

FALL 2022

BEST OF BURLINGTON

LIFE AND CULTURE IN THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

VOLUME 15 NO. 4

ANGELFLIGHT NE
MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE
POSSIBLE THROUGH AVIATION

MATER CHRISTI
CELEBRATING A MILESTONE

SPECIAL SECTION

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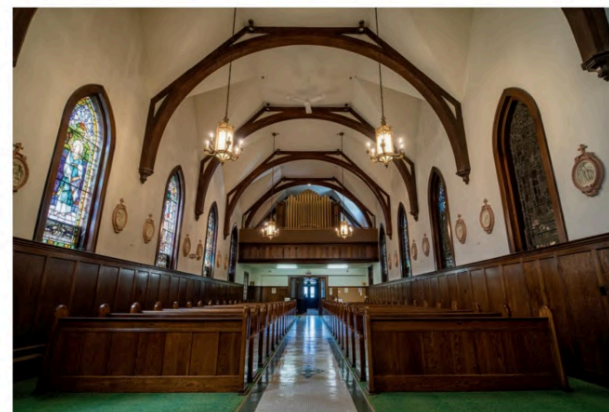
BURLINGTON
home

BY MERYL SIEGMAN
PHOTOS BY JACOB HAUENSTEIN



Jason Moore, Assistant Head of School (Left), and Tim Loescher, Head of School, welcome students into the elementary school building while middle school students hold the doors for their younger friends.

Mater Christi School Celebrates a Milestone



When the Sisters of Mercy, part of an international order of Roman Catholic sisters, officially closed their convent in the summer of 2019, the entire Burlington community mourned its loss. After all, the sisters have lived there for 145 years, serving the community as teachers, nurses and social workers.

At the time, it was unclear what would happen to the building, which is located on 20 acres of land in the heart of Burlington. Fortunately for the community, Mater Christi School, which occupies the Hill section of the land, recently purchased the entire property, including the extraordinary Chapel of the Sacred Heart, located inside the convent building.

We spoke with Tim Loescher, Mater Christi's Head of School, about this momentous achievement. He told us, "The



Students in the elementary school engaged in active learning.

next 136 years, including an all-girls' school and a boarding school, before becoming a co-ed institution that serves students from pre-school through eighth grade in 1963.

It was originally housed in the newly-constructed convent at 100 Mansfield Avenue in Burlington. Today, nearly a century and a half later, the school offers a first-class education that is inspired by the mission of the Sisters of Mercy and guided by the core values of MESA (Mercy Education System of the Americas):

*Compelled by Mercy
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Inspired by Faith
A Voice for Dignity and Respect
Principled Leadership*

Today, the school is thriving under the leadership of its current administration and the influence of a gifted and dedicated faculty. Combining 21st century academics with a values-centered philosophy and vibrant spiritual

purchase of the convent is a new chapter in the life of this property that is unprecedented and filled with opportunity. It guarantees our ongoing connection to 'Mercy,' meaning both the Sisters of Mercy and the tradition of Mercy education here in Vermont. That we have the chance to carry on the Mercy legacy both at the school and the convent

is an incredible feat. We are thankful to the members of our community who made it possible."

ABOUT MATER CHRISTI SCHOOL

Education began on Mansfield Avenue in 1886 as Mt. Saint Mary's Academy. The school went through a number of incarnations over the



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life, the school has seen its enrollment increase each year for the last 5 years.

THE CONVENT

The history of the building goes back to just one year after Burlington itself was founded. First inhabited in 1886, it housed 100 Sisters and included a chapel, library and infirmary. Built in the French Second Empire style, it was known as "The Mount" due to its location on the top of Loomis Street.

"The Chapel of the Sacred Heart is unique and spectacular," Tim explains. "There's nothing like it in Vermont, or anywhere else. It contains the original pipe organ, and its stained-glass windows were created by an Italian artisan in the 1920s. Its value is impossible to measure. We look forward to being able to use the chapel in the coming year."

