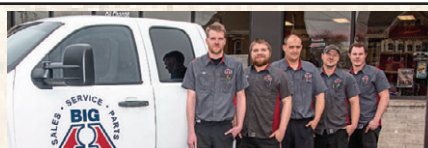
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Holly Lovell



to win,” she said. “We have a more stabilized market than what it has been in the last couple of years.”

The house cleaning, staging and professional photos – all of which Lovell’s firm pays for up front – can create an advantage for sellers by effectively marketing to potential buyers.

“We need people just to see the features of your house rather than your things,” Lovell said. “When you have 52% of buyers finding their homes online, all they can go off of are pictures. And if those pictures are of your stuff, they’re not going to see the value in your property. They need to see what they’re buying.”

Her firm offers this level of service, she joked, because, “I’m kind of a control freak.” Her goal, however, is to make sure the house shines so no money is left on the table when the deal is done. The professional cleaning, staging and photos can produce an extra 3 to 5 percent in the sale price, Lovell said.

“We want to make sure we’re leveraging and positioning their purchase – or their sale – on the best leg possible to keep more money in their pocket,” she said. “Offering more of these services is our way of doing that for our clients.”

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BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK

1-800 T-shirts



Tom Rauen sets up a machine to screen print World Series t-shirts for the Washington Nationals.

BY CHRISTOPHER STEINBACH

Tom Rauen didn't know in 2005 what he didn't know when he launched what became 1-800 T-shirts.

"I started the business with no clue on how to actually screen print a T-shirt or how to embroider a hat or a jacket," said Rauen, chief executive of the company. "It was learn as you go."

He began the business as Envision Screen Printing and Embroidery. He worked side by side with his mom in a 10-foot-by-10-foot room in the Dubuque home of his parents, Steve and Joanne Rauen. Today, the company employs 35 people who produce and ship uniforms, T-shirts, and marketing products nationwide from a 35,000-square-foot facility at 7010 Chavenelle Road.

"It probably would've been smarter to get an apprenticeship or, you know, try to get a job at somebody else's business that was already doing it, so you're learning on their dime and the mistakes you're making aren't costing you a lot," Rauen said. "That definitely lengthened the learning curve."

Doing it the hard way, however, also helped Rauen develop grit.

"Learning on my own let me evolve and create self-discipline, the work ethic and the resiliency and tenacity to keep trying new things, keep going when there was a bump in the road," he said, adding that the business encountered some bumps.

"We were trying to do sales and marketing and customer service while at the same time running production and doing



Learning on my own let me evolve and create self-discipline, the work ethic and the resiliency and tenacity to keep trying new things, keep going when there was a bump in the road.

Tom Rauen

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Tom Rauen speaks during the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce annual meeting at Hotel Julien Dubuque in 2019.

the artwork and doing all the production and fulfillment and everything else," he said. "It was like wearing 10 different hats all at once."

After five months in his parents' basement, the business moved into a 2,000-square-foot facility it called home for six years and then moved into a 7,000-square-foot facility for another six years. It moved in 2018 to its current location. In 2020, Rauen acquired 1-800 T-shirts and renamed Envision.

"We really liked the national presence and the marketing behind having that phone number and the domain name (1800tshirts.com)," Rauen said. "It's very memorable and easy for people to tell other people."

The company's roster of

clients includes Fortune 500 companies and Major League baseball teams such as the Washington Nationals, local T-ball teams, lawn care companies, painters and other small businesses. The success hasn't gone to Rauen's head and he doesn't rest on the company's laurels because of a lesson he learned during the early days of the pandemic in 2020.

"You don't know that business is guaranteed tomorrow. You can't take a customer for granted. You have to keep delivering a good product, great service," he said. "We're always asking 'What's changing in the industry? What's changing in the economy?' We're constantly reinventing ourselves or adjusting to our customers' demands."



T-shirts in the process of being screen printed.

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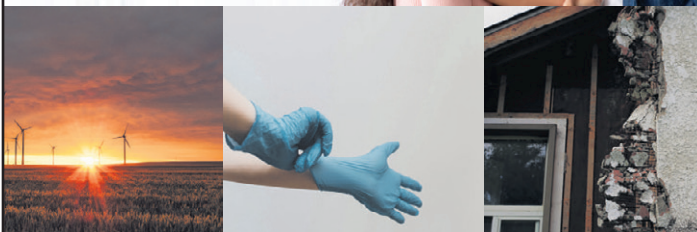
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Chad Richardson
President

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Dubuque, IA 52003
crichardson@richardsonmotors.com
563-582-5411



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RIBBON CUTTINGS



Molo Big 10 Mart
Ribbon Cutting Date: 7/27/2023
Address ?



Matters of Space by Angie
Ribbon Cutting Date: 8/31/2023

RIBBON CUTTINGS



@properties - EllevenChristies International Real Estate
Ribbon Cutting Date: 9/28/2023
467 Bluff St.



Century 21 Signature Real Estate
Ribbon Cutting Date: 7/13/2023
1171 Iowa St.

RIBBON CUTTINGS



Boys & Girls Club — St. Mark's
Ribbon Cutting Date: 8/15/2023
1299 Locust St.



Dubuque Main Street
Ribbon Cutting Date: 7/20/2023
1069 Main St.

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*Treasures of
Croatia & Slovenia*



Alaska Cruisetour



*Spain & Portugal
Highlights*



*The Grand Canyon
Route 66 & Las Vegas*



*Albuquerque Balloon
Fiesta*



*Music Cities
Christmas*

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Alaska Cruisetour

Aug ~~SOLD OUT~~ 10, 2024 & Sept ~~SOLD OUT~~ 16-19, 2024 | 11 Days

from **\$4,999** pp double

Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta

October 4-9, 2024 | 6 Days

\$3,649* pp double

Informational Meeting

Tuesday, December 5 | 6 p.m. | Telegraph Herald

801 Bluff Street

Treasures of Croatia and Slovenia

October 15-25, 2024 | 11 Days

\$4,599* pp double

Music Cities Christmas

December 3-8, 2024 | 6 Days

\$3,549* pp double

Informational Meeting

Tuesday, December 5 | 7 p.m. | Telegraph Herald

801 Bluff Street

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- Most Meals
- Admission to Attractions



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TelegraphHerald.com/Trips

Questions...call 563.588.5697.

*Rate reflects \$100 booking discount per person.

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RIBBON CUTTINGS



Mount Carmel Bluffs
Ribbon Cutting Date: 8/17/2023
1040 Carmel Drive



Tri-Phoenix Group
Ribbon Cutting Date: 8/3/2023
900 Jackson St., suite LL3-12



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