

2023 COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

CNY BUSINESS  
JOURNAL  
**40** Under  
Forty

PRESENTED BY

**M&T** Bank

**BIZEVENTZ.COM**

**FROM THE DIRECTOR**

*"If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, then you are an excellent leader."*  
- Dolly Parton

We are thrilled to be celebrating 26 years of recognizing leaders in our community. In this special section you will get to read the bios of each honoree and learn about their accomplishments. It is hard to believe that some of them are not much older than this event. This year, we are recognizing the Mayor of Oswego, a man who uses his disability to change others perspective on what it means to have a disability, a music teacher, and a young woman who published a book and is working to develop it into a TV series, just to mention a few.

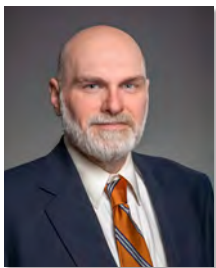
Congratulations to this year's 40 under Forty honorees. You have joined a highly coveted, unique group of individuals who have received this award just like you. With the first class recognized in 1998, there are now 1,040 alumni in our community. You are in good company to make the world a better place.

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.



**Jill Allen,**  
Director,  
BizEventz

**2023 JUDGES**



**Vance Marriner**  
Director of Marketing & Research,  
*The CNY Business Journal*



**Ashlea Schad, MBA, CRFE**  
Assistant VP for Advancement,  
Utica University



**Merike Treier**  
Executive Director,  
Downtown Committee of Syracuse, Inc.



**Ahmeed Turner**  
Executive Director,  
Say Yes Syracuse

**THIS YEAR'S HONOREES**



BILLY BARLOW



VICTORIA BRACCO



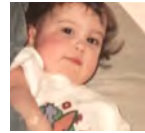
JAMES BURT



JEFFREY CARPENTER



SARAH CARROLL



VINCENT CIOCI



TIMOTHY CROSBY



BRITTANY DEANGELIS



CRISTINA DISTEFANO



WILLIAM FINCH



PATRICK FIORENZA



ANDREW FLAMIK



ZACH FORWARD



JAMES HUNTER



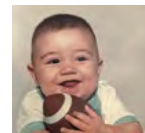
MIKE LANE



MERISSA LYNCH



JULIET MALOFF



DAVID ESTEBAN MARIANO



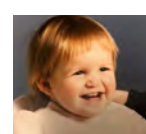
STACY MILLER



JENNIFER MOORE



JONATHAN PARRY



LARKIN PODSIEDLIK



MICKEL POMPEII



JOHN READE



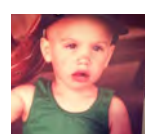
COREY RILEY



CHRISTIAN SAMARA



BENJAMIN SIO



TANNER STEWART



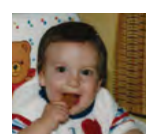
EDEN STRACHAN



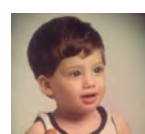
JENNIFER TELESKY



MEGAN THOMAS



MICHAEL THOMPSON



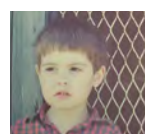
JOSEPH VERARDO



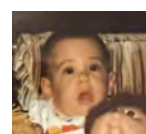
CASEY WHITE



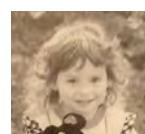
ASHLEY WHITT



ROBERT WIMLER



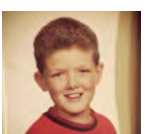
LEAH WITMER



STEPHANIE WORDEN



EMILY ZAENGLE



JOHN ZELL

**M&T BANK PRESENTING SPONSOR MESSAGE**

On behalf of everyone at M&T Bank, I want to extend sincere congratulations to all of the *40 under Forty* honorees. M&T Bank recognizes and applauds your extraordinary efforts, accomplishments, and the impact that you have on our community, as well as the impact you will make as future leaders of the CNY region.

M&T Bank's philosophy is to support and empower individuals and companies that contribute to the economic engine of CNY. We believe that the communities in which we live, work, and volunteer are the main core of our personal and corporate existence. That is why we have partnered with BizEventz and the *CNY Business Journal*, and are proud to help present the 26th annual *40 under Forty Awards!* All of this year's honorees are being recognized for their contributions and excellence to the workplace and in the community.

Once again, congratulations to all of the honorees and know that we celebrate your visions and successes, and encourage others to follow in your footsteps!



**Steve Gorczynski**  
Central New York Regional President  
M&T Bank







**BILLY BARLOW** | 33  
MAYOR  
City of Oswego

Born and raised in Oswego, Billy worked consistently for his parents' food-concession company, Barlow's Concessions. Following high school, he attended Arizona State University, earning a bachelor's degree in emergency management. While attending college, Billy helped his parents expand the family business into Western New York, Arizona, and Las Vegas. Following graduation in 2012, Barlow moved back to Oswego and ran for City Council at age 22. After one term, he successfully ran for mayor of Oswego in 2015 at age 25. Barlow was reelected to a second term in 2019. During his term in office, Barlow's administration revitalized downtown Oswego using a \$10 million state grant to leverage another \$100 million in private investment, resulting in several new mixed-use buildings and unique attractions in the community. In 2022, Billy was named the VP of system development & public affairs at Oswego Health, assisting with developing a new strategic plan and overseeing expansion plans.

**One word that describes you best:** steady

**Hobbies:** jet skiing/boating; working family-owned concession stand, going to Oswego Speedway

**Fun Fact about yourself:** award-winning drummer, played in rock band through middle school and high school.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Seinfeld

**One food you would never, ever eat?** cottage cheese



**VICTORIA BRACCO** | 38  
OWNER  
Encore Media Agency, LLC

At Encore Media Agency, Victoria's mission revolves around the transformation of regional economies and the expansion of employment opportunities. Bracco was a marketing and PR leader for several different businesses and served as a designer for one of the world's largest fashion houses. Victoria is passionate about bringing conversation to life when it comes to diversity and inclusion and proud to have worked with companies that recognize that these are not options but necessities. Bracco has pursued her love for music and photography by running her own music-influenced life and style website. Recently, Victoria has embarked on a new artistic journey as a children's book author and is preparing to release her first book.

**One word that describes you best:** resilient

**Hobbies:** running, painting and art, and camping

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I took dance lessons from the age of three through high school, where I then received the opportunity to visit Radio City for a day and dance with the Rockettes.