Tim remains in awe of the old gymnasium, the vegetable and flower gardens, and an original old-growth pine grove leading to the Sisters of Mercy cemetery, where more than 100 Sisters are buried. He goes on to say, "Almost every day I read about convents and chapels throughout North America being forced to close. We are so grateful to be able to use the chapel again, and for the opportunity it presents. The generosity that made this transaction possible guarantees the continuation of Mercy education at Mater Christi School."

HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

"We have overwhelming testimony from the families of students attending MCS. They have come here seeking, and have found, two essential things: first, academic expectations that are lofty,



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but that students are helped to meet and rise to," Tim says. "Parents are looking for a bar that is set high, but also want to see the support from the school that is needed to get them there."

The second is the sense of a tight knit community that the school has created. "We have taken some very intentional ways of accomplishing this," the Head of School continues. During the COVID pandemic, for example, a skating rink was built as part of what was aptly named the "Winter Wonderland," where students could skate, snowshoe and cross-country ski on campus after classes. Parents were able to gather outdoors at the facility; a much-needed relief in the midst of the pandemic. "It's indicative of a much bigger philosophy and approach," Tim explains. He describes the special and extra-curricular activities the school offers, including informal sports such as flag football, where kids get to develop age-old, backyard skills such as making their own teams and working out their differences, all part of a rich program to bring the community together.

"There are all kinds of after-school clubs, from German and sign language to math, that meet the interests of our diverse study body," Tim continues. "In addition to a strong core curriculum, we have made an intentional commitment to the arts." MCS offers classes in everything from pottery to stained-glass making, and has added two music instructors to teach music theory, early instrument implementation, and rhythm and movement.

A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY SERVICE

The school continues its commitment to serving the local community. As Tim tells us, it's in the DNA of the Sisters of Mercy. MCS's Mercy Community Service Team, a formal school program that partners with community organizations, enables kids to get involved with the community outside the walls of the school and carry out the school's mission at the same time. "What people notice when they come to the campus is that the students hold doors for visitors," Tim concludes. "The spirit of generosity is palpable throughout the halls."

Mater Christi School

50 Mansfield Avenue
 Burlington, VT
 (802) 658-3992
www.mcschool.org

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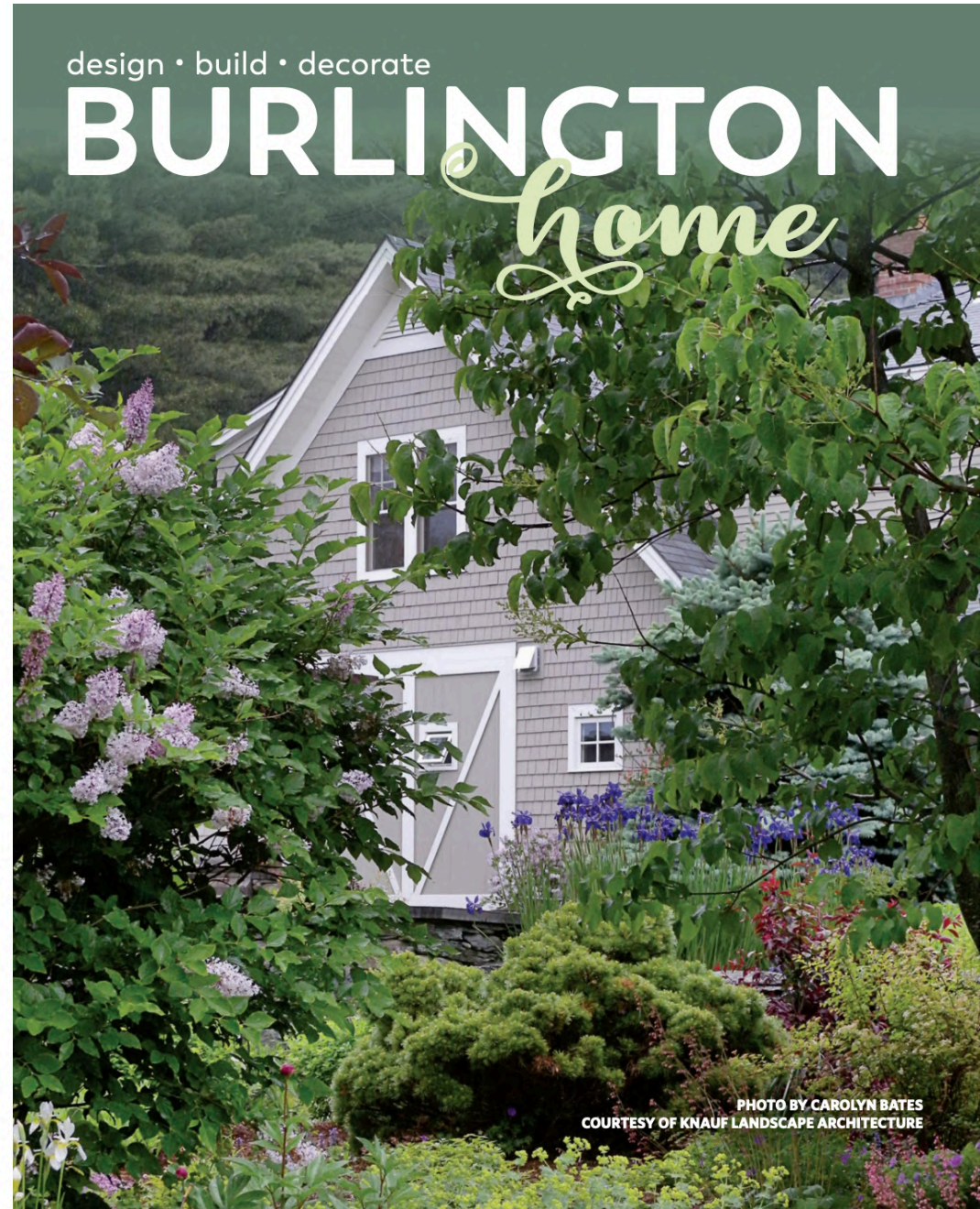


