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Dad, Mom,  
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Paige Roseo is the manager of guest services at Roscoe Mountain Club



# Paige Roseo

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY MATTHEW ALBECK

Visiting the Roscoe Mountain Club is a wonderful experience that includes stellar views of the surrounding region, outdoor

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5Y



# *Congratulations Paige*

*from the team at  
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3Y

activities, and cozy, fireplace-laden environments for relaxing. Your visit will likely be tailored by 25-year-old Paige Roseo, who is Manager of Guest Services. Paige's enthusiastic and positive attitude imparts a warm welcome to her guests as she continues in a career which she first learned from her family's business.

Paige has been manager of guest services at Roscoe Mountain Club since May 2024, and her parents own and operate The Rockland House in Roscoe, "so I've been in hospitality my entire life. I got a degree in accounting and then, when I went into accounting, I missed working with people." Before her current position, Paige worked at the accounts payable department at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts for a year and a half.

"It was great," Paige said, but she missed the elements of hospitality she was accustomed to and wanted to return to a position that

*'I see so much potential in the property which is why I was drawn to it. It's so beautiful and there are so many experiences to be made for [visitors] and it's great to see repeat customers.'*

**Paige Ruseo**  
Guest Services Manager |

allowed her to interact with guests everyday.

As manager of guest services, Paige coordinates logistics for her guests, and her main focus is lodging. Paige also helps with scheduling tee-times and booking packages for the 18-hole championship golf course. "We are a resort," Paige said, and in addition to lodging options and golf, "we have six newly renovated pickle-ball courts, an ice skating rink, and a private boathouse on Lake Florence where guests can enjoy a

swim and take out boats, paddleboards and kayaks."

Paige knows how important her position is at the resort, and she is committed to giving her guests an excellent experience. "When people walk through the front door, making sure they have a friendly face, making sure that their concerns are answered, making sure that they feel taken care of, that they know where everything is on the property, that we can get them booked if they want a tee-time." Paige also works diligently behind

the scenes making sure everything is accounted for and boosting her team's morale.

"I see so much potential in the property which is why I was drawn to it. It's so beautiful and there are so many experiences to be made for [visitors] and it's great to see repeat customers. They come back and say, 'Thank you so much for making our stay really great.'"

Paige said her biggest influences were her parents, who have been running The Rockland House for her entire life. Her grandfather purchased the Rockland House in 1963, so it's been in the family for a long time. As she grew up alongside her parents, she learned the logistics of the restaurant business and even remembers handing flowers to guests on Mother's Day as a child. She saw how dedicated her parents were to building a business by themselves, and that observation inspired a diligent work ethic and a love of hospitality that still informs her work to this day.



# Congratulations

## Paige Roseo

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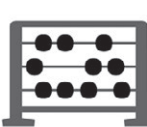
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# Ean Blank

BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**E**an Blank never thought he'd end up in the family business. But looking back now, he wouldn't have it any other way.

The 22-year-old fuel supplier works at County Petroleum Products in Ferndale, a company with deep roots in Sullivan County. He's not just an employee—he's the third generation in his family to keep the business running strong.

"My grandfather [Robert Blank]



started it in 1952," Ean said. "My dad [Mitchell Blank] runs it now, and I'm here carrying on the tradition. It's an honor and a privilege

to be a part of this...it's big shoes to fill, to continue after my grandfather and my father. But I'd like to think that I have what it takes."

Growing up in Liberty, Ean says he was given the chance to join the family business. There was no pressure, no expectation—just an opportunity. "I was given the choice," he explained. "I was not forced to go into it. But when I was probably 13, I started working in the business...not saying I was hooked on day one because I was not! But as time went on, I found myself coming back during my school breaks, and now full time."

He went on to achieve an accounting degree from Syracuse University, knowing that math was always a strong suit. "I chose what I'm best at," he said. "I'm good with math, so I decided to pursue a degree in a math-related field."

Today, Ean is involved in every part of operations. "I attempt to do everything," he said. "One day I might be in the office answering phones, and the next I could be out making the deliveries that I took the day before or be involved with a mechanical matter. I assist with management tasks as well as the hands-on work—everything from the logistics to manual labor."

