CNY Business Journal

40 Under Forty

Presented By:

M&T Bank

Virtual Celebration
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This year, with the challenges we’ve faced, we have learned a lot about ourselves, our communities and the importance of leadership. When confronted by crisis, great leaders step up, stand tall and pave the way forward. They also listen and learn and adapt to best serve the needs of others.

The 2020 40 Under Forty exemplify this type of leadership. They put in the work necessary, always going above and beyond, to drive positive change here in our community.

These young professionals serve as examples for us all to emulate.

Even during these most challenging of times, their leadership and relentless hard work are making our region stronger and more resilient. I’m proud to congratulate them for the impact they’ve made and for earning this recognition.

At M&T Bank, our team is driven to make a difference in people’s lives. We strive to understand what’s important to our customers, our communities and our colleagues, and we empower them with the support, resources and tools they need to reach their full potential.

But as we do this work of understanding and empowering and serving others, we can’t lose sight of our need for balance. Now especially, it can be incredibly difficult to juggle everything and find balance with our responsibilities at work, at home and in our communities. With our current work-from-home situation, we’ve focused on big things like flexible work schedules and additional support programs and smaller-yet-important things like explicit “permission” to turn-off video feeds. We’ve developed solutions by listening to the needs of employees and by leading with empathy and without judgment.

As we navigate the uncertainty that remains ahead of us, I’ll continue to look to the Central New York Business Journal’s 40 Under Forty for inspiration on how to best serve, lead and find balance, and I encourage others to join me in following their example.

Allen J. Naples
CNY Regional President
**REBECCA ALEXANDER**  
*Physical Therapist, Artist*  
Upstate Medical University, Rebecca Stella Art  
**Age: 33**

Dr. Rebecca Alexander is a physical therapist, yoga teacher, and founder of Rebecca Stella Art. She collaborates with the Fitness Inclusion Network and the Syracuse Parks Department resulting in a guidebook about unified yoga and instructional videos on breathing techniques for stress management, optimal health, and inclusive recreation. In the creation and sales of her original artwork, Dr. Alexander engages in activism for elephant conservation via the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya.

One word that describes you best: Conscientious  
**Hobbies:**  
Recycling items and making them into artwork, rescuing house plants, & hiking the Adirondack high peaks  
**Secret talent:**  
Insect and small-animal identification  
**Bucket-list item:**  
Hiking Mount Kilimanjaro

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**JENNIFER L. ALFIERI**  
*Chief Fiduciary Officer*  
Tompkins Financial Advisors  
**Age: 39**

Jennifer is responsible for overseeing the trust services department and works with clients and their advisors to develop estate planning strategies. Prior to joining Tompkins Financial Advisors, Jennifer practiced law for more than 10 years, specializing in estate planning and trust and estate administration. She received her B.B.A. from St. Bonaventure University; her J.D. from Syracuse University, College of Law; and her L.M. in estate planning from the University of Miami, School of Law. Jennifer is a member of the New York State Bar Association and the Women’s Bar Association of Central New York. She is a leader in both her work and community roles.

One word that describes you best: Dedicated  
**Hobbies:**  
Running and spending time on the water, whether it be shortishing, sailing, tubing, or swimming with family  
**Secret talent:**  
Decorating birthday cakes for my kids.  
**Bucket-list item:**  
Visit various cities in Europe with my husband  
**Best advice ever received:**  
“If you think you’ll lose, you’ve lost”  
**Volunteer activities:**  
President of the Estate Planning Council of Central New York; chairman for Toomey Residential & Community Services

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**ALEXANDER J. BEHM**  
*Executive Director*  
Clear Path for Veterans  
**Age: 34**

Alex is a Central New York native who graduated from Le Moyne College. He joined the Clear Path team in 2015 and developed the Warriors Working Program that provides career services support to veterans, military members, and their families. In 2020, Alex transitioned into the role of executive director. In this role, he is charged with ensuring that Clear Path’s holistic programs and services are executed effectively across its 23-county coverage area in New York state. Collaborating with local, state, and federal partners, Behm and his team advocate for veteran-centered services to be made available to all communities Clear Path serves. Alex enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps as an infantryman in 2005. He spent his first three years with the 1st Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Company, deploying to multiple locations worldwide. He then served with the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, completing a deployment to Ramadi, Iraq.

One word that describes you best: Patriot  
**Hobbies:**  
Camping, traveling, boating  
**Secret talent:**  
Gardening  
**Bucket-list item:**  
Ski the Swiss Alps  
**Best advice ever received:**  
Work hard, stay humble, and never forget the sacrifices others made on your behalf  
**Volunteer activities:**  
Helping fellow veterans in the Central New York community

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**Congratulations to Kara Gemmell—  
2020 40 Under Forty Award Winner**

Loretto is proud of Kara, Director of Independent Living, at The Nottingham. Thank you for helping to make our community extraordinary!
NICOLE K. CHIDSEY
Marketing, Communications and Relations Manager
Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists
Age: 32

Nicole has proudly worked at SOS for 13 years, continuing to cultivate the SOS brand through measurable marketing and business-development strategies. A Syracuse and Baldwinsville enthusiast, she enjoys spreading the good word about her hometown and encouraging active participation to make it an even better place to live and work. She is a graduate of the Leadership Greater Syracuse civic-leadership training program and an outstanding young professional who every day strives to be better than the day before. Nicole is grateful to have supportive family, mentors, and peers enabling her passion for engaging with the community.

One word that describes you best: Reliable
Hobbies: Exploring with her husband and two dogs & tackling home-improvement projects.
Secret talent: Car karaoke

GEORGIA G. CRINNIN
Trust and Estate Attorney
Bousquet Holstein PLLC
Age: 29

Georgia is a trust and estate attorney at Bousquet Holstein, where she assists families both with estate planning, navigating the court system after the death of a loved one, including in contentious matters. She attended the University at Albany, where she studied political science and criminal justice and then graduated from Washington and Lee University School of Law. She returned to the Syracuse area to be near her large family. Outside of work Georgia enjoys spending time with her fiancé, friends, and family.

