Artist Creates Windows of Opportunity at Local Thrift Shop

Finders Keepers thrift shop is located on the corner of State and Main Streets in Mount Morris. It’s a high traffic intersection that is ideal for its carefully designed shop windows to capture the attention of hundreds of drivers and walkers-by every day.

A busy intersection is also an apt metaphor for the window displays themselves. Many of Finders Keepers’ most talked about windows are realized by local artist Ellen Friedler, as what could be described as an intersection of her many loves, including thrift, fine art, good humor, and visual storytelling. And the shop serves another of Ellen’s passions: providing work opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For the better part of three decades, Ellen has worked directly with community members with disabilities through employment and day programs of The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming, a private, not-for-profit agency founded by parents. Finders Keepers is part of one of those programs, called Hilltop Business Services.

Ellen’s list of work responsibilities is long, like her job title: Autism Training & Support Specialist. And although you won’t find the word “window” anywhere in her official job description, somehow she always finds time for them. She has assembled professional, theme-driven window displays from Finders Keepers’ constantly changing inventory of donated items for most of the store’s 10-year existence.

“Creativity is about problem solving,” Ellen says. “You have to get from A to B, whether it’s me designing a window or a Hilltop worker finding the best way to do a job that fits their abilities. Doing a thrift store window is problem solving with the variables that you have on hand.”

Ellen’s sense of ingenuity has fueled many of the area’s most unique window displays, from a scene created for Mount Morris Italian Fest that featured likenesses of icons including Joe DiMaggio and Sophia Loren to a wedding display that would basically forgo the dress and instead feature the “little touches” that together add up to the most complex, special day in a couple’s life.

“The one area that I think is probably not realized by many people looking at the windows is the artistic thought and movement that goes into each one,” says Arc Coordinator of Vocational Services Judy Welch, who is Ellen’s supervisor. “A lot of the appeal for us as customers is really due to Ellen looking at things such as where our eyes will naturally be drawn, and using the themes to make us think about more than just the items in it.”

That seemingly effortless visual flow is the product of Ellen’s hard work and natural artistic instincts, which she refined while studying Fine and Applied Arts at Rochester Institute of Technology. It’s a skill that is complemented by attention to detail that treats ordinary thrift store items as more than props.

Case in point: for a memorable patriotic display, Ellen recreated a scene from a 1940s home, with a chair left empty for a soldier off to fight in World War II. To Ellen, even the smallest display item can trigger a memory for an everyday window shopper.

“I believe that people have the ability to resonate with a look or a storyline,” Ellen says. “Individual people will fill in the blanks from their personal experiences. A doily on the back of a chair is enough to resonate with someone. I love experiencing history through everyday things.”

And if the contents of a retail store window can kindle a sense of nostalgia, then surely a different treatment of that same window can bring about a smile, or even laughter. Ellen refers to it as “whimsy” – and she proudly considers it one of her specialties. Anyone who’s seen Ellen’s “New Year’s Hangover” or “Feisty Cat with a Ball of Yarn” windows would be quick to agree.
Message from the President

Greetings! I am excited to be “back in the saddle” as president of the Board of Directors, and I’m here to tell you that The Arc has much to celebrate.

Membership! Last year our membership reached over 1,600 members—and our goal for this year is 2,000. We can do it with your help. You recently received a mailing reminding you to renew your yearly membership. Check your membership card. It should have the dates 2019-2020 plus new discounts at area restaurants and businesses. Our membership numbers give us clout. Join, and help us to advocate.

Dedicated Employees! The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming has an awesome workforce. These individuals go above and beyond every day. As you read this issue of The Parchment, you will be inspired and uplifted by many stories of accomplishments; these milestones happened because of the competent and caring people who choose to work at The Arc. Because of their innovative thinking, many of the individuals you will read about were able to overcome challenges to reach a goal and maybe even realize a dream that once seemed unattainable. Please join me in thanking those individuals who work in any capacity at The Arc, from bus drivers to the administrative team. They all truly make a difference in the lives of our loved ones.

The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming has much to celebrate. Please renew your membership or sign up some friends. I guarantee that The Arc will give you plenty to smile about!

Comments from the Executive Director

In recent months and years, The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming has made a concerted effort to understand, communicate, and celebrate the reasons that we are so special to the people we support, families, and the community. This is an ongoing process, conducted at very low cost, that allows us to assess and refine our behaviors and continuously improve agency offerings.