PHOTO BY CAROLYN BATES
 COURTESY OF KNAUF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

A RESTAURANT THAT FEELS LIKE HOME

DESIGNER **CANDY KAVANAGH**
CREATES A HOME AWAY
FROM HOME AT BRAMBLE



Interior designer Candy Kavanagh loves designing restaurants. The owner of Weston Design in Shelburne, whose tag line is “holistic interiors that invest in your well-being,” she is known for creating rich, multi-layered and intentional environments for both residential and commercial clients.

She told us, “I love restaurants because that’s where people go not just for the food, but for the entire experience. I love designing for enjoying life to the fullest, whether

residential or commercial.” Her latest project, Bramble, a restaurant located in Essex, VT, has become a beautiful, relaxing and elegant home away from home for thousands of happy diners since it opened last April.

CREATING A HOME-LIKE ATMOSPHERE

Two of Candy’s prior restaurant projects, Waterworks at the Champlain Mill in Winooski and Junior’s in Stowe, provided the perfect lead-up to working on Bramble. When she was

approached by Bramble’s owners Shawn Hyer and his wife, executive chef Colleen Hunt, she jumped at the opportunity to work on the 4,000 sq.ft., 90 seat restaurant.

“When Shawn and Colleen showed up at our first meeting, they brought with them a 12-page print out of images they liked showing how they wanted the restaurant to look and feel. Their goal was to make customers feel as if they were being invited into someone’s home,”



Bramble takes inspiration from a French country feel.

Candy said. “They had a very clear idea of what they wanted, having already imagined what it would be like for people sitting there enjoying the food.”

She explained that the clients wanted a French country feel: welcoming but elegant. During the initial meeting, she immediately conjured up an image of rich wood with a timeless, earthy feel, accented by the blue color that Colleen had already chosen. “They had a vision of what they wanted people to experience. They had already come up with the idea of putting the custom-built, wood-fired pizza oven in the middle of the space.” Candy saw herself as the project’s “co-creator,” rather than its designer, whose job it was to execute their vision and keep the project moving along. Together as a team, they put Bramble together lovingly and with intention.

A CHALLENGING SPACE

Bramble is located at the Essex Experience. As the former shopping mall Essex Outlets, it was recently reimaged as a creative hub comprised of Vermont entrepreneurs, artists and artisans that serves as a gathering place for

the community to “connect, learn, create and celebrate the best of Vermont.” Located in the space that used to be an Orvis store with views of a parking lot rather than a pastoral setting, it presented a challenge for Candy.

