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Q1 2016

# 2016 Commercial Real Estate Outlook

What's Hot, What's Not?

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**Andrew McMurray:**

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Zipz frontman, and  
*Shark Tank* champ

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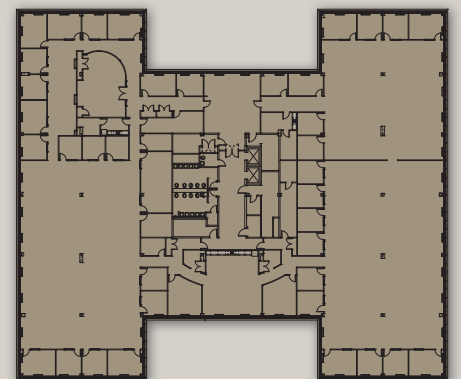


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# Entrepreneur of the Year

Meet Westchester's wine wizard, **Andrew McMurray**: The Zachys Wine & Liquor frontman (he's VP in charge of retail operations) is also a Zipz Wine pitchman (he snagged a \$2.5 million investment on *Shark Tank*) and a devoted family man, too.

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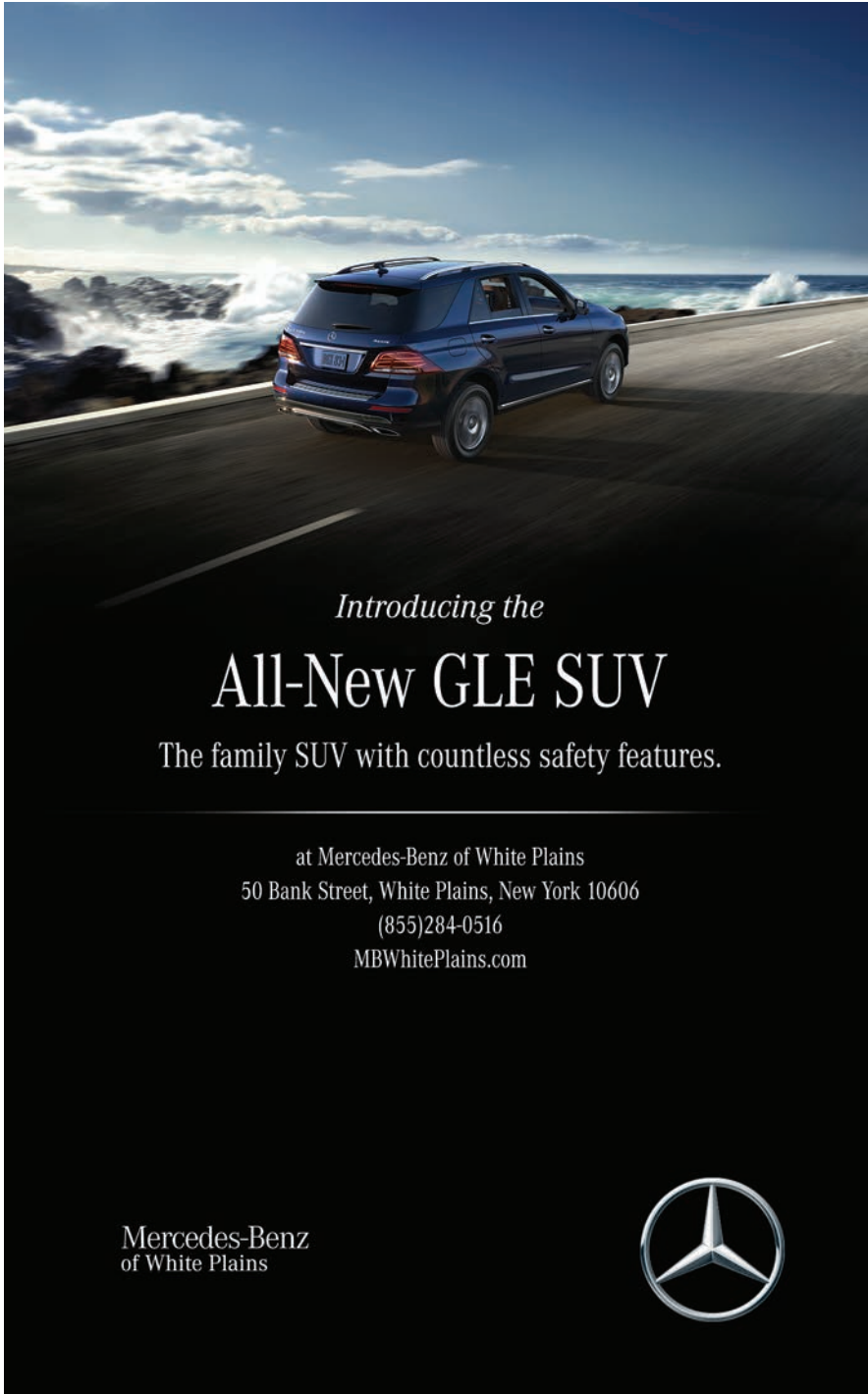
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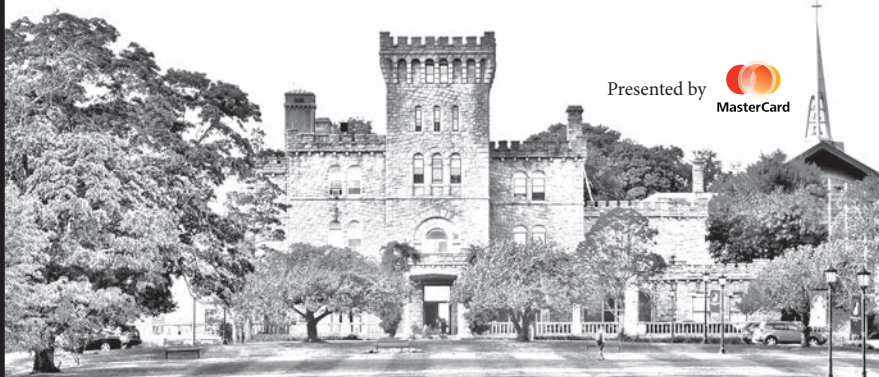
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April 5, 2016

**Steve Wozniak**

Co-Founder, Apple, Inc.; Chief Scientist, Primary Data

September 20, 2016

**Twyla Tharp**

Tony and Emmy award winning choreographer, director, and writer

November 29, 2016

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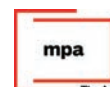
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# Measuring Up (or Not) in 2016



There's a recurring theme that exists when you work for a magazine that regularly deals in uber-successful people: feelings of inadequacy whenever you compare yourself to said people. For example, I tend to declare it a pretty good day when I can get myself and both of my young children out the door in the morning, on time and in one piece; manage to get some decent writing and editing done at the office; and then make it through mealtime, bath time, and bedtime without any major meltdowns. Compare that to our cover subject, our Entrepreneur of the Year, Andrew McMurray, who, in a single day, promotes his *Shark Tank*-deal-winning company, Zipz Wine; brokers innovative entrepreneurial partnerships for legendary wine shop Zachys, where he is vice president; takes a very active role in the lives of his two children (attending all athletic events and parent-teacher conferences)—oh, and trains for and competes in triathlons (including the Ironman!) while he's at it.

Feeling a little less-than yet?

In our fun and enlightening profile (page 32), written by Kevin Zawacki, McMurray explains the source of his seemingly endless reserves of determination and energy, and it's pretty simple: "I'm a driven person," he says, adding that the triathlons further fuel his ambition and creativity.

Like the story on McMurray, our first-ever It List (page 44) is packed full of ridiculously accomplished men and women who also live inferiority-complex-inducing lives. But our purpose in compiling this list is not to make our readers feel substandard; quite the contrary, in fact. The 2016 It List comprises 50 people we think you need to know this year in order to take your entrepreneurial venture or small business to the next level. You'll find, of course, the typical movers and shakers on the list (whom we need, to keep the county, well, moving and shaking), but we've gone beyond that. We've also included some lesser-known yet definite impact players—people who may fly under the notoriety radar but are nonetheless master networkers who could have a profound effect on your most ambitious business or entrepreneurial aspirations. Let us know if you think we've missed anyone.

Lest you still feel inferior at this point in the issue, we've added some trend stories, which may not make you more accomplished, but will at least keep you abreast of the goings-on in our key business sectors. In this Q1 issue, we have reports on the strategies that help local apparel retailers stay competitive (page 28), what's trending in commercial real estate in Westchester (page 38), the current state of our franchise market (page 54), and the changes shaking up the county grocery industry (page 92).

Here's to a happy, healthy, and successful business year in 2016!



Andrew McMurray

**Amy R. Partridge**  
Executive Editor

## Contributors

### Dave Donelson



Dave's career as an entrepreneur and management consultant was perfect preparation

for the reporting he does on various Westchester industries for *914INC*. In this issue, the frequent contributor tackled stories on two interesting but disparate local sectors: retail apparel ("Profit is Always in Style," page 28) and commercial real estate ("2016 Commercial Real Estate Outlook," page 38). Donelson, who lives in West Harrison, is also an author of *The Dynamic Manager's Guides* series of how-to business books.

### Kevin Zawacki



A writer and editor living in Southern Westchester, Kevin penned our cover profile on Entrepreneur

of the Year Andrew McMurray of Zipz Wine and Zachys Wine & Liquor (page 32). Kevin, who has written for *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, and *Smithsonian Magazine*, spent some quality time with McMurray, and, he says, "managed to mispronounce *Sauvignon* only once."

### Stefan Radtke



A frequent *914INC* contributor, Stefan did double duty in this issue, photographing

our cover subject, Entrepreneur of the Year Andrew McMurray (page 32), and Bonnie Kintzer, the CEO of Trusted Media Brands (formerly Reader's Digest Association), for our Corner Office department (page 22). Stefan, who lived in England, Italy, and Germany before moving to Westchester in 2002, studied photography at the International Center of Photography in Manhattan.




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◀ **914INC.**

**Women in Business Awards Luncheon, Tarrytown**

Nineteen of Westchester's most notable female executives, entrepreneurs, politicians, and nonprofit leaders were honored at The DoubleTree Hotel in Tarrytown during 914INC.'s 5th Annual Women in Business Awards Luncheon on November 20. *Left:* Executive Editor Amy R. Partridge and Publisher Ralph A. Martinelli of 914INC., honoree Royal Regency Hotel co-owner and VP Maria Pampafikos with guest. *Bottom left:* Event honorees. *Bottom right:* honoree State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, County Executive Rob Astorino, and honoree Westchester County Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler.



**ArtsWestchester** ▶

**Through the Decades Gala, White Plains**

Celebrating its semicentennial, ArtsWestchester held its Through the Decades Gala on November 20 at The Ritz-Carlton, Westchester, in White Plains. More than 400 turned out for the event, during which 19 former and current board presidents were honored. Funds raised at the gala support the nonprofit's ongoing mission to further the arts. *Pictured:* event- emcee Tony Aiello and Chairman of the County Board of Legislators Michael Kaplowitz.



▼ **Business Council of Westchester**

**First Niagara Bank Leadership Conversations Program, White Plains**

On November 10, more than 100 professionals gathered at the Business Council of Westchester's First Niagara Bank Leadership Conversations program at 42 The Restaurant in White Plains. *Pictured:* Robert Cerminaro of First Niagara Bank; BCW President and CEO Dr. Marsha Gordon; Laura Forese, MD, MPH, Executive VP and COO of NewYork-Presbyterian; and BCW Chairman Anthony Justic.



◀ **Westchester Magazine**

**2015 Top Doctors Cocktail Reception, Tarrytown**

On November 5, *Westchester Magazine* celebrated the 2015 Top Doctors in Westchester County, as selected by Castle Connolly Ltd., with a cocktail party at the Castle Hotel & Spa in Tarrytown. The CEO and president of Castle Connolly, Dr. John Connolly, addressed the crowd. *Pictured:* Dr. Anna Alshansky with Dr. Georgia Close.



◀ **JCC on the Hudson**  
**Groundbreaking Ceremony, Tarrytown**

More than 100 individuals gathered in Tarrytown on October 8 for a groundbreaking ceremony and name reveal for the JCC's new, expanded campus, called the Harold and Elaine Shames JCC on the Hudson. Honored guests included State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and County Executive Rob Astorino. *Pictured:* Harold and Elaine Shames.



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### Business Council of Westchester

2015 Annual Dinner, Rye Brook

On October 27, the Business Council of Westchester held its Annual Dinner at the Hilton Westchester in Rye Brook. New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo was honored as the special guest, and *TODAY* show commentator Mark Halperin served as the featured guest. *Pictured:* "Game Change" author Mark Halperin; Jean Marie Connolly, senior director, BNY Mellon Wealth Management; and Elizabeth Bracken-Thompson, partner, Thompson & Bender.



### Pace Women's Justice Center

Making a Difference Benefit Dinner, Tarrytown

Pace Women's Justice Center (PWJC) held its annual Making a Difference Benefit Dinner on October 28 at The Tappan Hill Mansion in Tarrytown. The event raised more than \$150,000 to aid the PWJC.

*Pictured:* Cindy J. Kanusher, Esq., executive director, PWJC; Chairman Mike Kaplowitz of the Westchester County Board of Legislators.



### Thompson & Bender

Holiday Networking Event, White Plains

Thompson & Bender held its annual holiday networking event on December 16 at 42 The Restaurant in The Ritz-Carlton, Westchester, in White Plains. More than 100 business leaders, officials, and dignitaries attended the event. *Pictured:* Kathryn Walsh, senior editor of *914INC.*; Geoff Thompson, partner, Thompson & Bender; and Joanna Straub, executive director, Nonprofit Westchester.



### The College of New Rochelle

Common Core Task Force Public Session, New Rochelle

The College of New Rochelle hosted the first public session of Governor Andrew Cuomo's Common Core Task Force on October 29 in the college's Maura Hall. *Pictured:* Jay Quaintance, New York State assistant secretary of education; Judith Huntington, president of The College of New Rochelle; and task-force chairman Richard D. Parsons, senior advisor, Providence Equity Partners, LLC, and former chairman of the board of Citigroup, Inc.



### Westchester County Association

Economic Forecast Breakfast, White Plains

County Executive Rob Astorino unveiled plans for a new Westchester BioScience & Technology Center during the WCA's Economic Forecast Breakfast at the Westchester Marriott on January 7. *Pictured:* Jack Kopnisky, CEO of Sterling National Bank; William M. Mooney Jr, president and CEO of the WCA; and Westchester County Executive Rob Astorino.



### Westchester County Association

Annual Holiday Party, Rye

On December 2, more than 200 of Westchester's business professionals gathered at the Westchester Country Club in Rye for the WCA's Annual Holiday Party. *Pictured:* Dawn French, VP of Marketing and Community Outreach, White Plains Hospital; Michael Schiliro, VP of PCSB; Melinda White, Senior VP of Commercial Banking, Wells Fargo.

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Mari Ogihara, *Front View of Strip & Dismantle*, 2014



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## Something Fishy

How do you keep a Westchester restaurant going strong for 30-plus years? For Rick Ross, it's all about hands-on involvement and stellar customer service.

Photograph by Susan Woog Wagner

### Plus:

Drones hit the commercial sector  
**page 19**

Must-read business books  
**page 21**



## INC.quiry

## Making Waves in Westchester's Seafood Market

Eastchester Fish Gourmet has been one of the region's top seafood spots for more than 30 years. No surprise that founder-owner Rick Ross knows just what it takes to keep a company afloat. **By Paul Adler**

Even the most diehard business leader can't say they wake up at 1 am to begin their workday—but Rick Ross can. That is when the devoted restaurateur heads to New York City's Fulton Street Fish Market to pick up that day's catch. With extensive praise from publications that include the *New York Times*, his longstanding seafood restaurant and market, **Eastchester Fish Gourmet and Fish Market**, have become county favorites. Below, Ross dishes on what it takes to remain a big fish in Westchester's ultra-competitive pond.

### How did you get into the restaurant industry?

One of my jobs out of college was working at Windows on The World, as the buyer of fish. I always knew I wanted to open a restaurant and needed to learn from some of the best before I did. I saw that fish was getting more popular even back in the late '70s as customers realized its health benefits.

### What was the genesis of Eastchester Fish Gourmet and Fish Market?

I couldn't afford to open my own restaurant, so I opened a retail fish store in

1981. In fact, I had two: one in Eastchester and one in Bronxville. The Bronxville store didn't work out, because I didn't have the right location, so I put all my energy into the Eastchester store, which was originally located where the restaurant is. We were busy, so I expanded to the adjoining store and created a casual seafood restaurant in 1987. With a lot of hard work, we decided to expand again and created a fine-dining seafood restaurant in 1997 and moved the fish market four doors down to its current location.

### What were some of your hopes and concerns when founding the restaurant?

My goal was to have a restaurant I could be proud of, where my employees would enjoy working and to which my customers would return. Working for myself was also important to me. I worried about paying the bills and keeping my customers satisfied. Running a restaurant, you just never know what's around the corner, so you need to be flexible, and your staff has to be able to adjust, as well.

### What does it take to maintain a successful restaurant in Westchester?

Your staff is most important to your success—from the chef to the busboy to the dishwasher. We all have to work as a team, understanding that our goal is to make our customers happy. I'm fortunate that many of my staff members have been with me for a long time, especially in the kitchen.

### How do you keep the restaurant competitive?

I do so by ensuring that my staff provides feedback to the chef, manager, and others as to the good and the bad input from our customers. We also solicit feedback from our diners via comment cards, which I read and respond to personally when needed. We've been collecting comment cards for more than 10 years, so I have a

very large database of customer emails. I also eat [at a lot of restaurants] in the area and when I travel, in addition to reading a lot of trade publications.

### **What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced?**

A car drove through our window earlier this year, and that was probably one of the biggest challenges we had to overcome. The accident happened in June, which is a busy time for us. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but we literally had a car go right through the restaurant, destroying tables, booths, chairs, etc. We worked tirelessly for 48 hours to get the restaurant in shape to reopen.

### **How have your business practices evolved over the past 30 years?**

Marketing has become increasingly important, because you need to keep your name out there. New restaurants open; people move into the area, and they need to know about you. It surprises me that some of my customers don't realize I have a fish market, as well—mainly those who are not local. I use email to let customers know about new offerings and specials. We use print media, social media, and, of course, the best marketing is word of mouth.

**"I'm fortunate that many of my staff members have been with me for a long time."**

### **Why go to the Fulton Street Fish Market so often?**

When dealing with fish, freshness is most important—but there are also different qualities of fish, similar to Prime and Choice meats. I go to the Fulton Street Fish Market because I will only buy the best fish, and the vendors at the Market know the quality I expect.

### **What did it mean to be honored by the *New York Times* in 2013, and do you plan on opening other locations?**

Getting an "Excellent" from the *Times* confirmed that my hard work all these years has been recognized. I thought about expanding several times, but I felt I wanted to be the best at what I was doing and having multiple locations wouldn't [allow that]. I don't have any partners in my business, and that works well for me.

## Tech

# Attack of the Drones!

Expect to see more of these unmaned aircraft in Westchester skies, as businesses reap their benefits. **By Cathleen Kenney & Nick Brandi**

It was only a few years ago that drones were nothing more than sexy future-tech seen only on evening-news footage from distant battlefields and in action-packed Hollywood thrillers.

Today, you can pick one up at Kmart for \$99.99. Naturally, unmanned aircraft have broken into the business world, too: From stunning aerial photography to automated door-to-door delivery services, commercial-use drones have really taken off.

The residential real estate market has been an important market for the proliferation of drones in Westchester. "Before drone photography, real estate firms had to hire helicopters for their photographers to take aerial pictures of the luxury homes they were marketing," says Joe Houlihan, managing partner of Houlihan & O'Malley Real Estate Services in Bronxville. "Drones not only are less expensive to fly than helicopters, they also take photos faster, from closer vantage points and without much neighborhood disruption."

But real estate is not the only sector embracing drones. Amazon.com recently unveiled plans for a new drone-delivery system, Amazon Prime Air, which will provide customers with same-day delivery of their orders. Meanwhile, Google's parent company, Alphabet, has announced similar plans, and Walmart has requested permission from US regulators to conduct tests.

"I've been getting a lot more calls recently to make drone-based promotional videos not only for real estate companies but also developers, sports facilities, golf courses, summer camps, and weddings," says Vinny Garrison, who launched

Flying Films NY, his Nanuet-based unmanned-aerial-vehicle company (UAV), in 2014. Garrison added that he's also getting calls from local municipalities—like Clarkstown, which had him aerially video a fireworks display, and Tarrytown, which hired him to do aerial surveys of municipal lots under development.

But there has been some turbulence. In December 2015, the FAA mandated that drones used for commercial purposes may be flown only by individuals with a pilot's license and that UAV companies obtain a special exemption from the FAA to operate them. And they mean it: In October, the FAA fined Chicago-based aerial-photography company SkyPan International \$1.9 million for alleged unauthorized drone flights dating back to 2012.

Garrison, however, is steadfast in his resolve not to get a pilot's license just so he can fly drones commercially. "Everything is pointing in the direction of the pilot's license not being necessary in the future. They'll eventually have a ground test instead, which I think is really smart," he says.