To use the current buzzword, we are building a ‘brand.’ But in layman’s terms, it’s simply this: how we behave, individually and as an organization. In other words, our culture. And our culture boils down to five very important personality traits.

Competent: Do we strive to support individuals and families with highly developed skills and knowledge?

Dedicated: Are we unwavering in our quest to provide meaningful options and experiences for all?

Professional: Do we hold ourselves to the highest standards, always?

Caring: Are our words and actions firmly rooted in a deep sense of respect?

Innovative: Do we embrace new methods, creative thinking, collaborative partnerships, and advanced activities?

For answers, look no further than the pages of this newsletter. It’s a clear “yes” across the board. So grab a cup of coffee, and spend some time with the people and programs that fulfill the promise of our agency’s “brand.” You’ll be proud to be part of The Arc culture!

Board Officers Installed

The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming installed our 2019-2020 Board of Directors at the 2019 Annual Dinner, held Friday, June 7 at Wadsworth Homestead in Geneseo.

Officers of the Board are Marcy VanZandt (President), Cheryl Englert (Vice-President), Linda LeBlond (Secretary), and Eric Parker (Treasurer).

Other Board members include Diane Armbruster, Dr. David Breen, John Haugh, Ken Hubacher, Lisa Irwin, Charles Keenan, Patty Millen, Shelley Miller, Ken Reimels, and Stefanie Tallman.

Patty and Lisa are new to the Board. Lisa, who is a Self Advocate, assumes the seat formerly held by Scott Kamakaris. The Board presented Scott with a special certificate for outstanding service during his term.
The Presidential Treatment: Outstanding Performer Stephen Rose

Geneseo’s Stephen Rose is living his dream thanks to NYSID Preferred Source employment provided through The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming’s Hilltop Business Services work program.

“Cleaning is my dream job,” he says, when asked to picture himself in his ideal career. “So maybe you could say that my goal would be to clean at someplace fancy or famous – like the White House. But I would definitely be cleaning, just like I do now.”

While he is presently located far from the nation’s capital (about 350 miles), Stephen gives clients nothing less than the Presidential treatment when providing comprehensive janitorial solutions. He works four days a week vacuuming, scrubbing, and scouring workspace and bathrooms at area Department of Transportation, Doty Day Treatment, and Arc Day Habilitation buildings. And he wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I just love to clean,” Stephen explains. “It makes me happy, it keeps me busy, and it’s not as noisy as other environments. I am the kind of person who likes a bit of quiet.”

Prior to his employment under the NYSID Preferred Source contracts, Stephen worked at a local convenience store. Although he received a Hilltop Placement Award in 2005 for his outstanding work there, Stephen always favored the janitorial aspects over the customer service requirements of that job.

“Work choice is a critically important aspect of a vocational program like Hilltop,” says Hilltop Director Kellie Kennedy. “We help connect people to jobs that are the right fit for their interests as well as their abilities. Stephen is a flexible worker with a track record of success, but he particularly excels at cleaning. As a NYSID Member Agency, we are able to link Stephen to his career of choice, where he provides world class service to satisfied customers.”

That type of workplace fulfillment opens a world of possibilities for Stephen.

“Without this job, I’d probably be doing very badly,” he says. “I probably wouldn’t have a place to live, and my mom doesn’t have room for me. My brother has four kids that already fill up her house. So where would I go?”

Stephen, who is 42 years old, has lived independently in Geneseo’s Brookside Apartments since 2002, first with his wife, and now in a single unit since their split in 2010. His mom lives close by – about 15 minutes north, in York – but Stephen manages the bulk of his finances on his own. He balances a budget that includes rent, utilities, and cell phone expenses.

For Stephen, money is a means to an end. He adheres to the adage “money can’t buy happiness,” while using the income that he generates to assist the people who are close to his heart.

“Sure, earning money feels pretty good. But the best parts for me are the achievements,” Stephen says. “Money is money, but achieving something good is more important to me than plain money. I'd rather focus on my achievements and my family's achievements.”

For Stephen, “achievements” include building his social skills, learning more about himself, and knowing that he’s doing a good job at work and as part of the community.

“I’m a very good friend,” Stephen says. “I help my friends when they need it. I would do anything for them, like helping my neighbor carry groceries up the stairs, or watching my friends’ children when they need help.”

