

# womanink

Spring 2021



**NAWBO**  
BUFFALO NIAGARA  
National Association of Women Business Owners



## **Event**

Annual Installation

## **Date**

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

## **Time**

Cocktails 5:30 – 6:00 PM  
Program 6:00 – 8:00 PM

## **Location**

The Barrel Factory  
65 Vandalia Street  
Buffalo, NY 14204

## **Register**

[nawbowny.org](http://nawbowny.org)

**Join us for the installation of  
our NAWBO Buffalo Niagara  
officers and directors!**

## NAWBO Buffalo Niagara President in the National Spotlight



**Paula D'Amico**

What a Difference a Call Makes For Every Member of This Chapter

**Featured article on our President in the NAWBO HQ Leadership Newsletter**

Paula Lynn D'Amico, president of NAWBO Buffalo Niagara, was on vacation in March on International Women's Day. Instead of thinking about relaxing and recharging, she was thinking of her chapter's members again and decided to pick up the phone and call every single one.

"There's been discussions on calls with chapter presidents to do a phone tree and have board members reach out to members," Paula explains. "We started this over the summer to check in with our NAWBO sisters."

Still, so much has happened for every woman business owner over this past year that Paula felt she wanted to personally reach out to see how each member is doing and maneuvering her way through the pandemic. Paula didn't think twice – she just opened her member list and started calling from top to bottom.

"The gift wasn't me so much calling them," Paula says, who spent two days making calls. "It was what they gave back to me. It's so important for leadership to reach out and call their NAWBO sisters and check in on them. They were all so grateful – it was an unexpected ray of sunshine."

In fact, Paula had never even met the first woman she called who shared that the year had been tough and she was considering packing up her business and moving out of state. "By the end of our conversation, she was so grateful," Paula recalls. "She had prayed for a sign or to get some sort of support and here was this call. She needed a little assistance too, so I was able to connect her with another NAWBO sister." Other members shared how they had taken second jobs to support their families during this time when business is down.

"I just wanted to be a sister and reach out to these women who have become my friends and some of us have done business together to give them this simple gift of support," Paula says. "I can't even describe what they gave me in return. We laughed, cried and had some real moments. It was so simple, yet so incredibly powerful." ☺

**Paula D'Amico is the 2020/2021 president of NAWBO Buffalo Niagara and owner of Blessings By Nature®**

## Diamond Chapter Partner

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Buffalo is fortunate to have many innovators, creative leaders and people unafraid to take ambitious risks. Driven by inspiration, tireless hard work and an entrepreneurial attitude, they are making meaningful and measurable impacts on our community.

That's one of the reasons my colleagues and I at M&T Bank support NAWBO. We understand how important it is to provide information and insights to local businesses, and to recognize the achievements of women entrepreneurs in the Western New York market.

At M&T Bank, we are dedicated to helping our neighbors succeed and our communities thrive. It starts with our commitment to understand what's important to our customers. We get to know them, their needs and their priorities in order to help them achieve their goals. We take a similar approach to serving our communities – working to understand what matters most, so we can do our part to help Buffalo, and the entire WNY region, grow even stronger.

M&T Bank and NAWBO Buffalo Niagara share this community-focused mission. Together, we will make the future of Buffalo shine bright. M&T Bank is pleased to partner with NAWBO and its members to assist in promoting the success of women-owned businesses in our WNY community.

Mark L. Martin  
M&T Bank, WNY Business Banking Regional Manager

*(Mark retired in 2020, his replacement chapter partner representative will be named soon.)*



**Paula D'Amico**  
Owner

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**Lisa A. Coppola, Esq.**

lcoppola@coppola-firm.com

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**Andrea Schillaci**

# Energized for the Future

As I am preparing for installation as the incoming Chapter President, I am energized by the possibilities that await us. Between COVID-19 and the shutdowns, sickness, loss, and the sadness it brought, the 2019-2020 year was challenging for our entire community. While the pandemic is not yet over, we are at least feeling glimmers of hope brought by the vaccine availability, slow reopening of businesses, and tentative return to socialization.

While some people are anxious to return to "normal," I am confident that we can take this opportunity to improve on some practices and patterns. We are broadening our reach and taking active steps toward achieving our goals for increasing the diversity of our membership and achieving greater inclusion of all women business owners and we are reaching out to young entrepreneurs through our Next Gen program.

We are all looking forward to getting together in person again, but we should also continue to take advantage of opportunities to network and brainstorm with our NAWBO sisters across New York State and across the country. One of the unexpected benefits of the last year has been to welcome to our meetings members from other chapters across the country, just as we have been able to take advantage of the programming from other chapters, and to meet their members.