**Volunteer Activities:** participation in community cleanups, charity walks/runs. Support local nonprofits with organization, marketing, and events. Part of a mentorship program helping students and young professionals grow.

**What is your motto for life?** "Embrace challenges as stepping-stones to growth and use setbacks as fuel for your comeback."

**Best place traveled and why?** Vermont in the fall will always be my favorite. It holds great memories from when I was young and we would take family vacations there every year.



**JAMES BURT** | 35  
PRESIDENT  
Landscapes East of CNY

James is a lifelong Syracuse-area resident and graduate of West Genesee High School, and a graduate of the landscape architecture program at SUNY ESF. He developed a passion for landscape design at an early age, crafting small golf courses out of the sand during family trips to the beach. As a young adult, James played ice hockey and worked as an official for almost 15 years. Burt had the opportunity to take a summer internship during college in Scotland to work in the famous town of St. Andrews and developed an independent study on sustainable golf-course design during a semester abroad in Berlin, Germany. An avid international traveler, James spends the off-season exploring the world with his fiancée. When not working, James can be found on the golf course, in the kitchen, or on the water.

**One word that describes you best:** patient

**Hobbies:** golf, board games, airline "points and miles"

**Fun Fact about yourself:** My favorite dinosaur is the brontosaurus.

**Volunteer Activities:** Block Blitz, Onondaga Earth Corps, Plant CNY

**What is your motto for life?** "Control what you can control." Many external factors play into each and every day, most are out of our control and shouldn't be stressed about too much.

**Best place traveled and why?** Maldives for scuba diving — it has amazing coral reefs and crystal-clear water.

# CONGRATULATIONS MERISSA LYNCH

Interior Designer - Graphic Designer - Marketing Manager

CNY BUSINESS JOURNAL  
**40** Under **Forty**

**2023 HONOREE**







**JEFFREY CARPENTER** | 37

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
**Cliff's Local Market**

Starting his career in the convenience-store industry, Jeffrey joined the Nice N Easy Grocery Shoppes team after graduating high school in 2005 and worked while earning both his bachelor's and master's degrees at Syracuse University. Carpenter went on to teach publicly at a high-ranking 'Newsweek School' while still working with Nice N Easy, but after two years found his niche as director of education and training with Nice N Easy. During Jeffrey's time at Nice N Easy, he grew into the role of senior director of program development overseeing multiple areas of the business. Upon an opportunity to apply his expertise and remain local with Cliff's Local Market, Carpenter accepted a senior-level position where he has helped evolve the New York-based chain with 400-plus employees. A natural leader with a passion for his community, Jeffrey has also served as trustee, as well as deputy mayor, in his local area.

**One word that describes you best:** reliable

**Hobbies:** hunting, camping, snowmobiling

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I enjoy trying different foods, exploring new destinations, and novel experiences.

**Volunteer Activities:** community events, professional organizations, charities

**What is your motto for life?** Every day is a gift.

**Best place traveled and why?** Alaska, twice — The freshest air I've breathed and a generally untouched beautiful landscape.



**SARAH CARROLL** | 33

PROJECT MANAGER  
**Creighton Manning Engineering**

Sarah Carroll has been a resident and employee in Onondaga County since moving here from Boston in 2014. She has 10 years of experience as a civil engineer, specializing in transportation planning, traffic analysis, highway design, and land-development projects. Carroll is a project manager for Creighton Manning Engineering. Prior to Creighton Manning, Sarah worked at a transportation-consulting firm in Syracuse and a land-development firm in Manlius. Since studying abroad in the Netherlands, Sarah has been passionate about active transportation and complete-streets design projects. Her career has evolved from design to management, but her desire to create and improve connectivity for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders is stronger than ever.

**One word that describes you best:** independent

**Hobbies:** interior decorating, antique shopping, and baking

**Fun Fact about yourself:** The movie 80 for Brady is based on my grandmother.

**Volunteer Activities:** Adapt CNY, American Public Works Association Central NY Chapter (Board of Directors), American Council of Engineering Companies of New York Central Region (Secretary), Institute of Transportation Engineers Upstate NY Section, and New York State Association of Transportation Engineers.

**Best place traveled and why?** The Netherlands, where I developed my love and focus for active transportation and complete streets.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Office Ladies podcast and The Toast podcast



**VINCENT CIOCI** | 32

CEO  
**Luck Grove Telecom, Inc**

Vincent was born and raised on Long Island before moving to Central New York at the age of 15. The oldest of eight children, Vincent was thrown into manhood when his father unexpectedly passed, leaving his mother with eight young children. Through his perseverance and determination, Vincent was able to slowly chip away at his collegiate goals while helping his mother raise his younger siblings. A 2015 graduate of SUNY Oswego, Cioci started a family and worked his way into the telecommunications industry, earning the position of CEO at one of the industry's key players, Luck Grove Telecom.

**One word that describes you best:** driven

**Hobbies:** golf and piano

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I am a Black Belt in Taekwondo.

**Volunteer Activities:** on the board of directors for Onondaga County Development Corporation

**What is your motto for life?** Everything in life that matters requires at least a little risk.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** 48 Laws of Power

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**Congratulations to City of Oswego  
Mayor Billy Barlow on being part of the  
CNY Business Journal 40 under Forty!**






**TIMOTHY CROSBY** | 36

VP OF CLIENT SERVICES

**SIDEARM Sports**

Tim holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in organizational leadership from Mercyhurst University. As VP at SIDEARM Sports, Crosby has been instrumental in launching impactful programs, which focus on giving back to the community, promoting diversity, and strengthening the core values of the company. Tim prioritizes inclusiveness and diversity through all his endeavors. He is currently part of the 2023 Leadership Greater Syracuse class and a member of Syracuse University's Inclusive U Business Engagement Group. Tim and his husband enjoy traveling, trying new foods and restaurants, spending time with family, and taking in a Broadway show at the Landmark Theatre.

**One word that describes you best:** empathetic

**Hobbies:** traveling (experiencing new cultures), interior design, and cooking

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I introduced Hillary Clinton to the crowd, at her rally stop at Mercyhurst University, during the 2008 presidential election.

**Volunteer Activities:** Syracuse Earth Day Cleanup, Rosamond Gifford Zoo, A Tiny Home for Good, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and more.

**What is your motto for life?** "Embrace your uniqueness, unleash your brilliance."

**Best place traveled and why?** Germany during the holiday season. The overall ambience — sights, smells, and sounds — created a magical and heartwarming experience. It was truly an unforgettable experience.