What's certain is that between advertising, promotional, marketing, and other commercial applications, drones are big business. One study by international consulting firm Frost & Sullivan predicts that the commercial drone market will nearly triple in size by the year 2020 and that the nonmilitary drone market as a whole could easily swell to upwards of \$10 billion.

Now that's sexy future-tech.



PHOTO: ULA

Startup Spotlight

# Meeting An Urgent Need

MDxpress succeeds in the fast-growing urgent-care clinic market

By Marie Sue Iarocci

As emergency-room physicians at some of New York City's top hospitals, Rye Brook resident Dr. Jason Lupow and his colleagues noticed urgent-care clinics popping up all over the city and saw an opportunity: Together, they could offer patients access to emergency treatment while saving them a costly and time-consuming trip to the ER.

That's what led to the 2013 opening of **MDxpress**, an urgent-care practice with clinics in Mamaroneck and White Plains, staffed by ER doctors who are available days, nights, and weekends to diagnose and treat an array of emergency and non-emergency conditions, from cuts and scrapes to sore throats and broken bones.

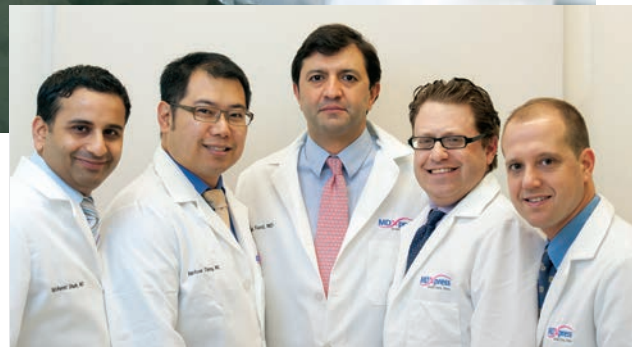
All five MDxpress partners—Drs. Babak Toosi, Alan Teigman, Nelson Tieng, Nishant Shah, and Lupow—work part-time at the clinics and full-time as ER doctors at hospitals in the Bronx, with Tieng at Bronx Lebanon and the rest at Montefiore Medical Center. All but one (Shah) live in Westchester.

"We live in an on-demand society, and time is valuable," says Lupow of the need for clinics like MDxpress. "People want to see the doctor when the need arises, and they don't want to wait to make an appointment. Sometimes people who don't necessarily need the ER for treatment go anyway because their regular doctor either can't squeeze them in or doesn't feel comfortable doing things like stitches or setting a broken bone. At MDxpress, all of us are ER doctors, and that's what



Demand for accessible emergency treatment led five Westchester doctors to found MDxpress in 2013. The urgent-care practice now has two locations.

**Business:** MDxpress  
**Founded:** 2013  
**Founders:** Dr. Jason Lupow, Dr. Babak Toosi, Dr. Alan Teigman, Dr. Nelson Tieng, Dr. Nishant Shah  
**Locations:** Mamaroneck and White Plains  
**Employees:** 21 (14 doctors, 7 medical technicians)  
**Revenue:** Doubled from 2014 to 2015



we do every day at our regular day jobs."

Lupow says while an ER visit can mean hours of

waiting to see a doctor and a high insurance deductible, at MDxpress the average co-pay is around \$20, and most patients are in and out in 20 minutes. For those without insurance, fees depend upon services rendered.

In addition to emergency treatment, MDxpress offers laboratory services, vaccinations, X-rays, and occupational services, including annual physicals.

According to Lupow, a national shortage of general practitioner physicians has left other medical professionals to provide primary care at many doctor's offices and other urgent care clinics, but "what sets us apart at MDxpress is that when you're coming to see us, you're only going to see an ER doctor—not a nurse practitioner or a physi-

cian assistant. And although they are great, we find a lot of our patients would rather see a physician who has the training to treat emergency conditions."

MDxpress has been growing every year; the company opened its first location, in Mamaroneck, in March 2013 and its second, in White Plains, in December 2014, with plans for new service offerings, including urgent dental care, nutrition, physical therapy, and a possible third clinic on the horizon. Volume at the two locations typically ranges from 50 to 60 patients per day.

"Volume is up at both centers, but the biggest issue is staffing," says Lupow. "There's a finite pool of ER doctors available, and we have already recruited a number of our colleagues to work with us. We don't want to grow so quickly that we're forced to hire physician assistants to see patients, like a lot of the other urgent-care clinics out there do."



Stat

# \$1.2 billion

Amount of the private investment that Fareri Associates has pledged in order to build a 3-million-square-foot, mixed-use bioscience and technology center on the vacant 60-acre "North 60" lot on the Grasslands Reservation in Valhalla. The project would boost the county's profile as a biotech leader.

Internet

# From Clicks to Bricks

Etsy and Kickstarter help two local companies find their footing—and branch out as standalones. **By Paul Adler**

Just as Apple began in a garage, many notable Westchester businesses originate not in high-powered boardrooms but in small corners of the Internet. Sites such as the online market Etsy and crowd-funding resource Kickstarter have proven to be effective starting points for a range of fledgling companies, allowing these businesses to reach a varied clientele without expending a great deal of capital.

One such company is **Old New House**, a vintage-and-antique rug seller founded by Westchester residents Melissa



Starting out online helped Katonah rug dealer Old New House (above) and Ossining-based 6 Degrees of Separation Brewery and Restaurant (right) build customer interest and raise funds to open brick-and-mortar locations.

our means to reach and showcase to the customer had to, as well. For example, to offer a shop-by-size option on a website was much more doable for our larger inventory than on Etsy.”

A similar story can be found with **6 Degrees of Separation Brewery and Restaurant**, an Ossining-based business founded by Scott Ryan in 2011. 6 Degrees began as a project on Kickstarter, where the concept surpassed its funding goal by more than \$5,000. “As we started this project, it was bigger than I and the other cofounder, Ron McKechnie, could manage. So, we needed more seed money,” says Ryan of his decision to take to the crowd-funding site. “Kickstarter acted as a great platform for us to get out



Lynn Friedman and David Dilmaghani that began as an Etsy shop. “Etsy is a haven for the keen eye—whether a buyer or seller,” says Dilmaghani, who specializes in selecting inventory.

“When we joined Etsy, no one was really selling rugs. So I took some shots of [our products] draped over chairs to show more of the texture and personality, and a couple of weeks later, we had our first sale,” says Friedman. “We had five rugs when we started and have more than 500 now.”

Today, Old New House operates both a popular standalone website and showroom in Katonah, while still conducting business through Etsy. “It is still a huge part of our business, but it has its limitations,” shares Friedman. “As we grew,

our ideas and to expand our following. It also led to several interviews, which got our name and project out to an even larger audience.”

With the influx of capital, Ryan was able to purchase equipment, pay fees, produce a video for the 6 Degrees website and get a bit closer to opening a brick-and-mortar establishment, which will sell a range of local and house-brewed beers. The company is currently on the brink of making this dream a reality. “We plan to open a small place first, get the word out, establish brand recognition, gain more investors and plan a larger space, which will also serve as a larger production facility,” says Ryan. “We want to open the first place in Ossining, as it is where I’ve lived for the last 17 years.”

Read This

## Buy the Book

Westchester business pros share their top picks

Wondering what books to crack open in 2016? How about titles that have inspired Westchester’s leading business minds? While not always related to industry or finance, each of these various texts has the power to motivate and stimulate, whatever your individual goals may be.

Claire Gilvar

Founder, Booked Parties, Chappaqua



**Invent it, Sell It, Bank It!: Make Your Million-Dollar Idea into a Reality** by Lori Greiner

“As one of the stars of *Shark Tank* and otherwise known as “The Queen of QVC,” her perseverance and tireless

work ethic are an inspiration to me as a female business owner. She talks about the hurdles and challenges we all experience at times in our entrepreneurial journeys and notes that if we focus on approaching these obstacles with passion and determination that this will lead us to our ultimate success.”

Harris Reinhardt

CEO, Paragon Uniform and Apparel, White Plains



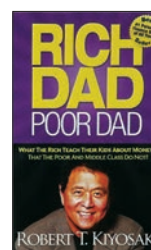
**Leaders Eat Last** by Simon Sinek

“This is a great book for anyone who manages others. The title was taken from a credo of the US Marine Corps, which states that junior servicemen always eat before higher-

ranked officers. Great leaders don’t just care for their employees; they also create environments that protect them from harm, provide opportunities to grow and flourish and create a vision within an organization that is greater than any one person.”

Linda Lopresti

Associate Professor of Business, The College of New Rochelle



**Rich Dad Poor Dad** by Robert Kiyosaki

“In my classes I always talk about taking financial responsibility and learning about money. I often recommend that my students read this book, to learn about taking control of their financial futures.” —PA





## A Trusted Leader

Combining guts, grit, and a good nature, Bonnie Kintzer is taking Trusted Media Brands (formerly Reader's Digest Association) to new heights. **By Elaine Pofeldt**

One of Bonnie Kintzer's former bosses told her she had the charm of a talk-show host and the toughness of a drill sergeant. "It's always nice to be charming and easygoing, but, at the end of the day, you have got to hit your numbers and get the work done," says Kintzer, CEO of Trusted Media Brands, the parent company of *Reader's Digest*. "I'm not afraid to be the drill sergeant when it's needed. People know I'm very passionate, but I have very high ex-

pectations. I expect a lot out of myself and my people. I think people respond to it."

Those qualities have come in handy since Kintzer took the helm of what was known as Reader's Digest Association in April 2014, leading a team of 600 employees spread across its New York City headquarters, the office in White Plains (where Kintzer works), and other locations around the world. Kintzer, a Harvard Business School graduate, started working at the company as a consultant

in the early 1990s, held several leadership roles there before leaving in 2007, and ran a marketing agency called Women's Marketing Inc. before making her return to Reader's Digest Association.

It did not come at an auspicious time for the iconic company, which was founded by DeWitt and Lila Bell Wallace in 1922. It had only recently emerged from a 2012 bankruptcy and had seen three CEOs in as many years since then. Circulation was declining far faster than the 1.9 percent average for the 367 US consumer magazines tracked by the Alliance for Audited Media in 2014. *Reader's Digest* suffered a 35.3 percent dip in paid and verified circulation, dropping from 5,241,484 in June 2013 to 3,393,573 in June 2014. Meanwhile, another of the company's magazines, *Taste of Home*, saw circulation plunge by 22 percent, to 2,501,098, as of June 2014, down from 3,207,340 just a year earlier. (The company states that these declines were due, in part, to a purposeful decrease in rate base.)

But Kintzer saw the potential to reverse the trends. "There were two really critical pieces that would enable the company to grow that I saw from the outside," she says, speaking with rapid-fire precision. "One was very strong products with very committed and engaged customers. The other was a lot of digital traffic that was not being fully monetized. I'm absolutely on a mission to grow this company."

### Big Decisions, Big Changes

One of Kintzer's first major decisions was a dramatic one: She renamed the company Trusted Media Brands in September 2015. The new name, she believes, reflects the common thread in the company's 12 properties, which include publications such as *The Family Handyman*, *Country*, and *Reminisce*.

Explaining her thinking, Kintzer says, "What really runs across our brands is trust. We're the snark-free zone. We're not here to tell you you're doing a bad job, you need to lose weight, or your kids are in trouble." Plus, she notes, the new name makes it easier to pitch advertisers on several brands at once. "*Reader's Digest* is one of our biggest brands but not

our only large brand," she says. "This is a much more respectful way to talk about all of our brands."

But orchestrating that change, and the others to come, required a deft touch from Kintzer. "Many of the employees here had been through a lot," recalls Liz Vaccariello, *Reader's Digest* editor-in-chief and chief content officer.

Fortunately, Kintzer—who dreamed of being either a psychologist or diplomat while growing up—wasn't lacking in the people skills to pull it off.

"One of the first things Bonnie did when she came was meet with the top 100 people at the company," says Vaccariello. "She had half-hour, one-on-one conversations with 100 employees in New York, White Plains, and Milwaukee." The fact that Kintzer had worked at the company previously was key. "She knew our brand. She trusted our content. She understood a lot about our business and our customers," Vaccariello says, "but she wanted to get to know the people who were running things today. She spent a lot of time connecting with people on a personal level." The employees, she adds, "appreciate being heard, and she understands that."

The 54-year-old Kintzer has steered this transformation of Trusted Media Brands while also going through big personal changes. Seven months ago, the Stamford resident remarried, to architect Eric Baker. "We met on eHarmony, which everyone loves," she says.

Each brought children from previous marriages. Kintzer's daughter Stephanie, 26, works in San Francisco for a nonprofit that helps people re-enter the workforce, and Danielle, 24, also lives in Stamford, working in sales for a recruiting firm. "I'm super-close with my daughters," Kintzer says. "They are a very big part of my life."

Baker also has two children, Adam and Anna, and has contributed two rescue dogs to the family, Ammo and Sammi, who now live alongside Kintzer's pug, Zoe.

"Life is wonderful," says Kintzer, the daughter of a salesman father and secretary mother from Brooklyn. "I'm very grateful."

Though Kintzer is a long-time Stamford resident, today she spends much of her time at her White Plains office and can often be found trying

out new restaurants in Port Chester. To unwind, she takes Vinyasa yoga classes and participates in a book club. She has also been very active in the Stamford chapter of Friendship Circle International, a Jewish charity that promotes inclusion of children with special needs by matching them with teenage volunteers. "It's a brilliant idea, to sensitize teenagers to the needs of special-needs children," says Kintzer, whose daughters have both volunteered with the group.

Kintzer's sensitivity to others has

introduced *Taste of Home* Online Cooking School in October 2014. This past April, it launched *The Family Handyman* DIY University.

### Connecting Through Events

Another big push has been holding live events to connect readers to the company's publications. Trusted Media Brands has held more than 200 *Taste of Home* Cooking School classes across the US, Kintzer says. At the same time, in a partnership with *The Moth*, *Reader's Digest* has been holding



**"I'm not afraid to be the drill sergeant when it's needed. People know I'm very passionate but I have very high expectations. I expect a lot out of myself, and my people."** —Bonnie Kintzer, CEO, Trusted Media Brands

been important at Trusted Media Brands, where she has had to quickly decipher exactly how to grab readers' attention from the many digital distractions vying for it.

"Our competition is everything a consumer can spend time with on their phone," Kintzer explains. "We have to understand this mobile environment is here to stay, is very powerful and will continue to grow."

To do that, she has spearheaded new Trusted Media Brands initiatives like subscriptions to online classes, which have created a new source of revenue for the company. EnrichU, the firm's education arm,

live storytelling events in 19 cities. *The Moth Radio Hour*, which airs on 460 radio stations, has built a nationwide following for its story slams. (Kintzer hopes both of these events will come to our area in 2016. "I'd love to do a *Moth* event and a *Taste of Home* cooking event here in Westchester. That's on my to-do list," she says.)

The company also introduced an advertising program new to the US this past fall. The *Reader's Digest* Trusted Brand survey of more than 4,500 Americans awarded winners in 40 product categories from hair color to pet food with the "*Reader's Digest* Most Trusted Brand" title.

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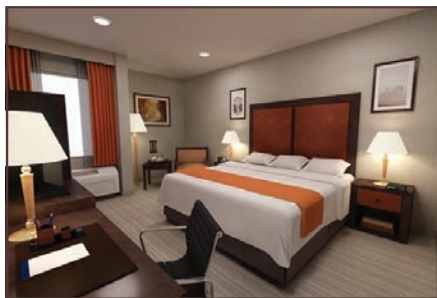
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Are these efforts driving better financial results? Asked about Trusted Media Brands' revenue, Kintzer says the company is growing its profit line, brought in more customers in 2015 than in 2014, and is on track to hit the goals of its current three-year plan. Its brands have also been picking up fans rapidly on Facebook and other social media. "We're doing what we need to grow," she says.

Pulling this off has meant leading a powerhouse team that now includes Chief Revenue Officer Richard Sutton—who most recently worked at the giant newspaper site MailOnline; Chief Digital Officer Vincent Errico, a seasoned executive formerly with *Everyday Health*; and Alec Casey, who returned to the company in November as chief marketing officer.

Asked about his boss's style as a leader, Sutton summarizes it in four words: Inclusive. Inspiring. Hard-charging. Successful. "I want to work hard because I am really competitive," he says. "I've had a long string of successes I want to keep going—but I want to work even harder for Bonnie."

Being positive comes naturally to Kintzer, according to Sutton. "Every meeting starts off with, 'Okay, here's what's going right,'" he says.

She also cares about her entire team, he adds, citing this example: A manager who works directly for Sutton was distressed in the aftermath of a recent shooting at a Long Island mall because her husband and daughter were there at the time. (They were uninjured.) Sutton was surprised to find out that Kintzer had heard about the manager's situation and expressed her concern before Sutton even knew what was going on.

"That speaks volumes about how she works with people," Sutton says. "She's got the ability to inspire you through being positive, through laughter, and by really caring."

What the future holds for Trusted Media Brands is unknown, in an environment that is changing rapidly by the day, but Kintzer is optimistic. "One of the beauties of being a smaller company is that we are really very nimble," she says. "If we need to shift the way we create content, we can do that." One thing she learned at Harvard, she notes, is how to make decisions without having 100 percent of the information about a situation—a skill "that has absolutely served me well," she says. It's a skill that will likely continue to come in handy for Kintzer as technology continues to disrupt the media industry. ●

Frequent 914INC. contributor Elaine Pofeldt is a freelance journalist who writes about entrepreneurship and careers.



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# The Sound of Success

Rock Island Sound, which originated from one man's love of guitar, has become a three-store hit with Westchester music lovers. **By Ken Valenti**

**Y**ou don't hear Dylan, the Stones, or Pink Floyd on the airwaves the way you used to, but they're still playing at **Rock Island Sound**. Find yourself talking to the store's owner, Paul Bessolo, his blond curls recalling Roger Daltrey in the 1970s, and you may hear "Lay, Lady, Lay" or "Wild Horses" playing in the background among the gleaming Fenders and Gibsons hanging in rows on the walls.

But if that style of music has passed its prime in the popular scene, Bessolo's stores are only becoming more vital. Over the past decade, Rock Island Sound has grown from one store to three—one in Rye and two in Tarrytown—surviving the struggle with big-box stores and navigating the challenge of Internet sales by also offering music lessons and a full range of services.

Customers can learn to play a wide range of instruments, have instruments repaired and rent all the sound equipment needed for a wedding gig. "We have everything you need for a band to perform," Bessolo says.

His business started with the lessons. Bessolo began playing guitar and piano as a child growing up in Argentina. After arriving in the United States 23 years ago, he was eking out a living playing in rock and blues bands and doing studio work. But he wanted more security.

"You can make a living as a musician. You can get by," he says. But if you want to get to the next level, you've got to do something more. "So you teach to complement your income," he explains.

Bessolo took on students even as he went back to school and studied classical composition at Purchase

College in the 1990s. "I would go to school in the morning, then teach in the afternoon and play at night," he recalls. "So in those days, I didn't sleep much."

He opened the Rye store first, in September 2005. Many of his students lived in that area, and a friend of his in real estate knew of a small shop available on Milton Ave, near Rye Playland. (He named the business after a speck of land, Rock Island, which he'd spied on a map of Long Island Sound in a Rye diner.) It cost him roughly \$100,000 to open the shop, and when he did, he was teaching 50 or 60 students himself, working seven days a week. Two years later, he hired a drum teacher.

## Beating the Chains; Mastering the Internet

In 2009, he expanded and opened the shop at 6 Main Street in Tarrytown in what had been a shoe store. Bessolo did an extensive renovation. Then, three years ago, he opened his largest shop, at 54 Main Street, a couple of blocks away from the second. Formerly an attorney's office, the 2,000-square-foot space includes five soundproof rooms for teaching. He estimates that each store took another \$100,000 to open. Along the way, he

▲ Paul Bessolo, owner of Rock Island Sound, uses strategic pricing, personalized service, and value-added offerings to compete with the big chains.

added more teachers and took on a luthier who repairs instruments.

When it comes to competing with the giants in the field—chain stores such as Guitar Center and Sam Ash—the Internet is a help for smaller, local stores, like Rock Island Sound, says Allen McBroom, president of the 450-member Independent Music Store Owners, a trade group. He says Rock Island Sound is doing all the right things online: offering items through eBay, Amazon, and on the store's own website.

"His website is well organized," McBroom says. "His name is in every listing related to Rock Island Sound. So he's got the Internet figured out."

Good thing—Bessolo says 80 percent of his sales now come from online channels.

McBroom says personal service can turn a buyer into a loyal customer, especially when selling an item that might be cheaper at a big-box store. But Bessolo is not convinced that a handshake and a helpful attitude are enough to convince people to spend more than they would online.

"I don't think that's going to do it," he says. "People want to pay less."

The industry follows a policy called Minimum Advertised Pricing, in which suppliers require retailers to agree not to sell items online at a price below a certain minimum. But a store owner can offer a lower price in person or over the phone, and that's what Bessolo does. He can also throw in extras, like free strings and other accessories.

Bessolo urges his customers to call Rock Island Sound before buying anything they find on Amazon. Recently, a customer almost paid \$999 online for a Yamaha keyboard, but he first contacted Bessolo, who sold him the instrument for \$950. He also sent a teacher to the customer's home to set it up, a service he also provides when a customer buys a drum set.