And no two days are alike. "There's no day that's the same as the next," Ean said. "Of course, you might have a slower day, but the next day could be the complete opposite."

It's those unpredictable days—and the people he meets along the way—that make the work worth it. "My favorite parts are the opportunities and the connections that I've made these past few years," he said.

Ean credits his family and friends for keeping him motivated when things get tough. "I'm very fortunate for what I have. What keeps me going is knowing that there's always someone supporting me."

When he's not working, Ean enjoys the outdoors—skiing in the winter and being outside as much as possible.

His advice for young professionals? "Try to meet as many people as possible," Ean said. "Make connections because you never know where one connection could lead."

As he looks to the future, Ean knows the weight of his family's legacy—but he's ready for the challenge. "It's big shoes to fill," he said. "But I'd like to think I have what it takes."

## Congratulations, Ean!

Proudly welcoming  
the third generation to  
our experienced team  
of professionals!





# Dominique Etienne



BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

**D**ominique Etienne didn't always know where her career would take her, but she knew one thing: she wanted to make a difference. Now, as a lab technician at AG Environmental in Sullivan County and a soon-to-be graduate of SUNY Sullivan, she's doing just that.

Dominique was born in North Carolina and moved to Queens with her mother when she was five years old. She spent her school years in Queens and graduated from Bayside High School. Afterward, she and her mother relocated to Middletown, where Dominique enrolled at Sullivan County Community College. She is now in her final semester, majoring in liberal arts science.

Originally, Dominique was on a different path. She had majored in green building technology, but changed her major to make transferring to a four-year college easier. Still, her passion for sustainable design stuck with her.

"The idea of making pre-built homes more sustainable and creating more energy efficient buildings...I like the aspect of taking what we already have and just making it greener," she explained.

"Not everybody can afford to build a new house from the ground up. So integrating more efficient and sustainable energy forms and technologies into the home really piqued my interest."

Dominique's interest in science

runs deep, but her love for lab work came through a mentor at SUNY Sullivan.

"Kathryn Scullion, she was the lab coordinator and she introduced me to the Bridges to Baccalaureate program at SUNY Purchase. At the end of the program I was able to go to Phoenix, Arizona to do a poster talk on the research we did," Dominique said. "The ability to create and test my hypothesis in the lab is really what got me into the research field."

It was Scullion who told her about AG Environmental, where she works today. "She pushed me to apply and encouraged me," Dominique said. "So I was like, yeah, I'll go for it."

At AG Environmental, Dominique and her lab mates are part of the team that makes sure drinking water is safe for Sullivan County's residents, schools, and summer camps.

Dominique works in the Chemistry department as a Lab Technician. "I'll come in, I'll look at what we have in the fridge and see how many samples we have. There's a lot of tests we can do, so I have a variety of options to choose from depending on how I'm feeling" she explained. "From nine to five, it's opening samples, testing 'em, smelling 'em..."

Yes, you read that right. Smelling them. "We do offer an odor test where people do want to see if their sample has a smell to it," she said. "It's somewhat painful for the lab because I have to recruit a panel of people to smell different dilutions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13Y

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# Dominique Etienne

*Chemistry Lab Technician*



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# Kassondra Johnstone

BY DEREK KIRK

**A**cquiring grants is essential to a nonprofit's survival. Thus, Kassondra Johnstone is essential in the vibrant surge of Sullivan 180's impact on all of Sullivan County – whose work as the Development Manager for the organization relies on her to identify and secure funding for community health initiatives and programs.

The 29 year-old also oversees the administration of grants that are received, as well as facilitating community collaboration meetings around grant opportunities

and special initiatives, in addition to coordinating Turtle Awards sponsorships, which recognizes participants in the Healthiest Fire Department Challenge and schools in the Empowering a Healthier Generation program and for events like Sullivan 180's Walk-Thru Mondays at Peace, Love & Lights.

"It is inspiring to see our community work toward better health in these programs," Kassondra said. "I connect our local schools and organizations to funding opportu-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

nities at the local, state and federal levels in order to bring more funding into Sullivan County and work on special projects as needed."

