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Golden Artist Colors continues to invest in the arts, products, and employees

SARAH GENTER

EVENING SUN

NEW BERLIN - Golden Artist Colors, Inc. has seen a successful year as an award-winning manufacturer of art supplies.

The company began as a joint venture between Sam Golden and his uncle Leonard Bocour, who partnered to create Bocour Artist Colors in the 1930s. During their partnership, Golden had a hand in developing artist acrylic paint, known as the "Magna" line, with his first batch crafted in the late 1940s. Over time he continued to work on crafting paints, and eventually developed a popular waterborne acrylic paint known as "Aquatech."

After 30 years, Golden retired from Bocour Artist Colors and moved to New Berlin. However, after growing bored with the life of a retiree, he returned to the paint production business with Golden Artist Colors, Inc.

Despite his humble beginnings in a 900-square-foot barn, Golden found success in the art industry. Golden Artist Colors only grew over the years, and today is a thriving

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Golden Artist Colors, Inc. has been producing artist quality paints since 1980, when Founder Sam Golden began the company from his 900-square-foot barn. Today, Golden is an industry leader with more than 200 employees and an approximately 100,000-square-foot facility on the grounds of the original barn, as well as a 45,000-square-foot commercial warehouse in Norwich. (Submitted photo)

S&S TV and Appliances: A new generation for a long-time family business



S&S TV and Appliance is a family-owned business, operated by Kurt Brauer and his wife, Alyssa (not pictured), and owned by his mom and dad, Joan and Thomas Brauer. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

KELLI MILLER

EVENING SUN

NORWICH — S&S TV and Appliances co-owners Tom and Joan Brauer have been serving Madison and Chenango County since 1971.

2023 was an important year for the family business, with

the family's son Kurt and daughter-in law Alyssa taking on a growing role with the company.

S&S two showrooms are in Norwich and Hamilton. They carry selections of brand name appliances such as Amana, Speed Queen, Danby, Electrolux, Maytag,

Monogram, and Whirlpool.

"Our goal has been to deliver the best brands at the best possible price, while delivering outstanding, friendly, customer service," said Tom. "We'll work with you to find a product that fits your needs, budget and lifestyle."

In the last few years, S&S

received recognition and was named the BrandSource Dealer of the Year for the North Atlantic Region. They also received the New York State Senate Empire Award for outstanding contributions and dedication to the growth, prosperity, and betterment of

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Lewis' Restaurant at night, located on Route 12 in the Village of Sherburne. (Submitted photo)

Business SPOTLIGHT

Lewis' Restaurant

SOPHIA ROOT

EVENING SUN

SHERBURNE – Lewis' Restaurant in Sherburne is owned and operated for over 80 years, as medium sized casual dining family restaurant with their relaxing atmosphere, homemade food and competitive prices.

The family-owned restaurant uses only the finest ingredients available to make their signature homemade food. They start with the most basic ingredients and make everything from scratch. The friendly staff is always anticipating the needs of the customers. Owner Rich Lewis stated that consistency has been the key to his business' longevity in the Sherburne community.

Rich Lewis, who is responsible for everything from hiring to sweeping when necessary, grew up in Sherburne to Lebanese immigrant parents. In 1942, his parents had the opportunity to lease and operate a Colonial Beacon Oil Company gas station.

Part of the Esso Brand, CBOC had gas stations all over New England, using a large lighthouse out front as a symbol of their brand. The Lewis family operated the gas station with Mr. Lewis pumping Gas and doing some light mechanical work and Mrs. Lewis selling dry goods in the station. One night as the family sat down to eat dinner, a customer asked what he had to do to get a plate of the spaghetti they were eating.

Inspired by this interaction, the Lewis family bought the gas station from Esso in 1948 and converted it into a restaurant. There have been many renovations since then, including the expansion of the main dining room in 1992. Rich Lewis said that it has been almost completely remodeled, but the lighthouse remains intact.

"I'm a small-town boy" Rich Lewis said. "I've lived in Sherburne my whole life and I love it. It's an idyllic place to live and grow up in. It's on the main route from Utica all the way down to Binghamton, I wouldn't want to live anywhere else." Rich Lewis also appreciates Sherburne because it has a good reputation of being a versatile town with many industries and good schools, arts, and sports.