That strategy may make sales, but it doesn't make it easy to get by. To sell more merchandise in this climate, Bessolo may accept margins of 10 percent or less, when they used to be about 50 percent, he explains. All of this is difficult while paying Westchester rents, as well as his staff of about 20. "Of course it's difficult. It's hard for a small business to stay afloat," he says.

The lessons are what keeps the business thriving, Bessolo says. It's not that he makes more from the lessons—the retail end and the lessons are about even in terms of the money they pull in. But they feed each other, particularly when combined with the other services Bessolo offers.

A customer may enter the stores as a complete novice, for instance, try out some guitars, then select one after tapping from Bessolo's vast product knowledge, from the

ever-popular Fenders and Gibsons, plus high-end Taylor acoustics to the collectors' instruments, like a semi-hollow 1962 Harmony Rocket. That same customer can take lessons, get advice on upkeep of the instrument and bring it back for periodic maintenance. Bessolo explains: "A guitar needs an occasional 'set-up,' which aligns the guitar and tunes it, and it costs \$65; a more intensive grind-and-polish, which reshapes distorted frets, costs \$150."

Staying with the store, the musician might graduate to a higher-end instrument.



**"That's the eternal question—how do you let customers know about everything you do?"**

—Paul Bessolo, Owner

And maybe even rent all the equipment to put on a show. Bessolo's commitment to his business is not lost on his students.

"If a student wants to learn an instrument, and Paul doesn't teach it, he'll go out and find someone to do it," says Marian Hoffman of Irvington, who is learning bass

at Rock Island Sound. "He's very entrepreneurial. He's got a big vision."

His drive to accommodate anyone looking to learn any instrument has helped expand his base to about 180 students, taking lessons in clarinet, trumpet, even voice. About 90 percent of the business done at the Rye location is in lessons, with 10 percent of the business in retail. That ratio is reversed at the Tarrytown locations.

### **Tapping Into Advertising**

The stores are bringing in 10 times the revenue of when he started, Bessolo says. His growing numbers of students are taught by 15 teachers. Five salespeople work the counters. But he still shows some frustration at the difficulty of getting the word out.

"That's the eternal question: How do you let your customers know everything you do?" he asks.

Bessolo's newest approach is TV and radio advertising. He demurs when asked how much that will cost but he says there will be 250 ads a week on local stations.

The business is getting marketing help from Amy Ormond of Irvington, who is not only taking lessons (as are her two teenage sons) but is also creating promotions for the stores, using her experience as a marketing-and-design professional. "The draw for most people is that it's a great place to learn," Ormond says. "Some people may be intimidated by classical music, but who doesn't enjoy learning a Rolling Stones song?"

Over the past five years, Bessolo has noticed a slight shift in sales. Ukuleles and mandolins have become more popular, with their use by groups such as Mumford & Sons and the Lumineers. They make up about 10 percent of the instruments sold. "Ten years ago, I don't remember anyone walking in an asking for a mandolin," he notes.

Other trends? Acoustic guitars are popular now; whereas, in the past, electrics were all the rage, he notes. It's a reflection of how many pop songs now can be strummed with relative ease, versus the intricate guitar solos that turned guitarists like Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, and Jimmy Page into rock gods.

But whatever changes may come, there are some things Bessolo expects to stay the same, and to keep him in business. "The guitar, the piano—these are the instruments that will always be popular," he explains. ●

*Ken Valenti is a freelance writer with many years of experience in Westchester and the region. Having covered all four corners of the county as a longtime reporter, his is a fan of the region's many and varied downtowns.*



Shopping as entertainment is big for customers at LOLA New York in White Plains. Women come in for a break from their busy days, says co-owner Dawn Pasacreta.

the world for different designers because we don't want the humdrum designers that are in every department store. That way, we have a niche product that entices everyone."

### Staying on Trend

Today's retailer has to keep up with trends in the industry, since they help point the way to what will sell and what won't. "I have always been an avid reader of various fashion magazines, and I always leave events such as New York Fashion Week inspired by what new trends and pieces I can offer my customers," says Lynn Puro, owner of **March Boutique**, a Briarcliff Manor shop that she describes as a bit of SoHo in Westchester. "This allows me to continuously offer my customers their favorite classics with a fashionable twist that keeps them up-to-date while staying true to their style."

Zuckerman, who sells both men's and women's fashions, says men's styles don't change as rapidly. "For women, though, there are cropped jeans and skinny jeans and boyfriend jeans and flare jeans, and you never know what will be next. But when you live and breathe it all day, you realize what will catch on."

Local retailers need to be cautious about embracing trends, however, since Westchester shoppers aren't always the first to grab the cutting edge. "Our customer is fashionable but not all that fashion-forward," explains Dawn Pasacreta, co-owner of **LOLA New York**, a mid-priced fashion boutique in White Plains. "We follow the fashion magazines, but sometimes they're over the top. Pleather is a good example. Last year, it was big, so we bought some pleather pants for Christmas. They took awhile to sell. This year, we bought pleather in the fall, and it was gone in a week."

Moving the merchandise quickly is crucial for apparel retailers' success. Patty Palmieri, owner of **LV2BFIT**, a leisurewear store in Rye Brook, says, "I don't want to be a museum. I need turnover. There are vendors I don't do business with anymore because their merchandise

# Profit is Always in Style

Westchester apparel retailers use a personal touch to attract and keep customers, while fighting off online competitors. **By Dave Donelson**

**T**he deadliest duo in retailing is low margins and fickle tastes, a combo that pretty much sums up the apparel business. Add growing competition from online merchants, and you can readily see why Westchester clothiers face a constant scramble for strategies to succeed.

"My customers, because they're savvy, will also shop stores in Manhattan, but my biggest competitor is the Internet," explains Adam Zuckerman, owner of **Z Life Denim Lounge**, a trendy shop in the Rye Ridge Plaza that caters to denim-obsessed 30- and 40-somethings. "Delivery in a day, free shipping; it's all tough. But then, what's easy these days?"

Certainly not the local retail-apparel business. Net-profit margins in the industry run under 7 percent, which doesn't leave much room for error. But there is plenty of opportu-

nity for error, since fashion retailers face significant fixed costs and essentially reinvent their merchandise mix every season, ordering goods they hope will sell as much as a year in advance. Success requires an interesting ability to read minds and predict the future.

"It's not about guessing," insists Lori Land, co-owner of **Churchills of Mount Kisco**, a designer clothing and accessories boutique. "Because I'm on the selling floor every day and know my customers on a first-name basis, I know the colors and palettes they love; I know what's been selling. I'm not going to buy a bunch of green sweaters even though they're on the fashion forecast. My clients hate green! So I'm going to buy gray and brown and purple."

With so much competition, it's essential to differentiate your store, according to Land. "We shop all over

doesn't move. I know what my bread-and-butter is, so I've got to be a better buyer."

Pricing is also important in retail apparel, although perhaps not as much as in other retail categories. "Customers are not going to buy something they don't like, no matter how cheap it is," Pasacreta says. But price does matter: "A \$75 handbag sells like crazy, but a \$300 one takes a little longer to sell," she notes.

The type of customer a store attracts also impacts its pricing philosophy. The luxury segment, for instance, has been somewhat isolated from the ups and downs that other retail apparel categories have faced. "Luxury customers are always shopping," says Land. "They always have events; they always go on vacation. The people who live that lifestyle need to look the part, so we don't suffer as much as mainstream stores [when the economy falters]. For our customers," Land adds, "if it's something they love and just have to have, it goes straight to the counter. They don't even look at the price."

That feeling is far from universal, though, and Land says retailers have to be careful not to turn away business from other market segments. "We stopped using the term 'high end' [to describe ourselves] because it alienated people," she says, adding that some customers are intimidated by the store itself. "They think they're going to spend a thousand dollars if they walk in. That's just not the case. We do carry high-priced designers, but we

also have moderate price points that welcome any customer."

Buying the right merchandise mix (another key success factor) depends heavily on knowing your customer—which, according to every retailer we spoke with, is key to the business model. "Clothing is personal; you want it to fit your body in the most complimentary way," points out Tal Bitton, spokesperson for **Princess by Tali**, his wife's eponymous boutique in the Jefferson Valley Mall in Yorktown Heights. "My wife knows her customers by name and knows their stories. From years of experience, she can tell them when something looks good and fits them well—or not. Online, you don't have a connection with the salesperson who cares about you."

Land also recognizes the importance of personal knowledge and service. "People have been shopping in malls and big stores for so long, where they don't get the attention they need because the salesperson is so busy helping maybe 20 people," she says. She contrasts that with the approach at Churchills, where, she says, "We know their families. We know what events are coming up in their lives. We're dressing them for occasions. We're dressing their kids and husbands, too."

Zuckerman, like many retailers, keeps a database of notes about his customers. He also believes in making the store experience at Z Life Denim Lounge as enjoyable as possible as another way to keep business constant. "We've made shopping



"In the last 10 years, the emphasis on social-media outlets has enhanced our ability to connect with our customers in the best way possible."

— Lynn Puro, owner, March Boutique



"You have to offer something different to create an experience that makes the customer feel good about coming in."

— Adam Zuckerman, owner, Z Life Denim Lounge

## Westchester Apparel Retailing by the Numbers



Sources: 2012 Economic Census; 2014-15 CSIMarket.com



"I don't want to be a museum. I need turnover. There are vendors I don't do business with anymore because their merchandise doesn't move."

—Patty Palmieri, owner, LV2BFIT



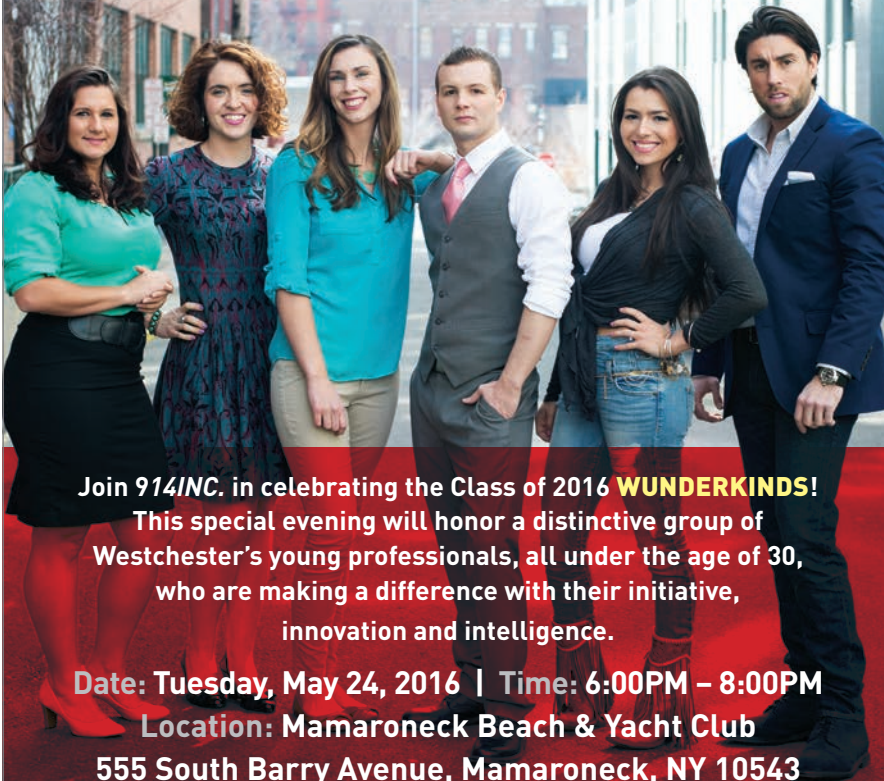
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**WUN•DER•KIND**

**[wuhn-der-kind] -noun. plural.**

**1. a person who succeeds, especially in business; at a comparatively young age.**



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a family thing," he says. "One person can shop women's, while the other shops men's, and the kids can sit in the lounge and watch TV. We also have an old-school candy section. You have to have something different to create an experience that makes the customer feel good about coming in."

LOLA's Pasacreta adds that the concept of shopping as entertainment is alive and well for Westchester women. "We try to create a relaxing environment that's fun for our customers. It's a break from their busy day. They have fun shopping with their girlfriends or their daughters," she says, adding that the boutique carries clothing and accessories for women of all ages.

Land agrees that retailers must focus on their stores' ambience as an important contributor to the overall shopping experience. Though Churchills is a small business, Land explains, "We put a lot of money into the



Staying abreast of industry trends helps local apparel shops like March Boutique in Briarcliff Manor compete against the big department stores.

aesthetics of the store, because we knew it would drive business. It makes people feel comfortable to be in a nice setting with beautiful merchandise, so they feel good about the experience."

**The Internet Factor**

Internet retailing isn't going anywhere, obviously; it's becoming ever more popular and pervasive as part of the apparel-shopping landscape. So what can local stores do to compete? Brick-and-mortar retailing has significant, lasting advantages, according to Puro. At stores like March, she says, "We always help our customers find exactly what they are looking for while offering several alternatives. Also, a brick-and-mortar retailer truly provides a level of freedom for customers to try something on, change their minds multiple times, and explore new looks they might shy away from online."

"If you don't know the brands, it's very frustrating to shop online," Pasacreta adds. Returns aren't always easy, either. "If you go to the UPS center here, it's totally obscene with the boxes going back. I think people are going to get tired of that," she says.

An intimate, satisfying, entertaining shopping environment is only part of successful apparel retailing, however. You still have to get the customers into the store to experience it. And that's one of the ways in which the retail-apparel business has changed the most.

"In the last 10 years, the emphasis on social-media outlets such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest has enhanced our ability to connect with our customers in the best way possible," Puro says. "Ten years ago, customers had to rely solely on driving by the store or visiting our website to be aware of new arrivals, store parties, or holiday promotions. Now, through social-media posts, customers have immediate access to store news, events, and new merchandise within minutes."

Princess by Tali's Bitton points out that social media adds another merchandising

**"Because I'm on the selling floor every day and know my customers on a first-name basis, I know the colors and palettes they love; I know what's been selling."**

**—Lori Land, co-owner, Churchills of Mount Kisco**

dimension for retailers. "We've seen customers come to the store, buy a dress, then post it online. Within two seconds, their friends are commenting on it," he says.

Land uses a mix of digital and analog communications to keep it personal with Churchills' customers. "We don't just send blanket emails," she says. "We text a customer and say something like: 'We have that red dress you were looking for six months ago.'" What's more, she adds, "We still send personal, hand-written cards to say 'Thank you.'"

Fashion retailing is a peculiar business. Customers generally shop to achieve a personal "look," yet most want what's in style — which, by definition, is the look the majority is wearing.

"You have to have your finger on the pulse," Zuckerman says. "Being in the store and hearing everything the customer says gives you a feel for what they want." ●

*Dave Donelson— who, like Gilda Radner, bases his fashion taste "on what doesn't itch"—is a frequent 914INC. contributor.*

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ENTREPRENEUR  
OF THE YEAR

Andrew McMurray



# THE WINE WIZARD

Westchester entrepreneur and wine connoisseur Andrew McMurray dishes on being creative in a notoriously rigid industry, his historic appearance on ABC's *Shark Tank* and making time for family—and marathons.

By Kevin Zawacki

Photograph by Stefan Radtke



**I**t's an opportunity most entrepreneurs dream of: a spot on *Shark Tank*, that irresistible reality show that places a plucky pitchman or pitchwoman in a room with celebrity moguls like Mark Cuban, Lori Greiner, Barbara Corcoran, and Kevin O'Leary.

Entrepreneurs have the chance to pitch their ideas to the panel of eponymous "sharks"—and millions of viewers. If they succeed, entrepreneurs snag a hefty investment, plus the sharks' incalculable wisdom. But if they fail, they fail hard: Entrepreneurs often wobble, stumble, and crack under the weight of the sharks' prying questions and unbridled criticism.

During the summer of 2014, Scarsdale's Andrew McMurray, 48, found himself running that notorious gauntlet. The vice president of Zachys Wine & Liquor in Scarsdale, McMurray was pitching Zipz, a portable, single-serve wine product he co-founded. Zipz is a canny idea: It's wine on-the-go that doesn't sacrifice elegance or taste. You simply peel off the wrapper, unscrew the plastic top, and voilà—fresh wine in a handy plastic glass. No unwieldy bottle, no pesky cork.

But despite Zipz's clever design and McMurray's charisma, the sharks were relentless.

"Why is it different than [competitors' products]?" interrogates shark and software titan Robert Herjavec during the 13-minute segment.

"What's your sell-through?" asks O'Leary.

"What are your total sales?" demands Cuban an instant later.

For a moment, it seems McMurray might falter: His face grows anxious; the music reaches an ominous crescendo; the sharks grow increasingly impatient. "I'm out," booms Cuban, show lingo for *Thanks, but I'd rather not invest*. Three other sharks quickly follow suit.

But McMurray persists: He pivots

and rebounds, sparring with Kevin O'Leary, the sole remaining shark (and the most ruthless). Despite those rough moments earlier, McMurray and O'Leary are able to strike a lucrative deal—and Zipz makes *Shark Tank* history.



On a recent Saturday afternoon, McMurray sits in a conference room tucked into a corner of Zachys Wine & Liquor, the 72-year-old store that sits on East Parkway in Scarsdale. Just outside, Zachys' main floor is humming: The store is hosting a tasting, and dozens of customers mill

around towering wine displays, sipping reds and chatting.

When asked if he self-identifies as an entrepreneur, McMurray is coy. He's more comfortable characterizing himself as a wine professional with an entrepreneurial flair.

"Wine is in my blood, and it has been for two-plus decades," he says. "It's what I know."

McMurray's modesty belies his ability. Entrepreneurs have a knack for innovating in unlikely or unexpected places. They also know how to "disrupt," to borrow a hackneyed Silicon Valley phrase, and over the past 20 years, McMurray has done just that.

What's more, McMurray has pioneered in an industry notably averse to change. "The wine industry moves so slow," McMurray says. "It's definitely not a progressive industry; it's hundreds, thousands of years old. It doesn't change quickly." The news comes as no surprise, given that in McMurray's world, the product is often older than the salesman.

### A history of wine

For someone who's made an indelible impression on Westchester's wine landscape, it's intriguing to learn McMurray's entrance into the industry was marked by hesitation.

McMurray studied marketing at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in the late '80s and later landed on the West Coast with his wife. He had a job with Enterprise Rent-A-Car, then transitioned to a gig in the restaurant sector. "I had no background in wine," McMurray says.

But McMurray's father-in-law—Zachys CEO Don Zacharia—saw a spark. Don was quick to notice McMurray's tenacity and extended an invitation to join the family business.

McMurray was reluctant. "I needed to make sure I liked the family business," he recalls. To test the waters, he took a job at a wine store in Los Angeles.

Something clicked. "In the three years I was there, I went from being the guy who sweeps the floors in the warehouse to general manager," McMurray says. "I fell in love with wine. And that's how I got started."

When McMurray eventually gave notice to the West Coast wine shop in order to head to Zachys, his employer was distraught. The boss called Don Zacharia and asked if he might turn McMurray away, so he could continue working in Los Angeles. A bold move—but one that likely cemented Zacharia's decision to take on his son-in-law.

Now, 22 years later, McMurray serves as Zachys' vice president, managing retail operations. Helming the retail division means overseeing the sprawling selection of wines and spirits that line Zachys' walls, but far more, too.

"What you see [in Zachys] is only about 15 percent of our retail business," McMurray explains. The other 85 percent is carried out online and over the phone, with 100,000 clients around the country.

It's this sort of scope, and also the expertise, that distinguishes Zachys from the other wine and liquor stores that dot Westchester's down-

towns. "We deal in the premium fine wine sector," McMurray explains. Zachys' average bottle price is between \$39 and \$42. At other wine shops, that average is closer to \$14 or \$15, McMurray says.

During his tenure at Zachys, McMurray says he's learned from the best, his father-in-law, whom he considers a mentor.

"He's an icon in the fine-wine industry," McMurray says with deference. Don Zacharia bought the Zachys location (then called East Parkway Liquor House) from his father in 1961 and transformed it into one of the most revered names in premium wine in the US. Today, at 84, Don Zacharia serves as CEO and has grown the company to more than 100 employees. In addition to the Scarsdale location, Zachys has offices and a 50,000-square-foot, temperature-controlled storage facility in White Plains.

McMurray also works with his brother-in-law and Zachys president, Jeff Zacharia, who's quick with praise. "He is always thinking about new and exciting ways to promote Zachys, new ways to bring people into the store," Zacharia says of McMurray. "He's a great entrepreneur."

**A family affair:** McMurray with his father-in-law, Zachys owner Don Zacharia (middle), and brother-in-law Jeff Zacharia (right), president of Zachys.



*"Wine is in my blood,  
and it has been for  
**TWO-PLUS DECADES.**  
It's what I know."*



Since his appearances on *Shark Tank* and *Beyond the Tank*, McMurray and shark Kevin O'Leary have remained in touch. O'Leary has helped broker partnerships for Zipz with retailers, airlines, and hotels.