"One of the projects I am particularly invested in is our efforts in increasing school nutrition for our students through farm to school initiatives, access to cafeteria staff training and capacity building, and

kitchen equipment upgrades," she continued.

For Kassondra, it was instilled into her character by her parents at a young age that giving back to the community should be practiced as well as preached. With her work at Sullivan 180, both of these lessons are happily satisfied.

"I spent a lot of time volunteering



## Congratulations Kassondra

We are all Very Proud of You

*Love*

***The Johnstone Family***

Troy, Caroline,  
Adelaide, Cheryl,  
Stephen, Darren,  
Tre, Ma, (Pop Pop)

– and –

***The O'Brien Family***

Mom, Fred,  
Nana, Popa



in my youth which exposed me to a broad range of career paths and ways that a person can make a difference," she said. "I wanted to find a career path where I could help people using my specific skill set, and while I didn't start out in the nonprofit world it was always my goal and led me to pursuing the type of education that I did."

After growing up upstate in Hampton, NY, Kassondra has since made Liberty her home after meeting her husband and Liberty native, Troy, while they both attended Hartwick College. After earning a Bachelor's degree in political science and a Masters in Public Administration with focuses in Nonprofit Management and Local Government Management from SUNY at Albany, the duo made the decision to make Liberty their permanent address, dig in and make their community a better place. On top of her work with Sullivan 180, Kassondra takes pride in caring for her two daughters, Caroline, 4, and Adelaide, 2, and the family's two rescue mutts.

"Being able to see their direct impact on Sullivan County and inten-

tional focus and investment in our youth firsthand, especially since becoming a parent, made the decision to join the team in December 2023 effortless."

Leading up to her current position in her career path, Kassondra noted that her time spent with the Sullivan County Division of Planning was invaluable.

"The department took a chance on hiring me fresh out of grad school – without a traditional Planning degree. Heather Jacksy and Jill Weyer really molded me into a competent and confident Planner," she attributed.

"The experience I gained learning government processes and the connections I made within and throughout the county still serve me each day in my role with Sullivan 180," she went on to say. "I can't thank them enough for the opportunity. I would also like to thank our entire team at Sullivan 180. It is an honor to be a part of such a diverse, dynamic, and passionate group of women who are all working toward the goal of a healthier Sullivan County, one degree at a time."



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# Congratulations Kassondra!

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"You sort of start thinking anything's possible if you've got enough nerve."

– Ginny Weasley, Harry Potter & the Half-Blood Prince

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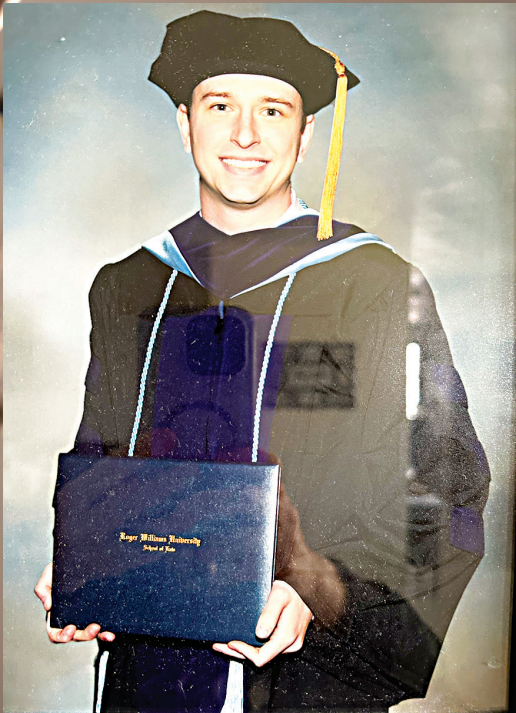
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CONGRATULATIONS

# Zach!



We are proud of you for sticking to your goals and coming back to the County!

Love,  
Mom & Dad

131518

# Zachrey Nilsen

STORY AND PHOTO BY VINCENT KURZROCK

At just 28 years old, Zachrey Nilsen is carving out a name for himself in Sullivan County's legal community. As an Associate Attorney with Blustein, Shapiro, Frank & Barone LLP (BSFB, LLP) in Monticello, he assists clients with land use and real property matters, including real estate transfers, subdivisions, and municipal applications for land use projects. His role allows him to work closely with local families while also contributing to emerging industries such as solar energy and commercial development in upstate New York.