One word that describes you best: Loyal
Hobbies: Reading, running, watching Syracuse basketball
Secret talent: It’s a secret
Bucket-list item: To travel to Australia

Best advice ever received: Just keep going
Volunteer activities: Volunteer attorney with the Volunteer Lawyer’s Project Surrogate’s Court Clinic and Eviction Defense Clinic, member of the ARISE, Inc. board of directors

DEKA DANCIL
Manager, Bias Response & Education
Syracuse University
Age: 28

Deka Dancil is a local community activist and advocate. She is a Syracuse University alum and currently works for the university as manager of Bias Response and Education. Deka serves as the president of the Urban Jobs Task Force, a local 501(c)(4) that advocates for equal access to employment opportunities for city residents, especially minorities. She is a founding member and core trainer for RiseUp for Social Action, which provides training and consultation to activists, organizers, institutions, and organizations to incite social change. Deka is also a TEDx Speaker, and a graduate of Leadership Greater Syracuse. Her personal mission is to use her experience growing up in extreme poverty to empower others living the experience now to overcome.

One word that describes you best: Change agent
Hobbies: Reading & traveling
Secret talent: Singing

JOHN ECKMAIR
Vice President, Chief Underwriting Officer
Utica National Insurance Group
Age: 35

John grew up in Clinton, where he attended and graduated from Clinton Central School District. He spent a lot of his time in the restaurant his parents still run today, which is where he learned a lot about hard work, and business. After graduating from Le Moyne College with a bachelor’s degree in business administration, John took on a role as an underwriting trainee with Utica National Insurance Group. During the next 12 years, he continued to learn and grow both personally and professionally. John is a graduate of the Leadership Mohawk Valley civic-leadership training program. He resides in Utica and enjoys spending time with friends and family, as well as being active in the community.

One word that describes you best: Versatile
Hobbies: Cooking and playing volleyball. This year, I have added spin to my list.
Secret talent: If I told you, it wouldn’t be a secret

Bucket-list item: Start a bucket list
Best advice ever received: “You have the mental horsepower to do whatever you want; you just need to start applying yourself.”
Volunteer activities: Empowered Pathways board of directors, finance committee. United Way of The Mohawk Valley: board of directors, governance committee

Best advice ever received: "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take"
KARA J. GEMMELL
Director of Independent Living
The Nottingham – A Loretto Community
Age: 32

Kara graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a bachelor’s degree in recreation management and policy and is a certified therapeutic recreation specialist. She began her career at Loretto, working to engage older adults in meaningful and purposeful leisure activities. Kara’s career has grown as she transitioned into the role of director of therapeutic recreation, and most recently, director of independent living at The Nottingham. These growth opportunities have centered on her commitment to embracing person-centered empathy for residents and staff. Kara and her husband are the proud parents of an energetic 4-year-old son. Her free time is filled with the family gatherings, reading, and enjoying local craft beer.

One word that describes you best: Determined

Hobbies:
Spending time with my family, cooking, practicing yoga.

Secret talent: I once took a flying-trapeze class.

Bucket-list item: Visit all 50 states with my husband and make a trip to Iceland

Best advice ever received: “You cannot fill someone else’s cup when yours is empty”

Volunteer activities:
Involved annually in the Walk to End Alzheimer’s Campaign and United Way, supporting voter registration and participation in social-justice campaigns

DAVID GRAHAM
Digital Operations and IT/Social Media Manager
CH Insurance
Age: 39

Graduate of international studies from Carroll University, David is a world traveler with a heart all about Syracuse and Central New York. He’s a vital driving force at CH Insurance and is one of the most highly regarded spokespersons by his peers and colleagues throughout the industry. He is the wizard behind the curtain with social media and digital platforms. He has a larger-than-life personality and is loved by everyone he has the opportunity to work with and teach.

One word that describes you best: Sincere

Hobbies:
Traveling, being in the water, socializing

Secret talent: Can speak German

Bucket-list item: Fly an airplane or helicopter

Best advice ever received: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”

Volunteer activities:
Believe in Syracuse, Applied Client Network Syracuse chapter president

NICK GRIMMER
Director of Giving Strategies
The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties
Age: 37

Nick is responsible for managing all aspects of fund development, donor engagement, and planned giving in our community. Prior to joining the Community Foundation, he worked in various roles overseeing the alumni relations and fundraising programs at higher-education institutions, including the assistant VP of development at SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Utica and Albany. Nick was a decorated college athlete in Division III. He has transitioned from competitor to officiant. His presence each season at dozens of regional athletic contests as a referee contributes positively to youth sports and provides a positive example and role model to student-athletes. He lives in New Hartford with his wife and two boys.

One word that describes you best: Good-natured

Hobbies:
Spending time with my family, exercising in our basement gym, going to Phish concerts

Secret talent: I can still dunk a basketball

Bucket-list item: Hiking all of the Adirondack High Peaks

Best advice ever received: “Don’t miss” — from my father Kevin, my college basketball coach

Volunteer activities:
Prior board member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals – Central New York Chapter and the Greater Utica Chamber of Commerce

Congratulations NICOLE CHIDSEY
Thank you for your dedication and leadership in our community!

Follow us on Twitter at @cnybj
SUSANNE GRUENING ANGARANO
Founder and Principal
Vaysen Studio
Age: 34

Susanne is a principal at Vaysen Studio and Ashley McGraw Architects. Her extensive experience includes a focus on higher-education projects and holistic sustainable-design work. For every project, Susanne works with stakeholders to transform environments and to cultivate symbiotic relationships between humans and nature. Capturing intangible qualities in a tangible way is why she is an exceptional designer and facilitator — always seeking to dig deeper into culture and context, to uncover and realize project and stakeholder potential. Susanne is the recipient of the 2019 ASID Ones to Watch award, and her interior-design work was awarded the 2019 ASID Design Impacts Lives honorable mention.