“It’s a perfect spot for getting noticed,” Candy explains, “but it was a challenge to create that special feeling you get when you enter a restaurant. We designed it so that you are transported to the French countryside the moment you walk in the door.” This was accomplished by tearing up floors, planing, sanding and re-staining existing wood, while mixing in reclaimed wood in the bar area and walls. “We didn’t want it to be too rustic. The blue tones feed your soul and help you feel relaxed, while at the same time being vibrant and making you feel alive.”

SATISFACTION IN DESIGNING RESTAURANTS

“I hope as a designer I continue to work on restaurants,” Candy continues. “I love the whole experience. It feels like you’re part of a family.” She goes on to explain that it’s an honor to be asked to help a client with their interior design. “But a restaurant is special. It’s where



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Candy brings restauranters visions to life.

you go to celebrate a special occasion or even to have a difficult conversation. And when the project is complete, you can see the faces and body language of the customers, knowing this is how you envisioned their experience of the space."

As for working with Shawn and Colleen, she says, "The vision was always Shawn's and Colleen's. I was just there to help them bring it to life by sourcing the materials, and giving them feedback. I also helped them make some very important, significant decisions to turn their vision into reality.

Today, Bramble is a thriving restaurant that provides a canvas for local farmers and producers to showcase their products, while offering a level of personal service and true hospitality that exceeds expectations. Its menu is designed to be shared, and all items are served family style.

ONLINE EXTRA

See more photos of Bramble's lovely dinner settings, and some delicious food at www.bestofburlingtonvt.com

BRAMBLE RESTAURANT

We caught up with Bramble owner Shawn Hyer, who along with his wife, executive chef Colleen Hunt, opened the restaurant in April, 2022. Both Shawn and Colleen have been part of the restaurant scene for years, working in and helping to open restaurants in San Francisco, Utah and New England. It has always been their goal to open their own restaurant together. They chose the perfect location in Vermont, where Colleen grew up and where Shawn moved with his brothers and sisters as their adopted home.

"Our entire ethos is to make guests feel that we are inviting them into our home. The seating, design and layout all convey that from the moment they set foot in the door." The interior is warm and inviting, but also elegant, clean and spacious. "The inspiration is the light, bright country homes of Europe, with lots of open space."

Shawn goes on to say, "When friends gather at our house, we always end up in the kitchen, the heart of the home. We come together in the familial and convivial warmth over a hearth—it's been like that for centuries. That's what we wanted Bramble to feel like." The custom wood-fired oven was placed right in the middle of the dining room to help convey that feeling. "We're going back to that very simple, primal style of cooking with wood. We do everything in there—we roast veggies, brine meats, cook salted fish, as well as make pizza."

According to Shawn, working with designer Candy Kavanagh was a delight. "Candy has a big heart. She loves what she does, and does it for all the right reasons. She was able to take our vision and make it real."

BRAMBLE RESTAURANT

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CYNTHIA KNAUF TAKES LANDSCAPING SERIOUSLY



a landscape architect addresses habitat loss

While for most, the word “landscaping” conjures up images of beautiful plants, manicured lawns and perfectly trimmed hedges, it’s also about addressing the impact of climate change and the loss of habitat on the environment.

A landscape architect with over three decades of experience, Cynthia Knauf has stayed current on the subject of habitat loss. “The global issues of climate change and

habitat loss for pollinators have become a major focus in my landscape designs and in the profession of landscape architecture as a whole,” she tells us.

Cynthia was happy to share with us her concerns about the environment and what we can all do to help.

WHAT IS POLLINATION?

Cynthia explains, “Pollination occurs when pollen is moved within flowers or carried from flower to flower by pollinating animals such as birds, bees, bats, butterflies, moths, beetles, and even some mammals, or by the wind. This process leads to fertilization, and ensures that a plant will produce full-bodied fruit and a full set of viable seeds.”