### Breaking the mold

"I'm always looking for ways to take 'Zachys' out of Zachys," says McMurray of the dictum that guides his work. It's this philosophy—a desire to try something unexpected—that gave rise to Zipz and eventually landed McMurray in front of five of the most influential businesspeople in the world.

About a year-and-a-half before Citi Field opened in Queens, a food-and-wine consultant working with the Mets—and a longtime Zachys

customer—reached out to McMurray for his expertise. Zachys was tasked with helping create a "real New York food-and-wine experience" at Citi Field. No small task. For years, arenas and other large venues have struggled to introduce a single-serve wine that's both convenient and classy. Beer? No problem—pump it into an aluminum can. Wine? Not so easy. Rare is the wine drinker willing to sip Cabernet Sauvignon out of a can or flimsy plastic cup.

McMurray began to research so-

lutions. He tracked down a product from New Zealand that did the trick (sort of) but lacked personality. When J. Henry Scott, a Zachys customer with a penchant for design, stopped by and saw the New Zealand contraption, he was inspired. A month later, Scott emailed sketches and ideas to McMurray.

"That's how the whole concept got started," McMurray says. The two made a powerful pair: the imaginative engineer and the savvy wine merchant, one able to draw up clever designs and the other able to open doors in a notoriously aloof industry. Today, McMurray serves as Zipz co-founder and national wine consultant. McMurray's fellow co-founders are Scott, now CEO, who runs Zipz's day-to-day operations, and President Pat Scire, a founding investor who brings 20 years of experience in the financial industry (along with a personal wine collection in excess of 17,000 bottles).

Zipz's encounter with *Shark Tank* began with a demo tape, recorded at Zachys during the summer of 2014 and mailed to the show's producers. At first, the demo's reception was lukewarm. "They said, 'It's interesting, but we don't know if we can slot it,'" McMurray recalls. But interest grew, and soon McMurray was invited to Los Angeles for a visit.

"I went out there and did a screen-test and went back to my hotel room, planning on flying back to New York," McMurray says. "But they called me at 11 pm and said, 'Can you come back tomorrow?'"

The taping took two hours, but McMurray notes the experience was far less grueling than the 13-min-



## An Unflinching Energy

Parenting, triathlons, and philanthropy—all part of a day's work

Entrepreneurs always seem to have a preternatural amount of time, an impressive ability to balance this commitment with that career and all those side projects. And Andrew McMurray is no exception.

McMurray lives in Scarsdale, just two miles from Zachys, with his wife and two children. He's a hands-on dad. "I don't miss anything: the sports, the parent-teacher conferences," he says.

Then there's the athletics. "I'm one of those crazy triathletes," he admits. "Iron Man was

always my dream, and two years ago I did the one in Kona, Hawaii." Leading up to a race, McMurray will sometimes train 14 hours a week.

But the workout is hardly a respite from wine. "I have all my best business ideas when I'm out on the bike, swimming or running," he says.

"I've brought the Zachys brand along with me when I do triathlons," he continues. In this case, though, it's less about business and more about charity. The Zachys brand has a certain cachet, an ability to motivate donors and kick-start philanthropy. In the past eight years, McMurray and Zachys have raised \$300,000

*"I'm usually pretty good at spinning out  
NEW CONCEPTS."*

ute segment makes it out to be. "The whole conversation [with the sharks] was much lighter, more jovial," McMurray says. "We had all sorts of great conversations about things we like in wine."

"But the way they cut it, they want to make it look tough," McMurray adds.

Drama may make for good television, but so does a happy ending. By the segment's conclusion, McMurray and O'Leary reach a historic agreement: \$2.5 million for 10 percent equity, the biggest investment in *Shark Tank* history to that time.

As for his performance on the show, McMurray's colleagues (and family) were impressed. "I knew beforehand that Andrew had a lot of talents, but I was truly impressed how comfortable he was on *Shark Tank*," notes Jeff Zacharia. "He got everyone's attention."

Since their agreement was struck, O'Leary remains actively involved in Zipz. He serves as one of the company's "frontmen" and "deal-makers," says McMurray, helping broker partnerships with major retailers, airlines, and hotel chains, giving Zipz an international identity. "Kevin has the ability to get his calls answered and get the right

for various causes. Recipients are varied, including the victims of the Boston bombings and, more recently, a breast cancer charity.

In one case, McMurray helped raise funds for a Zachys employee battling prostate cancer. "We raised about \$30,000 to pay for all his medical expenses," McMurray says.

McMurray's energy seems endless—so much so, the *Beyond the Tank* producers asked him where it comes from.

The answer is simple, he says: It's the triathlons. They fuel his creativity.



people at the top to take notice," McMurray says. When a major deal is in the works, McMurray notes he and O'Leary will sometimes huddle daily. "Bottom line: When we need him, he has been very responsive in getting back to us," McMurray says.

If O'Leary's media appearances are any indication, it's a partnership he's happy about. "I love wine; I invest in it; I buy futures," O'Leary said during a CNBC interview late last year. "When I saw this deal, I had to do it."

McMurray and O'Leary will have more screen time together in the near future, too: The pair spent a portion of this past summer filming an upcoming episode of *Beyond the Tank*, a sister show that spotlights *Shark Tank* entrepreneurs and their projects after the deal has been struck.

### Getting creative

McMurray's entrepreneurial energy isn't exclusive to Zipz. He's lent his magic to Zachys, too.

McMurray takes a marketer's approach to selling wine. Due to New York State law, all of Zachys' wine transactions can only take place at or from a single location—the Scarsdale shop. Zachys may not be able to sell wine offsite, but they can tout their brand anywhere in the world. And so McMurray does just that.

Take, for example, Zachys' relationship with Centerplate, a major food-and-beverage provider. The wine store served as the national partner to Centerplate from 2013 to 2015, helping to pick wine for football and baseball stadiums across the country. There was no money exchanged in this partnership, which might leave a less imaginative entrepreneur scratching his head. But to McMurray, there's still extraordinary value.

"I bartered my time and effort and services for recognition," he says.

Zachys also runs the wine program for NetJets, a company that offers purchasers fractional ownership of a private jet. Now, when movers and shakers enjoy a bottle of wine onboard, they're likely to spy the Zachys label.

Like any entrepreneur, not all ideas stick. "Probably 8 out of the 10 marketing ideas I come up with make [Don Zacharia] cringe," McMurray laughs. "But I'm usually pretty good at spinning out new concepts."

He's also pretty good at not giving up—he's got that innate entrepreneurial spirit, which just may be the key to his success. "I'm a driven person," McMurray says. ●

*Kevin Zawacki is a writer and editor living in Southern Westchester. In reporting this piece, he managed to mispronounce "Sauvignon" only once.*

McMurray's entrepreneurial approach to selling wine has led to relationships with major food-and-beverage players like Centerplate and the private-jet company NetJets.





# 2016 Commercial Real

## What's Hot and What's Not?

Signs of strength seen in Westchester's commercial real estate market

By Dave Donelson



# Estate Outlook



Office rentals in Westchester are lagging, but building sales are up. Several major properties are now on the market and will draw interest in 2016, including 44 South Broadway in White Plains, which offers 825,000 square feet of Class-A office space.

Cautious optimism describes the 2016 mindset of those forecasting the commercial real estate market in Westchester, but the outlook varies greatly depending on which market segment is on the radar screen. Demand for rentals in the high-profile office segment looks moribund, while the retail market shows strong demand. Medical isn't cooling; it's just changing direction, while mixed-use developments tap into changing lifestyles. The divisions somewhat reflect the economy as a whole: full corporate purses with strings tightly cinched as consumer spending continues to fuel the economy.

"Given market realities, 2015 was about as good as we should have expected," says Rick Rakow, Commercial Realty Group CEO. And 2016 may follow a similar course, notes Jeff Warner, senior vice president of leasing for Westchester's largest commer-

cial property owner, Mack-Cali. "[This year] will be interesting," he says. "It remains to be seen whether there will be any real economic growth, but I think it will be much the same as it has been." Rakow, however, is predicting stronger growth for 2016: "We've gotten off to a positive start," he says, "and we are busy working on new lease negotiations all around the county."

Several trends put marks on the positive side of the equation for 2016, according to Westchester County Office of Economic Development Director William Mooney III. "From an economic-development standpoint, the real estate market has been positive in a wide range of areas," he says. "These include housing, conversion of existing corporate space, healthcare expansion, and biotech expansion. Many of these projects have been approved and will be in construction in 2016."

Commercial real estate isn't a homogenous market, so here's a segment-by-segment look at the year ahead.



## Office

**HOT METER: 4**

"The 2015 market wasn't great," says Glenn Walsh, executive managing director of Newmark Grubb Knight Frank, a major broker in White Plains. "But most of the bad news is coming from north of I-287, where the vacancy rate is around 30 percent. The southern part of the county isn't such a bad market." Walsh points out that Northern Westchester has lost some big tenants in recent years, like MBIA in Armonk, and that those

properties are just now being re-purposed.

According to data supplied by Houlihan Lawrence Commercial Real Estate Group, about 18 percent of the 23 million square feet of total Class-A office space (nicer buildings with amenities) in the Westchester market was vacant at the beginning of the year. Rental rates range from \$28 to \$37 per square foot in better buildings, although they dip to less



# Medical

**HOT METER: 7**

The most active sector in Westchester commercial real estate over the last several years has been medical space, with sweeping changes in the industry driving demand for both new construction and repurposing of existing office space. The prospects for 2016 are generally good, according to Guy Leibler, president of Simone Healthcare Development, a developer headquartered in the Bronx, although the demand may come from different directions as the wave of consolidation of county hospitals into NY metro institutions runs its course.

"I don't see a lot of big medical office building projects in the near future, but I see a lot of small to midsize ambulatory projects in the 10,000 to 50,000 square-foot range," Leibler explains. "Now it's time to develop ambulatory care throughout the county. It's been rather dormant the last few years because there wasn't a real strategy, and there wasn't capital to execute." Leibler points to projects like White Plains Hospital's new ambulatory center in Armonk, and forthcoming initiatives by Mount Kisco Medical Group [now CareMount Medical], WESTMED, and Crystal Run Healthcare. Plus, the Hospital for Special Surgery recently leased 50,000 square feet in White Plains for an outpatient center. "It's going to be an exciting year," Leibler says. Hoping to capitalize on the continuing trend, Simone recently

filed with the town of Harrison to build one final building at Purchase Professional Park, where WESTMED opened last year, at 3030 Westchester Avenue. "We hope to gain approval for 3040 Westchester Avenue, a 46,000-square-foot medical office building with a parking structure," Leibler says. Simone does not have a tenant for the new building at this point. "The approval process takes about five months, then we will go to market," Leibler explains.

The growth in the medical sector can be a mixed blessing,

MARKET SECTOR SNAPSHOT		
Category	Total Square Feet	Vacancy Rate (%)
Medical	3,488,834	12.0

though. As LaPerch points out, "The consolidation, cost-cutting, and new medical center buildings leave behind a trail of small abandoned medical offices that don't often lend themselves to other uses. I just received a listing in Mahopac, where a small practice was gobbled up by one of the bigger ones, leaving behind a chopped-up 2,500-square-foot medical space." He adds that when those small spaces are repurposed for regular offices, they rent for at least 20 percent less than they did when they were medical offices.

As exciting as it is, the medical space segment accounts for less than 3.5 million square feet in Westchester.



Simone Healthcare Development plans to build one final building at The Purchase Professional Park in 2016.

than \$25 in many places. The market is finding it difficult to generate higher rents, however. "A lot of people who were locked into \$35 to \$40 [per square foot] space from before the recession are planning to move to space in the mid-\$20s," according to Paul Adler Esq, regional manager for Rand Commercial, who is located in the broker's White Plains office. "The go-go days are over."

Corporate trends that favor smaller workforces supported by digital technology work against large buildings designed originally as headquarters for single tenants. "We have very few prospects looking for a 100,000-square-foot building," Rakow points out.

The most successful office complexes in the county are those that have been reconfigured from single-tenant to multi-tenant buildings, to accommodate the new normal. Robert P. Weisz, CEO of RPW Group in Rye Brook, one of the county's largest developers, followed up the conversion of 800 Westchester Avenue with another makeover at 1133 Westchester Avenue, setting the pattern for the I-287 corridor. Stamford developer Steven Wise is working on a similar project at the former MBIA headquarters, at 113 King Street in Armonk, which he purchased in 2015.

Also contributing to a brightening of the picture is the repurposing trend. "Some of the properties that are ripe for repurposing are on Corporate Park Drive off Westchester

Avenue, for example," says Rakow. If you come back in a few years, you'll see housing, retail, some senior assisted living. There are going to be very different uses for those properties." The town of Harrison is considering creation of a mixed-use zone in that area that would encourage redevelopment of the all-but-abandoned buildings. It's an option under consideration in other towns, too, often falling under the "mixed-use" rubric.



▲ Developers like Robert Weisz of RPW Group are converting spaces for multi-tenant use.

While office rents are lagging, the building investment market is

heating up, according to Adler. "It was a solid market in 2015. People went from off of the sidelines to back in the game," he says. "The single most important factor was that buyers and sellers have reached equilibrium after having a buyers' market for the last six or seven years."

In response, several major properties on the market are drawing strong interest. According to CBRE VP Mike McCall, these include the 700 series on Westchester Ave, 44 South Broadway in White Plains, and 100 Manhattanville Road in Purchase. "When new owners come into the market, that generally means rents are going to increase because the investors bought the buildings looking for growth," he says.

Tom LaPerch, director and associate broker at Houlihan Lawrence Commercial in Rye Brook, believes this bodes well for the coming year. "I am optimistic that the market is coming back. There is a pent-up demand for new product."

MARKET SECTOR SNAPSHOT		
Category	Total Square Feet	Vacancy Rate (%)
Office - Class A	22,916,015	18.7
Office - Class B	15,571,411	14.4



# Retail

**HOT METER: 8**

With more than 50 million square feet of space in the county, the consumer retail segment is the largest single segment in the commercial real estate market. It's also one of the hottest, according to Bob Friedland, CEO of Friedland Realty Advisors, a longtime broker located in Harrison. "The retail market is dynamic," he says. "In the major corridors, rents are going higher and higher, although there are pockets with vacancies. Overall, it's pretty tight."

Emblematic of the sector is the Cross County Shopping Center in Yonkers. "We are 99 percent leased, and our outlook is excellent," says the center's senior marketing director, Liz Pollack. The Center announced six new tenants in the fall (four are already open) and opened a 155-room Hyatt Place hotel last April. It plans three new openings for 2016. Not far away, at Ridge Hill, Forest City Ratner opened nine retailers and announced plans for a Lowe's store to be built in 2016.

Retail centers like Ridge Hill in Yonkers will continue to expand in 2016.

### MARKET SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Category	Total Square Feet	Vacancy Rate (%)
Retail	50,075,320	8.4





▲ The former Boyce Thompson Institute in Yonkers will become a mixed-use complex.



## Industrial

**HOT METER: 9**

Westchester's industrial segment continues to boom, according to Friedland. "It is extremely, extremely tight. Rentals have gone up, sales prices have gone up to record highs. It's only getting higher because of limited inventory," he explains. "Industrial property could go from \$12 to \$15 per square foot as rental and \$125 to \$175 per square foot for sale. These are prices we've never seen before."

Mack-Cali, which owns a total of 4.2 million square feet of space in the county, has seen significant improvements and increasing rents in the flex/industrial market. "We are 90-plus percent occupied in the flex portfolio and that's truly become a landlord's market in the last 12 to 24 months. I do not anticipate

MARKET SECTOR SNAPSHOT		
Category	Total Square Feet	Vacancy Rate (%)
Warehouse/Industrial	22,916,015	9.5

that changing. We are raising rates on that space," Warner says. Most of the company's 66 Westchester properties are combination office/other buildings in commercial parks in Elmsford, Hawthorne, and Yonkers. "Flex space is everything under the sun," he explains. "It's office, tech, industrial, lab, biotech—just about anything can find a home here."

The entire industrial segment (including space for warehousing and manufacturing) totals more than 23 million square feet in the county, with a vacancy rate of under 10 percent.



## Mixed Use

**HOT METER: 9**

Closely related to the retail sector is another bright spot in Westchester, says the Economic Development Office's Mooney: combination residential/office/retail development. "You have the approval of the Lennar development in White Plains, a \$275 million project with 700 units geared toward empty nesters and young professionals. Ossining's Harbor Square topped off in October. It has 188 waterfront units, a \$65 million project. These downtown transit-oriented projects use a live-work-play model that touches so many different areas," he says. "Transit-oriented properties are the ones people are migrating to," says Mack-Cali's Warner. "We have approximately 600,000 square feet of office space within a stone's throw of the transit-oriented planning area in White Plains, and we're very excited about that." One of the company's major office complexes in the county is the Westchester Financial Center in White Plains (Mack-Cali owns two of the three buildings), which Warner says is slated for major capital improvements in 2016.

Transit-oriented projects and/or studies are underway in Yonkers, White Plains, Harrison, New Rochelle,

Mount Vernon, Ossining, Tarrytown, Mamaroneck, and Peekskill, according to Mooney. One that broke ground just before year-end is Rivertowns Square in Dobbs Ferry, a 17-acre shopping/living complex with a hotel, retail space, restaurants, and a multi-story apartment building.

"We're big believers that mixed use is vital. We don't want to live in silos anymore, where we live here, work there, and go shopping over there," Leibler says. Simone Development is redeveloping the long-abandoned Boyce Thompson Institute in northwest Yonkers as an 85,000-square-foot mixed-use complex. "We're going to have restaurants, retail, offices, and ambulatory healthcare," Leibler explains. "Each of these things will support one another."

Among the other mixed-use developments that may impact the market in 2016 is Chappaqua Crossing, the 120-acre site formerly occupied by Reader's Digest Association, where owners Summit/Greenfield are looking for retail and office tenants while building/converting space into market-rate residences and affordable housing. ●

*Dave Donelson lives and writes in West Harrison. He's the author of numerous business books, including the Dynamic Manager Guides and Handbooks.*



# The Top 100 List



# The 50 people you need to know in order to do business in Westchester in 2016

*Compiled by the editors of 914INC.*

**If business success is more about who you know than what you know, look no further. Whether you want to secure business funding, land a big contract, negotiate tricky legal concerns, gain PR assistance or just learn to schmooze like a pro, these are the folks you need in your network.**





**WHO: ROB ASTORINO**

**WHAT: Westchester County Executive**

**WHY:** He controls the county's purse strings. Need we say more?



**WHO: MARSHA GORDON**

**WHAT: President and CEO, Business Council of Westchester**

**WHY:** If you don't know Marsha Gordon, you don't really know anyone. As head of the county's largest business organization, she exerts major influence on virtually everything related to business in the county—and she's got the ear of everyone who matters.



**WHO: RICK RAKOW**

**WHAT: President & CEO, Rakow Commercial Realty Group**


**WHY:** Need to find a perfect location for your business? Rakow is your go-to guy; the veteran commercial real estate broker runs the largest tenant-advocacy firm in the region.



**WHO: JANET LANGSAM**

**WHAT: CEO, ArtsWestchester**

**WHY:** If you want to be involved with the arts in Westchester, you either know Janet Langsam or are desperate to know her. She's spent more than 20 years as the reigning queen of the county art scene and shows no signs of stopping.

He's the elder statesman of Westchester business—and he's got the Rolodex to prove it. 



**WHO: WILLIAM M. MOONEY JR.**

**WHAT: President and CEO, Westchester County Association (WCA)**

**WHY:** Officially, Mooney acts as an advocate for the WCA's members and a cheerleader for new-business creation and economic vitality throughout Westchester. Unofficially, he's the elder statesman of Westchester business—and he's got the Rolodex to prove it.



**WHO: WILLIAM M. MOONEY III**

**WHAT: Director, Office of Economic Development, Westchester County**

**WHY:** He's the son of one of the most well-connected men in Westchester (see left), but Mooney III is worth cozying up to on his own merit, as his job is to help attract, retain, and grow business in Westchester.



**WHO: JOHN TOLOMER**  
**WHAT: President and CEO, The Westchester Bank**

**WHY:** Tolomer heads up one of Westchester's premier community-lending institutions, which caters to small- and midsize businesses. The esteemed banking veteran, who joined The Westchester Bank in its founding year (2008), has steered its growth to more than \$500 million in assets.



**WHO: TOM ROACH**  
**WHAT: Mayor, City of White Plains**

**WHY:** As head of the city that is the county seat and commercial hub of Westchester, Mayor Roach is an obvious power player. If you're looking to do business in White Plains (and who isn't?), you want him in your corner.

If you're looking to do business in White Plains (and who isn't?), you want him in your corner.



**WHO: ELLEN LYNCH**  
**WHAT: President and CEO, Food Bank for Westchester**

**WHY:** Surprised that a nonprofit chief is a must-know for conducting business? Don't be. Lynch's connections run deep. She's the former CEO of the Yonkers Industrial Development Agency, and in her current role at the Food Bank, she fosters partnerships with some of the biggest muckety-mucks of the business world.