Stephen also puts a high priority on being a good dad. His son, Anthony, lives a half hour away, with his mother and her family in Castile. Stephen and Anthony see each other whenever possible, and part of Stephen’s paycheck always goes towards Anthony’s needs and wants.

“I worry about him,” Stephen says. “I work to make sure that he has nice things, like clothes for school. I’m very proud to have a son who loves me. And he’s really smart – he’s in 6th grade, but he does 7th grade math. That’s how smart he is.”

Best of all for Stephen, Anthony is achievement-focused, just like his dad.

“He likes sports, but he’s more into the Boy Scouts,” Stephen says. “He’s doing a lot of good.”

When Stephen isn’t spending time with family and friends, he enjoys quiet time relaxing. He has also been active in Special Olympics, where his specialties include softball and basketball.

“One time, we got to play against the Syracuse Orangemen basketball team,” he recalls, laughing. “These were really big guys, and we got our butts kicked. They were dunking on us and everything. We played out hearts out, but we still couldn’t beat them.”

From a spectator sport perspective, Stephen likes football. His favorite team is the Dallas Cowboys, and he has a collection of memorabilia and clothing that celebrate the franchise.

Stephen cites quarterback Troy Aikman and running back Emmitt Smith among his favorite players, for their MVP contributions to the Cowboys’ Super Bowl victories in the mid-1990s. As is customary, the team was invited to visit the White House after each of those wins. If only Stephen were with them in more than just spirit, he might be one step closer to achieving his employment dream of cleaning for a sitting President.

“That would be cool,” he says. “But I love the job that I have right here, too.”
Dynamic Duo Marks 15 Years with Seniors

Amy Beiswenger and Mellina Provorse are both just 39 years old. So how could it be that they are among the most senior members of our Seniors team?

While many of the program participants that they support have the leg up on them in terms of age, Amy and Mellina have the edge when it comes to time spent with the program. They are both celebrating 15 years of employment as Senior Aides!

Both Mellina and Amy started with Hilltop Business Services fresh out of high school, around the year 2000. They began their careers doing piecework at the Work Center in Mount Morris, and soon branched out into other areas; Amy took a job at McDonald’s, while Mellina tried her hand at Hilltop’s Lunch Cart. At about the same time, a new “Seniors” program for a small group of older individuals was getting started not far away, in the Hilltop Conference Room.

“I remember them meeting right there across the hall when I was working the Lunch Cart,” Mellina says.

By 2004, it was apparent that the Seniors program was destined for growth – and based on their enthusiasm to take on new tasks, Mellina and Amy were tapped as potential Senior Aides. They jumped at the chance, and haven’t turned back.

Today, the Open Roads Seniors program supports more than 30 individuals, and employs 11 staff at 66 Stanley Street in Mount Morris. Amy and Mellina couldn’t be prouder to be part of the group.

“My favorite part of the job is helping people, and being a part of a team,” Amy says – and Mellina agrees.

“I like working with the clients, but I also like my coworkers and my bosses,” she says.

According to Habilitation Coordinator Elyse Strom, who supervises this dynamic duo, the feeling is mutual.

“They’re my girls,” she says, enthusiastically. “They’re just phenomenal. They are always willing to do what needs to be done, and take on new tasks. They are just invaluable.”

Their responsibilities are vast: they help out with crafts, in the kitchen, ordering lunches, loading and unloading buses, and with outings such as bowling and ceramics, to name just some of their duties.

In her spare time, Mellina loves to bowl with Arc Recreation, shop, and sell Avon products. Amy likes to spend time with her dog, Baxter, and travel to South Carolina and Memphis, TN to see her brothers. Both Mellina and Amy are very family oriented, and are proud aunts.

At work, they have no intention of slowing down. While they have many years to go before they’re Seniors themselves, Amy and Mellina are excited to continue to grow older and wiser with the close-knit Open Roads crew.

“We plan to be here for at least another 15 years,” they say, together.

Community Award Winners

The Arc honored community members who are making a difference for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at our Annual Dinner this June. Additional award winners are on page 7.

