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## Small Business Saturday: Celebrating homegrown merchants



Greg's Pools also sells a large assortment of toys and sheds.

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get our service, they're getting Greg," Michelle Robertson said.

"You come to a small shop, here in Lewiston – wherever – you're getting personal service. People know you. We've had customers that have been with him longer than I've been with him," she added. "We know their pools, we know their houses, we know what they got. They know us. You don't get that relationship at 'big box' stores. I mean, everybody that goes to a small shop usually forms some type of a bond."

It's that type of relationship that often enables customers to save money at Greg's Pools.

"Everything is so much of a throwaway world," Greg Robertson said. "You know, nobody repairs anything, and people come in and they're looking for a new pump or something. And it's, 'Well, it's making noise.' Well, that can be fixed. Instead of paying \$300 or \$400 for a new product, for \$50 you can repair it."

Michelle Robertson said, "We've had customers that have been with us, that I've been opening and closing their pools since we started."

"A lot of our customers, they're not customers – they're family," she added. "They've watched us have our children, raise our children. They've been here for graduation, for wedding. We're a big extended family. When they come here, they're coming into our family, basically."

**Hibbard's Old Portage Shop  
Wines & Liquors**  
125 Portage Road, Lewiston

Who knew alcohol had so many different applications?

2020 has taught people it's much more than a recreational or congratulatory beverage.

In the early stages of the pandemic, customers sought alcohol to make their own hand sanitizer. Now, with the holidays around the corner, people are using it more and more for family recipes.

"If you are going to do baking, there's a lot of Italian recipes that call for alcohol – whether it be rum or vodkas or brandies or a type of port or anything along that line for baking," Kris Trunzo said. "There are a lot of uses for those types of liquors, and also Chambord's and the raspberry liquors. There's many, many more recipes that will be using an Irish cream base or something along that line. There's even recipes out there that have eggnog bases for cakes and that type of like a vanilla custard-like puddings that have rum in them and that type of thing."

"And a lot more people are staying home and doing a lot more cooking. So, they're making use of these recipes that they find online. Also with a lot of menus. I know myself, I have just started making my own vodka sauce at home. So, obviously, you need to buy vodka. That's a good use. It's something that you can make in a batch and freeze it in smaller containers and pull it out when you need it."

"But a lot of people are doing that – and we did have a run in the very beginning of people coming in to buy vodka to make their own hand sanitizer."

She said, "There were quite a few people that were making their own sanitizer at home, because of not being able to find it on the shelf. And there are a lot – whether people know it – a lot of organic-type cleaning products that call for vodka and/or Everclear grain alcohol, which, in the beginning, we couldn't keep in stock."

She noted, "Since New York state brought out the sanitizer for free to businesses and whatever, that kind of dropped off. And a lot of the sanitizers that we got, we got in so much bulk that we would give some of the gallons to some of our employees who had church affiliations that they wanted to put into smaller containers and hand out to parishioners."

COVID-19 has put so many things on a rollercoaster ride of opening, closing, in-person, online – and for merchants, it's made ordering more challenging.

"It's just been very hard to gauge," Trunzo said. "Normally, our ordering process is one way. But with this, there were so many more people that were cooking at home, staying at home, a teeny bit of hoarding (laughs). I have to admit there were some that, in the beginning, were over-buying what they needed just because they didn't want to run out, and were obviously unsure of what was going to happen next. But once things loosened up for the most part, everything became a little bit more normal."

She added, "You don't want to over-order to a point where you have an abundance of something left over and then it drops off. That's been a little bit of a hurdle to get over, but our manager, Shirley (Hurst-Beiter), has really stepped up and really done a lot. Someone with four children at home and a widow, it's very hard to find someone with that type of dedication. But she has really been what has kept us afloat."

Trunzo added, "If we didn't have her, I don't know where we would be. One of the most dedicated employees I think I've ever run across – ever. ... We wouldn't be where we are if we didn't have her behind the scenes doing 99.9% of the work."

For Small Business Saturday, Trunzo said she is hopeful her store will have an in-store tasting sponsored by a distributor, but she's monitoring Western New York's micro-cluster activity to see what will be permitted Thanksgiving weekend.

Say You Saw It In The

**Tribune  
Sentinel**



NIAGARA RIVER REGION CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

YOU'LL ♥ OUR  
UNIQUE STORES, DINING & SMALL BUSINESSES



•\*The Lewiston Museum – 469 Plain St., Lewiston: A sneak peak of baskets raffled off Dec. 5-6. Items in the gift shop will be ready to fill your gift needs for those "Hungry for the History of Lewiston." Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

•Master barber Aaron Stevens – 744 Center St., Lewiston: Visit me at my new location.

•Niagara Records – 5833 Buffalo St., Sanborn: Take 10% off all records. (Friday through Sunday)

•The Niagara Sausage Co. – 5611 Lockport Road, Town of Niagara: Holiday roasts and hams available.

•Patti's Cut Above – 2568 Youngstown-Lockport Road, Ransomville: Gift certificates available.

•\*The Rose Hanger – 480 Center St., Lewiston: 15% off storewide! Some exclusions may apply. Free Rose Hanger individually packaged cookies from Just Desserts by Aimee (while supplies last) and a raffle to win a \$25 The Rose Hanger gift card! Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Visit [www.therosehangershop.com](http://www.therosehangershop.com).

•Sanborn Old General Store – 5856 Buffalo St., Sanborn: Open house. Take 10% off each item. (Friday through Sunday)

•Shawnee Country Barns – 6608 Shawnee Road, Sanborn: Open house. Take 15% off anything. (Friday through Sunday)

•Sue's Frame of Mind – 748 Center St., Lewiston: Expert framing of treasured memories, keepsakes and art; gift certificates available.

•Tortuga Sandwich Shop – 5835 Buffalo St., Sanborn: Come visit our restaurant.

•Tracy Gillick's Hill-Vue Café & Catering – 1439 Ridge Road, Lewiston: Home-cooked specials for breakfast and lunch; best burgers in town.

•Wagner's Farm Market – 2672 Lockport Road, Sanborn: Homegrown apples are \$12 per ½ bushel. Homegrown squash is \$15 per ½ bushel.

•\*Warren's Village Hardware – 185 Portage Road, Lewiston: Your year-round grilling headquarters. Take 10% off Melissa & Doug toys and educational products.

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