**WHO: NOAM BRAMSON**  
**WHAT: Mayor, City of New Rochelle**

**WHY:** Anointed as a whiz kid since winning a seat on the New Rochelle City Council at age 25, this second-term mayor is now poised to be on top of every businessperson's need-to-know list, thanks to New Rochelle's upcoming downtown redevelopment plan.



**WHO: RUTH MAHONEY**  
**WHAT: President, Hudson Valley/Metro NY District, KeyBank**

**WHY:** One of the highest-profile women in Westchester's banking industry, Mahoney is known for her relationship-building prowess. In addition to plenty of A-list clients, she's hooked into the "who's who" network through her extensive involvement in Westchester charity and business events.

PHOTO (LYNCH) BY TOSHI TASAKI



**WHO: GEOFF THOMPSON, ELIZABETH BRACKEN-THOMPSON, AND DEAN BENDER**

**WHAT: Partners, Thompson & Bender**

**WHY:** Don't let the homey offices fool you. Thompson & Bender is *the* power player of public-relations firms in Westchester. Proof? The firm's client roster likely includes half the people on this list.

Her nonprofit has dished out more than \$2 million in local microloan funding since 2003.



**WHO:** KIMBERLIE JACOBS  
**WHAT:** Executive Director, Community Capital New York  
**WHY:** Schmoozing with bank presidents is never a bad move, but Westchester small-business owners would do just as well to pay Jacobs a visit: Her nonprofit has dished out more than \$2 million in microloan funding to area businesses since 2003. Jacobs is a crucial ally for local entrepreneurs.



**WHO:** JOHN RAVITZ  
**WHAT:** Executive Vice President & COO, Business Council of Westchester  
**WHY:** As second-in-command at the Business Council, Ravitz—a former New York State assemblyman—has his finger firmly on the pulse of the county's business scene (and all its players).



**WHO:** NATASHA CAPUTO  
**WHAT:** Director, Westchester County Tourism  
**WHY:** Fun, chatty, and endlessly energetic, Caputo is literally the face of Westchester tourism. If you want a piece of this \$1.7 billion sector of the county's economy, seek her out at nearly any county business event (we're not sure how she ever makes it into the office!); her advice and influence are critical.



**WHO:** MIKE DARDANO  
**WHAT:** Founder and CEO, Buzz Potential  
**WHY:** The most atypical PR guy you'll ever meet (his de facto uniform: jeans, a client's tee shirt, and bright white shades), Dardano nonetheless is a major connector—nearly everyone in Westchester's small-business circles is a Buzz Potential client, friend, or friend of a friend.



**WHO:** LARRY GOTTLIEB  
**WHAT:** President & CEO, Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation  
**WHY:** If the Hudson Valley had an official economic-development cheerleader, it would be Gottlieb. In his current role (and previously, as Westchester's Director of Economic Development), he's amassed a contact base that spans nearly every local industry. If he can't help you directly, he knows who can.



**WHO:** PETER KELLY  
**WHAT:** Chef/Owner, Xaviars Restaurant Group  
**WHY:** If it involves food in Westchester, Kelly is likely involved. He's cooked up one of the most successful entrepreneurial careers in the county, with several marquee restaurants in his group. Kelly's blessing can make or break a fledgling Westchester restaurateur.



**WHO: ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS**

**WHAT: New York State Senator, Democratic Conference Leader**

**WHY:** Though she's known more as an advocate for the underserved than as a business-friendly legislator, Senator Stewart-Cousins of Yonkers is the one to woo if you need an ally in the state's Democratic Party.



**WHO: ANTHONY JUSTIC**  
**WHAT: Partner, Maier, Markey & Justic LLP**

**WHY:** Accounting prowess is crucial for any business, and Justic runs one of the top CPA firms in Westchester. He's also chairman of the Business Council's board of directors.



**WHO: JAMIE IMPERATI**  
**WHAT: President & Founder, Professional Women of Westchester**

**WHY:** If networking were a kingdom, Imperati would be its queen. Her five-year-old, 250-member organization exists solely to provide area women with opportunities to network, share experiences, and exchange information to help them grow their businesses.



**WHO: CHRIS O'CALLAGHAN**  
**WHAT: Managing Director, Jones Lang LaSalle**

**WHY:** If you need to know anything about commercial real estate in Westchester, you need to know O'Callaghan. He has been one of the region's most active brokers for the past 30 years.



**WHO: MARTIN GINSBURG**  
**WHAT: Founder & Principal, Ginsburg Development Companies (GDC)**

**WHY:** Looking to get in on the TOD trend sweeping county real estate? Ginsburg's ahead-of-the-curve residential and mixed-use development projects have made GDC synonymous with these Millennial-friendly housing options.



**WHO: KEVIN PLUNKETT**  
**WHAT: Deputy County Executive**

**WHY:** As Astorino's right-hand man, Plunkett is essentially the COO of Westchester County. And he's highly accessible; just go to nearly any county business event and look for the tall guy towering over everyone else in the room.

Just go to nearly any county business event and look for the tall guy towering over everyone else.





**WHO: MIKE SPANO**  
**WHAT: Mayor, City of Yonkers**  
**WHY:** Unless you've been living under the proverbial rock, you know that Yonkers has become the hub of Westchester's urban renewal/redevelopment focus (a new office park, restaurant, loft-living project, or gallery seems to open there daily). And unless you've been hit in the head by said rock, you know that Mayor Spano is the man behind all of it.



**WHO: ANNE JANIAK**  
**WHAT: Founder & Executive Director, Women's Enterprise Development Center (WEDC)**  
**WHY:** Janiak has built WEDC into the area's top nonprofit microbusiness-development organization—making her a key contact for any entrepreneur seeking access to capital, training, and advisory services.



**WHO: DAN CONTE**  
**WHAT: President, Westchester Hotel Association**  
**WHY:** Rising tourism spending, plus the fact that hotels are part of nearly every new mixed-use development project on the boards, makes Conte a valuable ally for anyone trying to tap into the hospitality market here.



**WHO: FANNIE ALEMAN**  
**WHAT: President, Westchester Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**  
**WHY:** She's a spokesperson for Westchester's Hispanic business community, which is growing in strength and numbers. As a prolific networker, she's always in-the-know about what's going on across the county.

He's a driving force in our hot biotech scene, making him a must-know for innovators.



**WHO: ROBERT W. AMLER, MD, MBA**  
**WHAT: Dean, School of Health Sciences and Practice, New York Medical College (NYMC)**  
**WHY:** He's a driving force in Westchester's hot biotech scene, making him a must-know for would-be innovators in that industry. Plus, NYMC's newly completed biotech incubator, BioInc@NYMC, is Amler's baby.



**WHO: DEBORAH L. MILONE**  
**WHAT: Executive Director, Hudson Valley Gateway Chamber of Commerce**  
**WHY:** Milone has a huge influence on business in the northwestern part of the county, and she is a master at putting people and companies together.



**WHO: ROBERT O. SANDERS JR.**  
**WHAT: Founder & Chairman, Hospitality Resource Group**

**WHY:** Is your contact database lacking someone who is both a driving force in the hospitality sector and an active participant in regional workforce/training programs (through the Westchester/Putnam Workforce Investment Board)? Robert Sanders is your man.



**WHO: WILLIAM P. HARRINGTON**  
**WHAT: Partner, Bleakley, Platt & Schmidt**

**WHY:** Getting friendly with a big-time litigator is never a bad idea for a business owner, but add the fact that Harrington is chairman of the WCA board, and it becomes a no-brainer that getting into his inner circle is a really good idea.

Getting friendly with a big-time litigator is never a bad idea for a business owner.



**WHO: ROSS PEPE**  
**WHAT: President, Construction Industry Council of Westchester & Hudson Valley**

**WHY:** If you don't think you need to know the head of the industry group that, as its website declares, "fights like hell for the construction industry and the development community to win approval of projects," then we can't help you.



**WHO: CYNTHIA RUBINO**  
**WHAT: President/CEO, YMCA of Central and Northern Westchester**

**WHY:** What can a YMCA CEO do for a businessperson? Plenty when that CEO is Cynthia Rubino, who's been uber-connected practically since birth (her dad is former White Plains mayor Joe Delfino). Involved in many county organizations, she's a go-to for an introduction to almost anyone who matters.



**WHO: ADAM STARK**  
**WHAT: President, Stark Office Suites**

**WHY:** If your company is at that stage where the kitchen table is too small, but a full-fledged office is out of budget, seek out Adam Stark for his expertise in the area's flexible office-space market.



**WHO: ROBIN DOUGLAS**  
**WHAT: President, CEO & Founder, African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland Counties**

**WHY:** Since the number of businesses owned by African Americans (and particularly African American women) is increasing rapidly, now is a good time to tap into the expansive network Douglas has developed as the top advocate for African American entrepreneurship in our region.

A veteran PR pro, she's got a knack for helping companies kick-start their brands. 



**WHO: STACEY COHEN**  
**WHAT: President & CEO, Co-Communications**

**WHY:** A veteran PR pro, her agency represents many big-name county firms, but she's got a knack for helping small companies kick-start their brands, too.



**WHO: PETER HERRERO**  
**WHAT: Founder & General Manager, NY Hospitality Group**

**WHY:** Any business hosting an event, catering an event, planning an event or thinking about doing any of the above is likely already in contact with Herrero. If not, they should be.



**WHO: ROBERT P. WEISZ**  
**WHAT: CEO, RPW Group**

**WHY:** Many companies boast of their 800 Westchester Avenue address, but RPW is the only company that can lay claim to developing it (along with other Platinum Mile landmarks). A commercial real estate visionary, Weisz virtually controls this most important of industries and is heavily involved with a slew of powerful Westchester organizations.



**WHO: JOHN A. DORF, ESQ. & JONATHAN NELSON, ESQ**  
**WHAT: Managing Partners, Dorf & Nelson LLP**

**WHY:** If legal counsel and business success go hand in hand, the hands you want to hold are Dorf's and Nelson's, thanks to their firm's 20+ years serving entrepreneurs, family businesses, and large companies alike.



**WHO: ERIDANIA CAMACHO**  
**WHAT: Director, Gateway to Entrepreneurship, Westchester Community College**

**WHY:** If the name of the program she heads up didn't give it away, we'll clue you in: Camacho is all about helping entrepreneurs get off the ground. And she's got years of experience, plus the resources of the county's largest college backing her up.





**WHO: JEAN MARIE CONNOLLY**

**WHAT: Senior Director, BNY Wealth Management**

**WHY:** There may be an ordinance somewhere in Westchester that states you cannot convene a business or fundraising event without inviting Connolly (maybe not; it just seems that way). She's well known as a premier networker, mentor, and all-around "go-to gal"—plus, she's a conduit to some of Westchester's wealthiest residents.



**WHO: LOUIS R. CAPPELLI**

**WHAT: Founder, Cappelli Organization**

**WHY:** As the unofficial king of Westchester real estate development, Cappelli's firm continues to be a key player in the downtown redevelopments of New Rochelle and White Plains.



**WHO: KEN JENKINS**

**WHAT: President, Yonkers IDA**

**WHY:** With the total amount of new development in Yonkers topping \$1 billion recently, it would be a smart move to get in good with the man who helps the city's IDA. Jenkins also has more than 20 years' worth of political experience—and the vast network that goes hand in hand with it.



**WHO: CAROLYN MANDELKER**

**WHAT: President & Founder, Harrison Edwards PR & Marketing**

**WHY:** Snag a meeting with Mandelker, and you'll be chatting up the woman who knows how to handle the PR and marketing needs of some of our top local organizations, including the Westchester County Association.



**WHO: NATASHA ROUKOS**

**WHAT: Chairman, SCORE Westchester**

**WHY:** Roukos, a retired IBM exec, heads up an organization composed entirely of business-savvy volunteers who help small businesses grow and expand. (That means free advice, people!)



**WHO: JOSEPH COTTER**

**WHAT: Founder & President, National RE/sources Group**

**WHY:** With the county's coolest office park (iPark Hudson, Yonkers) and one of its hottest residential developments (Hudson Harbor, Tarrytown) in his portfolio, Cotter is the current darling of hip real estate. Get to know him now—before he's too busy for you. ●

He's the current darling of hip real estate. Get to know him now—before he's too busy for you.



PHOTO (COTTER) COURTESY OF BENJAMIN MEDIA







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# FRANCHISE REPORT 2016

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Despite the threat of increased labor costs, franchising is on the rise in Westchester—in sectors both expected (food) and unexpected (nearly everything else!)

BY DAVID LEVINE

**D**an Magnus knew, one night at his Elevation Burger restaurant in Rye Brook, that he had made the right decision to go into franchising. A former publishing executive, he was left without a job when his company was sold. During his one-year, non-compete severance time—“my ‘gardening clause,’ as they call it in Europe,” he says—and with the media business in turmoil, he decided that it was time to move on to something else. He found franchising and opened two county locations of Elevation Burger, a restaurant offering organic, grass-fed beef and other health-conscious food items.

That evening, three C-suite publishing execs whom Magnus knew well happened to walk into his restaurant coincidentally. “They told me: ‘You are the smartest guy in town for getting out of the [publishing] business,’” Magnus says.



Dan Magnus (inset) ditched the publishing world to try his hand at franchising. He now owns two county Elevation Burger locations.

Magnus, 51, says he has “never been happier” since leaving the tumultuous publishing world and opening his own business. That, in a nutshell, explains the seductive lure of franchising. In our current economy, entrepreneurship is increasingly attractive to many who fear losing their jobs through mergers, restructurings, and all the other corporate landmines that dot the employment battlefield. Magnus, like many others, found himself out of work and “had no brilliant idea,” he says, other than deciding that he “didn’t want to spend my life in a business that hadn’t figured out a model yet.” He looked at different options, and someone suggested franchising. “I can’t say I was immediately enamored with the idea,” Magnus recalls. “But looking into it, there were a lot of things desirable about it. I fell in ‘like’ with the business. But I fell in love with Elevation Burger.”

Passion like his is helping fuel strong growth in franchising, both around the nation and here in Westchester County. Franchise businesses grew at a faster pace than the rest of the economy—by 5.2 percent franchise GDP to 3.4 percent overall US GDP—according to the mid-2015

forecast update by the International Franchise Association Educational Foundation and IHS Economics, a business analysis and forecasting firm. In fact, franchising is expected to outperform the US economy for the fifth consecutive year and will have contributed \$521 billion to the economy in 2015.

Local franchise numbers are harder to come by, but those in the trenches say business is booming here, too. “Unfortunately, most of the hard data that exists is not broken out on a Westchester basis, but we have had more inquiries this year [from Westchester] than last year, and more last year than the year before that,” says Frank Dunne, of FranNet, a national company that helps match prospects with franchise opportunities. “We’ve seen franchise businesses open here in massage, cell-phone repair, direct mail and marketing, dental-product repair, residential cleaning, residential and commercial painting, staffing, frozen yogurt and desserts, senior-home-placement advisement, and others,” says Dunne, who also offers seminars on franchising through SCORE Westchester. “Franchising is very much alive here.”

David Kaufmann, a senior partner in the New York City law firm Kaufmann Gildin & Robbins, who specializes in franchise work, agrees. “We have had very significant growth here in 2015 and will again in 2016,” he says. That optimism is confirmed by the Fall 2015 Bank of America Small Business Owner Report, which finds that small-business owners in the metro-New York area—of which franchisees are a significant portion—are quite bullish about 2016, with 70 percent expecting revenues to increase in the year ahead and 57 percent confident the local economy will improve in the next year.

### Beyond Fast Food

Franchising is far bigger than most people realize and goes well beyond the fast-food joints we typically associate with the model. There are about 3,100 franchise concepts across more than 90 industries nationwide, Dunne says. “Today, 40 percent of retail sales in the US are made in franchise outlets,” Kaufmann says. “Every time you buy a car, have it serviced or fill it with gas; virtually every hotel you stay in; most stores in the mall; most lawn-care or pet-care services you use—all of these are predominantly franchised.”

All those options can make it hard for potential franchisees to choose their business sector. Franchise owner Seth Berkman of Edgemont recalls a franchising expo he attended four years ago: "There were so many franchises I had never even heard of; it was mind-boggling," he says. Before becoming a franchisee Berkman, 41, owned a tech company but "yearned for a situation where I didn't have to be in charge of every last detail," he says. "I wanted to deliver a product or service in the best way possible but have the pipeline for dealing with the product, the website, all that taken care of for you."

His *aha!* moment came when his wife's cell phone crashed. "We were in North Carolina, and my wife went to this place I'd never heard of, called uBreakiFix. She had a great experience. She spent so much money, like \$500, and said it was fantastic. That was the start of it." The company wasn't franchising then, but Berkman kept an eye on it. When uBreakiFix did become a franchise, he dove in, and now owns three stores in the county (in Scarsdale, Mamaroneck, and Mount Kisco) with plans for two more.

Like Magnus, Berkman is in love with his business. "I felt these guys were a lot like me, really passionate about servicing the customer properly," he says. "That is what is missing from the tech service industry. You expect to deal with someone who will be mean or condescending or dismiss you. That is the exact opposite of what I preach and what uBreakiFix preaches."

Such passion is critical for success. But so is caution. "The biggest mistake people make is that they don't engage in evaluation," says Charles N. Internicola, a New York franchise attorney who also practices in Westchester. "They become attached to a particular brand or business they personally like, and as a result they short-circuit what should be a vibrant due-diligence process." All franchisors must, by law, offer a Franchise Disclosure Document, which details the agreement and lists all other current and former franchise holders, Internicola points out. Prospects are able to contact those franchisees and learn all the good, the bad, and the ugly associated with the company. "If you don't call them,

## Franchising Is More than Food

If you think all franchises sell are cheap hamburgers and coffee, consider this: While five of the top 10 franchises in *Entrepreneur Magazine's* 2016 Franchise 500 rankings are indeed food franchises, there are only 10 food franchises among the list's top 25. And, McDonald's, Burger King, and Dunkin Donuts comprise only about 6 percent of the total franchise pie, says Frank Dunne of franchising consultancy FranNet. Here are *Entrepreneur's* Top 10:

RANK	FRANCHISE NAME	STARTUP COSTS
1	Jimmy John's	\$323,000 to \$544,000
2	Hampton by Hilton	\$3.8 million to \$14.1 million
3	Supercuts	\$144,000 to \$294,000
4	Servpro	\$142,000 to \$191,000
5	Subway	\$117,000 to \$263,000
6	McDonald's	\$989,000 to \$2.2 million
7	7-Eleven	\$38,000 to \$1.1 million
8	Dunkin' Donuts	\$217,000 to \$1.6 million
9	Denny's	\$1.2 million to \$2.1 million
10	Anytime Fitness	\$63,000 to \$418,000

Source: [www.entrepreneur.com/franchise500](http://www.entrepreneur.com/franchise500)

you are being absolutely foolish," Kaufmann agrees. "They will be pleased to tell you if they are doing well and will tell you even louder if their experience is negative."

Michael Lang couldn't agree more. "Do your due diligence, no doubt," says Lang, who opened a Signarama franchise in Hartsdale two years ago, after losing his job as a marketing executive in 2010. "Don't make a decision based on a few conversations. Use all the resources you can get, and ask lots of questions. Look at many options. I looked at 12 to 18 different franchise systems in different fields."

Financial due diligence is perhaps the most critical. "In the beginning

you are not making any money, so financial planning is very important," Lang says. "Many businesses fail in the first few years from financial constraints, so you need a business plan to cover that part of the venture." Even with such planning, "The first year was really tough," he says. But he doubled his business in his second year. "I can now pay myself, though not to the extent I was paid at the corporate level. Will you get rich fast [through franchising]? No. You have to work hard, maybe harder than before. But it is absolutely fun." He especially likes watching the signage he creates pop up in the community: "You see the direct impact, the re-



“Every time you buy a car, have it serviced or fill it with gas; virtually every hotel you stay in; most stores in the mall; most lawn-care or pet-care services you use—all of these are predominantly franchised.”

— David Kaufmann,  
Kaufmann Gildin & Robbins

sults of your work, right away,” Lang notes.

As a community, Westchester offers both enticements and potential roadblocks to franchising. “It takes a certain amount of income to live here, so there are plenty of people who don’t blush at spending money,” Magnus says. “That’s always good when you are selling something.” This relative wealth has created franchise opportunities for supplemental services and enrichment activities, such as specialized fitness centers, home healthcare for the elderly, and childcare and early-education programs, Internicola says. More problematic, though, is the high cost of real estate. “I see a lot of people who make errors in real estate,” Magnus says, meaning they misjudge the hit those high costs will impose on their bottom line.

### The Minimum-Wage Factor

Another storm cloud billowing overhead is the minimum-wage issue, which affects the entire state, of course. In most businesses, labor is the biggest expense, “and it has been a runaway train,” Magnus says. “And that train became a bullet train recently, [with the minimum wage]



Franchising does very well with first-time business owners, because it’s like cooking from a recipe.

— Frank Dunne, FranNet

on track for \$15 an hour.” While most of those interviewed agree that the current minimum of \$7.25 is too low, they also agree that \$15, which Governor Cuomo is calling for in the food-service industry, is too high.