The use of pesticides and habitat loss due to fragmentation, as well as climate change,

are disrupting the process of pollination all over the world. Cynthia goes on to say, “More and more, landscape designers and architects are looking beyond just making a place look beautiful. It’s our responsibility to respond to the decline in the local pollinator population.” She believes this is an issue we can no longer ignore and sees educating clients as part of her job, explaining that humans are dependent on flowering plants for many reasons. “It’s not just about food supplies,” she continues. “We need plants for building materials, pharmaceuticals, even for the air we breathe, so it’s an issue we need to address.”

Appropriate habitat is needed for pollinators to feed, nest and overwinter, but unfortunately more and more of those sites are being fragmented by development. Pollinators require a diversity of flowering

plants that are either native or naturalized, as well as nesting sites. Protecting that habitat is the best way to conserve native pollinators.

THE SOLUTION TO LOSS OF HABITAT

Cynthia takes an upbeat approach, believing that with knowledge and action, we can combat this growing problem. “It’s important for my clients, whether they’re homeowners, municipalities or corporations, to understand how they can take action to address this issue,” she reasons. “If we all take some responsibility, we can nip it in the bud.”

For example, Cynthia believes it isn’t necessary to have a perfectly manicured one-acre lawn. Instead, property can feature a meadow with native grasses and plants. “Even a garden can be a paradise for pollinators,” she says. “You also don’t have to mow the lawn every week, or you can mow select parts of it.” Small species such as clover, if left unmowed, can provide a banquet for bees.

Another solution is using native species of plants, shrubs and flowers because they are a much better source for pollinators than imports. Most nurseries can supply local plants, but it requires proper planning. “The sooner you plan, the greater chance you will find the plants you need,” Cynthia advises.

EVERYONE CHIPS IN

Fortunately, the majority of Cynthia’s clients are conscientious. If they are unfamiliar with the problem, she takes time to educate them, often getting them excited about being part of the solution. “Even if it’s a very minimalist landscape, I try to steer them towards using native plants,” she continues. “Any style, formal, naturalist, modern, can be achieved with natives.” And there’s no need to sacrifice beauty to go this route: “Many of them have wonderful aesthetic value from spring to fall. Some plants produce late summer berries that stay into and even through winter, and provide food for birds while creating gorgeous fall colors. There is great beauty in many of our native plants.”

Maintenance is also important. Cynthia advises keeping flower heads on until winter, and not overdoing it with the mulch, since too much can harm wintering habitat.

“If we start now and each of us is conscientious, we can all help keep our environment from becoming fragmented and provide the pollinator habitats that are needed,” Cynthia concludes.



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Owner and founder Danial ArdesH grew up in Persia, where he became fascinated with old landmarks and ancient objects. Having lived in Vermont for a quarter of a century, his taste has been influenced by his Asian background and the elegance of the Old World, as well as by a modern lifestyle and Vermont country living. As a result, his collection is unique and broad-ranging; evidence of his knack for sourcing special pieces from all over the world.

A FOCUS ON RUGS

“Rugs are something I personally love,” Danial tells us. “I believe they are the soul of the store’s collection, but also the soul of the home.” Originally acquired as a complement to other pieces in the store, the rugs became an instant favorite among many of his customers. “Even though they make up only about 1/4th of our merchandise, they are one of the most



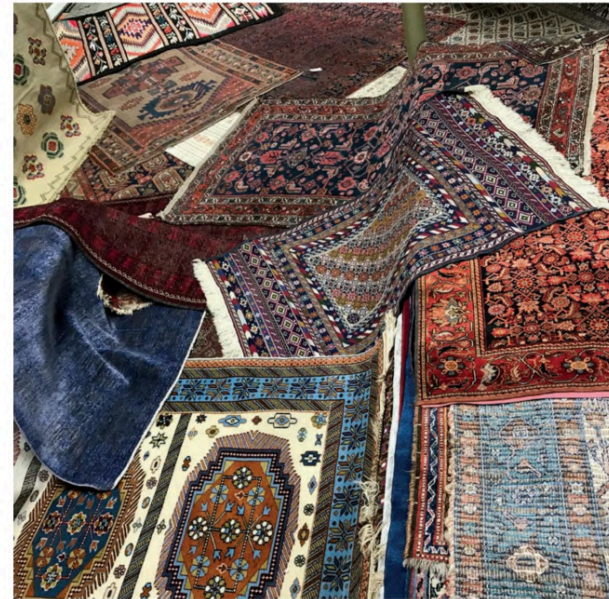
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popular items,” he continues. In fact, some of his customers have purchased as many as 15 to 20 from him for their homes.