**BRITTANY DEANGELIS** | 31

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

**Mark Antony Homes**

Brittany grew up in Syracuse and graduated from Le Moyne College with a bachelor's degree in accounting and an MBA. While completing her master's, she obtained her Certified Public Accounting (CPA) license. After college, she worked for one of the Big Four accounting firms for eight years in audit and business consulting before joining Mark Antony Homes as the director of finance. Outside of work, she loves to travel and has been to seven different countries. Brittany is a passionate, fun-loving wife and mother of two beautiful little girls. Most of her free time is spent enjoying quality time with her family.

**One word that describes you best:** motivated

**Hobbies:** travel and spending time with my family

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I am a mother of two (2 ½ year old and newborn)

**Volunteer Activities:** Junior Achievement — teaching students financial literacy; College MAP — mentor and previous assistant director in Rochester area; Ronald McDonald House — involvement in organizing Thursday night dinners for families

**What is your motto for life?** Vision without action is a day-dream.

**Best place traveled and why?** Italy, because of the beauty, food, and history


**CRISTINA DISTEFANO** | 38

DIRECTOR OF ENTERPRISE MARKETING

**Turning Stone Enterprises**

An experienced marketer and hospitality professional, Cristina is a charismatic and engaged leader who brings more than 15 years of hospitality experience to CNY. Cristina is the director of enterprise marketing at Turning Stone Enterprises. She is a proven expert in campaign development, brand, creative, and digital strategy all while building teams and mentoring the next generation of leaders. Throughout her career, DiStefano has been a part of more than 50 different website launches and various new technology and partner onboarding including CRMs, agencies, and marketing technology. At Turning Stone, Cristina has grown the enterprise marketing department from a team of one to a team of 15.

**One word that describes you best:** kind

**Hobbies:** yoga and cooking

**Fun Fact about yourself:** originally from Panama

**Volunteer Activities:** Friends of the Hamilton Public Library board member and a HSMAI Marketing Advisory Board member

**What is your motto for life?** "This is just temporary."

**Best place traveled and why?** Traveled to Istanbul, Turkey in 2009. Loved visiting Hagia Sophia and seeing the transformation of what was a catholic basilica 1,500 years ago, into an active Mosque.



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 Michael L. Thompson, PE**

Section Manager & Project Engineer  
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**VINCENT CIOCCI**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**JOHN ZELL**  
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

**2023 40 UNDER FORTY HONOREES**

Luck Grove is a telecommunications consulting firm that offers a wide range of surveying, engineering, and construction services on a national scale to the utilities industry.





**WILLIAM FINCH** | 32

SENIOR PROJECT ENGINEERING

**Barton & Loguidice**

As a registered professional engineer with nearly 10 years of experience, Bill Finch is a leader and trusted professional in Central New York's civil engineering industry. As a senior project engineer at Barton & Loguidice (B&L) in the firm's transportation practice area, he has contributed to a broad portfolio of roadway, sidewalk, and trail design projects from the Southern Tier to the North Country. Today, his responsibilities are expanding to include project management tasks for key clients and complex projects. Finch recently served two years as president of the Syracuse Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), representing around 350 members in CNY and the North Country. Prior to becoming president of the organization, he was treasurer for several years.

**One word that describes you best:** collaborator

**Hobbies:** boating and adventures with my kids

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I played trumpet in the Syracuse basketball pep band, the "Sour Citrus Society" from 2010-2014 and travelled to several postseason tournaments.

**Volunteer Activities:** Board of directors for the Syracuse Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) since 2015, and more.

**Best place traveled and why?** A trip that included Las Vegas, Hoover Dam, and the Grand Canyon. It was fun to be in a totally different climate and explore Las Vegas.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Yellowstone and Below Deck



**PATRICK FIORENZA** | 37

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH ANALYTICS

**Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc.**

Pat holds a master's degree in public administration from Syracuse University and is pursuing his doctorate in curriculum, instruction, and science of learning from the University at Buffalo. Pat enjoys spending time on the shores of Lake Ontario with friends and family. As the director of research analytics at RMS, Patrick is passionate about helping clients achieve their goals and designing effective strategies through customized market research. He has extensive experience in survey design, data analytics, and qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Patrick monitors all aspects of a research project, assuring validated and high-quality results are provided to RMS clients. He is also committed to providing coaching to his analytics staff and collaborating closely with clients to ensure their needs are met.

**One word that describes you best:** dedicated

**Hobbies:** cooking, going to concerts

**Fun Fact about yourself:** Growing up, I wanted to be an astronaut. Someday I hope to go to space.

**Volunteer Activities:** ARISE Foundation board member, BYSA soccer coach, formerly the vice president of Adapt CNY

**Best place traveled and why?** Amalfi Coast — food, wine, and scenery

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend



**ANDREW FLAMIK** | 34

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

**Usherwood Office Technology**

A 2007 graduate of Binghamton High School, attending Le Moyne College brought Andrew to Central New York. During his senior year, he applied for an internship at Usherwood. Upon graduating with a bachelor's degree in accounting and an MBA, he joined Usherwood full time as assistant controller. A dozen years later, Flamik is now the CFO at Usherwood. Growing up, Andrew's mother worked in a children's museum. One of his first jobs was cleaning the museum after school. This experience has led Andrew to volunteer and support local child-related non-profits and causes. He has been active at the MOST and Ronald McDonald House for the last handful of years. Andrew enjoys cooking, watching all kinds of sports, and spending time with his two-year-old daughter, wife, and extended family.

**Hobbies:** golf and family

**Fun Fact about yourself:** got a hole-in-one on July 4th

**Volunteer Activities:** The MOST — chair, foundation board of directors, Ronald McDonald House of CNY; co-chair, Red Shoe Society, McMahan-Ryan Child Advocacy; multi-year participant in 100 Holes 4 Kids

**Best place traveled and why?** Napa, California with my wife. I love wine and Napa is a great culmination of good food, great wine, beautiful scenery, and awesome history.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Freakonomics Radio — my favorite book series turned podcast.

Congratulations to our  
colleague

*Jennifer Moore*



40 under Forty  
2023 Honoree

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and all of this year's 40 Under Forty honorees!

Thank you for bringing expertise, passion  
and vision to your work in the community.