“I worked for minimum wage back in the day, so I know the need,” Kaufmann says. “On the other hand, picking an arbitrary number like \$15 an hour, which the governor is cramming down our throats, creates a dilemma.” Kaufmann believes that doubling the cost of labor will result in higher consumer prices and in franchisees not making an adequate ROI, which will in turn slow business growth in the county.

Magnus says a hike in the minimum wage will of course eat into his profits at Elevation Burger and

counters that the restaurant business is actually one of the best places for workers to move up the management and income chain. “There is no industry where people can grow faster in their careers than in this business,” he says. “I had a woman start at my Ridge Hill store, and she went, in two years, from \$7.25 an hour to a manager spot making a \$50,000 base salary.”

An even bigger threat looms at the federal level. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), in an action against the McDonald’s Corporation, is proposing to change the status of franchisors to that of “joint employers” of the people who work for the franchisees. “The federal government seems to be challenging the very structure of franchising and the

A passion for user-friendly tech service drove Seth Berkman (inset) to open three Westchester uBreakiFix franchise locations.



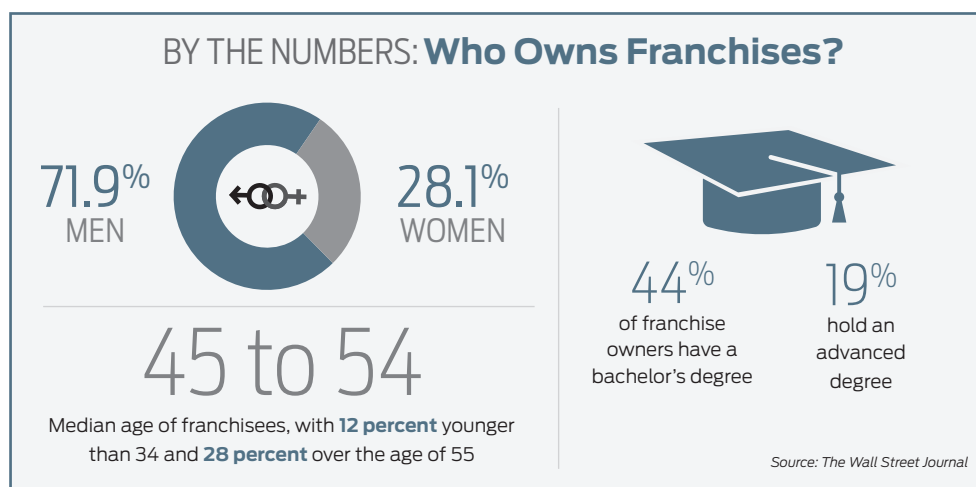
relationship between franchisor and independent contractor, the franchisee," Kaufmann says, noting that he believes the NLRB's motivation is for labor unions to be able to negotiate a pay rate with McDonald's corporate. "This goes against 50 years of judicial decisions," he adds.

The International Franchise Association states: "If this ruling survives legal challenges, it will impose additional costs on franchisors associated with the need for more oversight and insurance against risk. Uncertainty about how this issue will be resolved could impede the growth of franchise business formation, employment, and output."

### Keys to Franchise Success

Despite these headwinds, franchising can be the right choice for anyone looking for something other than the current world of regular employment, where, as Berkman says, "There is no real security for anybody, anywhere." Of course, not everyone is suited to running a business. But you don't need experience or a special skill set in any particular sector to succeed, Dunne claims. Indeed, past experience may be a shortcoming. "Most franchisees don't want people with a background in the business," he says. "Financial franchisors consider those with a financial background untrainable. Franchisors will train you how to be a successful owner."

You don't need to be a big-picture entrepreneur either, Dunne says: "People like Elon Musk and Sir Richard Branson would make horrible franchisees because they couldn't follow the systems. Franchising does very well with first-time business owners, because it's



like cooking from a recipe."

That's what attracted Nataliya Kisseleva and her husband, Andrei Kisselev. They both left Manhattan-based corporate jobs to try their hand at running a business. "We wanted to see if we were made for entrepreneurship, if we could handle it," Kisseleva says. "We went with the safer route, with a franchise, because it gives you the infrastructure and support, rather than running it completely on your own." They chose to franchise with a lesser-known business, which offers both benefits and challenges. About six years ago, they signed a contract with Massage Envy, a chain offering monthly memberships for massages and facials and opened the first Massage Envy in the county, in Scarsdale. (There are now several others.)

Pioneering the region affords a unique opportunity to any business, and that was attractive to them. "Being first can work for you," she says. "But there are also challenges you have to overcome. No one knew what we were about,"

she says. "There was a lot of cheer-leading we had to do." They led their own cheers at every health fair, chamber of commerce event, and community gathering they could attend, drumming up as many articles in local publications as they could muster. "If there is any type of exposure in the community, you have to be there, explaining what you are about," she says.

Going with a newer franchisor also means staying on your toes. "This franchise has gone through many changes, and you have to be flexible and agile. Even if you don't agree with everything they do, you have to do it," she says. "You have to figure out, at this location in this community, what can *you* do to spin it your way to run your business?"

The most important factor in franchise success, though, gets back to passion. There is nothing easy about running a business, so it's critical that owners feel strongly about their brand. While looking for his franchise fit, Magnus came across an idea that resonated for him and his family. "I have kids, and having a place for them to eat high-quality food is something my wife and I talked about," he says. "When we saw this idea of grass-fed organic beef, we knew this is what we are talking about. I am proud to represent Elevation Burger. In a sense, it is a personal mission." ●

*David Levine, an Albany-based freelancer has written for Westchester Magazine, Hudson Valley Magazine, the New York Times, Sports Illustrated, American Heritage, and many other publications.*

### Franchise Costs

According to franchise consultancy FranNet, 30 percent of all franchises in the United States require an initial investment of \$100,000 or less:

AVERAGE INITIAL INVESTMENT	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FRANCHISES
Under \$50,000	13%
\$50,001-\$100,000	17%
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Over \$500,000	18%

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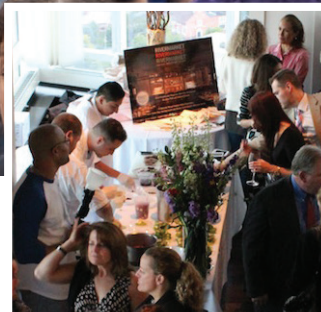
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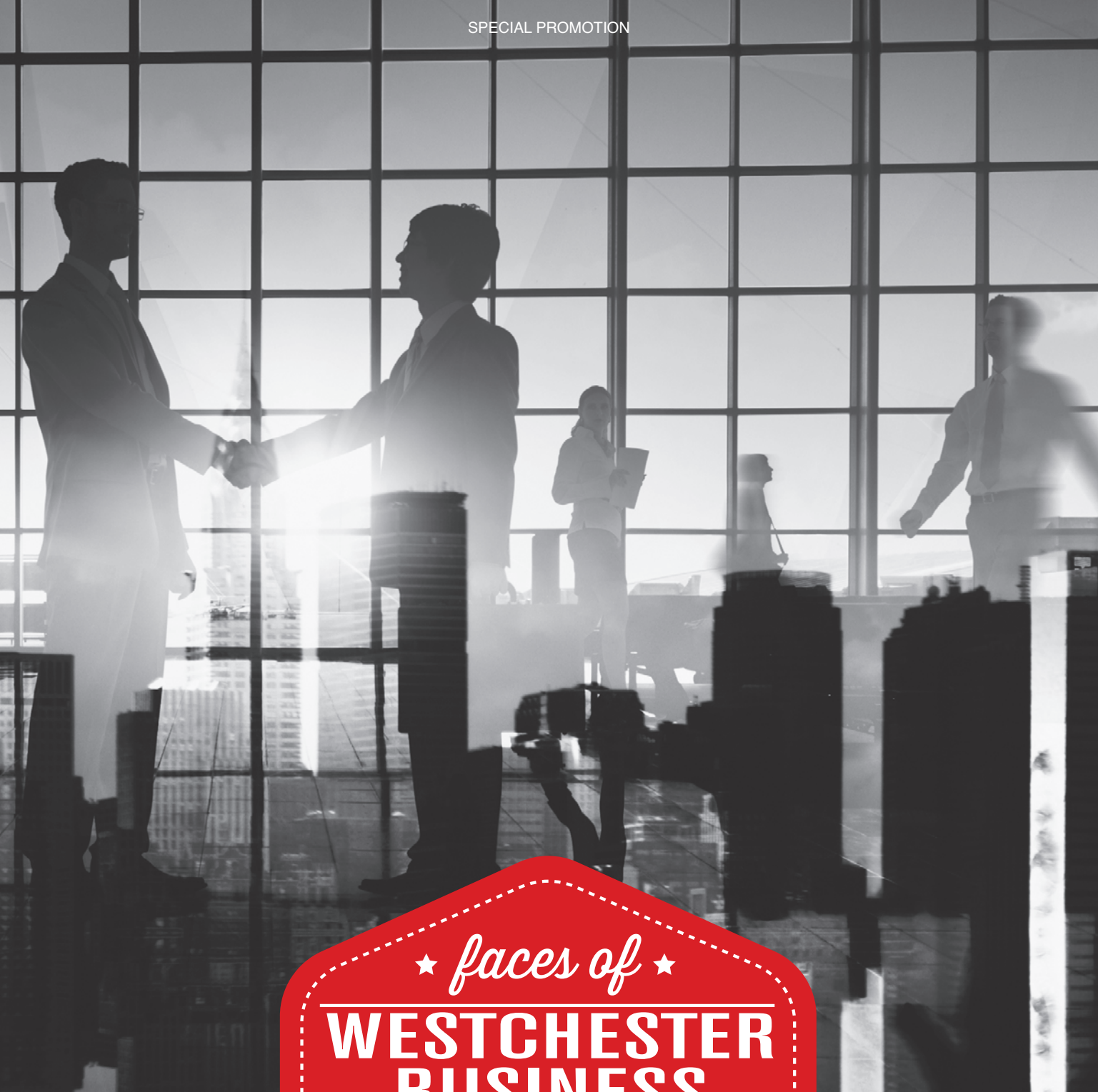
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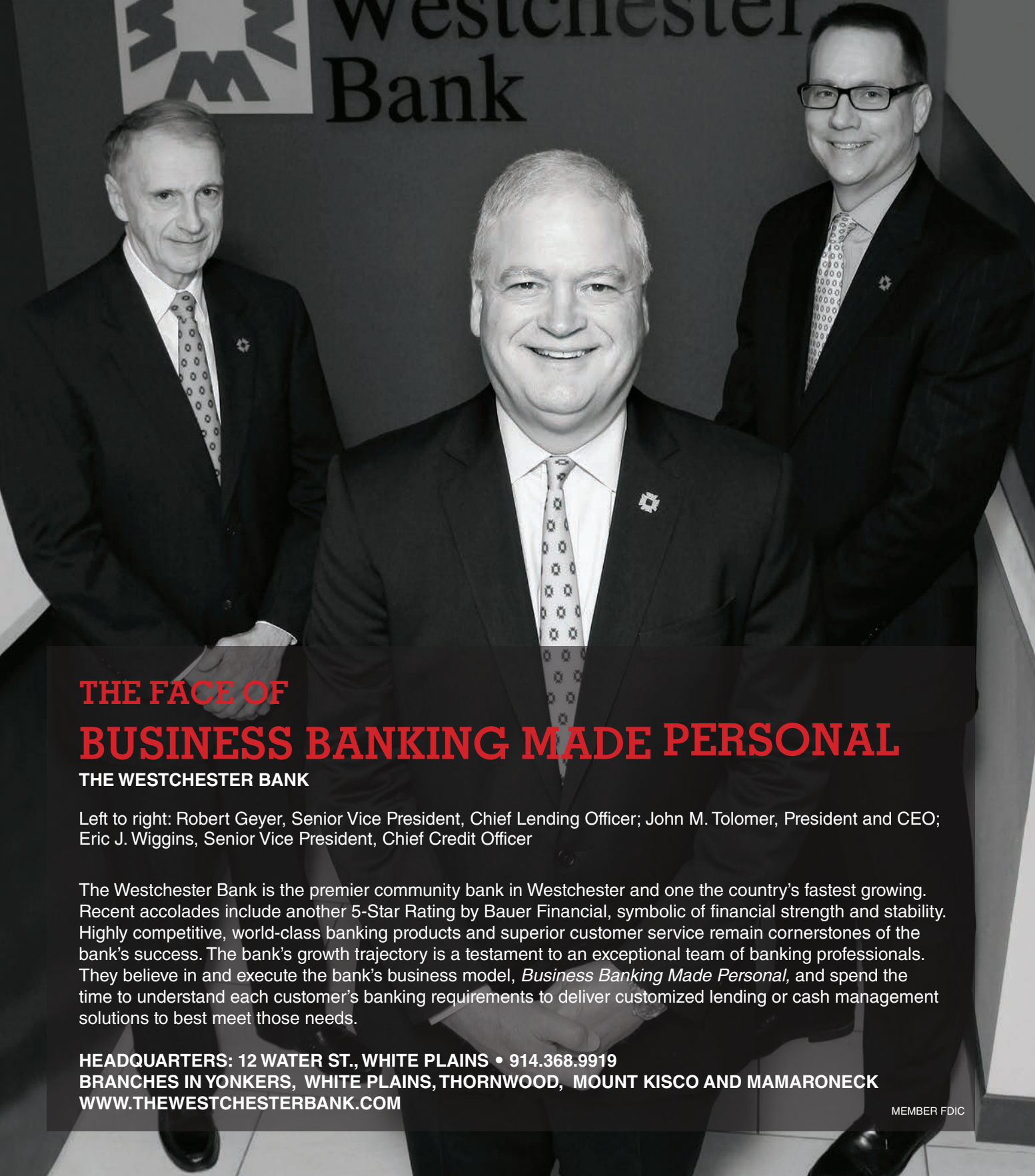
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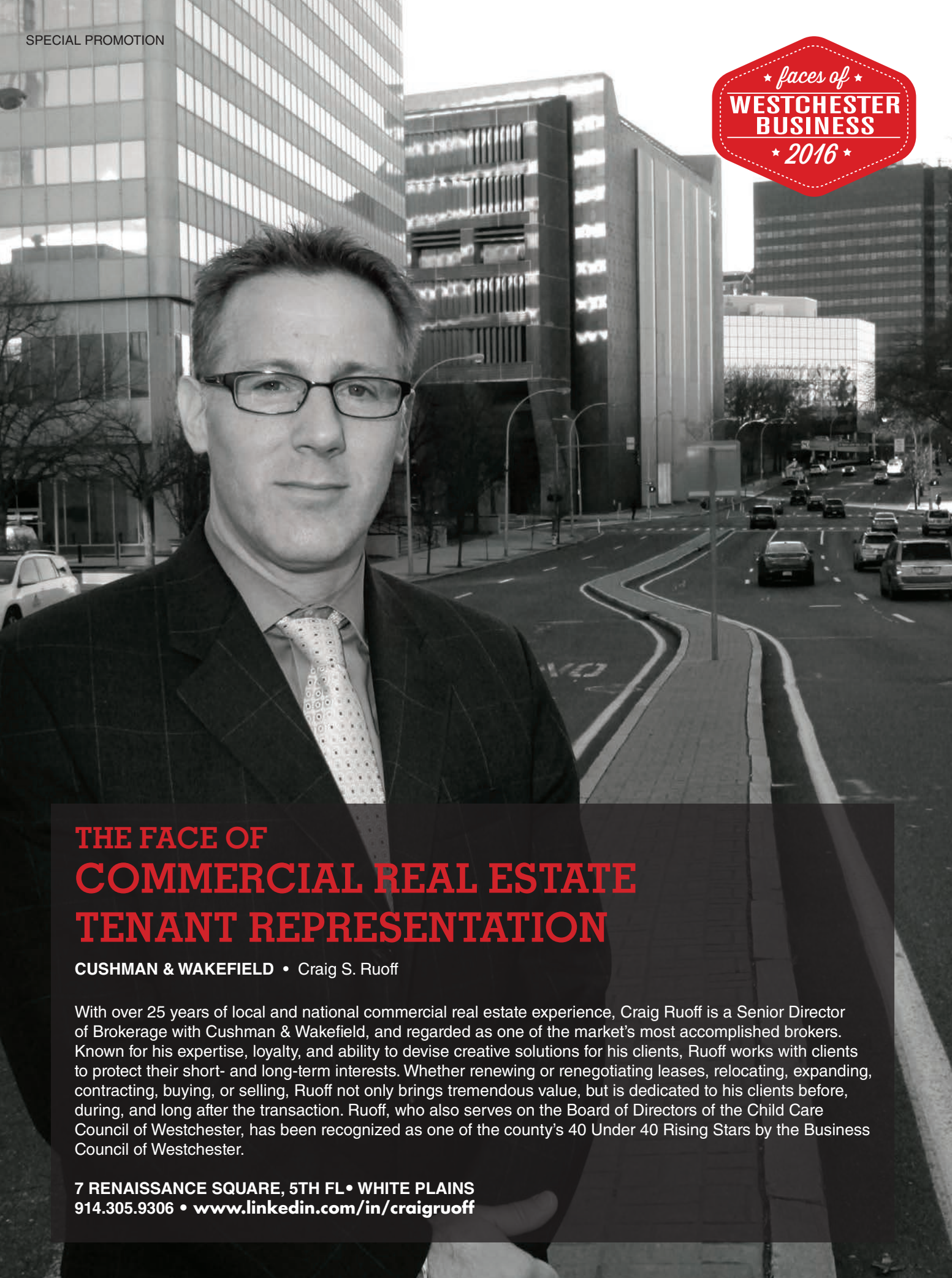
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Standing: James M. Frommert, Sales Executive - New York; Larissa Delo, Vice President Market Manager; Thomas P. Fehn Jr., First Vice President; JoAnn Keller, Senior Vice President; Leah M. Reeves, Senior Private Banker; Despina Cifu, Vice President; Michael Tardella, Vice President Business Banking; Suzanne Siebert, Vice President Market Manager

The People's United Bank story reflects a 174-year banking history and solid fundamental principles. People's United Bank believes that by offering empathy and expertise to customers, giving back as a partner in the Westchester community, and valuing employees, we all succeed together. Since its founding, People's United Bank, N.A., a subsidiary of People's United Financial, Inc. (a diversified financial services company with over \$39 billion in assets) has become a premier, community-based, regional bank in the Northeast offering commercial and retail banking, as well as wealth management services. in nearly 100 branches throughout New York.

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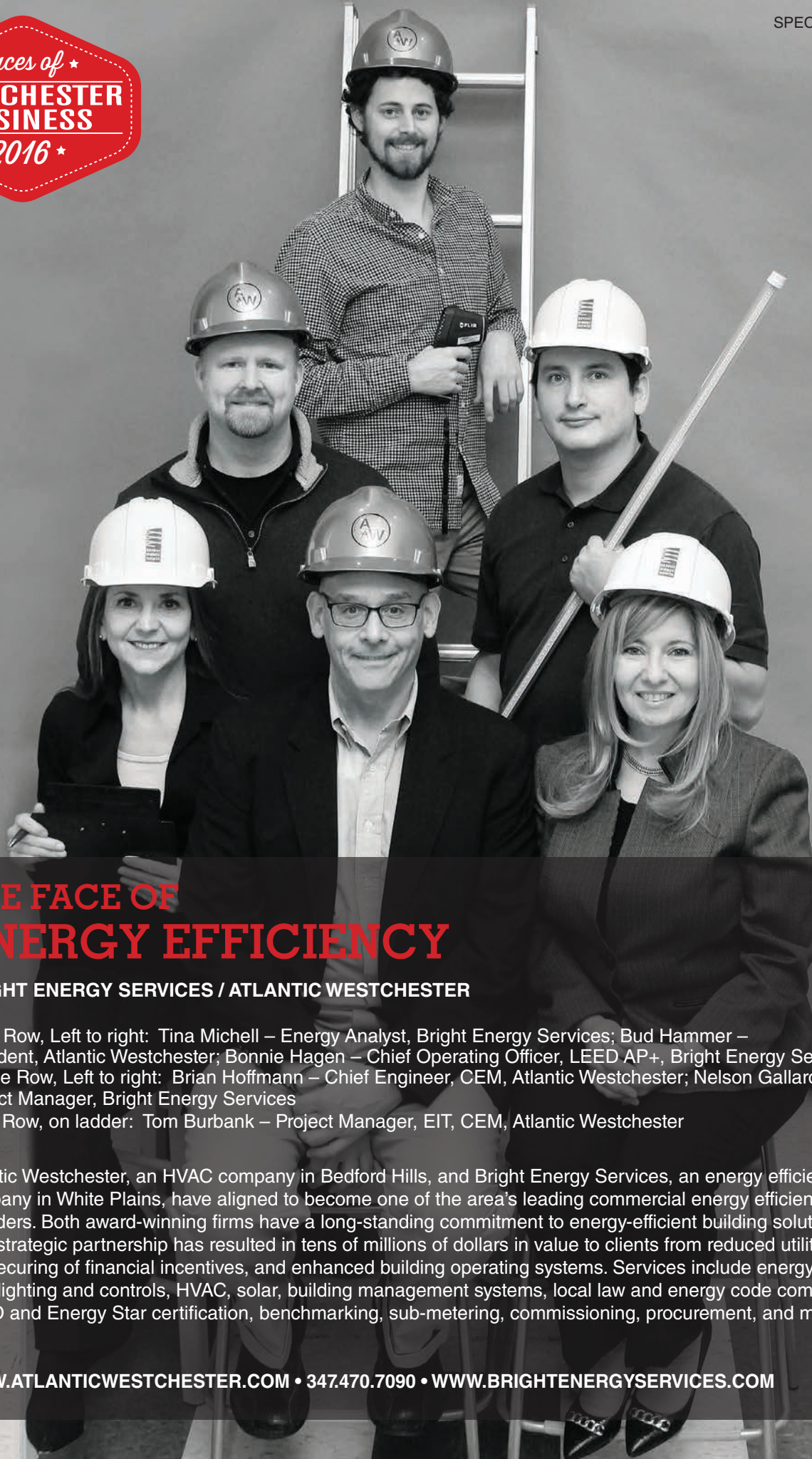
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 Middle Row, Left to right: Brian Hoffmann – Chief Engineer, CEM, Atlantic Westchester; Nelson Gallardo – Project Manager, Bright Energy Services  
 Back Row, on ladder: Tom Burbank – Project Manager, EIT, CEM, Atlantic Westchester

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# Annual Dinner Offers Preview of 2016 Campaign



From left, BCW Chairman Anthony Justic; BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon; keynote speaker Mark Halpern; Dr. Leonard Schleifer, CEO of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals

More than 700 Business Council members and guests were treated to a sneak preview of the 2016 Presidential campaign as preeminent presidential election historian and political analyst Mark Halperin offered his perspectives on the field of candidates as the keynote speaker at the BCW's Annual Dinner.