One word that describes you best: Passionate

Hobbies:
Cooking & singing

SECRET TALENT:
I speak German

BUCKET-LIST ITEM:
To see the Aurora Borealis

BEST ADVICE EVER RECEIVED:
Life is short — seize each day

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:
I have been working closely with K-12 and higher-education institutions to navigate responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Longtime member of the Syracuse Oratorio Society

BRENDAN HALL
Senior Engineer
CHA Consulting
Age: 36

Brendan is a senior engineer at CHA Consulting in downtown Syracuse. As a part of the Advanced Energy Group, he leads the mechanical-design team that implements energy-efficiency retrofits in commercial and industrial buildings. Brendan has volunteered for the industry professional society his entire career. As the local-government affairs chair, he connects industry technical resources with New York state agencies and local governments, which has created a conduit for timely technical information on building reopening from COVID-19 and high-performance building systems in support of the state’s climate goals. Brendan and his wife are both Watertown natives and have two daughters.

ONE WORD THAT DESCRIBES YOU BEST:
Flexible

HOBBIES:
Skiing, soccer, DIY projects

SECRET TALENT:
Singing

BUCKET-LIST ITEM:
Taking my girls hiking in Glacier National Park

Best advice ever received:
Always do the right thing, never do the wrong thing

Volunteer activities:
American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) government affairs chair – Central New York chapter; three technical committees, NYSERDA Buildings of Excellence Competition advisory committee, Getting to Zero 2021 Conference advisory committee.

KATE HOUCK
Executive Director
David’s Refuge
Age: 39

Kate Houck leads David’s Refuge, a Central New York-based nonprofit organization that provides respite programs and support for caregivers of children with special needs or those with life-threatening illness so that they can return to their families refreshed and refocused. With an undying love for seltzer and the tendency to belt out 1990s lite rock, Kate finds satisfaction in the little things like bonfires, inspirational quotes, and gardening. She’s hungry for life and loves with a fierceness that translates to anyone in her circle. When you get to know Kate, it’s hard to decide if she’s a total contradiction or incredibly consistent. Polished and poised one day, gardening in the mud the next. You will find that whether she’s running a marathon, sharing our mission with potential donors, or volunteering at her kid’s school, Kate is a powerhouse and you can rest assured that whatever the task, she is going after it with all her heart.

One word that describes you best: Passionate

Hobbies:
Skiing, running, laughing with friends

SECRET TALENT:
Sing the ABCs in alphabetical order

BUCKET-LIST ITEM:
Give $50,000 to another person as a surprise

BEST ADVICE EVER RECEIVED:
Impression is for the now, trust is for the future — always strive to make the best first impression possible

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:
Lions Club, former president of the Fayetteville Home School Association, proud member of Women United

DAVON HUNTER
Program Coordinator
Syracuse Community Connections
Age: 38

Davon Hunter is a lifelong Syracuse native and devoted employee of Syracuse Community Connections (SCC). Davon joined SCC’s staff in 2016 due to his own personal involvement with at-risk youth. Davon is the founder of BLAK Entrepreneurs, a grassroots organization developed to bring awareness, education, and inspiration to the youth in the City of Syracuse. BLAK Entrepreneurs started in 2015, with the initiation of its first youth trip to the 20th anniversary of the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. The trip propelled Davon to continue youth development by reinforcing the importance of not only education, but also positive representation for our youth and challenge them to reach their greatest potential. Davon is also the owner of the realty-investment company, ProLux LLC. He aspires to combat the city’s housing crisis by renovating and revitalizing homes within the city.

ONE WORD THAT DESCRIBES YOU BEST:
Resilient

Hobbies:
Reading books and looking at things I cannot afford

SECRET TALENT:
Great with math

BUCKET-LIST ITEM:
Visit Africa

BEST ADVICE EVER RECEIVED:
If you can see it in your mind, you can hold it in your hand

Volunteer activities:
Food giveaways, summer youth program, college tours for inner-city youth
JASMIN JONES
Licensed Psychologist
ADHD & Autism Psychological Services and Advocacy
Age: 35

Jasmin is a licensed trauma-informed psychologist. She studied psychology at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia and earned master’s and doctorate degrees from the University of Georgia. She was the recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship and is an alumnus of the HEPP/Upward Bound Program. Her areas of interest include working with underrepresented populations, race-based stress, psychological assessment, identity development, and culturally relevant and trauma-focused interventions. Jasmin was previously recognized for her commitment to serving marginalized college students and addressing mental-health stigma through outreach efforts in the Syracuse community. She places social justice/advocacy at the center of her professional identity. Jasmin was born and raised in Syracuse, where she currently resides with her three energetic and spirited children.

One word that describes you best: Compassionate
Hobbies: Creative writing and anything related to music

KATELYN M. KRIESEL
Financial Advisor, President and Founder, Town Councilor
Hansen’s Advisory Services, the Sustainable Economies Alliance, the Town of Manlius
Age: 33

Katelyn graduated from the University at Buffalo with degrees in political science and psychology. She built her professional career around her long-held passion for sustainability and urban revitalization. As a financial advisor, Katelyn focuses on socially responsible and environmental, social, and corporate-governance investing. Through this role she grew her expertise in sustainable finance, leading her to start the Sustainable Economies Alliance (SEA). SEA’s mission to raise community awareness on economic sustainability is being met through its current initiatives; SustainaFi: The Sustainable Finance Podcast and Financial Empowerment, Live! In 2019 Katelyn was elected to the Manlius town board, and she is currently serving her first term as town councilor. Katelyn resides in Manlius with her two daughters and their famous dog Henry.