A proud first generation American, Rich Lewis appreciates his parents and the other immigrants that came through Ellis Island for their desire to work and make a difference in the community. Rich Lewis credited the community around Lewis' Restaurant as his business' most valuable resource, thanking the community for being loyal and gracious enough to support him day in and day out.

Lewis' Restaurant is open from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday and 4pm-9pm Fridays and Saturdays. The business is still operating on limited hours in the aftermath of COVID-19, they continue to struggle hiring help after the pandemic. Rich Lewis claims that the Restaurant has never experienced a labor shortage like this in its history, and the effort to find more staff is a significant commitment and challenge.

Commerce Chenango recently awarded Lewis' Restaurant by naming them 2023 Small Business of the Year for their commitment to exhibiting excellence, best business practices, and a commitment to both ethical business practices and employee support. Rich Lewis reiterated his appreciation for this by saying it was a tremendous honor to be nominated and selected.

To learn more about Lewis' Restaurant visit lewisrestaurant-ny.com or Lewis' Restaurant on Facebook. They are always seeking help. To inquire/apply: simply stop by the Sherburne location or call (607) 674-9005.

Golden Artist Colors continues to invest in the arts, products, and employees -

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ing industry leader with over 200 employees and an approximately 100,000-square-foot facility on the grounds of the original barn, as well as a 45,000-square-foot commercial warehouse in Norwich.

Success in 2023

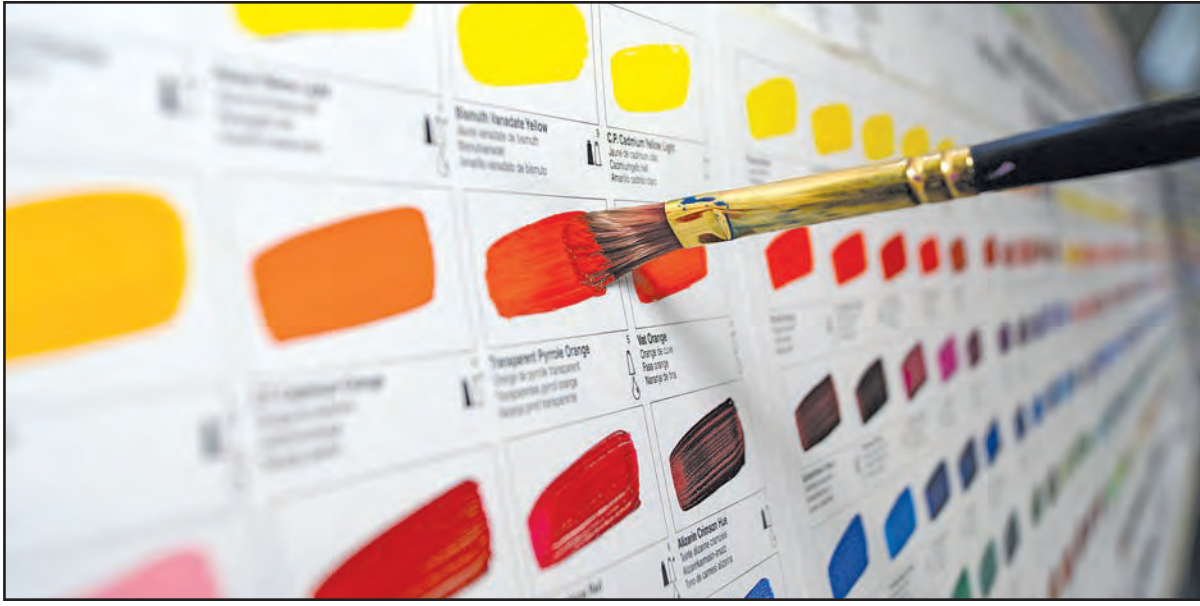
Golden Artist Colors had great achievements in 2023, including launching new products, hiring new staff, hosting gallery exhibitions, and earning recognition for their hard work and superior products.

In November 2022 the company acquired PanPastel and Sofft Tools products, and 2023 marked the first full year Golden manufactured and sold PanPastel Colors. They describe PanPastels as “professional artist quality soft pastel colors packed in a unique pan format.”