There is no more appealing time to purchase a rug than the fall, when the days are shorter, the nights are colder, and every Vermonter starts thinking about staying cozy and warm.

RUGS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

You will find rugs and runners from every corner of the earth at ArdesH – they can be from France, Portugal, Armenia, Afghanistan, India or Persia. Danial has a preference for the older pieces, particularly those made in the 1920s through 1960s, explaining, “The newer rugs have brighter, fresher colors. But



You can find this eclectic collection of hand made rugs at ArdesH.com

the organic dyes that were used tend to fade over time, so the antique and vintage rugs have softer colors and more character.” He says that some of his clients who purchased recently-made rugs often trade them in for older ones because as their taste matures with time, they are drawn to a more authentic look.

HAND-MADE AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE

Each rug is created by hand. Danial goes on the say that many customers do not understand how many hours of skilled labor go into creating a single rug. “They can take months and months to make,” he tells us. “A single rug made here in the U.S. would cost thousands of dollars for that much labor. We are very fortunate to have access to these affordable objects.”

How does ArdesH keep its prices so reasonable? It’s easy: “Many rug dealers have a huge markup,” he explains. “They look for ones in perfect condition, which are hard to find, or spend money to have

them repaired.” At ArdesH Findings & Furnishings, the gently-used rugs are sold “as is,” with their slight imperfections only adding to their character.

A VENDOR WHO KNOWS HIS RUGS

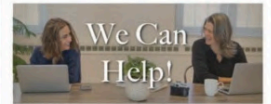
Based on his upbringing and years of experience, Danial instantly identifies special pieces, but he also knows what he is looking for. For instance, he instantly recognizes the materials they are made from, and can estimate their age based on the colors used. Their patterns also tell him a lot. His vast expertise also applies to the other items in his shop as well.

According to Danial, each rug is an individually crafted and unique work of art that can be walked on. One of the best things about them, he claims, is that they are all made from organic dyes and materials without the use of chemicals. “People often don’t realize they also act as air purifiers. You do have to wash them once in a while, but they’re great at capturing dust. There is nothing like a rug to make a house a home.”

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BEST OF BURLINGTON
Life and Culture in the Champlain Valley

LAKE CHAMPLAIN CLOSETS KNOWS HOW TO GET PEOPLE ORGANIZED

A CUSTOM CLOSET AND STORAGE COMPANY RISES THROUGH THE RANKS



BRINGING VISION TO REALITY

In February 2018, Cathy Armstrong launched Lake Champlain Closets and Storage Solutions (LCCVT). Recognizing there was an industry gap that needed to be filled, Cathy set out to bring her vision to fruition. At the time, there was a notion that customized storage solutions were out of reach for the everyday person. As a woman-owned, local company, LCCVT caters to people from all walks of life and treats all projects, big and small, equally. The company never turns down projects due to their size; in fact, Cathy believes that organization and storage space is equally important in smaller homes.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

At Lake Champlain Closets and Storage Solutions, customization is key. The company

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does not rely on a warehouse full of pre-cut pieces. Rather, they fabricate their custom pieces to fit every type of home, including old farmhouses that populate Vermont. They also accommodate slanted ceilings, requiring the precisely drawn and executed custom work that the company is known for. LCCVT's Owner and Lead Designer, Cathy Armstrong, adds that doing custom work does not make a project more expensive.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS KEY

"We have a very cohesive team," Cathy explains. "I respond to every email, text, and phone call we receive. Our clients know we're authentic in caring about them and their needs." LCCVT offers a complete and satisfying experience, from helping clients find exactly what they are looking for to a perfect and beautiful outcome. Cathy goes on to say, "Customer service has become foreign to a lot of companies. It's the most important part

of who we are." The company is known for hosting fabulous client appreciation events, such as a charter on Lake Champlain because, in Cathy's words, "We want everyone to know they are appreciated."