"This is one of the hardest campaigns to understand. It defies history. It's a strange time in the Republican Party and nothing is stranger than the rise of Donald Trump. He has an effect on people that I've never seen," Halperin told the standing-room-only audience gathered at the Hilton Westchester on October 27.

Halperin, who is co-managing editor of Bloomberg Business, is a regular political commentator on the TODAY Show and MSNBC's Morning Joe. He is also the author of the best-selling book Game

Change which became an award-winning HBO Film about the 2008 presidential race between then Sen. Barack Obama and Sen. John McCain.

Also addressing the record audience was Dr. Leonard Schleifer, CEO of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals in Tarrytown, who gave a stirring speech about the uniqueness of the American system of capitalism and spoke of his own experience in starting a company in his apartment to growing it into the world's fifth largest biotech company.

Marsha Gordon, President and CEO of The BCW, said the Annual Dinner was one of the most successful ones of her tenure. "It was a wonderful evening for businesses and we're grateful for the contributions of our speakers. It was a great night." for The BCW and our members."



January 22 8:00 - 9:30 am

**KeyBank Speaker Series**

Westchester's Booming Urban Centers  
TAPPAN HILL MANSION, TARRYTOWN  
Panel includes the mayors of New Rochelle, Mount Vernon, White Plains and Yonkers.

January 27 4:15 - 5:00 pm

**Strategies for Wealth Seasonal Soiree**

LIFE The Place To Be, ARDSLEY  
Join us for an informative evening with the Thought Leadership Team of Strategies for Wealth. Open networking from 5:00 -7:00 pm.

March 16 1:30 - 5:00 pm

**BCW Presents Fresh Desk Customer Happiness Tour-Westchester**

HILTON WESTCHESTER, RYE BROOK  
Join us for a half-day seminar on "How to Define Customer Success."

March 17 1:00 - 5:00 pm

**Westchester Business Expo (WEXPO)**

HILTON WESTCHESTER, RYE BROOK  
Don't miss the most influential business-to-business trade show in the Hudson Valley.

April 19 5:30 - 9:00 pm

**Hall of Fame Awards Dinner**

GLEN ISLAND HARBOUR CLUB, NEW ROCHELLE  
Join the Business Council of Westchester as it salutes Westchester's most successful businesses and business leaders.

May 17 5:00 - 7:00 pm

**People's United Bank Leadership Conversation Series**

Join us for a lively and informative conversation with some of the region's top business leaders.

June 16 5:00 - 8:00 pm

**Rising Stars Awards-40 Under 40**

THE ATRIUM AT 800 WESTCHESTER AVENUE, RYE BROOK

Visit [thebcw.org](http://thebcw.org) for details



# Message from the president...



**Marsha Gordon**  
President and CEO  
The Business Council of Westchester

Looking back on 2015, I am proud of how much the Business Council of Westchester has accomplished in the past year. Our signature programs – Westchester Business EXPO, Business Hall of Fame, Rising Stars 40-Under 40 Awards, KeyBank Speakers Series, Conversations Leadership Series and Annual Dinner – were hugely successful and drew record attendance.

Our Political Leadership Series featured some of the state's top political leaders including William Mulrow, Secretary to Gov. Cuomo; Lt. Gov. Kathleen Hochul and Senate Majority Leader William Flanagan. The series concluded in November with a lively and informative forum on the upcoming Presidential campaign called The Road to the White House which featured a panel of top political commentators and pollsters.

As you can see from the Upcoming Events listed on the cover of this issue of Business Inc., 2016 is shaping up as another banner year for the BCW. We are pleased to welcome People's United Bank as our new sponsor of the Leadership Conversations Series. This program has featured some of the region's most important leaders in the fields of biotech, real estate and healthcare. We look forward to another stellar lineup in 2016.

We are also very pleased to announce another new and exciting program called TAMI Talks. TAMI – which stands for Technology Advertising Media and Information – is one of the

hottest industry sectors. From Fortune 500 technology giants to start-up companies in digital marketing, TAMI is a driving force in the regional economy. We are also delighted to have Manhattanville College as the host for this new program which debuts on June 1. Stay tuned for more details.

As we begin a new year, I would like to thank BCW Chairman Tony Justic for his continued support and outstanding leadership throughout the past year. I would also like to thank BCW Executive Vice President and COO John Ravitz for his leadership on advocacy issues and spearheading our successful Political Leadership Series. A special thank you to our dedicated BCW Team: Sara James, Vice President Membership & Programs; Amanda DePalma, Director of Special Events; and Ebony White, Workforce Development Coordinator. And finally, a hearty round of applause for all our members and sponsors who make the Business Council of Westchester THE premier business organization in Westchester County!

## BCW Elects Six New Board Members

The BCW is pleased to announce the election of six new members to its Board of Directors.

- **Kevin Bovet** is Vice President of Sales and Business Operations, Westchester Knicks (NBA Development League, NY Knicks affiliate). He is responsible for leading the day-to-day operation of the Westchester Knicks and partnering with the respective divisional leadership.
- **Heidi Davidson** is a marketing and communications executive with more than 20 years of experience helping companies of all sizes tell their stories. She is the co-founder of Galvanize Worldwide.
- **Taryn Duffy** is the Director of Public Affairs at Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway where she oversees lobbying and political activities, and manages civic engagement and community relations.
- **Eon Nichols** is a Partner in the Real Estate/Transactional department at Cuddy and Feder LLP, where his practice includes both commercial and residential real estate, real estate financing, commercial lending trans-

actions and leasing.

- **Patricia Simone** is President of Simone Management Group, a division of Simone Development Companies, a full service real estate investment and development company.
- **Mark Weingarten** is a partner at DelBello Donnellan Weingarten Wise & Wiederkehr, LLP, a highly successful law firm. He is a member of the firm's Executive Committee and the Land Use and Zoning and Government Relations practice groups.

# Rising Stars Shine in BCW Dance Competition



Dance teams, from left, James Giangrande & Marie Herrero; Megan Gann & Robert Cioffi; event co-sponsor Jaime Johnson; John White III & Regina Poniros-Simonetti; event judge Andrew Castellano; Jill Ortiz & Jamell Scott; Diana Seo & Kevin Langtry.

Five fabulous couples rose to the occasion as they danced the night away in the BCW's Annual Dancing with the Rising Stars competition. This year's winning couple was John White III and Regina Poniros-Simonetti of Fred

Astaire in Tarrytown. Top fundraiser was Kevin Langtry and Diane Seo of Arthur Murray Dance Studio in White Plains.

Other competing dancers and their respective studios were: Jamell Scott and Jill Ortiz of Arthur Murray Dance Studio

in Mount Kisco; James Giangrande and Marie Herrero of The Greenwich Ballroom, and Megan Gann and Robert Cioffi of On My Toes Dance Academy.

The event, which was held at the White Plains Performing Arts Center, featured guest judge J.R. Martinez, a U.S. Army veteran, motivational speaker, actor, best-selling author and winner of the ABC hit-competition "Dancing with the Stars."

The event raised more than \$10,000 for the Furniture Sharehouse, a Westchester-based not-for-profit that provides free furniture to economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

"This year's Dancing with the Rising Stars was a phenomenal event. The dance teams were outstanding and we were so pleased to have J. R. Martinez as our guest judge. Best of all, this event raised more than \$10,000 for Furniture Sharehouse," said Gordon. "We applaud the BCW's Rising Stars Leadership Council for coordinating this annual event."

## A Conversation on Healthcare Leadership

One of the region's leading healthcare executives took center stage as the Business Council of Westchester concluded its 2015 First Niagara Bank Leadership Conversations series on November 10 with a wide ranging and insightful interview with Laura L. Forese, M.D., M.P.H., Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of NewYork-Presbyterian.

In her conversation with BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon, Dr. Forese discussed how NewYork-Presbyterian is providing world-class healthcare to Westchester residents through the addition to its network of NewYork-Presbyterian/Hudson Valley Hospital in Cortlandt Manor and NewYork-Presbyterian/Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville. "There are so many resources here. It's an opportunity for us to partner where many of our



Robert Cerminaro of First Niagara Bank; BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon; NewYork-Presbyterian Executive Vice President and COO Dr. Laura Forese and BCW Chairman Anthony Justic

patients live and work," she said citing Westchester's wealth of resources and its patients' demand for high quality and compassionate healthcare.

Dr. Forese also emphasized the importance of a personal touch in engaging with patients and inspiring confidence and trust

among consumers. "The culture of the organization is not the bricks and mortar. It's the people working there. You need people who are comfortable with technology at all levels, but if patients don't feel like we're connecting with them, they'll leave.



# Business in Action

**Annual Dinner, October 27, Hilton Westchester, Rye Brook**



From left, Martin Berger of Saber Real Estate Advisors; Yonkers Planning Commissioner Wilson Kimball, and Mark Weingarten of DelBello Donnellan Weingarten Wise & Wiederkehr



County Executive Robert Astorino; Robert Amler, MD, Vice President for Government Affairs, New York Medical College; Keynote Speaker Mark Halperin, co-managing editor of Bloomberg Politics

## Road to the White House

*November 20, 800 Westchester Avenue, Rye Brook*



Standing, from left, BCW Executive VP and COO John Ravitz; Taryn Duffy of Empire City Casino; BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon; and George Lence of Nicholas & Lence Communications LLC. Seated, from left, Beth Fouhy of MSNBC; Steven Greenberg of Siena Research Institute; Adam Edelman of The Daily News; and Lane Filler of Newsday

## Reception for Mayor Thomas

*December 15, Maggie Spillanes, Mount Vernon*



From left, Joseph Apicella of MacQuesten Development; BCW President and CEO Marsha Gordon; Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Thomas; and Thomas DeCaro of Benchmark Title Agency

## Holiday Party, December 8, Westchester Marriott, Tarrytown



Cynthia Rubio of YMCA of Central and Northern Westchester; Elizabeth Bracken-Thompson of Thompson & Bender; Kara Mac of Shoe Candy; Julie Fareri of Fareri Associates



Stephen Jones of Jones Morrison; Joanne Deyo of Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Michael Murphy of Murphy Brothers Contracting



The Tesla P85D electric speedster

# Mean, Green Machines

Eco-friendly cars get the luxury treatment.

**Plus:**  
Dress-code dilemmas, solved  
page 90

INC.redible Indulgences

# Carbon-Cutting Cruisers

Green transport doesn't have to be boring. **By Philip Garrity**

Most of us wouldn't be caught dead in a Prius or suffer the anonymity of a hybridized family sedan. But the truth is, a soulless driving appliance is not the only ticket to the eco-friendly drivers' club. There are premium electric and hybrid-electric options that will raise your pulse as they lower your carbon footprint. Here's a look at some of the most sought-after among them.



## E-Rocket

Elon Musk's fully electric Tesla Model S has been a hit with the likes of *Consumer Reports* and *Car and Driver*, thanks to its combination of range (minimum 240 miles on a full charge), style, and performance. But when Tesla released the more powerful P85D version last year, it poked at the soft spot of automotive enthusiasts everywhere: 0-60 time. Two electric motors generate a combined 691 horsepower, sending the P85D rocketing to 60 mph in 3.2 seconds. That's faster than most supercars.

From: \$105,670, Tesla at The Westchester, White Plains (914) 285-1000; [www.teslamotors.com](http://www.teslamotors.com)



## Guilt-Free Luxury

When Porsche introduced the Panamera in 2012, diehard fans howled cries of indignation at a four-door luxury liner joining the ranks of the sacred 911 and Boxster. Little did they know variants like the **Panamera S E-Hybrid** were on the horizon—an even further departure, packing a 333-HP V-6 paired with a 95-HP electric motor, putting out a combined 435 lb-ft of torque. With a full charge (you can plug your Porsche in overnight), it's good for 15 miles of electric-only cruising.

From: \$93,200, Porsche of Larchmont, Larchmont (914) 391-1000; [www.pepeautogroup.com](http://www.pepeautogroup.com)



## A Duo From BMW

BMW introduced the plug-in hybrid-electric **i8** as something of a technological halo car for the 21st century, armed with a futuristic drivetrain and construction that may one day trickle down to more accessible models: an aluminum-and-carbon-fiber chassis for reduced weight; two 7.1 kWh lithium-ion batteries strung through the center tunnel; a turbocharged, fuel-sipping three-cylinder engine producing 228 horsepower for the rear wheels and a 129-horsepower electric motor that drives the front; and a plug, so you can charge your supercar while you sleep. A full battery will take you 23 miles on electric power before the gas engine kicks in.

From: \$140,700, Ray Catena BMW of Westchester, White Plains, (914) 761-5555; [www.westchesterbmw.com](http://www.westchesterbmw.com)



BMW's **i3** is the i8's fully electric, less expensive, more practical cousin. The i3 carries four passengers in relative comfort, and a three-and-a-half-hour charge with a 220-volt outlet buys you 81 miles of travel, according to the EPA. An optional range extender—an onboard gas motor that will charge the batteries during driving—affords you an anxiety-reducing 150-mile range.

From: \$42,400, Ray Catena BMW of Westchester, White Plains, (914) 761-5555; [www.westchesterbmw.com](http://www.westchesterbmw.com)

## The Commute

# On The Road Again—And Again

Four locals discuss daily treks to the office via car, train, plane, and even skateboard.

By Laurie Yarnell

The average work commute in the US clocks in at 25.4 minutes, according to the US Census Bureau. How do our local commutes compare?



### A Train Buff's Traditional Commute (Chappaqua to Manhattan)

STEVE SWIRSKY, 62

Shareholder, Epstein Becker & Green, PC (law firm), Manhattan

**Commuting since:** June 1989

**Route:** Drive to Chappaqua Metro-North Station (7 to 10 minutes); train to Grand Central: 63 minutes

**Total one-way time:** 1 hour, 20 minutes

**Pass-the-time strategy:** The *New York Times* crossword puzzle. "I time myself on how many stations it takes to finish—and I have different targets for different days of the week, as the puzzles get progressively difficult."

**Tactic to maximize the fun**

**factor:** A lifelong train buff, Swirsky loves exploring Grand Central and visiting its Transit Museum. "I always find something interesting, new, or different along the railroad or at the station."

**Biggest stressor:** Finding a seat going home.

**Worst commute:** The days following the blizzards about 10 years ago, when Metro-North was on limited service, with "very full trains that took two-plus hours one way."

**Biggest upside:** Quiet time to read and decompress.



### The Reverse Commuter (Manhattan to Mamaroneck)

BRIGID MCGIVERN, 32

Art Director, Motif Designs, Mamaroneck

**Commuting since:** June 2014

**Route:** Walk to Grand Central (15 minutes), Metro-North train to Mamaroneck (45 minutes), walk to office (5 minutes). **Total one-way time:** 65 minutes

**Pass-the-time strategies:**

Reading a book or news article, listening to podcasts (Terry Gross, Marc Maron), catching up on Netflix or Hulu, or emails and other work.

**Tactic to maximize the fun**

**factor:** "I like looking out the window and noticing the beauty of New York and how it can change so much in 45 minutes."

**Worst commute:** Experiencing a "train revolt" when a man locked himself in the restroom for the entire ride. "A group of guys just kept pounding on the door, yelling and getting angry. It made everyone really uncomfortable."

**Biggest upside:** Alone time and "knowing I'm either going to work to be productive or going back to the home I love."

**Fun fact:** An intern in her office commutes by skateboard.



### The (Very) Long-Distance Commuter (Harrison to Minnesota)

JEFF BRODSKY, 57

Managing Director, Quest Turnaround Advisors, LLC, Rye Brook

**Commuting since:** August 2013

**Route:** Brodsky flies each week to a client's office in Bloomington, MN. He usually leaves on Monday morning and returns Thursday evening. **Total one-way time:** 6 hours. When in town, he works at home or a local office (5 minutes).

**Pass-the-time strategies:**

Watching video content on an iPad—and working.

**Tactic to**

**maximize the fun**

**factor:** In-terminal distractions, like restaurants, shopping, and massage therapy.

**Biggest stressors:** Things that can't be controlled—weather, traffic, and other odd events.

**Worst commute:** For a previous client assignment lasting several years, he commuted to Hawaii once a month—a round-trip time of about 52 hours door-to-door.

**Biggest upside:** "The opportunity to stay in new parts of the country/world and live as a local in different locations."

**Biggest downside:** Being away from the family for four days of every week.



### The Multi-Route, Intra-County Commuter (Chappaqua or Harrison to Valhalla)

BRUCE RUBIN, 56

Chief Operating Officer, Westchester Capital Management, Valhalla

**Commuting since:** January 2010

**Route:** Back roads to Thornwood and then Columbus Avenue to his office; when commuting from his girlfriend's house in Harrison, Rubin takes the Hutch. **Total one-way time:** 12 to 15 minutes from Chappaqua; 17 to 25 minutes from Harrison

**Pass-the-time strategy:** Listening to 107.1, The Peak.

**Tactic to maximize the fun**

**factor:** Counting his lucky stars and "thinking about how thankful I am that I am no longer working in New York City."

**Biggest stressor:**

Ending up stuck behind a school bus.



**Most memorable commute:**

Post-Hurricane Sandy. "My street was closed due to downed trees, so I ended up running the five miles to my office. It took about 45 minutes."

**Worst commute:** When the Saw Mill floods around Pleasantville, and is closed. "Usually there's no notice until you get to the detour, and then the traffic backs up into all the local streets."

## Dressed 4 Success

# The Do's and Don't of Work-Occasion Dressing

Dressing appropriately for casual work occasions—whether at the office, on the golf course, or somewhere in-between—still leaves a lot of us stumped.

Here, stylist Scarlett De Bease of Waccabuc offers her best tips. **By Laurie Yarnell**

**OFF-SITE EXCURSIONS** All business-related events, no matter how casual—team-bonding activities, brainstorming retreats, etc.—still require a professional look.

**DON'T:** Don anything extreme, such as cropped tops, tight gym shorts, ripped clothing, worn-out jeans, sweats, or tees with controversial or political messages.

**DO:** Take a step down from your usual work look—if you normally wear a suit and tie or dress and heels, think a stylish button-down with nice pants and a blouse. If that is your daily look, consider a polo shirt or nice top with tailored jeans.

**Men:** Try a button-down with contrasting cuffs and collar; wear with khakis or dark-wash denim and a pair of stylish shoes.

**Women:** A ponte-knit fabric pant looks polished yet allows for easy movement. For a more casual look, try leggings or straight leg, dark-wash jeans paired with a stylish tunic or another long top.

**GOLF OUTING** Golf is a game that's steeped in tradition and, not surprisingly, has strict rules about appropriate attire, whether you're playing at a fancy private club or a public course.

**DON'T:** Try to get away with T-shirts and other collar-less tops, street shoes, jeans, sweat pants, or ultra-short skirts.

**DO:** Wear soft-spiked golf shoes and golf clothing—it has detailing like required collars, front pockets for balls and tees, and fabrics with sun protection. Overall, keep it simple with regard to color and patterns—this is not the time to stand out from the crowd.

**Men:** Collared polo or golf shirts paired with golf pants or golf shorts and hat. (Many courses require tucked-in shirts, so don't forget a belt.)

**Women:** Collared golf dresses or collared shirts paired with golf skirts, pants, or Bermuda-length shorts, plus golf hat or visor. Culotte-style skirts with built-in nylon shorts are especially comfortable and not too revealing when swinging a club.

**WORKING ON THE WEEKEND** Again, think casual but office-appropriate. When in doubt, go a little more traditional—you're still at your workplace and not working from your couch.