- Community Partnership Award - John Kaeemmele & RIT Engineering Students for developing automation solutions for Hilltop Business Services
- Charles Elam Volunteer of the Year Award - SUNY Geneseo Associate Professor Gillian Palu (Pictured) and Samantha Scott (Student)
- Graduating High School Student Scholarship ($2,000) - Brandy Rose Bird (Livingston County)
- Graduating High School Student Scholarship ($2,000) - Destiny Retigan (Wyoming County)
- Continuing Education Scholarships ($2,000 each) - Emily Fisheler and Elizabeth Brierton
- Foundation Hero Award Craig (pictured left) & Sharon Bolesky of C&R Foods for decades of donations and special event support
Thank you to the Developmental Disabilities Giving Circle for a generous grant to our Clinical Services team. The Giving Circle’s mission is “Promoting Innovation and Possibilities,” and they are applying that mission at The Arc by supporting the CAST Dragonfly Program. CAST Dragonfly is a comprehensive social support group for aging adults that allows us to assess needs and identify an individual’s wishes about end of life care before age-related challenges occur.

Everyone looked great and had a fun time at the Semi Formal on Saturday, June 9. Thanks to John and Sarah’s Family Restaurant for catering and to Dansville Moose Lodge 1130 for always hosting a lovely event.

Congratulations to the LIVES Program (Learning Independence, Vocational, and Educational Skills) graduates at SUNY Geneseo, who were honored at the Friday, May 17 School of Education-convocation ceremony. The future is bright!

The top team at the 25th Annual “Friends Fore Life” golf tournament, held Friday, June 28 in Geneseo: Andy Gikes, Glyn Hartigan, Mike Strauss, and Derek Hicks. The foursome came in with a score of 58 on a sunny, successful day.

Brittany Burrows (left) was the first place winner in the 2019 Arc Idol performance competition. Pictured with her are second place winner Beatrice Rhoads and third place recipient Hannah Finch. Congratulations to all the Arc Idol performers!

KidStart hosted a lovely Tea & Dessert Party on Wednesday afternoon, May 22. More than a dozen staff members donated amazing sweet treats, and admission was a donation (food or money) to the KidStart Backpack Program that assists local families. An absolutely great time for an absolutely awesome cause! Yummm!

Ken and Kathy Hubacher enjoy an evening of great food and drink to benefit The Arc at Tuesday, May 21’s Taste of Livingston County. The event drew almost 400 people to beautiful Camp Stella Maris, and nobody left hungry! Thank you to all of the sponsors, patrons, and vendors who came out to support The Arc and our partner for the event, the Livingston County Chamber of Commerce.
Meet CFO
Lynn Fleming

Chief Financial Officer Lynn Fleming is a new face at The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming, but she’s certainly no stranger to our field; Lynn comes to us with almost a decade of high-level financial experience at not-for-profit human services agencies.

After six years spent working in the public sector, Lynn dipped her toe in not-for-profit financial leadership in 2010, as Senior Accounting Manager at AVBL-Goodwill. She hasn’t turned back since.

“Working in a public accounting firm is really about trying to make money for people who are business owners, and helping them to develop tax strategies,” she says. “It was nice, but I was really only helping those specific people personally. I felt that there had to be something more rewarding. So I thought, ‘Maybe I could work at a non-profit.’”

Immediately prior to joining The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming this May, Lynn was Director of Finance for Epilepsy-Pralid, an organization for individuals affected by brain injury, epilepsy, or developmental disability and their families. Before that, she was Assistant Director of Finance at The Arc of Wayne, our sister agency and partner in the Collaborative of the Finger Lakes.

In nine years at not-for-profits, Lynn has managed budgets of up to $20 million; led general ledger, billing, accounts payable and payroll teams; overseen reports, financial reviews, and grants; and implemented payroll efficiencies for hundreds of employees.

Lynn’s background with human service agencies shortens the learning curve for her new position at The Arc. She is already armed with the understanding needed to help secure The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming as a high quality, cost effective agency in an evolving financial landscape.

“We’re recognizing that the traditional model is changing,” she says. “Now the question is how to position ourselves to weather that change, and not be harmed with the transition to Managed Care, and other changes that may be coming our way.”

As CFO at The Arc, Lynn and her team oversee all of the agency’s fiscal functions. Lynn is responsible for ensuring that each division and the agency as a whole meet financial targets. As such, her work has already begun with every senior manager and Executive Director Martin Miskell to develop annual and multi-year financial plans for programs and the overall agency.

Lynn is a graduate of the University of Connecticut, where she earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and Master’s Degree in Accounting. She subsequently studied Non Profit Management at SUNY Brockport, where she earned a second Master’s Degree.

Lynn currently lives in Penfield, but her daily commute to Mount Morris is a homecoming of sorts.