One word that describes you best: Resilient
Hobbies: Spending time with my daughters and working on my house

DIANA LAMATTINA ABDELLA
Communications Coordinator
NYS Assembly, Assemblyman Magnarelli
Age: 39

Communications coordinator for Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli since 2008. Diana is a constant reassuring presence in a field that does not offer much recognition. As Assemblyman Magnarelli’s aide, she has interacted with the majority of important civil and governmental groups on a routine basis to gather information for pending legislation. She is motivated to help the local community by organizing civic events like blood drives, CNY Volunteer Fair, and recyclable and shredding events. Diana is at the heart of the CNY Veterans Parade and Expo which features more than 100 local organizations that provide services to veterans. Diana was named to the “Women Who Make America” list by WCNY in 2017.

One word that describes you best: Resourceful
Hobbies: Hiking, cooking/baking, reading biographies

Secret talent: Using a glue gun to fix just about anything
Bucket-list item: Travel to every inhabited continent — only South America remains
Best advice ever received: Give it a try
Volunteer activities: Girl Scout troop leader, elementary yearbook coordinator

Secret talent: Impersonating characters from 1990s movies
Bucket-list item: See Lion King or The Color Purple on Broadway
Best advice ever received: “Beware of Destination Addiction — a preoccupation with the idea that happiness is in the next place, the next job and with the next partner. Until you give up the idea that happiness is somewhere else, it will never be where you are.” Robert Holden, Ph.D.
Volunteer activities: Mental-health outreach for various groups and organizations

Secret talent: Explaining complex subjects in an understandable and impactful way, one on one and while public speaking. Also, I can recite the Lion King in all of the characters’ voices.
Bucket-list item: Travel to the Great Bear Rainforest with my daughters
Best advice ever received: “Prove them wrong,” when people underestimated me. Advice from my mom
Volunteer activities: Sustainable Economies Alliance, Financial Empowerment, Live! Divest NY campaign, and Greater Manlius Chamber of Commerce

Congratulations to our colleague, NICK SHIERES, CPA for receiving the “40 under Forty” Award.

We commend you for your outstanding accomplishments in the workplace, your contributions to the community and your devotion to your family. Having leaders like you is what makes us a leader.

Partner-in-Charge of Tax Services, Dannible & McKee, LLP
DMCPAS.COM
JAIME LAWLOR WAGER
Local Sales Manager
Cumulus Media
Age: 32

Jaime graduated from Boston College with a bachelor’s degree in communications and classical studies. She has been with Cumulus for eight years. She loves working with Central New York businesses and helping them build a plan for growth. She is the platinum standard for marketing creativity, execution, and hard work. Her leadership extends to a stellar sales team and which have exceeded goals and budgets throughout her management career. She understands the importance of personalized and professional training and is an advocate for all team members to have the tools they need to be successful. Jaime lives with her husband, Dan, in the Sedgwick neighborhood with her two rambunctious cat-twins.

One word that describes you best: Practical
Hobbies: SCUBA diving & golf

Secret talent: I can read Latin
Bucket-list item: Dive in blue water and discover Atlantis
Best advice ever received: Always refill the ice trays
Volunteer activities: CNY Sales & Marketing Executives, CNY Cat Coalition, Leadership Greater Syracuse

ADAM MASTROLEO
Attorney
Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC
Age: 38

A native son of Solvay, Adam earned his bachelor’s degree (summa cum laude) and law degree (magna cum laude) from Syracuse University and built his law practice here in Central New York. An attorney in Bond, Schoeneck & King’s labor and employment practice, Mastroleo has extensive experience representing employers in a variety of labor-law matters involving discrimination, harassment, and retaliation under state and federal law. Most recently, he has assumed a lead role in the firm’s COVID-19 Recovery for Business practice, facilitating webinars and writing articles on issues for businesses to consider as they emerge from New York State’s pandemic pause. Adam and his wife live in Manlius with their four children.

One word that describes you best: Determined
Hobbies: Golf, playing with my kids, and taking care of my yard

Bucket-list item: Travel through Europe
Best advice ever received: From my grandfather – “No matter how good you are at something, you can always work harder”
Volunteer activities: President of the board of directors for David’s Refuge

BRIAN LEYDET, JR.
Assistant Professor
SUNY-College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Age: 38

Brian is an assistant professor of epidemiology and disease ecology at SUNY-ESF. He was born and raised in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where prior to his academic career he worked as an EMT-paramedic and spent his summers as an oceanfront lifeguard. He holds a doctoral degree from Louisiana State University’s School of Veterinary Medicine, a Master of Public Health degree from the University of North Florida, and a bachelor's degree from Old Dominion University. Brian maintains an internationally recognized research program focused on ticks and tick-borne diseases. He regularly serves as a regional expert in public-health issues regarding tick-borne diseases and more recently COVID-19. Brian enjoys exploring new bourbons, fishing, snowboarding, and spending most of his free time outdoors with his wife and son.

One word that describes you best: Outgoing
Hobbies: Fishing and snowboarding
Secret talent: I am a pretty good surfer and competed in high school. Also, good at backing a trailer
Bucket-list item: To see the northern lights
Best advice ever received: No matter your job title, do it better than everyone else
Volunteer activities: Annually, I give over a dozen community educational talks on ticks and associated diseases. Founding board member for CNY Lyme and tick-borne disease alliance.

TRAVIS MAUS
Managing Partner
S.E.E.D. Planning Group, LLC
Age: 39

Travis has an incredible ability to build a vision for a more creative and engaging way to help people. His inclusive leadership has created a culture of sharing ideas and always improving the experience for clients and the community. At S.E.E.D. Planning Group, he has the honor of leading an amazing team of professionals in their mission to help people and their communities find financial freedom. Travis and his wife live in Conklin, with their four dogs —Scrappy Doo (just like the one from the cartoon), Cosmo Batman (the sweetest super hero in the world), Dusty (who likes adventure sports such as playing with tarantulas), and Luna Moon (who might be part wolf, dingo, goat, and kangaroo).