Similarly, the pandemic has underscored the common threads of this shared experience that can help us forge new relationships and partnerships with other organizations with similar goals of empowering women business owners, providing mentorship, education, business opportunities, and new friendships. It has also given us awareness of ways to take advantage of the unique offerings from NAWBO HQ.

This experience has given us a window into demonstrations of resourcefulness and strength, as well as opportunities for innovation and new beginnings. New businesses are opening every day and each new business presents an opportunity for NAWBO to grow. Together we can help to grow women owned businesses in Western New York. How energizing is THAT?!

We are so excited for our Board Installation on June 9 at the Barrel Factory! There will be a basket raffle and opportunities to meet new people. We look forward to seeing you there! 🍷

**Andrea Schillaci is a partner at Hurwitz & Fine, P.C.**

## Diamond Chapter Partner

# KeyBank



KeyBank, a Fortune 500 company, is pleased to partner with NAWBO and proud to call Larkinville in Buffalo, NY its Northeast Regional Headquarters. KeyCorp is one of the nation's largest bank based financial services companies with approximately \$176.2 billion in total assets as of March 31, 2021. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, Key provides deposit, lending, cash management and investment services to clients in 15 states.

Our purpose is to help our clients and the communities we serve thrive. This is reflected in our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, philanthropy and encouraging our teammates to give back by volunteering. We are very proud of our award-winning culture. KeyBank has been ranked one of the Top 50 Companies for Diversity by DiversityInc and is one of the only top 25 U.S. national banks to receive ten consecutive "Outstanding" Community Reinvestment Act ratings. Also, in 2020, KeyBank was once again recognized by Points of Light, the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service, as one of the most Community Minded Companies in the United States.

KeyBank has a long history of helping women entrepreneurs and leaders thrive. One area that sets us apart is our Key4Women initiative. Key4Women provides networking opportunities, thought leadership, customized financial services and capital to help women achieve their personal and business financial goals.

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# THRUWAY

**Michele Jenkins**  
PRESIDENT

P: 800.905.9411  
E: MJenkins@ThruwayInc.com  
ThruwayInc.com

**Sherrie Barr Mack**  
Public Affairs Statagist  
The Mack Barr Group



O: 716.462.9085 | C: 716.440.0759  
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# The Power of NAWBO In My Life



**Jackie Lennert**

If you had told me over 3 years ago that I would be on the NAWBO Buffalo Niagara Board of Directors as the secretary, been to leadership training, participated in Advocacy Days in Washington, be awarded a Perseverance Award by my local NAWBO chapter, and be a mentor to other businesswomen, I would have said, "you're crazy!" You have me mistaken for someone else more experienced, more prosperous, and definitely more versed in the ways of business.

Little did I know that by reaching out to Lisa Coppola about NAWBO while on Facebook and wondering what the organization was, that my

life would be flipped upside down. Little did I know that going to a NAWBO monthly meeting would start me on a whole new path as a business owner. Little did I know, I could be of value to an organization such as this. Little did I know, that NAWBO helps to effect real change and policies when it comes to female owned businesses. Little did I know that I could make a difference!

NAWBO and the sisterhood that comes along with it has changed me beyond words. I have women who understand me and the challenges I face daily as a female business owner. I can just reach out to an endless group of women who will propel you to as high as you can reach, and they often see more in you than you see in yourself. That is probably the most profound thing of all. They see you and push you to grow within yourself and in your business. They support you even when you may be having trouble supporting

yourself. For this I will always be grateful and indebted. That is why I have pushed myself to help other female business owners grow and to show them the community of women that is NAWBO.

I would not be where I am if not for the tools, people, and resources made available by NAWBO both at the local and national level. I have gained the confidence and skills to not only help my business grow but also to share that knowledge with other women owned businesses especially younger female businesses. I want to see our younger female business owners have the same support I have through NAWBO only sooner so their path can be easier as they navigate the business ownership path.

NAWBO and its amazing women have forever changed my life personally and professionally. Thank you NAWBO. I will always be thankful for this gift! ☺

**Jackie Lennert is the owner of Rove Jewelry, Accessories & Gifts, LLC**

## Growing Your Business by Growing Your Network



**Nicholle Overkamp**

I joined NAWBO to grow my network and make new connections. I value having relationships with like-minded women, and I wanted to be a part of a community who supports one another and can bounce ideas off each other. I really felt the NAWBO community was accepting and welcoming and I would be able to be authentically myself. I have established great relationships with women and made friends by being a part of this organization. We live in a world where we have gotten away from personal connections and conversation. NAWBO is a place where that is coming back again and the opportunity to step out of your routine, your comfort zone and embrace the need to create new connections!