When paired with the unique sponge design of Sofft Tools, the application tool for PanPastels, artists are able to “blend and apply pastel (dry) color like paint, something that’s never been possible before.” But PanPastels aren’t limited to paint-like application; they can also be used for drawing and mixed media, making them even more versatile and well-suited to a wide variety of artists.

Golden Artist Colors didn’t just sell fine art supplies in 2023; they also showcased the creations of several artists in the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery at Golden Artist Colors.

Their annual artist residency program celebrated the tenth anniversary of the “Made in Paint” exhibition in April,



In addition to manufacturing high quality fine art supplies, Golden is also known for their philanthropic endeavors. The company donates funds and products to art and non-art related organizations each year on a local, regional, national, and global scale. (Submitted photo)

where the artwork of 18 resident artists was showcased in the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery.

In October, Golden Artist partnered with the Cooperstown Graduate Program of SUNY Oneonta to bring “Our Votes, Our Stories” to the gallery. The exhibition included paintings, sculptures, and installations from eight artists curated by Jimmy Nunn, Jr., a graduate of the Cooperstown Graduate Program.

The eight artists featured in the exhibition were Harper Bella, Greta Chapin-McGill, Sandra Charles, Brianna Harlan, Carla Rae Johnson, Lorie Novak, Taylor Sanders, and Vitus Shell.

The company also hired on a new Operations Director, Glen Chwala, who will oversee the entire operations and facilities areas. His focus will be on ensuring proper staffing

and training levels for optimum functioning and implementing lean manufacturing strategies, with an emphasis on continuous improvement to ensure the safety and efficiency of Golden employees.

“We’re delighted that Glen, with all his experiences and talents, has joined the Golden Team,” said Golden Artist Colors President and COO Barbara Schindler. “Glen brings positive energy and excitement as he guides the operations team through our journey of continuous improvement, as well as his contributions to the senior leadership team in driving corporate strategies forward.”

Golden was also recognized for their leadership and contributions to their community, and Schindler was even presented the International Art Materials Association (NAMTA) Hall of Fame Award – the Association’s highest honor.

According to Golden Artist Colors, the Hall of Fame Award is given to individuals “who have been supporters, volunteers and champions of the association,” and Schindler was chosen for the award “for her enthusiasm to serve NAMTA and the broader fine arts community.”

Golden CEO and Co-Founder Mark Golden said, “While our entire arts industry celebrates Barbara [Schindler] for all her efforts to promote and strengthen the value of fine arts around the world, we here at Golden Artist Colors celebrate her dedication to a truly values-centered leadership every day. One that promotes honesty, openness, and a place where respect for all persons is treasured.”

Schindler was also recognized for her leadership in the manufacturing industry with the Manufacturing Association of Central New York (MACNY)



Golden Artist Colors manufactures several brands of paint, including Golden Artist Acrylics, Williamsburg Artist Oil Colors, QoR Artist Watercolors, Golden Paintworks, and as of 2022, PanPastel Artist Pastels and Sofft Tools. (Submitted photo)

Transformational Leadership Award.

The award is given annually to an individual who exemplifies qualities in line with the Live to Lead Initiative, such as character, commitment, courage, competence, initiative, passion, servanthood, and generosity.

Golden Artist Colors said

Schindler was chosen for the award due to her dedication to Golden and its employees in the last 25 years, as well as her involvement in the community outside of the company.

Golden closed out the year with another big win in December: being presented the

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Golden Artist Colors continues to invest in the arts, products, and employees -

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New York State Empire Award by Senator Joseph Griffo, which is given for "outstanding contributions and dedication to the growth, prosperity, and betterment of their community and New York State."

On the horizon

Golden Artist plans to keep innovating in 2024, with several product initiatives and expansions planned for the new year.

Although Golden Artist Colors Public Relations Manager Jodi O'Dell said they can't release any details yet, they do have plans for new product initiatives involving their new brand, PanPastel Artist Pastels. Schindler said they also plan to expand their QoR Artist Watercolors and Golden Artist Acrylics product lines.

They will also be showcasing plenty of art in the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery with three exhibits - something O'Dell said is unusual for the company.

The 2024 exhibit season will kick off with the "Four Fold Hurricane" exhibition, which features the works of Ronald Davis and Ronnie Landfield.