One word that describes you best: Originator
Hobbies: Gardening, woodworking, listening to e-books
Secret talent: Cooking

Bucket-list item: To see people who I have mentored become more successful than myself
Best advice ever received: “You are never the smartest person in the room”
Volunteer activities: Board chair for S.E.E.D.s of Hope of Binghamton Inc, and board member of the Tioga Downs Regional Community Foundation

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COURTNEY M. MERRIMAN
Partner and Co-Chair of Women’s Forum
Barclay Damon LLP
Age: 39

Courtney is a proud Marcellus Mustang and spent her undergraduate years playing soccer for Le Moyne College. She returned to Central New York and joined Barclay Damon in 2008 after practicing law in Manhattan. Courtney’s practice primarily concentrates on commercial real-estate matters involving conventional mortgage loans, commercial mortgage-backed securities, and construction loans. Courtney has an extensive background representing landlords and tenants in commercial-leasing negotiations for retail, office, manufacturing, and shopping-center transactions. She also provides real estate and finance counsel to clients on the sale, acquisition, and financing of big-box shopping centers throughout the East Coast. In addition to her own practice, Courtney serves as co-chair of the firm’s Women’s Forum, which was established to create an environment that fosters meaningful interaction and mentoring opportunities for women attorneys.

One word that describes you best: Compassionate

Hobbies:
Spending time at Otisco Lake with my family and all things HGTV

Secret talent:
My secret weapon is beginning each day with a grateful heart

Bucket-list item:
Vacation in Italy’s wine country

Best advice ever received:
It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice

Volunteer activities:
Weekly meal server at Samaritan Center, board member at Baltimore Woods Nature Center and Catholic Charities of Onondaga County

LAUREN M. MONFORTE
Partner, Owner
Hennessy and Monforte Law Office, Beer Belly Deli
Age: 38

Lauren is a founding partner of the Hennessy and Monforte Law Office. She is an adjunct professor at Syracuse University College of law, where she teaches client interviewing and counseling. She is also the owner of Beer Belly Deli. Lauren enjoys helping clients, students, and her staff solve problems, pursue their dreams, and improve their lives.

One word that describes you best: Persistent

Hobbies:
Purple Belt in Jiu Jitsu

Secret talent:
Positive thinking

Bucket-list item:
Homesteading

Best advice ever received:
It is better to stay silent than say something you will regret

Volunteer activities:
During the COVID shutdown, I organized a movement called “Community Plates,” which served more than 12,000 free home-cooked meals to the community over the course of eight weeks

BETH MEYER
Director of Group Benefits
M&T Insurance Agency
Age: 37

Elizabeth (Beth) Meyer has spent the last 15 years working mostly in the benefits-insurance industry throughout upstate New York. She finds her current position with M&T Bank to be the perfect step to combine her passion for insurance and business. In every aspect of her life, she mentors and educates those she encounters. During her free time, Beth teaches entrepreneurship to students at University of Rochester and volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

One word that describes you best: Leader

Hobbies:
Rescuing animals, cooking, and creating new recipes

Bucket-list item:
Visit Iceland

Best advice ever received:
Your perspective

Volunteer activities:
Big Brothers Big Sisters, United Way

2020 JUDGES

BETH COUGHLIN
Cumulus Media

GEORGE KUHN
Drive Research

VANCE MARRINER
CNY Business Journal

www.centerstateceo.com

From your colleagues at CEO

Congratulations Dr. Juhanna Rogers

and all of this year’s 40 Under Forty Honorees!

Thank you for bringing expertise, passion and vision to your work in the community.
JANE NICHOLSON
Senior Planning Associate
MRB Group
Age: 38

As a certified urban planner and certified floodplain manager, Jane Nicholson brings expertise in comprehensive planning and zoning, environmental and regulatory compliance, concept design, and grant writing. Her unique approach to master planning has received recognition locally and nationally. Jane received her bachelor’s degree in geography and international relations from Syracuse University, as well as a master’s degree in urban planning from the University of Virginia, a master’s in natural resources management from SUNY-ESF, and an MPA degree from Syracuse University. She was recently selected as a Next City Vanguard in the Class of 2020. Jane resides in Cazenovia, where she is actively involved in the community.

One word that describes you best: Engaging

Hobbies:
- Gardening/landscaping, piano, Adirondacks enthusiast

Secret talent:
- Music composition

Bucket-list item:
- Travel across Canada by train

Best advice ever received:
- Don’t sacrifice your integrity for anything

Volunteer activities:
- SUNY-College of Environmental Science & Forestry College Foundation board of directors;
- Chair of the SUNY-ESF Foundation fund development committee;
- Village of Cazenovia zoning board of appeals member;
- American Planning Association (APA) National Conference proposal reviewer;
- Cazenovia Preservation Foundation board of directors (former)

JIMMY L. OLIVER, JR.
Deputy Commissioner
City of Syracuse/Syracuse Parks and Recreation & Youth Programs
Age: 39

Jimmy Oliver was born and raised in Syracuse. He calls his mother his most memorable teacher. Jimmy cultivated his talents at the Syracuse Boys & Girls Clubs as a front desk associate and working through various titles such as games room director, assistant gym director, teen director, unit director, and director of baseball operations. There, he founded the Syracuse Chapter of Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities baseball program (Syracuse R.B.I.). His talent afforded him opportunities to develop programs and work in senior-leadership roles for Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Lynchburg, and Metro Richmond in Virginia. He continued onto leadership roles at City of Lynchburg Parks & Recreation before returning home. In returning, Jimmy says mentoring youth and continuing to support organizations like Boys & Girls Club, which holds a special place in his heart, is less like work and more like a way of life.

One word that describes you best:
- Resilient

Hobbies:
- Tennis, reading, and golf

Secret talent:
- I throw with both hands

Bucket-list item:
- Visit a restaurant in Spain, called El Buli

Best advice ever received:
- Never forget where you came from

Volunteer activities:
- OnTech Charter High School (board of directors), Near Westside Initiative (board of directors), and community food giveaways

BRIAN RAPHAEL
Founder/President/Physician
Empire Dermatology
Age: 39

Dr. Brian Raphael is a native of Fayetteville. He completed his medical training at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. After his internal medicine internship, he completed his residency in dermatology at Emory University. Brian is a board-certified dermatologist and fellowship-trained dermatologic surgeon. Upon completing his fellowships in Boston, he now specializes in Mohs micrographic surgery for skin cancers and facial reconstruction as well as cosmetic dermatology. He moved back to Syracuse four years ago to open Empire Dermatology. Dr. Raphael lives with his wife and their awesome husky.