Zachrey joined BSFB, LLP in the fall of 2024 and has been in his

position for six months. His journey to the firm began when he reached out to longtime family friend and local attorney, Barbara Garigliano, as he sought a change of pace after his first year practicing law.

His academic background includes dual Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and Intercultural Studies from the University of Denver, where he graduated in 2019. He then pursued his Juris Doctor at Roger Williams University School of Law, setting the foundation for his legal career.

For Zachrey, his family's influence has been a driving force in his success. "My upbringing with

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my family is where I give a lot of credit to my success," he shared. "My mother is a first-generation U.S. immigrant, and my father works in large-scale highway construction. My whole life, I watched them work hard for our family and community, which inspires me each day."

Beyond his legal work, Zachrey enjoys traveling with his family, exploring the Catskills and local state parks, and experimenting with new recipes to share with friends and loved ones.

He also holds deep respect for his senior partners at BSFB, LLP, particularly Michael Blaustein and Will Frank, who have served Hudson Valley residents with superior legal counsel for decades. Now, as BSFB, LLP expands into Sullivan County, Zachrey is eager to continue that legacy.

"BSFB has been working with Hudson Valley residents from our Goshen office, but we have recently expanded into Sullivan County with our Monticello office," he explained. "Attorneys William Duguet Jr. and Barbara Garigliano have made me feel welcomed and appreciated. We have a great team here at BSFB, LLP, and we look forward to helping the Sullivan County community."



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## CONGRATULATIONS, ZACHREY!

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**Zachrey S. Nilsen**



# Congratulations Robert!

We have all watched you work so hard, and we cannot think of anyone who has earned this more.

You are an inspiration to all of us and you set an amazing example for not only other entrepreneurs and young business owners, but for your daughters!

This amazing accomplishment is just one step in your journey. You have overcome so many obstacles to pursue your dreams, and your perseverance is admirable.

You have always made it a priority to share your success with your family, your team and your community, and you deserve to celebrate this milestone.

**CHEERS TO A JOB WELL DONE!**



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# Robert Beach

STORY AND PHOTO BY MATTHEW ALBECK

**H**ave you ever wondered how to build a home from scratch? 31-year-old Robert Beach, owner of Bob The Builder, knows; in fact, it's his business to construct homes from the ground up. He and his nine crew members complete every aspect of home construction, including excavation, installing foundations, framing, laying sheetrock, tiling, and all finish work. Robert, who taught himself how to read blueprints, said, "within a week we'll build a 2,800 square foot building. All my guys are side-by-side with me and we meet every goal." Robert also writes his own takeoff sheet, which is a list of all the materials and labor needed for each building project.

Today, Robert is a successful family man with a supportive wife and two daughters, a team of trustworthy employees, a fleet of five trucks, and countless impressive construction projects under his belt.

Robert is proud of what he's been able to build, but he's also candid about his checkered past. After getting kicked out of high school, Robert completed home-schooling at night and at 15 years old began working construction full time. He was persistent in educating himself while he raised a family, and in 2019, he started his own construction business. During his first year he borrowed tools from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15Y

# Dominique Etienne

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7Y

sample to see if they can still smell the original sample," she laughed.

But it's the people that make the job worth it.

"I like the community that we have at my lab," Dominique said. "And I also like a variety of people that we have here and I enjoy talking to them. I like applying my science skills and things I've learned in the school in the lab. I just like how it keeps my brain going."

Her journey to finding this career wasn't always easy.

"I'm definitely finding my passion," she said. "I've had multiple jobs before, not in the science field. But finally getting a job that's in the STEM field...it's nice, it's fulfilling."

When she's not working, Dominique enjoys gardening in her own greenhouse. "It's my first year gardening and I really like doing my own gardening," she said. "Now that I've had my trial run last year, I'm going to completely put my all and

apply all the knowledge from last year into this season's harvest."

Dominique also enjoys spending time outdoors at local parks on trails, and she loves the peaceful views at the Neversink Reservoir. "I've gone there just to sit on the rock on the overlook and look at the beautiful water," she said. "I also enjoy crafts like painting pottery and drawing."