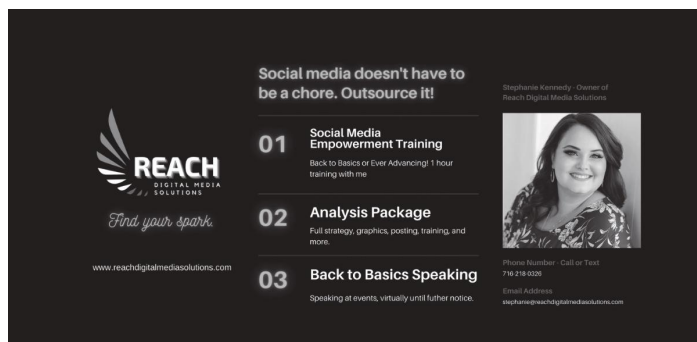
At the end of the day, you never know what will come out of forming new relationships. Being surrounded by motivated, ambitious people, who think like you and share some of your struggles, there is always something amazing that comes of it. In this world where making connections and friends are harder because of the virtual landscape, NAWBO makes it

easier to do this. You can come as you are, without worrying about being judged. I joined and am still a member for the simple fact of meeting new people and being able to be myself.

My advice to the next generation of businesswomen is, "Network or die." There is so much value in having connections! Stepping out of your comfort zone, and from behind a screen, to learn how to have a conversation, engage in small talk, even how to have phone conversations, is so beneficial. These skills are often lost and are important to cultivate. The younger generation may want to consider the extreme value in seeking mentors and having a network, because in my experience the more people you know, the more opportunities and personal development blossoms.

For finding a mentor, consider seeking out the women who you feel would be a really good fit to expand in an area you're weak or lacking or where you want to grow professionally! The best experiences are learned in the field or by watching real life. NAWBO is a great place to explore if there are any women in an industry you are looking to join and take advantage of their knowledge and mentorship. Every woman in NAWBO is happy to give back and share some of her time to a younger woman who is looking to get out there and crush it. ☺

**Nicholle Overkamp is the CEO and owner of Wilcox Financial Group, LLC**





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## How NAWBO Shaped My Business

I have attended many events by other networking groups. Some geared more towards business, some more towards artists and creatives. As a creative entrepreneur, I usually felt a bit out of place at these events – I was too creative for the business groups and too business for the artsy crowd. I found it difficult to see where I could benefit from these events and how my experience would benefit others. When I attended my first NAWBO event, Each One Reach One, in 2016, I immediately felt at home. I even remember telling someone, “MY PEOPLE ARE HERE!” I joined right after that event was over.

Since joining NAWBO in 2016, my business has grown in many different ways. Having connections to the networks of all my NAWBO sisters has introduced me to many amazing people who I would never have met otherwise. I believe that I bring a different perspective to the table and I have always felt welcomed and valued by the members of our chapter.



**Janna  
Willoughby-Loehr**

In 2018, I found out about a small business grant through a fellow NAWBO member and was encouraged by my NAWBO sisters to apply for it. I ended up winning \$25,000 and a year of curated business mentorship. That grant dramatically changed the face of my business forever. I was able to hire my first employee and now I have a team of three! I have also been awarded two professional development scholarships through my NAWBO chapter to help me continue to invest in myself and develop my leadership skills.

Since then, I have become a board member and chair of the membership committee. I have been able to help found the WINGS (Women Inspiring New Growth) scholarship to help women entrepreneurs become NAWBO members when they wouldn't otherwise be able to do so. I am also part of our new initiative, the Diversity & Inclusion Taskforce, to help our chapter to represent more of our community in our membership. I am proud to be among the leadership of our chapter and to help affect change that will help improve the entrepreneurial climate for women business owners in our area, and around the country.

I am really grateful to have found NAWBO when I did. Having this group of amazingly talented, successful and powerful women in my corner has made all the difference in my business and in my life. ☺

**Janna Willoughby-Loehr owns Papercraft Miracles**



**Kathleen Walker**  
**(716) 720-7350**  
**walkerkath52@gmail.com**

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**Stephanie S. Gelber**  
*Attorney at Law*

6512 Main Street • Amherst, New York 14221 • Buffalo • SouthTowns  
Phone: (716) 633-5050 • Fax: (716) 633-9052  
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# 7 Everywhere

**Everywhere**



**Janelle Kurtzman**

## Why NAWBO?

Why did I join NAWBO? If you look around, there are numerous networking and associations available to join. More organizations than anyone even has time to explore. I joined NAWBO with the invitation from Marcia Brogan, a friend and business associate. She spoke highly of the organization and its benefits, not only from a professional business view, but also from a friendship perspective.