“I grew up in Livingston County, and I still have some family in the area,” she says. “My mom had a bakery in Lima when I was little.”

Lynn inherited her mom’s love for baking. She also loves to read, craft, and cook. And she is an active cyclist, with her sights set on next year’s Tour de Perry bike trek to benefit The Arc.

Her husband, Jason, works for the Penfield School District. Completing their household are Lynn’s 9-year-old stepson, Eli, and “Hazel,” the family’s 10-month-old, high-energy beagle puppy. A new job combined with an active family life leaves very little in the way of spare time for Lynn.

“We did a puppy training class, which went OK. She graduated from it, but she had the least attention span of all the dogs there,” Lynn says. “So these days, it’s mostly about Hazel.”

45th Anniversary

On the occasion of Hilltop’s 45th anniversary, we are proud to introduce a suite of logos that connect Hilltop Business Services to our parent brand while celebrating Hilltop’s unique contributions to the fabric of life in our area.

As The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming’s work program, Hilltop Business Services creates meaningful jobs for people with disabilities while delivering unmatched manufacturing and service solutions to businesses and government agencies. We are seven diverse businesses plus a staffing service that are bound by a commitment to quality people delivering quality products. Our success benefits everyone – our customers, the people we work with, and the communities we share.
“I think that humor is the universal solvent for connecting people together, as long as it’s kind,” she says, with a smile.

Ellen’s good natured outlook comes in handy when she’s forced to balance her own thrifting instincts with what’s best for the shop window.

“I have been thrift storing and antiquing since I was 3 years old,” she says. “I know my thrift. It can be a real challenge not to buy things. Believe me, I am definitely capable of buying stuff!”

Such is the double edge sword of thrift – and Ellen isn’t the only one affected. Her displays often make items look so appealing that they would fly out of the windows into customers’ personal collections, if certain safeguards weren’t in place. Finders Keepers encourages shoppers to put such items on hold until the next display goes up. And Ellen complements for-sale items with other design elements such as custom banners and signs created specifically for the displays by Hilltop Printshop, a sister business under the Hilltop Business Services umbrella.

“I am always amazed by her ability to take items that really don’t look like much and would likely be passed over and then put them in a window where customers have a sense of what they could be and the item becomes a must have,” Judy says.

What’s next for window shoppers at the intersection of State and Main is yet to be determined, but one thing is clear: Ellen will find inspiration for her next masterpiece, sure as she would track down that next one-of-a-kind thrift shop deal.

“Once the idea hits, I feel like a crazed beagle with its nose to the ground,” Ellen says. “I need to sniff it out.”

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Finders Keepers’ post-Memorial Day window, titled “Sheila! We Can Wear White Shoes and Belts Now!”

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**Annual Dinner Award Winners**

- **Community Services Achievement Award**
  - Patricia Thome

- **Drew Moran Community Involvement Award**
  - Fred Ferrainolo

- **Hilltop Achievement Award**
  - Randy Dieter

- **Hilltop Placement Award**
  - Richard Johannes

- **Jonathon Templeton Award for Special Olympics**
  - Bill Gee

- **Ryan Helmer Bowling Scholarship Award**
  - Tim Layer

- **Randy Lakin Sportsmanship Award**
  - Shawn Barney

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Learn More at [www.LWARC.org](http://www.LWARC.org)
August 10th-17th Pike Fair
Visit The Arc of Livingston-Wyoming booth as we celebrate the "Bounty of the County" at the Wyoming County Fair (a.k.a. "Pike Fair") from Saturday, August 10 through Saturday, August 17. While you’re there, enjoy all that the Pike Fair has to offer: many daily activities, including exhibits, rides, horse shows, home arts, flowers, farm animals and products, great food, and so much more!

September 7th 5K Run/Walk
Join us Saturday, September 7 for The Arc’s 5K Run/Walk in memory of Board Member Ramon Rocha. It is a fun road race for all ages and experience levels in the historic Village of Geneseo, NY. For more information, contact Public Relations Director Jeff Thomas at jthomas@lwarc.org or (585) 658-2828 ext. 128.

Looking Ahead SAFE at Home
People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities benefit from the social inclusion and self-determination of community based living. Our new SAFE at Home program is intended to help people with I/DD maintain safe and healthy living outside of certified residential settings. Learn more at www.lwarc.org/safeathome.