From your colleagues at







**ZACH FORWARD** | 39

PARTNER

**Barclay Damon LLP**

Zach is a Syracuse-area native and a graduate of the West Genesee School District. He attended Cornell University, where he received his bachelor's degree from the applied economics and management program. Zach then went to Wake Forest University, where he received his law and MBA degrees. Forward currently is a partner at Barclay Damon LLP, where he has practiced corporate law for the past 13 years. His current practice includes mergers and acquisitions, forming various business entities, and all of the legal paperwork that goes along with those subject matters. Zach lives in downtown Syracuse, where he enjoys going for walks with his dog, Nesa.

**One word that describes you best:** meticulous

**Hobbies:** Spending quality time with my dog, Nesa, a one-and-a-half-year-old Aussiedoodle. Traveling with my family.

**Volunteer Activities:** Currently, I am the Syracuse office's co-chair of my firm's diversity and inclusion initiative, which includes overseeing the Syracuse office's pro bono and charitable activities. Board of directors — Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc.

**Best place traveled and why?** Benin. Just was an incredible cultural experience.

**One food you would never, ever eat?** raw onions



**JAMES HUNTER** | 39

CO-FOUNDER

**Robineau Media**

James, a New York City native and tech aficionado, brings a unique blend of expertise to every task. With a rich career history that includes working at Oxygen Network and Fox News, Hunter is now committed to fueling startups' revenue growth. A graduate in fine arts from New York Institute of Technology, James also holds invaluable leadership insights from his time with the Outward-Bound Southwest Mystery Expedition. He's a forward-thinker who is always one step ahead.

**One word that describes you best:** tenacious

**Hobbies:** Riding my Peloton bike and also walking my dog

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I once lived in the Moab Utah Desert for a month as part of an Outward-Bound course.

**Volunteer Activities:** McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center, Rescue Mission, Project Heal, and guest lecturing at NYU and Syracuse University.

**What is your motto for life?** "If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."—Shirley Chisholm

**Best place traveled and why?** Nice, France — it's a picturesque gem on the French Riviera that offers everything you could ever want on vacation.



**MIKE LANE** | 39

CLAIMS AND RISK MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

**Reagan Companies**

Mike Lane is a proud Syracuse native. Having graduated from Christian Brothers Academy in 2002, he went on to receive a bachelor's degree in history from SUNY Geneseo. Upon returning to Syracuse, Mike started a career in banking while completing his MBA from Le Moyne College. In 2010, Lane began his insurance career as a workers'-compensation claims adjuster. Mike's experience in claims helped him to see how overwhelming and frustrating the employers' experience was in managing workers'-compensation costs. After four years in claims, he joined the agency side of the insurance industry with the goal of helping employers navigate the workers'-compensation system. He has since helped over 25 clients reclaim workers'-compensation overpayments that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

**One word that describes you best:** persistent

**Hobbies:** lake time with family, coaching my kids in sports, golf

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I was in attendance at Yankee Stadium for David Cone's perfect game.

**Volunteer Activities:** Coaching youth sports, annual Marcellus cleanup with Reagan colleagues, Served on several nonprofit boards locally

**What is your motto for life?** Anything worth doing is worth doing well.

**Best place traveled and why?** I love Chicago. It has all the amazing entertainment and food you would expect from a global city, but the people have a Midwestern friendliness that makes it feel smaller.

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**MERISSA LYNCH** | 32

INTERIOR & GRAPHIC DESIGNER, MARKETING MANAGER  
**COR Development Company LLC**

Merissa obtained her bachelor's degree in interior architecture from Endicott College in 2013 and is currently working toward her degree in graphic design and digital marketing. Lynch works full time as a marketing manager and in-house interior and graphic designer at COR Development Company, LLC. Merissa has self-initiated, planned, and successfully executed multiple events and donation drives in the community. Lynch is also the founder of Dimensional Visions, LLC, an avenue in which she is able to continue to utilize her love of art and creative expression to help those in the community. Through founding Dimensional Visions, Merissa has been able to provide full-service design and marketing services.

**One word that describes you best:** determined

**Hobbies:** outdoor activities, traveling, and food enthusiast

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I was never a picky eater. At the age of three, I was ordering shrimp cocktails and virgin strawberry daiquiris on any family vacation.

**Volunteer Activities:** Inter Faith Works, It's About Childhood & Family, Inc., In My Father's Kitchen, National Bone Marrow Donor Program Registry, Food Bank of Central New York, Syracuse City Ballet, American Red Cross, and more.

**What is your motto for life?** May your character preach more loudly than your words.

**One food you would never, ever eat?** snake



**JULIET MALOFF** | 31

SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER  
**CNY Community Foundation**

During her nine years at the Community Foundation, Juliet has championed and guided the Community Foundation's brand management to internal and external audiences. In her current role, Maloff oversees and implements strategies to ensure impactful and consistent communications messaging across all platforms. She is a graduate of FOCUS Greater Syracuse's 2022 Citizens Academy class and formerly served as the president of the Public Relations Society of America, CNY Chapter board of directors. Juliet attended Syracuse University where she earned a bachelor's degree in communications and rhetorical studies and a master's degree in communications and public relations from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

**One word that describes you best:** dependable

**Hobbies:** reading, cooking/baking, hiking

**Fun Fact about yourself:** my cats are "Instafamous"

**Volunteer Activities:** Gala planning-committee member and volunteer, Sarah's Guest House; Book Buddy volunteer, United Way of Central New York; volunteer, CNYSPCA; volunteer, Onondaga County Dental Society; volunteer and visitor, Menorah Park

**What is your motto for life?** Growing up, every morning before my dad would leave for work, he would say, "Be the best you can be." Those words have been engrained in me ever since, serving as a guiding force that influences every aspect of my life.

**Best place traveled and why?** Israel because floating in the Dead Sea was the most incredible experience of my life.



**DAVID ESTEBAN MARIANO** | 34

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ACCESS & ABILITY  
**YMCA of Central New York**

David, the youngest of five, was raised in a multi-cultural and diverse family. He attended Le Moyne College where he played rugby and met the love of his life. He later earned a master's degree in organizational leadership from the University of Saint Francis. Mariano has spent his entire career in the nonprofit/human services industry. In 2018, David was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa and later declared legally blind. With a new outlook as a driving force, David has taken his passion for helping others within his local community, to help change perspectives on what society thinks it means to have a disability. If you asked David what his greatest accomplishment is, he would say becoming a father.

**One word that describes you best:** passionate

**Hobbies:** fitness and collecting vintage bikes

**Volunteer Activities:** I serve as the board president for Eye Got This, Inc., as a board member and volunteer of Gigi's Playhouse Syracuse, as a committee member on the Community Options, Inc. Business Advisory Committee, and as a committee member on the Rosamond Gifford Zoo Education and Community Engagement Committee.