Here I am, in my second year as a Board member. My membership has brought me new friendships as well as business opportunities. Most importantly it has "forced" me to step "out of the box" and explore beyond the usual day to day business routine. During the COVID-19 shut down, NAWBO was a way of connection with our

sisters and giving some normalcy to what was happening. It was a relief to know that others were feeling the same frustrations or a moment of fun sharing a laugh on a zoom meeting. One of the best days was when Paula, our President delivered the Buffalo Strong t-shirt to my mailbox. What a day! I got to dress up with a new shirt, put on make-up and improvise with the best hair style after going over 2 months without an appointment at the hairdresser. But I had an appointment to be on Zoom and that was great!

To our next-gen group, get active and explore any and all possibilities that may open up to you. Try to meet as many of our fellow members as possible and talk to them about who they are and what they do. You never know when a new idea may spark an interest or open up a path you never dreamed could happen.

Until we meet again...on Zoom or in person, stay safe and stay strong. We are NAWBO! 🌟

**Janelle Kurtzman owns Janelle Kurtzman Interiors**



**Wendy Blamowski**

## NAWBO is a Sisterhood of Like Minded Women Entrepreneurs

NAWBO to me is a melting pot of so many diverse women business owners. It's a sisterhood of like-minded entrepreneurial women coming together with a common goal in mind. Whether you are a brand new business, in a growth stage, a long standing established business or even in a succession planning stage, there is something for you as a member of NAWBO. You really get to know and trust your fellow sisters/members. They become your sounding board for ideas, collaborations, and all around support.

When my position was eliminated in October 2020, along with 30 years in that industry, I decided I needed a new and different chapter in my life. I have always had a passion for holistic healing and prevention. I have done in-depth research for years in that field. Finding the time to intertwine them all into my own life was always a challenge but I knew it was very important for self care and disease prevention. It can be hard to find the time and balance as a wife, mother and career woman.

This is where the concept of ECLECTIC ENERGY WELLNESS CENTER was BORN. I wanted a space that incorporated a therapeutic service along with health and wellness products tied in with the education around them and I wanted them all under ONE ROOF. I also wanted to create a spa-like setting with fireplaces, couches, relaxing music and be able to enjoy a cup of herbal tea while you wait for your treatment or browse through the store.

The service I selected to offer is a HYDROsonic therapeutic massage treatment bed.. This cutting edge technology (SRT) utilizes sound waves using high and low frequencies for cellular level healing and deep relaxation. When certain frequencies are applied to the body, knotted muscles, scar tissue, tendons, ligaments, organs and other tissues are stimulated resulting in healing, relaxation and balance. This can also help people struggling with weight loss, high blood pressure, low immune systems, numerous autoimmune diseases including, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, Graves' disease and Hashimoto's disease, to name a few.

Monthly membership packages, workshops and classes along with private corporate and friends retreats are all options as well. 🌟

**Wendy Blamowski owns Eclectic Energy Wellness Institute**



**Kenneth Mersimovski**

Vice President  
Sr. Small Business Banker

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## womanink

**2020/2021 Editors**

Jeanne Hellert and Joyce DeLong

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## 2021 EVENTS

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### **Upcoming Monthly Meetings**

June 9, 2021 (NAWBO Buffalo Niagara Annual Installation)  
The Barrel Factory • 65 Vandalia Street • Buffalo, NY 14204

### **NAWBO Saturday Brunch**

The chapter will be hosting a virtual networking brunch the first Saturday each month!  
Please join us anytime for as long as you are able. Add this date to your calendar.  
9:00 AM • June 5, 2021

### **Morning Coffee Talk**

Time: 8:00 AM • Thursday, June 17, 2021  
Undergrounds Coffee House & Roastery • 580 South Park Avenue • Buffalo, NY 14210  
<https://www.undergroundscoffeetbuffalo.com/>

### **Friday Wine Time**

6:00 PM • Friday, June 25, 2021  
The Little Club • 1197 Hertel Avenue • Buffalo, NY 14216  
<https://www.thelittleclub.bar/>

**We are looking at new ways to keep our members connected in this increasingly distant world. If you would like to receive text message updates about meetings and events, please contact [info@nawbowny.org](mailto:info@nawbowny.org) with your mobile number.**