Her advice for other young professionals?

"Get out of your comfort zone. Network, talk to people in your major, professors, faculty... they want to see you succeed," she said. "They might open you up to new opportunities that you never thought that you could do."

As for what's next, Dominique plans to take a short break after graduating this spring before deciding on her next step.

With her positive attitude and drive to help others, there's no doubt Dominique will continue making an impact wherever she goes.

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# Congrats Rob!

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# Rob,

Congratulations to one of the hardest working guys we know! We are so proud of the growth and accomplishments you continue to achieve. You are so deserving of this recognition. Cheers to you, your team and your beautiful girls.

*Love Corey, Kara, Sloan and Saul Nash.*



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13Y

friends and family just to complete small projects. Robert said running his own business was a big change, "but I was dedicated; I didn't want to fail so I worked from morning till dark (still do) and I took on some of the biggest projects that [laughing] put me to my test.

"I enjoy what I do, I love it, it's not just a check to me; after I'm done I see [what I built]. I take pride in my work every step of the

way," Robert has demonstrated incredible leadership qualities as he guides his team from project to project. Because he remembers his own troubled youth, he is open to hiring people that might have made mistakes in the past and need a second chance. On more than one occasion, Robert has been able to mentor a new hire until the employee has been able to make achievements in business and family for himself. "If you are willing to learn, I'll teach you to the fullest," Robert said.

Robert said in 20 years he'll still

be running his business: "I'm never gonna retire. I enjoy it too much." He owns three houses, has a daughter in private school, and takes his family on several vacations every year so the kids get him uninterrupted for one week. Even when he's relaxing in paradise it's hard for Robert to forget about his projects back home: His wife Lakin Castillo Beach said, "It's a tradition, from every country we've ever been to, I have a picture of him looking at blueprints on the balcony."

One of the reasons his employ-

ees respect him so much is his dedication and his willingness to engage in the work himself. "That is one thing that [his employees] always say about him," Lakin said; "He is the first boss they've had that works alongside them instead of sitting in the truck." Because he is a role model for his employees, a loving family man, and a successful tradesman and entrepreneur, Robert is an exemplary young professional and we wish him luck as he continues to complete building projects throughout Sullivan County.

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# Rachel Brazell

BY VINCENT KURZROCK

At 30 years old, Rachel Brazell is making a lasting impact in her community by helping people regain mobility and improve their overall well-being. A dedicated physical therapist for the past five years, Rachel took a leap of faith last May by opening her own private practice, Brazell Physical Therapy, PLLC.

A graduate of Tri-Valley High School in Grahamsville, Rachel pursued her passion for movement and rehabilitation by earning a Bachelor of Science in kinesiology from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA. She then continued her education at Plymouth State University in Plymouth, New Hampshire, where she earned her Doctorate in Physical Therapy.

Upon returning to Sullivan County, Rachel sought a position as an outpatient physical therapist. However, she struggled to find a clinic that aligned with her vision of patient care. Determined to create an environment where patients received one-on-one attention tailored to their unique needs, she decided to start her own practice.

"I strongly believe in providing one-on-one care tailored to each individual's needs, so I decided to start my own business to deliver the personalized attention and high-quality care that I feel every patient deserves," Rachel explained.

In her practice, she provides a range of physical therapy ser-



cerns and provide personalized care that fosters lasting results.

Outside of her practice, Rachel enjoys staying active through running and strength training. She also loves baking sourdough bread, spending time with her family, and being outdoors. One of her greatest inspirations is Courtney Dauwalter, one of the world's top ultramarathon runners.

"Her mental toughness and resilience are truly one of a kind," Rachel said. "She is full of positive,

vices, including manual therapy, therapeutic exercises, and neuromuscular re-education. Beyond hands-on treatment, she focuses on educating her clients on how to live healthier, happier lives through sustainable lifestyle changes.

"My favorite part of my job is empowering people to physically feel their best so they can live a life filled with health, happiness, and confidence," she said. "Seeing my clients achieve their goals and knowing I've contributed to their health and wellness journey is incredibly rewarding."