**What is your motto for life?** To live life with empathy and gratitude, to make sure that my perspective is positive and understanding that what I have gone through is a blessing and where I am is where I am supposed to be.

**Best place traveled and why?** Puerto Rico. From the beautiful mountains to the beautiful beaches, the amazing food, and culture, they call it Isla de Encanto for a reason.



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**STACY MILLER** | 39

DIRECTOR OF TRAINING

**Merit Apprenticeship Alliance, Inc.**

Stacy is a Syracuse native who currently resides in Eastwood with her husband and son. Stacy graduated from G.W. Fowler High School in 2002 and received her associate degree in criminal justice from Bryant & Stratton College in 2008. She went on to obtain a bachelor's degree in criminal-justice administration from Columbia College in 2010. Miller started working for Merit Apprenticeship Alliance in the fall of 2019 as an administrative assistant. She became the training coordinator in 2020 and the director of training in 2022. Stacy is hard working and loves what she does. She has always had a passion for education and enjoys watching the apprentices' succeed.

**One word that describes you best:** kind

**Hobbies:** reading and spending time with family

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I received three promotions in three years.

**Volunteer Activities:** Encounter Christian Fellowship and CNY ATD Programs Committee

**What is your motto for life?** Be the change you wish to see in the world.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** NCCER's podcast The Builders' Table



**JENNIFER MOORE** | 25

SENIOR TALENT ACQUISITION ASSOCIATE

**M3 Placement and Partnership**

Jennifer Moore grew up in Central New York, where she graduated a year early from West Genesee High School. She continued her education at Onondaga Community College, where she earned her degree in hospitality. She currently works at M3 Placement & Partnership as a dedicated senior talent acquisition associate. She has made an immediate impact with her day-to-day delivery of recruitment services to clients, as well as her involvement in strategic planning. She is seen as an expert in the industry and a supportive team member. In addition to her career, helping others has always been important to her, and because of that, she is a passionate volunteer for multiple organizations.

**One word that describes you best:** thoughtful

**Hobbies:** hiking, camping, and kickboxing

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I have my second-degree black belt in mixed martial arts.

**Volunteer Activities:** volunteer coordinator for Paige's Butterfly Run, Annual volunteer for Syracuse Honor Flight, annual volunteer for Feed My Starving Children, volunteers for Samaritan's Purse when in the area

**What is your motto for life?** "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game" — Babe Ruth

**Best place traveled and why?** Lake Murray, South Carolina. It is a beautiful and peaceful man-made lake that I have enjoyed vacationing at since I was a child.



**JONATHAN PARRY** | 38

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**Griffiss Institute**

Jonathan is a business and product development manager with 16 years of professional experience in technology startups, sustainability, business development, sales, operations, renewable energy, project management, and complex strategic partnerships. Parry has an international work background with project-management roles in Germany and Northern Ireland and business-development experience in Europe, Central America, India, and Asia. He is skilled in sales, strategic marketing, communications, project management, business development, and leadership capabilities related to new technologies, growth markets, and early-stage companies.

**One word that describes you best:** friendly

**Hobbies:** golf, dogs, antique cars

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I have renovated three 19th century homes in the CNY region.

**Volunteer Activities:** Clarkson alumni leadership board member (present), Onondaga Community College Foundation board member (previous), executive advisor at the Syracuse Tech Garden, driver for Meals on Wheels

**What is your motto for life?** "Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind." — Henry James

**Best place traveled and why?** Prague, Czech Republic — a beautiful city with amazing architecture and history.

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**LARKIN PODSIEDLIK** | 36

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Cornell Cooperative Extension-Madison County**

Larkin grew up in Fabius-Pompey and attended SUNY Geneseo. She received a master's in agriculture, food & the environment and a master's degree in public health (MPH) from Tufts University. Podsiedlik has spent her career working in the nonprofit and agriculture sectors in urban and rural areas, doing community nutrition and garden education, philanthropy, program development, and nonprofit leadership. Larkin is a leader in the food systems and nonprofit community and has served on the board of the CNY Regional Market Authority, and the LaFayette Advisory Conservation Commission.

**One word that describes you best:** exuberant

**Hobbies:** running and baking

**Fun Fact about yourself:** Larkin was a member of the NCAA National Championship Women's cross-country team at SUNY Geneseo.

**Volunteer Activities:** Lafayette Central School District Board of Education Member, CNY Women's Fund Advisory Board Member, SUNY Geneseo Syracuse Alumni Chapter Co-President, and representative to the SUNY Geneseo Alumni Association Committee on Regional Chapters

**What is your motto for life?** My grandfather's favorite phrase: proceed as the way opens

**Best place traveled and why?** Norway, because we got to eat Nutella and waffles on a cross-country train ride to see fjords and glaciers.

**MICKEL POMPEII** | 37

TAX PARTNER

**Dannible & McKee, LLP**

Mickel graduated from Windsor Central High School in 2004 and Le Moyne College in 2009. Soon after, he started his career with Dannible & McKee, LLP. At Dannible, he quickly rose through the ranks while earning his certified public accountant (CPA) and certified design accountant (CDA) designations. In 2020, Pompeii was named a tax partner at the firm and currently specializes in the manufacturing, architectural/engineering, and professional-service firms' arena. He currently serves on the board of directors for SUNY ESF Foundation and the Shady Shores Foundation in Clayton. In his free time, Mickel enjoys the outdoors, where he is an active hunter, fisherman, and boater and enjoys a multitude of sports. He also loves being a father to his five-year-old son and three-year-old twin daughters.

**One word that describes you best:** dedicated

**Hobbies:** hunting, fishing, boating

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I was New York State player of the year in baseball during my senior year of high school.

**Volunteer Activities:** SUNY ESF Foundation — board member, Shady Shores Foundation - treasurer

**Best place traveled and why?** Buffalo, WY — enjoy bow-hunting out west, the views, and the solitude.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** The Office

**JOHN READE** | 37

DIRECTOR OF IT AND SYSTEMS

**Quanterion Solutions Incorporated**

John Reade is a dedicated IT professional with a passion for problem-solving and empowering people to understand and utilize technology. John received a computer science degree from St. John Fisher College. A lifelong learner, he is currently pursuing an MBA in technology management from SUNY Polytechnic Institute, anticipating graduation in December 2023. John's commitment to giving back to the community began when he participated in Leadership Mohawk Valley. This transformative experience kickstarted his passion for volunteering, inspiring him to dedicate his time and skills to the community. As John's interests expanded into the world of drones and systems engineering, he connected with CNY Drones to promote drone-focused STEM-based workforce development pathways.