Davis' "Fold Four" piece from 1969 is a four-panel polyester resin and fiberglass piece that spans over 21 feet wide. Landfield's "Hurricane," crafted in 2004, features acrylic paint "often applied in atmospheric layers, wherein varying colors waft and blend. Discrete segments can be hovering, sometimes abruptly changing hues side by side, or transitioning slowly via tint and shade."

In regard to his work, Landfield said, "My inspiration has been my conviction that modern painting is fueled by the combination of tradition and the realities of modern life. Spirituality and feelings are the basic subjects of my work."

Davis said, "My work is comprised of aggressively deceptive, meaningless, unidentified flying objects that pretend to be rational. Illusion is my vehicle. Opticality is paramount."

In April, the "Made in Paint" exhibition will return to the gallery to showcase the works created by artists in the Golden Artist Colors Residency Program.

Founded in 2012 by the Sam

and Adele Golden Foundation, the artist residency program provides large studio spaces and private apartments in a renovated 19th-century barn for artists working with paint. The program gives them the opportunity to explore and experiment with a vast range of materials and technology available to today's painters.

The "Made in Paint" exhibition will feature works created by artists in the 2023 residency program. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, April 29 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery, located inside the Golden Artist Colors headquarters at 188 Bell Road in New Berlin.

In the fall, the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery will be filled with watercolor portraits by esteemed artist and author Ali Cavanaugh.

Cavanaugh is known for her expressionist and realist style in large-scale watercolor portraits, which have been featured in galleries and museums worldwide.

The exhibit comes in the wake of Golden's partnership with Cavanaugh to create the six-color QoR Artist Watercolors Portrait Colors Set, which the company announced in December.

"I have been a committed QoR Watercolor user since 2014, so to have the opportunity to launch this set in partnership with Golden is truly incredible," said Cavanaugh. "Painting portraits allows me to express my subjects in their most introverted, pure state. My portraiture, figurative realism, is aimed at sharing the mystery of life; my subject's existence. It's this intangible thing that makes you want to know more. It sparks your curiosity."

Gallery exhibits are open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Of course, Golden wouldn't be able to provide the high-quality products they're known for without their dedicated and skilled staff. Part of manufacturing these high-end fine art supplies is making sure employees are up to date on training and have opportunities to expand their skills.

Investing in staff

"2024 will be a year of significant investment in training for our manufacturing team members," said Schindler. "Annually we have leadership training for staff aspirational in developing, growing and being prepared for when a leadership position opens up."

The new year will also bring an investment in manufacturing TWI and yellow and green belt lean training, which Schindler said are all levels of training that involve problem solving, project management processes,

eliminating waste in processes, and how to make data-based decisions. She said the Golden operations team will be participating in these trainings throughout the year.

Additionally, Golden provides learning opportunities through their several committees, such as the Continuous Improvement, Safety, Employee Stock Ownership Plan, and Wellness Committees, among others.

Golden also invests in its employees by providing a robust benefits package, including support for continuing education, paid volunteer time, and company activities, such as Earth Day Cleanup, Schindler said.

A highly unique benefit for Golden Artist employees is their Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), which was first implemented in 2002.

In 2010, Golden took employee ownership a step further, and became one of just 4,000 companies in the nation to be majority owned by employees. By October 2021, Golden announced it was 100 percent employee owned.

"Implementing 100 percent ownership for staff is very unique and something our family has dreamt about since the company's beginning," said Golden Artist Colors CEO Mark Golden. "We began on the premise that 'what you care about will grow,' and Golden Artist Colors has grown many times beyond the dreams we once had as we peered across the fields from my parent's kitchen. Four decades later it is clear that we've grown in the most wonderful ways. It has been through the care and dedication of each of our staff that has joined us on this journey and made this place part of themselves."

With such a great emphasis placed on employee treatment and benefits, it's no wonder Golden touts an extremely high retention rate. Schindler said approximately half of their employees have been with the company between five and 30 years.

However, that doesn't mean Golden Artist hasn't had its challenges. Schindler said the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the aftermath in the following years, has made it more difficult to hire staff.

Plus, she said being headquartered in Chenango County can make it difficult to find candidates for higher-level positions, who would need to relocate to the area.