Rachel attributes her success to her ability to truly listen to each patient and understand their specific needs. She takes a holistic approach to treatment, considering the body as a whole rather than focusing solely on isolated symptoms. This allows her to address the root cause of her clients' con-

uplifting energy and remains incredibly humble and grounded despite her achievements. Her approach to challenges and her attitude toward life inspire me to push my limits and stay positive, even when things get tough."

Rachel expressed heartfelt gratitude to those who nominated her for this honor, calling it a humbling experience. She also extended special thanks to her parents, Mary and Johan Adriaans, for their unwavering support and for instilling in her the importance of giving 110 percent to everything she believes in. Additionally, she acknowledged her husband, William, for his constant trust and encouragement.

Lastly, she shared her deep appreciation for her clients, thanking them for placing their trust in her and allowing her to be part of their health and wellness journeys.

## Congratulations Rachel!

We are very proud of you and wish you all the success you have worked so hard for.

Welcome back to the Catskills, along with your family, William and son Grayson.

Love  
Mom and Dad

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# Yeni LaGrutta

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY DEREK KIRK

Preserving history and cleanliness go hand-in-hand, and at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, the mission to keep the spirit of the Original 1969 Woodstock Music and Art Festival is kept alive through the effort to maintain a polished and orderly Museum and music venue – led by 32-year-old Housekeeping Manager, Yeni LaGrutta.

In her role, she commands the oversight of the cleanliness of the venue, which includes the Museum exhibits, concert spaces, campgrounds and glamping sites – on top of all the other responsibilities, like training and guiding the housekeeping team to not only uphold the standards of Bethel Woods' historic setting, but to ensure the community enjoys their guest experience from start, to middle, to end.

With a Bachelor of Science in Administration and a Registered Environmental Services Executive (RESE), a credential offered by the IEHA (International Executive Housekeepers Association) that signifies expertise and professionalism in the environmental services field, she followed down her career path. Finding her place at Bethel Woods, Yeni said “honestly, it just happened!”



“I started at Bethel Woods as a housekeeping laborer, and from day one, I told myself I would strive to be the best at whatever I did. Looking back, it’s amusing how that mindset shaped my journey,” she said. “Reflecting on my career, I realize that my introduction to the art of hospitality comes directly from my family. They always knew how to make even the simplest gathering feel like a grand event, and that influence has stayed with me.”

Born and raised in Mexico into a large family of aunts, uncles, and “gazillion nieces and nephews,” Yeni said that making the move to

Sullivan County opened the door to many firsts, including her first

job, first time seeing snow, first catching of a fish, first time owning a vehicle, and much more. Looking back, her native country and family still hold an invaluable place in her heart.

“Even though my parents had just one child — me! — I never felt like an only child. I was always surrounded by my cousins, who taught me to share everything, whether I wanted to or not,” she said. “I grew up playing in the dirt, climbing trees barefoot. Some of my best memories come from those carefree days.”

Those good memories lend a hand to the current preparedness and a steady sense of self for Yeni today.

“Growing up in Mexico planted

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18Y

## YENI LAGRUTTA: Housekeeping Manager

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# Ann Awny

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY AUTUMN SCHANIIL



For nearly 20 years, Ann Awny worked in retail as an associate, store manager and everything in between. So, when she lost her job before the pandemic, she never thought it would lead her to becoming an Employment Specialist at New Hope Community in Loch Sheldrake, and that six years later she would be enjoying it more than ever.

"I assist people with developmental and physical disabilities in gaining employment," Ann said

with a smile, "and it's so much fun. I fell in love with everyone here, and I just love seeing them succeed. Their win is your win."

Ann does a little bit of everything. Sometimes she's at her desk with paperwork and on the phone, but most of the time she is out and about helping individuals get jobs, and that includes training.

There are a couple of main programs at New Hope, one of them

being the Employment Training Program, according to Ann, which has multiple sub programs within it. Discovery is an in-depth six month program in which the individual gets to try out multiple jobs to see what they like, or Discovery First - a shorter version - that helps out people who are already working but aren't necessarily satisfied with their job.

And then there are people who are completely new, who are taught the basic skills necessary to work towards gaining employment.