OUR PROCESS

LCCVT partners with a variety of builders, and interior designers to deliver affordable luxury solutions for residential and commercial clients. The first step is a complimentary site visit which helps them understand the space being renovated and the client's specific needs. After some in-depth conversation, Cathy will help the client identify the ideal storage solutions, finishes, hardware, and everything else they need to perfect their home storage solution!

RAPID GROWTH

Since its inception, Lake Champlain Closets has been growing rapidly. In addition to serving Vermont clients, LCCVT has also expanded



to provide its services to Upstate New York and New Hampshire. When asked what factors contribute to the company's success, Cathy responds that the pandemic caused people to care more about their homes and how they function. From the start, she has had multiple requests for help with home offices, Murphy beds, children's playrooms, spaces for homeschooling, and of course, closet storage. She mentions that there has also been a surge of development in Vermont as well as an influx of downsizing as people move from large houses into smaller dwellings.

The company is constantly evolving to respond to demand. "We have a custom woodworking shop which offers a variety of finishes for cabinetry," Cathy tells us. Another factor is the extensive custom work that the business offers. "Having an in-workshop was a differentiating factor for us, plus the fact that many clients want to use solid wood in their homes." The personal touch that the company provides is a big selling point as well. Cathy loves nothing more than visiting clients in their homes and getting to know them better as she takes measurements.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE BRING?

Always evolving and growing, the company has plans to add a professional home organizer to its staff. This service removes the chaos from clients by helping them with custom organizing systems and decluttering their closets. "This gives them a better quality of life and allows them to manage their time more efficiently."

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OTTER CREEK AWNINGS EVOLVES AS IT GROWS

AN AWNING COMPANY THAT KEEPS UP WITH THE TIMES

Otter Creek Awnings is an industry leader in the sale of sophisticated awning systems and solar shading for residential and commercial use. Located in Williston, it has one of the largest and most comprehensive awning showrooms in the United States. With clients throughout Vermont, upstate New York and New Hampshire, the company has a reputation

as the area's leading authority on home and commercial awnings, deck and patio canopies, solar screens and other unique solar protection products. We had the chance to speak with Sarah Larson, who along with her husband Kristopher owns Otter Creek Awnings. We wanted to learn more about how it evolved from a small company that manufactured canvas bags in 1976 to where it is today.

AN EXTENSIVE AND EVOLVING PRODUCT LINE

Much of Otter Creek Awnings' success is based on its ability to offer new products as new technology is developed and clients' tastes change. "Our product line continues to evolve over time," Sarah explained to us. "For one thing, much more advanced engineering has become available over the years." While overall



awning design hasn't changed much, awnings' popularity has continued to grow and so have the ways to make them.

For example, in the 19th Century, most had fixed frames and their covering had to be rolled up manually. Newer operable awnings were designed with hinged extension arms that could be operated by a simple rope and pulley system.

In addition, motorization allows awnings to extend or retract by simply pushing a button. "Now, instead of the traditional retractable awnings, we have retractable units with a heavy-

duty framework that can withstand high winds," Sarah continues. "Our Gennius Line is the best of both worlds. It's a cross between a retractable awning and a pergola." She explains that the new generation of retractable awning features a top that can easily be used in high winds.

WHO NEEDS AWNINGS IN THE WINTER?

According to Sarah, as the climate grows warmer, clients are able to use their awnings beyond the summer months, well into

September and even October. "Our seasons have shifted and extended," she says. But when winter finally does arrive, it doesn't mean there is no business to be had for Otter Creek Awnings. "Our entry vestibules are very popular among restaurants and retail spaces. They keep snow and ice off the sidewalk, while preventing a blast of cold air from entering when the front door is opened."

Some residential clients have a need for awnings in the winter months as well. "Our residential clients can use our custom curtains to protect their porches during the winter," Sarah goes on to say. "They can help block out the elements and keep energy costs down."

As for Vermont's famous mud season, Sarah mentions that these days clients are better prepared for the warm months ahead, saying, "Just because it's wintertime, doesn't mean you can't determine shading solutions for your home in preparation for warmer weather."

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE?
Awnings just keep on getting better. When we asked Sarah what the future of awning design looked like, she brought up retractable awnings with arms that house LED lights. "They can be turned on in the evening to create an ambience," she says.