"Any position can be difficult to fill - simply depending on the pool of candidates, which shift, and which facility," said Schindler. "That stated, our positions requiring higher levels of education tend to be the positions which are more diffi-

cult to find the best candidate. One of the biggest challenges is our rural community - acclimating from either a city or suburban community can be quite the culture shock."

Despite these challenges, Golden Artist continues to push for the best and seek out the right candidates.

"Our Human Resources team is active in the community, participating in local job fairs when available. MACNY has been active working with us to bring local students here for tours and to learn from staff about the types of job positions we have here," Schindler explained. "Also, we are currently working with two media organizations to develop content sharing what creative jobs exist at Golden and how staff has developed and grown into unique roles as a result of training on the job."

Investment in community

Investment goes beyond the walls of the Golden Artist plant and reaches out into the community. The company makes consistent efforts to collaborate with other local organizations, participate in charitable work, and invest in local art.

To support both the community and their employees, O'Dell said Golden gives employees 40 hours of paid volunteer time per year, which they can use to support organizations and non-profits of their choice.

"They can choose how they want to use that time, they just have to complete a form for the hours that they completed and some information about what they did, the organizations they supported, that kind of thing, and then it goes to human resources," she said.

"We also have activities here that you can use your volunteer time for, like most every year we do an Earth Day cleanup around the facility,

we have staff that volunteer for Colorscape Chenango Arts Festival. So there's different activities that we as a company support and have staff volunteer for, and then there's also outside organizations that staff just feel passionate about and want to be involved in, and that's a way for them to do that as well."

Additionally, employees who are volunteers with local fire and EMS services are given 80 hours of paid volunteer time per year.

"If there is an emergency in the community or a call in the community, they can feel good about leaving work and being able to support those in need in the community, and then they won't get shortened time for their work week," O'Dell said.

To help artists in the process of creating art, the Golden Material Applications Specialists Team offers phone and email assistance with the application of Golden Artist products as well as other art industry materials.

Golden Artist also supports both art and non-art related organizations through the donation of funds and materials.

"We donate monies locally, regionally, nationally, and globally for art and non-art related organizations who request our support," Schindler said. "We also have a donation program for materials (paints) to support community projects, artists in need, et cetera."

Some local organizations who have received support in the past include the Chenango Arts Council, Commerce Chenango, the Earlville Opera House, area schools and school sports teams, Rogers Environmental Education Center, and hospice centers.

"We try to support all the schools that request, but in particular we pay close attention to those schools and organizations

that our staff are involved in and/or where their children go to school," said O'Dell.

O'Dell said Golden Artist Colors also gives annual donations to local fire and EMT services, even if funding isn't requested.

Regionally, O'Dell said Golden supports art conservation groups, such as CERF, which supports artists impacted by hardships and natural disasters, as well as global arts organizations.

Locally, Golden also supports the arts and art-related organizations with gift certificates for art exhibition awards, paint donations, guest speaker events, and more.

"Oftentimes we try to provide a gift certificate for the artists as an award for the exhibition, and we try to tailor the gift certificate to the artist and the type of painting that they do," O'Dell explained. "So it might be a watercolor organization, and so the gift certificate would be for our core artist watercolor brand, for example."

Supporting the arts in the Chenango County area, across the country, and across the world is one of Golden Artist Colors' core values, and they plan to continue that investment in years to come.

"History and data show that investments in the arts can change the world," said Schindler. "That is part of our corporate mission and vision."

For more information on Golden Artist Colors, visit gold- enartistcolors.com. More information on the Sam and Adele Golden Gallery and Foundation can be found at theagg.org and goldenfoundation.org.



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their community. "Our in-house technicians are specially trained and prepared to service all that S&S sells," Tom added. "We also do in-store repairs at our Norwich location if you're in an area we can't get to in a timely manner."

In addition to appliance repair, they offer a great selection of parts and can help identify the correct piece needed for repairs. If they don't have the part in stock, they will special order it.

He said they also sell reconditioned appliances.

A family business close to community

"We do a lot of business with landlords, it's a part of our business, and we work with coin operated washers and dryers," Tom said. "We rent them and work on consignment and commission."

"Say a guy has a three to four family apartment building and he wants to put coin operated washers and dryers in there; we put them in and split the collection 50/50," Tom said, "S&S does all of the servicing. The landlord only has to pay the utilities, otherwise, we do it all."