**One word that describes you best:** considerate

**Hobbies:** kayaking, playing computer games, building and flying drones

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I have a knack for finding four-leaf clovers.

**Volunteer Activities:** CNY Drones, Amazing Gracie's Gift Foundation, Rome Mall Apartments, Rome Health Foundation, Sauquoit #150 Free and Accepted Masons

**One food you would never, ever eat?** Couldn't think of anything. While there are foods I dislike, I will try just about anything.



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**COREY RILEY** | 38  
DIRECTOR OF BANDS  
**Westhill High School**

Corey is in his sixth year as a music educator in the Westhill Central Schools where he is the associate director of bands at the high school and conducts the Westhill Symphonic Band and High School Jazz Ensemble. He also teaches brass lessons to grades 6-12, music theory, studio music, and advises the Audio Production and Engineering Club and the Modern Band Club. Riley graduated from Ohio State University in 2010 with bachelor's degrees in music education and euphonium performance. In his time there, he marched with the university's band, dubbed "The Best Damn Band In The Land," and performed with the Wind Symphony. He also holds a master's degree in instructional technology from Syracuse University. Corey has served on the board of the New York State Band Directors Association since 2014 in various roles including web editor, vice president of membership, and commission chair.

**One word that describes you best:** curious

**Hobbies:** guitar, music production, craft beer

**Fun Fact about yourself:** My hidden talent is juggling.

**Volunteer Activities:** Onondaga Music Educators Association, New York State Band Directors Association

**What is your motto for life?** being present is being free

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Ted Lasso



**CHRISTIAN SAMARA** | 30  
MANAGER, TAX DEPARTMENT  
**Dermody, Burke & Brown, CPAs LLC**

Christian is a Syracuse native and graduate of Bishop Grimes High School. He went on to earn his bachelor's degree in accounting from Le Moyne College, and later the professional designation of certified public accountant (CPA). Samara began his career with Dermody, Burke & Brown in 2016 as a tax associate where he is currently serving as a tax manager. He enjoys the opportunity to be of service to a diverse client base, building strong business relationships, as well as being a mentor and helping develop younger staff in the public accounting profession. Christian also has the privilege to give back to the local community through his involvement as treasurer and member of the Syracuse Sunrise Rotary Club.

**One word that describes you best:** considerate

**Hobbies:** reading, gaming, golf

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I am the only member of my family with red hair, a trait I inherited from both of my grandmothers.

**Volunteer Activities:** treasurer of the Syracuse Sunrise Rotary Club, the Food Bank of CNY, CNY Diaper Bank, OnPoint for College, Clear Path for Veterans, the Kara Fund

**Best place traveled and why?** Nashville, to visit family

**One food you would never, ever eat?** have not found a food I would not try again



**BENJAMIN SIO** | 38  
CHIEF OF STAFF AND SENIOR VP OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND PLANNING  
**CenterState CEO**

Ben Sio has been with CenterState CEO since he graduated college in 2007. Throughout that time, he has worn many hats within the organization including acting as a manager with 40 Below, lobbying on a variety of issues such as high-speed rail and the historic-rehab tax credit. He worked directly with the Brookings Institution on regional projects and helped to write the successful Upstate Revitalization Initiative plan. Sio was involved in growing the unmanned aerial systems industry locally and leading the region's successful designation as a Build Back Better regional challenge finalist.

**One word that describes you best:** jocular

**Hobbies:** childcare and woodworking

**Volunteer Activities:** I have served on many boards over the years. I just finished my term as board president of Partners in Franciscan Ministries. I've also served on the boards of the Near West Side Initiative and the Francis House.

**What is your motto for life?** Don't take life too seriously.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** I listen to a lot of woodworking podcasts.



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**TANNER STEWART** | 34

WEALTH MANAGEMENT ADVISOR

**Stewart Financial-Northwestern Mutual**

Tanner grew up in Lowville. While attending Utica College in 2009, Stewart began his career at Northwestern Mutual as an intern. After graduating in 2010, he became a full-time representative. Tanner earned his chartered financial consultant (CFC) designation in September 2016 from the American College. He holds his series 6, 63, 65 and 7 FINRA investment licenses. At present, Tanner has been contracted with Northwestern Mutual for a decade as well as other major investment and insurance firms. He now runs his own firm, Stewart Financial. In his spare time, Tanner enjoys playing lacrosse, fishing, as well as serving on the board of trustees for Utica University.

**One word that describes you best:** unpredictable

**Hobbies:** in-shore fishing, playing sports

**Fun Fact about yourself:** Knows how to make bowling pins but is a terrible bowler.

**Volunteer Activities:** Utica University alumni events and Alex's Lemonade Stand.

**What is your motto for life?** Don't do things on purpose. Do them for a purpose.

**Best place traveled and why?** Puerto Vallarta — the culture of the people.



**EDEN STRACHAN** | 24

AUTHOR & FOUNDER

**Black Girls Don't Get Love**

Eden Strachan is a journalist and filmmaker whose work has been published by CNN and NPR. Strachan has been practicing her craft for more than 10 years and was awarded a full media scholarship to Ithaca College in recognition of her use of media for social change. Strachan also trained at several major media companies including CBS Television Studios, VICE, and the Emmys. In addition to her media work, Strachan is the author and founder of "Black Girls Don't Get Love," a book and multimedia coming-of-age brand for girls of color. Building upon the principles in her book, Strachan founded Black Girls WILL Get Love, Inc., the nonprofit arm of Black Girls Don't Get Love. Within less than a year of being established, Black Girls WILL Get Love, Inc. has served more than 150 girls and secured over \$50,000 in brand sponsorships.

**One word that describes you best:** determined

**Hobbies:** finding the best local dessert spots, traveling, and spending time with friends and family

**Volunteer Activities:** I have advised students into employment at CBS, NBC, Warner Bros. Discovery, and the Television Academy through one-on-one coaching, interview prep, and résumé, cover letter, and personal-statement feedback sessions.

**What is your motto for life?** As Malcolm Gladwell says, it takes 10,000 hours to achieve excellence in a craft or skill. I'll never stop pushing myself to become the greatest I can be.