Then there's smart home technology. One of the company's motor manufacturers, Somfy, offers myLink, which allows users to control their shades and awnings with their smartphone by linking it to the motors used on the awnings. Ratio Technology Somfy (RTS), along with myLink, offers clients a motorized solution with a tablet as well, or even their own voice, transforming the user experience.

OTTER CREEK AWNINGS

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Williston, VT
(802) 864-3009
www.ottercreekawnings.com

BY MERYL SIEGMAN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF POLLI CONSTRUCTION



FROM SKI BUM TO SUCCESSFUL CONTRACTOR

POLLI CONSTRUCTION

TAKES CONTRACTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Steven Polli, arrived in Burlington, VT from his native Scotland in 1986 with 75 cents in his pocket; just enough to make three phone calls. Fortunately for him, he landed a job as a dishwasher in Stowe on the second call. A ski bum with a background in

house painting and window washing, he thought "Vermont" was the name of a ski area and chose Stowe because it rhymed with "snow."

Monica Gallardo came to the United States from her native Colombia in 2001 as an exchange student. She first arrived in Squaw

Valley, where she got a job in a hamburger joint because she didn't ski, then moved to Burlington. One of her jobs in Vermont was as a mushroom farmer.

So how did they end up working together at Polli Construction in South Burlington?



HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Polli Construction, Inc. is a full-service, general contractor specializing in residential projects. It offers new construction, home improvement and remodeling services, including kitchen and bath remodeling, siding, foundation repair, window and door

replacement as well as interior and exterior painting, staining and power washing.

After bumming around the ski slopes of Stowe, Steven, the owner of Polli Construction, started the company in Williston in 1989. Because his background

Top: Kitchen remodel in Charlotte
Left: Bathroom Remodel in South Burlington
Right: Sunroom addition in South Burlington



Top: After dormer addition.
Right: Before dormer addition.



was in house painting and window cleaning, skills he learned as a teenager in Scotland, he named it Expert Painters. It is now a division of Polli Construction.

"In October 1989, when I started the painting business, I dabbled in construction and fixing things for clients," Steven tells us. "Pretty soon, the construction overtook the painting end of things and it kept on growing." Today, Polli Construction, in addition to its contracting work, has four separate divisions: Expert Painters, its home painting business; Sparkles, a window cleaning company; Handyman by Polli



Screen porch addition in Essex, VT

which focuses on small, 1–3 hour jobs, and Rot Doctors, which specializes in removing rot of any kind.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Monica is the company's design and marketing director. In fact, she wears many different hats at Polli Construction. With a B.A. in Industrial Design, which she earned before coming to the U.S., and an M.A. in Interior Architecture from the Academy of Arts in San Francisco, she is an interior designer, able to execute layouts for clients. At her job in the back office of the mushroom company, she honed her skills in IT, marketing and website development. "We couldn't afford to hire anyone, so I had to teach myself," Monica explains.

Soon she was hired by Steven where she now wears three hats at Polli Construction as an interior designer, website developer and marketing specialist. According to Steven, this is an invaluable combination of skills. The two became so close that when Monica got married, Steven officiated at the wedding.

POLLI CONSTRUCTION TODAY

In addition to its four subdivisions, Polli Construction offers full-service design build and contracting services. The business model is a bit unusual. "What we do is "meat and potatoes," rather than massive 5 million dollar homes," says Steven. "It includes many different services, including renovations, repairs and additions. We do hundreds and hundreds of jobs every year, so if things are slow on one end, we are



Photo: Ryan Berni

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Garage addition in Essex, Vermont

busy on the other.” Unlike some of its competitors, Polli Construction takes on jobs of any size, making it the go-to choice for many Vermont homeowners with smaller projects. With a focus on residential work, Polli Construction is extremely service-oriented, one of the keys to its success. “We are a service company and our service just happens to be construction,” says Steven. Today, the business is thriving, with over 40 employees, and a full workload.

Polli Construction, Inc.

11 Gregory Drive
South Burlington, VT 05403
(802) 482-5777
www.polliconstruction.com
contact@polliconstruction.com



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