One word that describes you best: Extrovert

Hobbies:
- Golf, following Syracuse sports, and making cheese

Secret talent:
- Able to fall asleep in any environment

Bucket-list item:
- Attending the Masters golf tournament

Best advice ever received:
- Don’t get hung up on failures

Volunteer activities:
- Numerous speaking engagements on skin cancer throughout the community

BRIAN RAPP
Co-Owner and VP
Bill Rapp Buick GMC Subaru
Age: 39

After graduating from Christian Brothers Academy, Brian moved south to attend the University of Miami in Florida, where he received his BBA and MBA. Since 2009, Brian has worked at Bill Rapp Super Store in various roles, learning the “ins and outs” of the automotive retail business. In 2012, Brian attended the National Auto Dealers Dealer Academy, where he learned each aspect of dealership operations. Now Brian is co-owner and the VP of the dealerships. Brian is an example of a young professional with a strong commitment to the community. He has quietly helped many charitable organizations and the Rapp dealership has an outstanding reputation in our community for giving back.

One word that describes you best:
- Ambitious

Hobbies:
- Golf, watching college football, boating

Secret talent:
- I cook a really good steak

Bucket-list item:
- Take a trip to Ireland to play golf

Best advice ever received:
- Treat others the way you want to be treated

Volunteer activities:
- Board of directors for Ronald McDonald House of Central New York, COVID-19 Food Drive for the Food Bank of CNY, and strong affiliation with David’s Refuge
JUHANNA N. ROGERS
VP of Racial Equity and Social Impact
CenterState CEO
Age: 38

Rogers, Ph.D., is the VP for racial equity and social impact at CenterState CEO. Prior to this role, she worked for economic inclusion at CenterState CEO and as director of health services at Southwest Community Center. Dr. Rogers is the creator, executive producer, and host of “Behind The Woman” a web series that shares personal stories from diverse women leaders, with the goal of empowering women to pursue their dreams. Dr. Rogers earned a bachelor’s degree in integrative arts from Penn State University – Altoona. She went on to earn a master’s degree and doctorate in higher education and student affairs from Indiana University. Dr. Rogers has traveled the world exploring ways to document and highlight the narratives of Black women through theater and television. Today, in addition to professional and creative work, she is a mother and avid seeker of laughter.

One word that describes you best: Dynamic

Hobbies: Dance, performing, and traveling with friends
Secret talent: I am a great cook when time permits
Bucket-list item: Spend a year traveling through Africa
Best advice ever received: Don’t worry about how good you are; just keep delivering your gifts to the world
Volunteer activities: Auburn Public Theater Harriet Tubman Troupe

CHRISTINA SAUVE
CEO
Cooperative Federal
Age: 38

Christina Sauve is the CEO of Cooperative Federal, a low-income designated community-development credit union founded in Syracuse in 1982. She has served on the board of Home HeadQuarters, Syracuse Model Neighborhood Facility, the Credit Union National Association Hispanic Outreach Committee, the Credit Union Association of New York - Young Professionals Commission, Women Business Opportunities Connection, and as a volunteer for the Two Row Wampum Festival on Onondaga Lake and the East Side Neighborhood Farmers Market in Syracuse. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Stanford University. Christina is actively learning kanien’kéha, the Mohawk language, again after starting over 20 years ago, and she also enjoys speaking Spanish with members at Cooperative Federal’s four branches. She is driven by the desire to build a more just world for her son, and a brighter future for our community.

One word that describes you best: Resilient

Hobbies: Learning kanien’kéha (Mohawk language), exploring the outdoors with my son, and gardening
Secret talent: Baking
Bucket-list item: To see the Northern Lights in person
Best advice ever received: You can do anything, not everything
Volunteer activities: Board member, Home HeadQuarters; trustee, New York Credit Union Foundation

PATRICK E. ROHE
CEO
Rockbridge Investment Management
Age: 34

Patrick’s outstanding performance at Rockbridge has led to his appointment as CEO. He is an inspiring leader to a fast-growing wealth-management firm located in Syracuse. He is passionate about downtown Syracuse and is committed to keeping the firm in its downtown location. Patrick and his wife live on his family’s farm in Marcellus with their two sons. In his free time, Patrick enjoys being outdoors (especially the Adirondacks), attending local sporting events, golfing, and spending time with his family on their dairy farm.

One word that describes you best: Driven

Hobbies: Running/biking, hiking the Adirondacks, golfing
Secret talent: I was an Irish step dancer as a child and won many national events
Bucket-list item: Traveling internationally with my wife. I would also love to play golf at Augusta National and St. Andrews
Best advice ever received: Your work ethic is one of the few things you have full control over — advice provided by my parents
Volunteer activities: Board member for YMCA, Meals on Wheels, and NAPFA, a national association of fee-only financial advisors

Congratulations, Jennifer Alfieri! on being named 40 Under 40 and for excelling in both your workplace as well as the community.

We're honored to have you on our team!
ERICH A. SCHEPP  
President  
Schepp Family Funeral Homes/Peaceful Pets  
Age: 38

Erich resides in Fayetteville and enjoys his greatest accomplishment, father to his three children. Schepp Family Funeral Homes’ roots can be traced back to 1845. As a fourth-generation funeral director, he takes great pride in serving the families of Central New York. He continues to grow the family business on the foundation that his grandfather and father laid. In 2014, Erich expanded the family business to serve all of the family by establishing Peaceful Pets. Peaceful Pets filled a void by giving dignity to end-of-life services and allow families to celebrate the life of their pets. It continues to grow and has become the premier pet-cremation service of Central New York. Outside of the funeral industry, Erich has a passion for emergency services, having been a volunteer firefighter for more than 20 years. Most recently, he accepted a position as a deputy coordinator for Onondaga County Emergency Management. During the COVID-19 response, he spent many hours in the Emergency Operations Center, aiding in the county’s response and developing plans for the pandemic. In his down time, he can be found at the family camp on Cazenovia Lake. This is where he finds relaxation.