"We do it all," stated Ann. "Individuals are referred to me and

then we help them train. They're shown training videos, we physically train them, we bring them to the job sites and sit with them, sometimes we model how to do the job or walk them through it. It's 100 percent hands-on."

For individuals who find a job and are working, Ann will go and visit them to make sure everything is going well, that they're not being idle, and that they have the support they need. It means that Ann is sometimes at ShopRite, Home Depot, or the Casino. Other times she's on site inside the greenhouses watching individuals planting and farming, or at the horse barn modeling what needs to be done.

"The environment changes, the businesses change. I'm really lucky that I don't spend much time at my desk," noted Ann, "and a lot of what I do now in terms of training, I did a lot of when I was working in retail, so it all just kind of fell into place really easily for me. And I just love everyone I work with, they're all wonderful."

When Ann isn't at New Hope, she's still out and about, traveling with her son and her camera, photographing the beautiful landscapes that are pinned to the board behind her desk.



## YENI LAGRUTTA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17Y

the seed of the woman I am today and the woman I aspire to be," she said. "Moving to the U.S. has given me so many opportunities to grow in ways I never imagined. I met my husband, which led me to settle in Sullivan County, where I have now lived for almost eight years, and gained another big family!"

The Housekeeping Manager's passion for traveling has also been incredibly eye-opening for her, as she noted that experiencing different cultures and observing with an open heart has shaped her perspective in ways she never expected - noting that "a keen eye for detail and the little things is what truly elevates the hospitality

experience."

Yeni offered her deep thanks to God, as well to her mother, who repeated the phrase to her "Si vas a hacer algo, hazlo bien, o mejor no lo hagas," which she said roughly translates to, "If you're going to do something, do it well, or don't do it at all."

Yeni also gave a shout out to her husband — "my #1 fan; thank you for always supporting me, even in my most ambitious (and sometimes delusional) moments," she said. "Lastly, I want to thank Bethel Woods Center for the Arts for believing in me and investing in my growth. I am truly grateful to work in such an amazing organization, where I've found both opportunity and a strong sense of community."



STORY AND PHOTO  
BY AUTUMN SCHANIL

From a young age, Joy Leon felt pulled towards health, being inspired by the likes of chefs, physical therapists, and dietitians. She loved food and she loved learning.

Now, as the Nutrition & Physical Activity Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension for the last two years, what she loved as a kid is a part of her everyday.

"Health was something I always gravitated towards," said Joy. "I wanted to read about it, I wanted to learn about it. I've always loved food and nutrition, but I was also really interested in the social aspect of it too. Food connects everything, and everyone."

Growing up in Grahamsville, Joy spent a lot of her time at the local library, being proud of the "I 'heart' my library" tote bag that she happily carried her books in. Her love of information continued into college where she earned her Business Degree from American University while studying a variety of other subjects through electives.

"I felt like business was the easiest thing to study that would give me the most comprehensive set of tools to go out into the world with, while allowing me to also study other things," Joy noted.

Like studying abroad in Spain, where the culture around food is vibrant, communal, and fresh. She spent summers working in the dining hall at a retreat center in Upstate NY where her uncle lived as an artist and yoga teacher, learning as much as she could about food and nutrition while participating in yoga and dance classes.

"Everything in my life is connected to what I do now. I love to cook and I love to move and I love to be social," smiled Joy, "and I've always wanted to be an educator."

As Nutrition & Physical Activity Educator, Leon teaches workshops to senior citizens, and people of all ages, about eating healthy and being active. She works in schools



with the Farm to School program and a program called Warrior Kids, which is all about being a health champion, going over things like eating fruits and vegetables, reducing screen time, getting in physical activity, and reducing sugary drinks. Joy works closely with Garnet Health as well as Sullivan Fresh and its Mobile Market.

"My job covers a lot of things but its main focus is on health and making sure people have the tools and information they need in order to be healthy," stated Joy, "and that looks different for everyone. What's perfect for me, isn't what's perfect for the next person based on dietary preferences, based on cultural differences, etc. Everyone has something different that will work for them, so my approach is how does health fit into your lifestyle and how can you make incremental progress. We always say small changes make a big difference."

And Joy expresses these things in her own life - walking, moving, spending time outdoors, and loving the community she lives in.

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