Tom said, "Speed Queen is really popular with excellent washing machines. He said they are built old-school and don't wear out like the others. "That's been a good selling point for us. They're a little pricey but worth it," he said.

"We're a family-run business that are employees appreciate and allowances are made for our employees to have the freedom to take some time off to take their kids to the doctor."

"We know what families go through and support our employees with their personal family needs and they

appreciate it."

Tom also said the company joined with another buying group for better pricing and better service.

He said 2023 has been another good year and they hired two more service people.

He explained the benefits of being based in a small town with only two appliance competitors, the box store and S&S. He said they compete with them very well.

"Maybe 30 years ago there may have been five or six appliance stores, so it's easy for us to prove our service," he added.

Between the two stores, they have 15 employees, 12 being full time.

Working closely with customers

The company had a hard time finding qualified service technicians to fill roles. "Nobody wants to work, so we had been going a little crazy to keep up with it," he said. "It took about four to six weeks to find the right local hires," said Tom

"The challenge is we must tell the people what we do for them. A lot of people don't realize what a small business can do for the town. We don't stand there and say we're the greatest, we can do this, we don't do that, but a lot of it is word of mouth."

He said some time people shop for price, some shop

for service and its up to him to try to convince the public that service is more important than price.

He explained that on Thanksgiving Day he received a call from one of his customers, saying he bought a range from S&S about 8 years ago and it wasn't working, so he would need another one.

Tom said, "I told him to meet me at the store, I'll be right there."

"On Super Bowl Sunday, I received a call from Jim Cushman, and he said I want to watch the Super Bowl but my TV just conked out, and I said, ok Jim, come to the store, we'll get you one."

Those are the things people don't consider, they only consider that when they need it," he added.

"Its my job to show them that's what we do. He said, "That's service, that's all."

Another challenge shared was the issue of sales tax. He said the business is on East Main Street and they have to collect more sales tax than the whole city.

"We're not even in the Business District," he said. "We do over \$2 million dollars a year and with 8% sales tax, that's a lot of money."

He said he reached out to the Commerce Chenango but the only answer he got was the Business District only takes care of the main downtown up to the railroad tracks.

"I think S&S should be included in the Business District and would like this looked into 100%."

Welcoming a new future

S&S welcomed Kurt and Alyssa Brauer on their return to Norwich last year, the couple is partnering in ownership.

Tom said, "Kurt and Alyssa will be doing a lot more social media and advertising. I'm pretty much laid back, where word of mouth means a lot to me, but we must get into the new times. We're trying to keep the younger people as our customers, that's the main thing for the future."

He said the service department is going to get busier with all the new appliances and it will be imperative to keep up to date with all of the electronics in them.

"So we will have additional training to stay current," he said.

S&S Partner Kurt Brauer said he grew up in Norwich and was always with his parents at the S&S store. He said he enjoyed sports and was part of the community but when he married his wife Alyssa, they decided to move to Maine, being two young married kids they really didn't care where they lived.

He said they were gone

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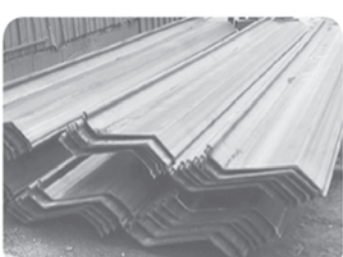
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S&S TV and Appliance owner Thomas Brauer discusses repair and replacement options with customer seeking advice at their Norwich store. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

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for about eleven years and when they found out there was an opportunity

to work with his parents, to work with the business, they decided to move back home.

"We moved back in May 2023 and found a house and settled down, putting our roots back in our hometown of Norwich," Kurt added.

"I just invested in the business, so I'm working buying it from my parents, over time. It sounds kind of weird for me to say part owner. The whole thing is humbling," he said.

"Working with my dad has been awesome, I wouldn't

want to work with anyone else. He really knows his ways with people and has a great demeanor about him," Kurt said. "I'm doing sales and service now, helping out where I can behind the scenes."

S&S would like to thank the community for making 2023 such a great success!

Norwich S&S store hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and closed on Sundays.



S&S TV and Appliance offers local appliance repair and has a large selection of parts. Workers can help identify the correct pieces needed for many repairs. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

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