One word that describes you best: Dedicated

Hobbies: Traveling, rooting for the New York Yankees and Dallas Cowboys, and serving as a volunteer firefighter

Secret talent: Still secret

Bucket-list item: Get stunned by the Great Pyramid of Giza

Best advice ever received: Take care of the community around you, and they will take care of you

Volunteer activities: Volunteer firefighter for over 20 years. Served as the fire chief of Minoa Fire Department and president of Fayetteville Fire Department

NICK SHIRES  
Partner-in-Charge of Tax Services  
Dannible & McKee, LLP  
Age: 38

Nick joined Dannible & McKee in 2004 after graduating from Syracuse University with a bachelor’s degree in accounting and finance. Nick has met all the challenges in his career head-on and was admitted to the partnership at Dannible & McKee in 2015. As a partner in the firm, he has continued to be a leader among his peers and on July 2020, Nick was named partner-in-charge of tax services. While he is proud of his career accomplishments, he is most proud of his family. Nick and his wife have two boys and he spends much of his time as a volunteer coach of youth soccer. Nick brings his expertise in finance to startups through the Fast Track program.

One word that describes you best: Loyal

Hobbies: Golf with my wife and two boys, playing rugby

Secret talent: I can make 3 loops with my tongue

Bucket-list item: Golf trip to Scotland and see a game at every MLB stadium (9 down, 21 to go)

Best advice ever received: You only get out of something what you put into it

Volunteer activities: Treasurer of rugby club and youth rugby club, treasurer of Hopeprint, board member of Music for the Mission, and various events to support the Rescue Mission

“The ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones that do.”  - Anonymous

Congratulations on being a part of the highly coveted, unique group of individuals who are 40 Under Forty alumni. With the first class recognized in 1998, there are more than 900 people who have received this award. You are in good company to make the world a better place.

On behalf of the Central New York Business Journal, BizEventz, and presenting sponsor M&T Bank, we are proud of you for doing the work that you do.

Being part of 40 under Forty does not stop today. You are each tasked with paying it forward and helping others succeed. The 40 under Forty Community Alumni Project does just that. Under normal circumstances you would be asked to join your colleagues and volunteer together at an organization you voted on. Even though COVID-19 has limited our social interactions, it does not mean that helping others must stop. PLEASE get involved, stay involved, be involved. Our community is depending on you.

Once again congratulations - you deserve this!
EMILY TAYLOR
Senior Research Analyst
Drive Research
Age: 27

As a market-research professional, Emily does more than wrangle data. She is approaching a decade of experience in the market-research industry and loves to challenge the status quo. Her work includes executing every step of the market-research process. Using new technologies and processes, Emily challenges industry standards by conducting market research faster and more accurately. Her day-to-day goal is to empower others to make smarter decisions using insights gained from market research. She also has a passion for storytelling and breaking down data in a way that allows clients to take-action quickly. Outside of work, you will find Emily giving in to her caffeine needs at a local coffee shop with her husband. Emily's family will tell you she gets fixated on little details, so she can determine whether her coffee was ordered correctly in just one sip.

One word that describes you best: Purposeful
Hobbies: True crime podcasts and exploring local hidden gems
Secret talent: Creative writing

NICOLE TESKA
Partner
Bowers and Company CPAs, PLLC
Age: 38

Originally from Hudson, N.Y., Nicole graduated from SUNY Cortland. She is a licensed New York State Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE). Nicole began her accounting career with Bowers and Company CPAs in 2004. In 2016 she was named an audit partner, and in 2019 was named the firm's quality control director. Nicole's clients are in the transportation industry, banking industry, and not-for-profit sector. Nicole is involved in her clients' industries which is shown through her work with the American Short Line & Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA). She is a member of the ASLRRA and serves on its numerous committees including as the chair of the ASLRRA finance and administration committee, a member of the legislative policy committee, and a member of the young professionals committee.

Bucket-list item: To visit all 50 states

Best advice ever received: “Make the other person feel important — and do it sincerely.” My dad taught me early in life the golden rules of Dale Carnegie
Volunteer activities: I volunteer on various boards, most currently with the ASLRRA trade association. Participate in running races that support local communities, provide donations to various charitable organizations

Congratulations to Brian Rapp on being named to the Central New York Business Journal’s 40 Under 40!

Brian, we are all so incredibly proud of your accomplishments! Your hard work and dedication are inspiring to those around you. All of us at Bill Rapp Super Store wish you many more years of success.
As a native Syracusan, and the proud daughter of two immigrants, Dr. Asalim Thabet has had a life full of blessed opportunities. After completing her early childhood education as part of the Syracuse City public schools, she went to Le Moyne College for a bachelor’s degree and then to Upstate Medical University to complete her medical degree. She stayed at Upstate University Hospital to complete a residency in pediatrics and further training specifically in pediatric emergency medicine. She is now a dual board-certified pediatric emergency medicine physician. When not in the hospital, she spends her time caring for her three sons and hanging out with extended family. Dr. Thabet says she is granted the privilege of caring for the sick children of the area and is always looking for ways to give back. She is an example that there are no limits in life except the ones you set for yourself.

One word that describes you best: Meticulous

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ERIN WEIMAN
Owner, CEO
Nunn’s Home Medical Equipment
Age: 39

Erin Weiman is the owner and CEO of Nunn’s Home Medical Equipment a full-service respiratory and durable medical-equipment company located in Rome and Syracuse. She is the 3rd generation to own and operate this family-owned business that was founded by her grandfather Martin J. Nunn in 1942 and she has been involved since 2006. Erin has spearheaded the acquisition of two other companies, numerous contracts, and more than tripled the number of employees the company has since she first joined the organization. Her focus is to improve the health of those they serve with a commitment to excellence in all that they do. Her goal is to offer quality care and programs that set community standards, exceed patients’ expectations, and are provided in a caring, convenient, cost-effective, and accessible manner. Erin is not only a tremendous business leader, but also a leader in her community.