**Best place traveled and why?** Visiting Amsterdam with my mom.



**JENNIFER TELESKY** | 39

SENIOR VP & SOUTHERN TIER REGIONAL COMMERCIAL BANKING MANAGER

**NBT Bank**

Jennifer grew up in Norwich and started working for NBT Bank as a teller at the age of 16. After graduating from high school, she continued her education at Siena College, earning a bachelor's degree in finance. In 2006, she moved back to her hometown to start a full-time career at NBT. With the help of various internal development programs, Telesky worked her way from the credit department to commercial lending. After several years as a relationship manager, she was promoted to her current position of regional commercial banking manager. Outside of work, Jennifer spends her free time with her husband and two children with the entire family actively involved in local youth sports.

**One word that describes you best:** trustworthy

**Hobbies:** reading and spending time outdoors

**Volunteer Activities:** chair of the United Way of Mid Rural New York, treasurer of the Norwich Wrestling Booster Club

**Best place traveled and why?** Sweden, at the age of 15. It was my first real trip without my family and experiencing a new culture, language, and natural beauty of a different country was fantastic.

**One food you would never, ever eat?** anchovies

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**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**



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**MEGAN THOMAS** | 37

GENERAL COUNSEL & DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC EDUCATION  
**OCWA**

Megan was raised in Kingston, New York, as the oldest of five children. In college, she studied political science and philosophy. After college, she joined Teach for America and was placed in Las Vegas. While there, she obtained her master's degree in education and served as the state co-director for Not for Sale — an anti-human trafficking organization. Megan then moved to Brooklyn, where she taught for three more years in charter schools. She moved to Syracuse in 2014, where she commenced a joint MPA/JD program. During law school, Megan enjoyed all things litigation. Upon completion, Thomas worked as a litigator for five years, including at Mackenzie Hughes, LLP. In 2022, Thomas joined OCWA as the general counsel and director of public education.

**One word that describes you best:** effervescent

**Hobbies:** running, traveling, and spending time with family

**Volunteer Activities:** Works with and mentors interns from Syracuse College of Law and the Maxwell School of Citizenship at OCWA, serves as membership director for the Central New York Women's Bar Association, vice chair of the Zoo Board.

**What is your motto for life?** "The success of every woman should be the inspiration to another. We should raise each other up." — Serena Williams.

**Best place traveled and why?** Narragansett, Rhode Island. I love the beach and fresh seafood. My husband and I got married there and now we return with our children each summer.



**MICHAEL THOMPSON** | 36

PROJECT ENGINEER/SECTION MANAGER, UTILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE, GAS  
**CHA Consulting, Inc.**

Michael is a graduate of Clarkson University with a master's degree in engineering. As an engineer, he has worked for two companies. The first company was General Dynamics Electric Boat. He helped design piping systems within the engine room and reactor compartment for the future Columbia class submarine. He is currently the manager of the gas design group for CHA. He manages eight junior engineers, developing gas-replacement designs. Outside of work, Michael is kept busy coaching his son in baseball and soccer. He also enjoys camping in the Adirondacks and takes a weeklong camping trip every year with his high school friends. When the weather isn't so agreeable, Michael enjoys relaxing with a video game or cooking a great meal. As a teenager he worked in his parents' restaurant and developed a love of cooking there.

**One word that describes you best:** patient

**Hobbies:** running, video games, camping

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I am a fan of both the Star Wars and Star Trek series.

**Volunteer Activities:** youth baseball and soccer league coach

**What is your motto for life?** "A good engineer is a wee bit conservative, at least on paper." —Scotty from Star Trek

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Currently working my way through every episode of Survivor.



**JOSEPH VERARDO** | 33

NSF CYBERCORPS PROGRAM COORDINATOR  
**Binghamton University**

Joseph Verardo is the inaugural coordinator of the National Science Foundation's CyberCorps program at Binghamton University, president of Young Education Professionals-NYC, and a TCAC Commissioner for the Town of Yorktown. He previously served as VP, COO, and director of finance & CFO of the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS); as an appointee on a committee at the U.S. Department of Education; assistant head of college engagement at JerseySTEM; and as a trustee on the Stony Brook Council at Stony Brook University. As program coordinator of the CyberCorps program at Binghamton University, he is helping build a framework to recruit future cybersecurity professionals and guide them to career appointments at government agencies. At the U.S. Department of Education, he worked on policies impacting millions of students in higher education. While with the NAGPS, Joseph advocated for more than 2 million graduate students, organized national conferences, and oversaw the board of directors.

**One word that describes you best:** caring

**Hobbies:** traveling and skiing

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I learned to swim when I was two years old.

**Volunteer Activities:** Joseph's volunteer activities include serving on boards and commissions for local, state, and federal government and nonprofit organizations.

**Best place traveled and why?** Thailand. It is a special place for me because it is where I got engaged. We explored beautiful temples and ate amazing food in Bangkok.

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**CASEY WHITE** | 35

FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

**Chimera Integrations, LLC**

Casey was born and raised in Central New York and graduated from C-NS. He received his bachelor's in business administration from SUNY Buffalo. After working in the security industry for six years, White founded Chimera Integrations to create a better place to work, and a more customer-focused experience. Over the past seven years, Casey has rapidly grown the business to 50-plus employees across five offices in New York. Over the past two years, Casey has spun off three additional companies related to the security industry. When not focusing on Chimera, Casey likes to travel and do anything outdoors. He likes to spend free time giving back to the community he was raised in and plans to get more deeply involved now that he is back in CNY.

**One word that describes you best:** resilient

**Hobbies:** hiking, skiing, traveling

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I am actively working on getting my private pilot's license.

**Volunteer Activities:** Casey volunteers time to professional organizations such as CNY Society of Healthcare Engineering, MACNY, SUNY EOC, Cannabis Association of NY, CenterState CEO, and several local chambers of commerce.

**Best place traveled and why?** St. John Island in the Caribbean Sea — two-thirds of the island is protected national park, so it is mostly untouched, and it has many of the most beautiful beaches I've ever seen.



**ASHLEY WHITT** | 30

BRANCH MANAGER

**Sidney FCU**

Ashley has an associate degree in criminal justice and received a bachelor's degree in sociology and criminology from SUNY Cortland. After graduating, she moved to Syracuse where she met her husband, who is also a SUNY Cortland alum. Ashley has always had a passion for helping people and animals. She volunteers whenever she can and opened up her home to dogs in need. Ashley recently started her journey with Sidney FCU as manager of member engagement but has been in the credit-union industry for eight years. Networking and making connections in the community is also a passion for Ashley, taking every opportunity to meet someone new. She enjoys finding others with the same professional enthusiasm as herself and coaching a team to be successful. She is determined to continue to grow and develop in her career, along with the credit union as it enters the Syracuse market.