**DON'T:** Come to the office in too-casual attire such as workout wear, gym shorts, sweatpants, flip-flops, cropped tops, leggings with short tops, or exposed bra-straps.

**DO:** Dress as though you might bump into your boss—you very well might. The trick is to look professional while not too stuffy.

**Men:** Button-downs, new-looking jeans or khakis, and rubber-soled shoes. Fabrics can be casual, such as a denim shirt, but cuts should be tailored. Creatives can think more out-of-the-box with

colorful button downs or graphic T-shirts.

**Women:** Make changes to your regular attire—wear shorter heels or flats if you usually wear high heels, separates if you always wear suits, and pants (see off-site recommendations above) if you typically wear dresses. Add stretch-blend tops—they're comfortable and move with you yet are more attractive than tees or sweatshirts. Leggings should be thick, opaque, and resemble pant fabrics and absolutely worn with tops that cover the derriere.

**FLYING ON A BIZ TRIP** The trick here? To be comfy—but not look it.

**DON'T:** Travel in sweatpants, tracksuits, pajama-style outfits, or fuzzy slippers.

**DO:** Be comfortable without looking sloppy. And dress in layers to accommodate changes in temperature in the terminal and aircraft.

**Men:** Traveling solo: dark-wash jeans, T-shirt, sweater, or nice hoodie plus stylish sneakers. With the boss, clients, or colleagues: khakis, a button-down, classic blazer, and loafers.

**Women:** Tailored pants in a stretch fabric, dark denim, or leggings. Pair with sleeveless or short-sleeved long-knit tops and add a wrap-style jacket or a soft pashmina to double as a blanket. For footwear, check out the versatile KaraMac line designed in Mount Kisco; it offers different embellishments and heel covers to create several looks from each pair.



## Plugged In

# New Solutions For Everyday Tech Headaches

Presenting the latest and greatest in high-tech gizmos, gear, and gadgetry **By Steve Ditlea**



### Never lose another must-have video moment off-frame

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### Cast room-filling hi-res images with a palm-sized projector

Tired of packing a briefcase-choking extra digital projector for presentations, just in case your client's hardware doesn't work? Sure, there are lots of other super-portable, so-called "pico" projectors—and then there's the **UO Smart Beam Laser**. No bigger than an old-school pencil sharpener, it crams bright razor-sharp laser-diode projection into a surprisingly lightweight, battery-powered (up to two hours per charge) package with an ample-enough audio speaker. At always in-focus 1280x720p resolution, it's ready to illuminate an eight-foot swath of wall anytime, anywhere. **Available from Amazon.com, \$370**



### Swap high-priced cartridges for squeezable printer-ink bottles

Computer printers drain budgets and work time whenever a pricey chip-equipped, plastic-encased ink cartridge (in any of four colors, or more) declares itself dry, requiring replacement before printing another page. EPSON, past perpetrator of such tinted extortion (not to mention wasting chips and plastic) relents with its EcoTank printers, easily refilled from included plastic bottles of ink. Though its initial cost is more expensive than other printers, the **WorkForce ET-4550** printer/scanner/copier for home offices comes with an economical two-year supply of inks. **Available from Micro Center, Yonkers, \$499**



Chocolate Espresso Bellini at Porta Napoli

## Happy Hour

# Coffee Comforts

Keep warm—and awake—this winter with Westchester's best caffeinated cocktails.

**By Cathleen Kenny**

### Chocolate Espresso Bellini Porta Napoli, \$10

Treat yourself to a pick-me-up with this dessert cocktail. Made with authentic Italian espresso, Prosecco, and the perfect blend of sugar and chocolate shavings, it's everything you need to toast the evening after a long day at the office.

261 Halstead Ave, Harrison (914) 732-3232  
www.portanapoliny.com

### Thick as Thieves Cocktail Harper's Restaurant & Bar, \$13

Take your taste buds on a journey with this cocktail. Along with Blackwell Dark Rum, Benedictine, and Bittermen's New Orleans Coffee Liqueur, this drink is full of delicious surprises, like the house-made raisin, vanilla, and Chinese five-spice shrub.

92 Main St, Dobbs Ferry (914) 693-2306  
www.harpersonmain.com

### Squirrel's Frenzy Pour Boutique Bar + Eatery, \$13

Pour has a delightful recipe squirreled away for winter. With just enough Dave's Coffee Syrup to give it a kick, you'll go nutty for this balance of smoky Sombra Mezcal, sweet hazelnut liqueur, and bitter Amaro Nonino.

241 East Main St, Mount Kisco (914) 864-0606; www.pourmtkisco.com

Supermarkets like Stop & Shop, with 14 locations in Westchester, face stiff competition from specialty stores.



# Supermarket Shakeup

The grocery industry in Westchester is undergoing dramatic change.

By Elaine Pofeldt

Judy Shampanier finds herself doing more and more of her grocery shopping at DeCicco & Sons in Pelham these days. “The selection is decent; the produce is good; the service is *beyond!*” says the attorney from Pelham. Each time Shampanier has made a special request—whether for Amy’s frozen vegetarian burritos, King Arthur flour, or Ghirardelli chocolate chips, the store has added her selections to its shelves within days. DeCicco’s even signed up a new distributor, to get the brand of cookies-and-cream ice cream Shampanier’s daughter wanted.

Shampanier sometimes hits Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, and Fairway for specific items, but as DeCicco’s expands its selection, it keeps pulling her back. Still, she’s happy for the wealth of grocery options in Westchester. “There is a tremendous amount of competition, which is good,” she notes.

Competition is an understatement for what is happening in Westchester County’s grocery scene—a microcosm of trends sweeping the country.

“It’s extremely competitive in every area, not just Westchester,” says Jim Keenoy, director of marketing and external communications at Stop & Shop New York Metro.

With profits down for traditional grocery stores nationwide, some big chains are trying to expand their footprint, especially into communities where other stores are doing well. In the wake of A&P’s bankruptcy, for instance, Stop & Shop, which now operates 14 stores in Westchester, acquired a former A&P in Mount Kisco and opened it in November 2015. Meanwhile, ACME Markets, a subsidiary of Albertson’s, announced in October 2015 it was going to purchase 16 stores owned by A&P in Westchester. Two months later, however, ACME pulled out of buying four stores (Yonkers, Millwood, Bedford, and Croton-on-Hudson), which meant the stores were headed for auction. Since then, Key Food bid successfully for A&P’s Port Chester store and the Food Emporium in Bedford, and Best Yet Market bought an A&P in Yonkers. Foodtown now operates

“Our main strategy is to customize the offerings, where possible, to the local neighborhoods—and promoting our natural and organic lines.”

—Jim Keenoy,  
Stop & Shop  
New York Metro

the former Croton-on-Hudson A&P, while ownership of the Millwood store was still up in the air as of presstime.

## Spotlight on Specialty Stores

But supermarkets increasingly must try to pry customers’ attention from specialty stores such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s—America’s favorite grocery store for the third year in a row, according to an May 2015 survey by Market Force Information, a customer-intelligence firm in Louisville, Colo.—along with a host of local specialty markets like DeCicco’s. Both Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s each run three stores in the county, and Whole Foods plans to open a fourth, in Chappaqua, in 2017. That has set the bar high for competing local players, such as Stew Leonard’s and Mrs. Green’s, which closed a 20,000-square-foot store that sold organic, natural, and local foods in Hartsdale in November 2015. Mrs. Green’s has been in the midst of re-designing its stores to highlight its natural fare and improve the customer experience, a project that has included its Rye location. Also planned are a new Mrs. Green’s in Dobbs Ferry for 2016 and fresh looks for the 14 other area stores.

People of all income levels are also gravitating to higher-end groceries, according to Jeff Cohen, CPA, partner at accounting firm Grassi & Co., who works with clients in the food-and-beverage industry. During the Great Recession, American consumers cut back on restaurant-going and began embracing home cooking, he says—something which boosted the amount of supermarket and specialty shopping among consumers.

Even with the economy doing better, that trend has continued. “If people are on a budget, they may go to a Stop & Shop or a club store like BJ’s,” explains Cohen. “But a lot of people who are no longer spending \$150 to \$200 to go out to dinner on Friday have no problem spending an extra \$75 on high-quality imported food. That’s the big change in the food industry.”

The foodie trend, promoted everywhere from the Food Network to friends’ Facebook pages, has also stoked interest in better quality groceries among shoppers at all income levels.

“Shoppers are sharing recipes via the Internet, Pinterest, and social media,” says Joe DeCicco Jr., who runs DeCicco & Sons, a group of six stores from relatives of the owners of DeCicco

Family Markets. “People want an interesting experience when they come to the store. They want to see something they’ve never seen.”

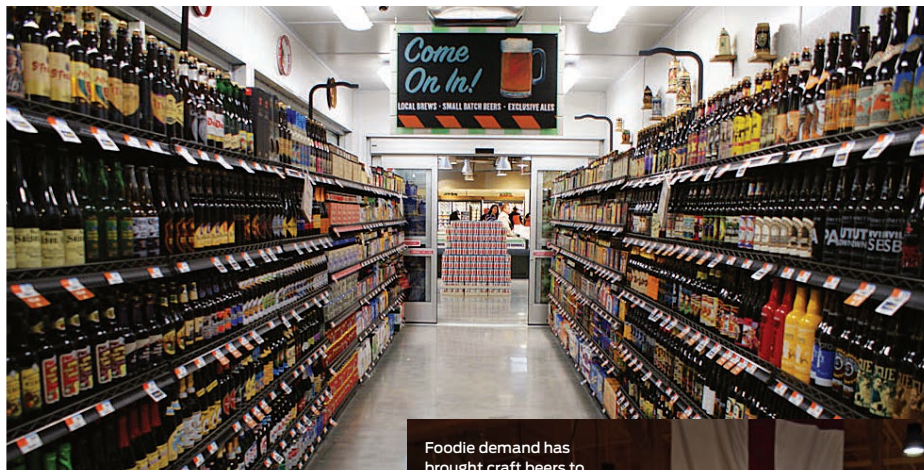
That demand has DeCicco’s embracing ideas like juice bars, which the chain rolled out at its Armonk store and at its newest location in Larchmont, which opened in December. That’s in addition to a craft beer bar, where shoppers can enjoy brews made in collaborations with local brewers, an idea that has been a hit in the chain’s Armonk store. The trend also has shoppers like Tuckahoe resident John Goodman raving about the new space at Port Chester’s Tarry Market, where customers can grab a bite. “Their roast beef on a roll is so good, it makes you cry.” The market is owned by celebrity restaurateurs Mario Batali and Joe Bastianich, who are also behind Manhattan’s Babbo, Del Posto, and Casa Mono restaurants.

### The Shopping “Experience”

Bigger chains are also working to make shopping more entertaining. Shampanier, for instance, loves the cheese selection at Fairway Market in Pelham Manor. “The Fairway cheese counter is exciting, elaborate; there’s theater to it,” she raves. Fairway isn’t alone in catering to foodies’ growing passion for cheese. Stew Leonard’s recently announced its expanded Cheese Shoppes, with additional global specialty offerings.

And chains like Whole Foods, which can afford specialized expertise on staff, are turning it into a selling point. “We’re still offering real trained butchers, fishmongers, cheesemongers,” says Michael Sinatra, a Whole Foods spokesperson. “Our prepared food departments have real chefs in our kitchens. There’s a different level of product knowledge.” Whole Foods is also bringing in outside guests to pull healthy eaters into its markets. In December, for instance, the Yonkers store hosted a talk by holistic health author Jeanne Ricks on “Winning holiday eating strategies.” Luring customers to stores with special events is also a trend embraced at Tarry Market, which is planning an upcoming olive oil tasting with Nicholas Coleman, an olive oil specialist from the gourmet-market chain Eataly.

At the same time, stores such as Whole Foods have responded to a push for lower prices. In 2016, the chain plans to begin rolling out its 365 by Whole Foods Market stores



on the West Coast, says Sinatra. The company’s website claims they will bring “fresh, healthy, and affordable food to more people in more places, every day.”

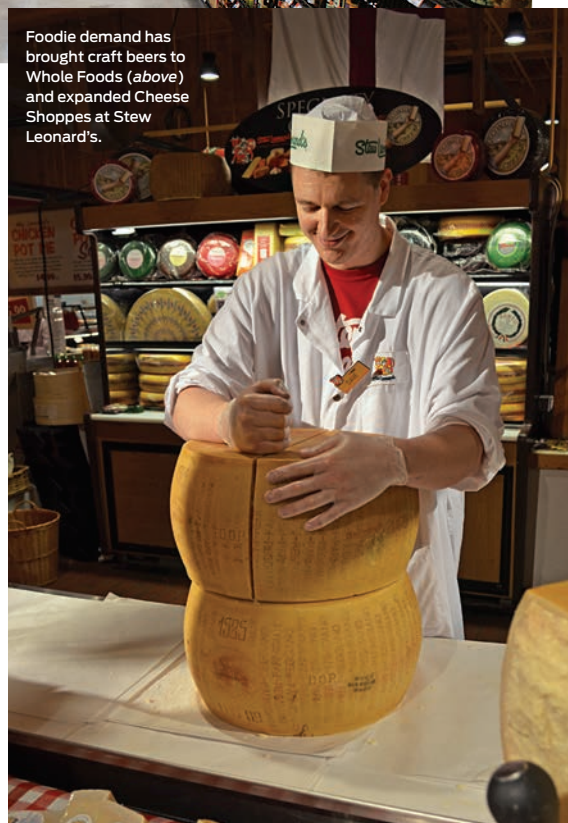
All of this ante upping has pushed less glamorous stores into extinction. “A&P, it’s like a dinosaur,” explains Cohen. “Markets change; people want better quality at reasonable prices.” Even stores such as ShopRite, which customers lauded for its deals in the 2015 Market Force survey, are seeing declining popularity. The New Jersey-based chain sank to the eighth-most-popular store in America, down from second in 2012.

To gain an edge, many local stores, both large and small, are tailoring their offerings to their zip codes. “Our main strategy is to customize the offerings, where possible, to the local neighborhoods—and promoting our natural and organic lines,” says Stop & Shop’s Keenoy.

This has not gone unnoticed by shoppers like Sharene Jones, a food coach in Pelham who offers her clients guidance on healthy eating. She was impressed on a recent visit to Stop & Shop in Mount Vernon by the many options from the Caribbean Islands and alternative types of flour, such as tapioca.

“I was blown away by the breadth of ethnic foods they have,” Jones says.

Stores in Westchester are also embracing the “buy local” trend—particularly Whole Foods. Whole Foods’ Westchester stores stock baked goodies from Greyston Bakery in Yonkers, Captain Lawrence beers from Elmsford, Hard Crack toffees from Port Chester, Lola Granola bars from Croton Falls, and personal-care products from Weleda, which has its North American office



Foodie demand has brought craft beers to Whole Foods (above) and expanded Cheese Shoppes at Stew Leonard’s.

“The Fairway cheese counter is exciting, elaborate; there’s theater to it.”

—shopper  
Judy Shampanier,  
Pelham

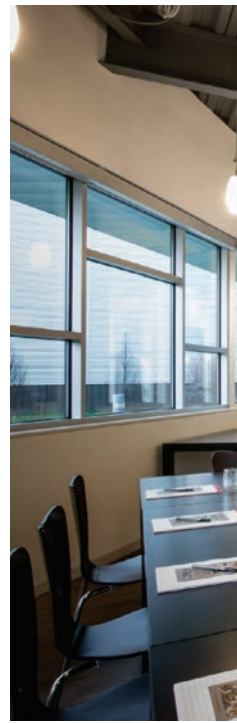
in Irvington.

Many stores are also embracing shoppers on special diets, whether vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, or Paleo. “For us, in almost every category, you have to have a conventional choice, you might have an organic, natural choice, and there might be a gluten-free choice,” says DeCicco. “It’s tough for us because space is tight, and we’re not a dedicated natural-foods store.”

But grocers know they have to keep up. Otherwise, “customers can go to a lot of different places for food,” says Sinatra. ●

Elaine Pofeldt is a freelance journalist who writes about entrepreneurship and careers. She is a former Fortune Small Business senior editor.





## Sleek Look, Sharp Products

A peek inside famed knife brand Zwilling J.A. Henckels' new corporate HQ in Pleasantville. **By Amy R. Partridge**

**R**enowned around the globe for its high-end cutlery, cookware, flatware, and glassware, German company **Zwilling J.A. Henckels** opened its US headquarters in Pleasantville in November 2015. The 122,000 square foot, state-of-the-art building provides modern, airy office space for the company's 75 US

employees. The building itself was designed and built with solar in mind—the 850 kW rooftop solar array is expected to offset 100 percent of the company's grid-supplied power. Zwilling worked with local firm Galin Beeler Studio Architects on the design, which highlights Zwilling's commitment to sustainability.



◀ **The Zwilling J.A. Henckels brand** debuted in 1731, when German knife-maker Peter Henckels registered the “twin” symbol as his trademark with the Cutlers' Guild of Solingen. Today, its products—which now also include cookware, flatware, and glassware—are sold in more than 100 countries worldwide.



◀ **Entering the Zwilling HQ,** you get an immediate dose of brand awareness via the reception area's gleaming showroom. It features seasonal selections and new products from Zwilling's roster of brands: Zwilling J.A. Henckels, Staub, Demeyere, and Miyabi.



▲ **In addition to internal use**, the multifunctional area next to the cooking studio is used to host groups from other companies who come for teambuilding and strategy events and then stay for cooking classes. The modular tables can be set up to accommodate events and groups of various sizes.

▼ **The building's 4 million cubic feet of warehouse space** serves as Zwilling's US logistics and shipping hub. The company ships roughly 4,000 cartons of merchandise per day to independent specialty stores and retail chains, including Bed Bath & Beyond, Macy's, Sur La Table, and Williams-Sonoma.



COURTESY OF ZWILLING J.A. HENCKELS

▲ **If a Zwilling retailer requests an original recipe** to print in its catalog (next to, say, one of Zwilling's Demeyere cooking pans), the company's chef heads to this open, airy kitchen for recipe development. It also serves as a cooking studio for workshops, master classes, and corporate functions. The cabinetry is from Mount Kisco-based Leicht Westchester.



▲ **In order to promote interaction among employees**, the workspaces were specifically designed to be of low height, while cushion-topped benches next to each workstation encourage people to sit down for impromptu desk-side meetings. The filing-cabinet kiosks clustered between the desks serve as display areas for product review sessions.



▲ **This main conference room** is situated on the second floor, near the executive offices. With floor-to-ceiling windows, the bright space is utilized frequently by all employees. ●



## Flight Plan

Though his feet are firmly planted in the office most days, insurance executive Ryan Pettus takes to the skies whenever he can. **By Jonathan Ortiz**

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's... an *insurance broker*?

While 35-year-old Ryan Pettus may not be Superman, he does share at least one similarity with The Man of Steel: an affinity for flight. Piloting a Schweizer 300 helicopter, Pettus spends much of his time off the clock exploring the Hudson Valley from a vantage point most never experience—800 feet above it.

Since 2004, Pettus has held a Clark Kent-like day job: He works for Hawthorne-based Professional Group Marketing (PGM), selling life- and health-insurance policies—a job, he admits, that could “bore someone to tears.” However, against the advice of several family members, Pettus began to fly helicopters in 2009, earning his pilot’s license one year later.

“When I was a kid, I did a lot of outdoorsy stuff with my father, who was a Marine. When he told me I couldn’t fly because of my glasses, I got pissed,” Pettus says. “As I grew up, it stuck with me. I don’t like when people tell me I can’t do things.”

Single and bored, Pettus took an aptitude test that produced two results: engi-

neer and helicopter pilot. That was the push he needed to go out and obtain his license, he says, taking instruction from Wings Air in White Plains.

Under the terms of his current license, Pettus must plan his flight according to Visual Flight Rules (VFR), a set of regulations by which a pilot must be able to see where the aircraft is going and have a visual reference to the ground (meaning Pettus can’t fly in bad weather, fog, or winds more than 15 knots). When Pettus does get time in the air, the view couldn’t be more satisfying. “I never understood why they called it the Hudson Valley until I started flying,” says Pettus. “You’re flying over these mountains, and then they open up into an expansive valley. It’s a nice visual sightline.”

On a typical flight, Pettus will travel toward the Tappan Zee Bridge, then move either north or south up the Hudson River. In reality, he can fly as far as his gas will take him, as long as he plans out a course before take off and plans for emergency landing. On one occasion, Pettus flew toward East Fishkill, a 40-minute flight from



After an aptitude test indicated he would be well suited to flying helicopters, insurance exec Ryan Pettus got his pilot’s license. Today, he enjoys the view from 800 feet in the air.

Westchester County Airport, to hover over his mother’s house.

“She got a kick out of that,” Pettus recalls.

Pettus’ opportunities to take in the county from 800 feet in the air have decreased a bit since getting married and having a baby. (He’s also focusing some of his current downtime on Drink More Good, a Beacon-based company that uses organic ingredients to create healthier soda syrups, which Pettus is a partner of.) But while Pettus’ wife isn’t the biggest fan of his high-flying hobby (“She won’t go near it!” he says of the helicopter), Pettus is confident that quitting is *not* part of his itinerary. ●



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