One word that describes you best: Determined

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KATIE WOJDYLA
VP and Director of Marketing
Water Safari Resort
Age: 38

Katie Wojdyla is the VP and director of marketing for Water Safari Resort, which includes Enchanted Forest Water Safari (water park), Calypso’s Cove (FEC), Old Forge Camping Resort (campground), and the Water’s Edge Inn (hotel). She started her career in the amusement industry growing up in the family business. She has worked in many different departments such as food service, games, photo, HR, admissions, administration, and the campground, all of which have provided a backdrop for industry knowledge and expertise. She returned to the company in 2004 after completing a bachelor’s degree in speech communication with minors in linguistics and French from Syracuse University. She and her sister Kelly now run the resort, overseeing all operations. Katie specifically manages all marketing for Water Safari Resort’s four properties. Katie lives with her husband and their beloved golden retriever Marcy in Old Forge and Saratoga Springs.

One word that describes you best: Forward-thinker

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Asalim A. Thabet
Clinical Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine & Pediatrics
Upstate Medical University
Age: 36

Hobbies:
Spending time with my sons and family & helping others
Secret talent:
Amazing basketball player
Bucket-list item:
To visit all 50 states of the USA
Best advice ever received:
Time is the most valuable asset you have
Volunteer activities:
Community outreach on pediatric preventive health and safety, mentoring local young girls, tutoring local children struggling in school, and donating goods to the local shelters

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Katie Wojdyla, Anchor, Spectrum News and 40 Under Forty class of 2007 and Steve Gorczynski, Administrative Vice President, Commercial Banking M&T Bank

for presenting this year’s 40 Under Forty honorees!

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Tammy Palmer, Anchor, Spectrum News and 40 Under Forty class of 2007 and Steve Gorczynski, Administrative Vice President, Commercial Banking M&T Bank

Thank You

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Erin Weiman
Owner, CEO
Nunn’s Home Medical Equipment
Age: 39

Hobbies:
I love to spend time with my family, decorate and work around my home, and spend time in the Adirondacks
Secret talent:
Shh, it is a secret
Bucket-list item:
Island hop around Greece
Best advice ever received:
The past is behind, learn from it. The future is ahead, prepare for it. The present is here, live it
Volunteer activities:
Director, Griffiss Local Development Corporation (GLDC), director Northeast Medical Equipment Providers (NEMEP), Delta Omega Sorority, Rome Rescue Mission

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Katherine Wojdyla, VP and Director of Marketing
Water Safari Resort
Age: 38

Hobbies:
Adirondacks lake activities, camping, home decorating
Secret talent:
Reading between the lines
Bucket-list item:
Travel outside of the U.S. again
Best advice ever received:
Keep it simple and do the best you can
Volunteer activities:
View Arts Center, Calypso’s Cove Charity Go Kart Race, World Waterpark Association, various community projects

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Thank You
Kim Zaccaria strives to maintain a balance between her work as a toxicologist at SRC, her family, and her community. At SRC, her primary role is writing and contributing to government-sponsored toxicological risk assessments. She is active in several SRC volunteer committees, including the SRC Cares Council, which organizes corporate-sponsored volunteer events, and the STEM Volunteer Group, which mentor local students. Outside SRC, Kim is active volunteer for Scout Troop 117. Recently, she has sewn and donated more than 500 cloth masks for SRC colleagues, camp staff at Camp Talooli and Woodland, the Samaritan Center, and neighbors. She received SRC-sponsored volunteer awards in 2016, 2017, and 2019 and the BSA Longhouse Council Distinguished Service Award in 2017. In her spare time, Kim enjoys playing games with her family or curling up with a good book — preferably at a cabin in the Adirondacks.

One word that describes you best: Perseverant

Hobbies: Sewing, reading, card/board games with family
Secret talent: Baking and cake decorating
Bucket-list item: Visit Europe with my husband
Best advice ever received: Life is too short to be ordinary
Volunteer activities: Scouts BSA- various leadership positions in troop 117, SRC STEM volunteer group, Society of Toxicology mentor and volunteer and Clear Path for Veterans Volunteer

Jordan is a graduate of St. Lawrence University where she majored in business and communications. Jordan was inspired to create On My Team16 by her younger brother, Jack Sheridan, and his battle with Leukemia. OMT16’s mission is to comfort and support pediatric-oncology patients, families, and caregivers by raising money through athletics. Jordan is determined to impact the life of at least one child or family, and provide a glimpse at a world without cancer, and she hopes On My Team16 is going to help her do just that. In addition to On My Team16, Jordan is the founder of a boutique digital marketing agency called JZ Agency3 and is currently living in Syracuse with her husband and two dogs Oakley and Ernie. 

One word that describes you best: Committed

Hobbies: Paddle boarding and running
Secret talent: Photography. Not sure if I am any good but I love to do it
Bucket-list item: Run the Boston Marathon
Best advice ever received: Never compare your 5th day to someone’s 5,000th day
Volunteer activities: On My Team16, and part of the CNY Cystic Fibrosis Finest Group
Our business banking customers helped us win seven Greenwich Excellence Awards. Recognition for serving businesses is always rewarding. But when it comes from the customers we work hard for, it’s even more meaningful. And this year we’re proud to have earned four national and three regional excellence awards from Greenwich Associates – the sixth year in a row we’ve ranked in the top 5% of more than 600 banks evaluated – based on performance surveys from our own business banking customers: We’ve taken the time to understand what’s important to them, and we’d love to learn what’s important to you. To learn how M&T can help your business, call Lee De Amicis at 315-424-5056 or visit mtb.com/businessbanking.