**One word that describes you best:** driven

**Hobbies:** outside activities with my dogs, golf, cooking

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I bring home a puppy almost weekly. I foster rescue dogs.

**Volunteer Activities:** POWERful Paws Animal Rescue; Special Olympics; BOCES SkillsUSA; Book Buddies-Syracuse City Schools; SPCA; CenterState CEO Ambassadors Committee, CNY Chapter; NYCUA; and many other various community activities throughout CNY

**What is your motto for life?** Be kind.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Podcast: Dare to Lead



**ROBERT WIMLER** | 38

ASSISTANT VP, BUSINESS ANALYTICS

**Nascentia Health**

In his role at Nascentia Health, Wimler has built the tools, procedures, and department to handle external regulatory reporting and to provide information needed for internal decision making and management. Robert holds a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics and recently completed a 10-year journey to become an actuary. Robert's leadership shines as he heads Fulton Ultimate Frisbee, a thriving group he founded in 2006. Over 17 years, he's fostered growth, drawing participants from neighboring regions for family-friendly outdoor fun, fitness, and camaraderie. A relentless drive to improve propels Robert each day. He thrives on expanding knowledge, creating better environments, and building tools to support each endeavor he undertakes. As the oldest sibling and experienced tutor, Robert extends this growth mindset to the people and groups in his life.

**One word that describes you best:** growing

**Hobbies:** board games, building tools, and finding people to play ultimate frisbee with

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I am not a vegetarian.

**What is your motto for life?** Be prepared.

**Best place traveled and why?** Nevada — duality of unique city and surrounding canyons

**STACY MILLER**

DIRECTOR OF TRAINING  
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**LEAH WITMER** | 39

DIRECTOR & CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
**City of Syracuse Bureau of Administrative Adjudication & Parking Violations Bureau**

Leah A. Witmer, Esq. is the director and chief administrative law judge of the City of Syracuse's Municipal Violations Bureau which handles adjudication of tickets issued for non-compliant property-code violations, parking violations, and sanitation violations. She obtained her J.D. from Syracuse University College of Law in 2010 and her bachelor's degree from New York University in 2007. Leah grew up in Northeastern Pennsylvania and spent her childhood attending Syracuse basketball and football games. She is now proud to call Syracuse home and lives in the Meadowbrook neighborhood with her husband, three children, and rescue dog. In her spare time, Leah takes part in both legal and non-legal community engagement.

**One word that describes you best:** passionate

**Hobbies:** house plants, event planning, travel/exploration

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I collected designer Barbie dolls and Pez dispensers as a kid and still have the collections.

**Volunteer Activities:** president, Central New York Women's Bar; board member, Syracuse Cooperative Market; volunteer lawyer, Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc.'s Talk to a Lawyer Community Clinic; PFO Team Captain, Montessori School at Lemoyne PFO; parent coach, Eastside Soccer

**Best place traveled and why?** I spent the summer between college and law school as a sailing instructor for a teen adventure camp in the Caribbean. We spent over a month sailing through the Leeward and Windward Islands of the Caribbean.



**STEPHANIE WORDEN** | 36

DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION & FINANCIAL AID  
**Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs**

Stephanie earned a bachelor's degree in communication studies with a focus on public relations and advertising from SUNY Cortland. At Ohio University, she obtained a master's degree in media arts & studies, specializing in telecommunications policy and political science. She went on to Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs for a certificate of advanced study in public administration and is finishing her executive master of public administration (MPA) degree. Throughout her career, Worden has held various key roles, including associate director of admission & financial aid at Syracuse University's Maxwell School, where she effectively manages multimillion-dollar budgets and drives the recruitment and enrollment strategy.

**One word that describes you best:** excited

**Hobbies:** skiing, cooking, dinner parties

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I have a bucket list I started in 7th grade and I'm very dedicated to it.

**Volunteer Activities:** United Way, The Women's Fund, Eleanor's Legacy, The CNY Political Leadership Institute

**Best place traveled and why?** Peru - the Inca Trail and Machu Picchu are mesmerizing.



**EMILY ZAENGLE** | 36

CEO  
**Stone Quarry Art Park**

Emily Zaengle champions the work of the not-for-profit sector. She holds graduate degrees in landscape architecture and museum studies. She enjoys working at the intersection of disciplines, ideas, and sectors. In her current role as the CEO of Stone Quarry Art Park, Emily strives to center artists and art-thinking in all aspects of the organization — demonstrating the brilliance of artists and showcasing their vital contributions to society.

**One word that describes you best:** perceptive

**Hobbies:** camping, running, and reading

**Fun Fact about yourself:** Though my background is in landscape architecture, I'm horrible at plant ID and I'm constantly and accidentally pointing to plants that I love only to realize they're what others might consider weeds.

**Volunteer Activities:** I drove a race car in the Race for Equity, an event that raises funds to bring CenterState CEO's Racial Equity & Social Impact work to small nonprofits. I took home first place in the slowest driver (ever) award category.

**Best place traveled and why?** Providence, Rhode Island. It's an art-filled city. Plus, my sister lives there.

**What series or podcast are you loving?** Jury Duty on Amazon



**JOHN ZELL** | 32

COO  
**Luck Grove Telecom, Inc**

Zell is the driven COO of Luck Grove Telecom, helping guide the company's growth from 15 to 300 employees, making it one of CNY's Best Places to Work. His entrepreneurial journey started with a clothing brand at 18 and a web-development company at 24, which led to his current position. John's philanthropic endeavors include serving as a board member of SC3, supporting Upstate Golisano's Children's Hospital. Beyond work, he's a passionate automotive enthusiast and collector. Looking ahead, John aims to continue expanding Luck Grove while maintaining a fulfilling work-life balance with his family and friends. His journey reflects resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to making a positive impact.

**One word that describes you best:** innovative

**Hobbies:** snowboarding, automotive, and boating

**Fun Fact about yourself:** I was simultaneously a senior in high school and freshman in college.

**Volunteer Activities:** Skaneateles Cares Car Club 501(c)(3) — board member

**What is your motto for life?** "Stay committed to your decisions, but stay flexible in your approach." — Tom Robbins

**Best place traveled and why?** A two-week tour of Italy. Experienced culture and art.

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# The honorees took a break for some fun photos while shooting their headshots this year.



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