



## The Judd Family Connecting in Person with the Community & Beyond

By Jenna Caputo/ Photography by Tara Wiley

**P**eter Judd believes in the importance of face-to-face relationships, both in the business world and beyond. There is nothing quite like that in-person contact that allows meaningful relationships and true customer service. “I would like to impress upon the younger generations the importance of local community and the importance of shopping local,” he says. “I am afraid that there will come a day where there will be no local shops and personal service. The impersonal deliveries of products from an army of little trucks on the street just cannot replace the charm and value of a visit to a local establishment. We need to keep the connection, the relationships and the local talents. For a community to thrive, we need to come together and support each other!”

This frame of mind was instilled in both Peter and his wife, Monica, from a young age. Peter was born in Amsterdam, NY and grew up on Galway Lake, racing sailboats from the age of 8 to 20. He loved canoeing and played baseball, basketball, golf and tennis, and enjoyed travelling with his family.

Monica was born in Minneapolis, MN and enjoyed spending time with her family camping, hiking and walking the dogs. She

also had a passion for horseback riding, riding on the college team while at SUNY Oswego.

Peter and Monica met on their lunch break while both working in a bank after college. “She had some bizarre German meal,” says Peter, “and she intrigued me from the start. I knew then and there that she was the one. She wasn’t quite as impressed with me, so it took a couple of weeks to win her over. We shared a cash vault at our bank branch, and we dated in secret for a couple of months before we became engaged.”

In November of 1979, Monica’s parents, Bernie and Jutta von Schwerin opened their store, Time Square Watch & Clock Shop, in Clifton Park when they moved to Rexford. The idea took off and they opened other stores in various areas over the next several years but found that their full-service concept wasn’t working as well in the stores where they couldn’t be there to personally manage the training, service and quality control. They decided to sell off the satellite stores and Peter and Monica purchased the Plattsburgh location when they married in 1985. They operated that store until the mall closed in 1994, and they decided to move



back to the Capital District. In 2006, they bought the Clifton Park store, allowing Monica's parents to retire while Peter and Monica continued to build the business.

Over the years, Peter received valuable retail and customer service training, both from his prior jobs and by working closely with Monica's parents. They taught him all the ins and outs of running a small business and how to survive life as a sole proprietor, in addition to the watch services and engraving they offer in the store every day. While Peter enjoys selling products, the real joy of the store is working with all their regular customers and finding new ways to impress them each day. He has found that face-to-face service is essential to the community. "The very sad reality is that shopping is out of fashion. It has become too easy to sit at home and buy things on your phone in your pajamas. Luckily, our store is more than retail sales. We provide essential services that you cannot get over the internet. Changing watch batteries, sizing watchbands and engraving, are all services that Amazon cannot deliver." This year is the store's 40th Anniversary, and they plan to celebrate throughout the year with special sales and giveaways.

In addition to the store, the Judds run Judd Engraving and Promotional Products, helping businesses with their engraving needs, and are long-time members of the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County. As with anything else, Peter has found that personal, lasting relationships are the best. "I try to remain active, finding the small-town chamber to be a very easy-going place to meet and socialize with other local businesspeople. As a founding member of

our Chamber Leads group, I find that it is much easier to network with people you know and trust. I'm in this for the long run and I find that business prospers best when relationships are nurtured over time," he observes.

Monica is also a full-time science teacher at Iroquois Middle School in Niskayuna and is involved with the Saratoga Therapeutic Equine Program (STEP). STEP is a charitable organization established in 1986 to provide physical therapy to special needs individuals through the use of horses. On most Friday mornings, Monica will bring a few of her middle school students to help with the care and feeding of the horses. They start at 6:45AM so they can be at school in time for the start of the day. "It's wonderful to watch the kids gain confidence as they become accustomed to handling the horses," says Monica. "A perfect way to start each Friday!" Some of her students have gone on to continue volunteering on their own and help out with the therapy lessons and barn chores, and even becoming an integral part of the program.

Their children, Alex (33) and Heidi (31), have gone on to lives of service as well. Alex is a Navy pilot who now lives with his wife, Kristen, (a Naval Helicopter Pilot) in Pensacola, FL. They spent four years in Virginia while Alex flew a C-2A Greyhound, a large twin-engine plane used to deliver both passengers and cargo to aircraft carriers, and Kristen flew the MH-60S Knighthawk helicopter, a Navy version of the Blackhawk. They then ended up with overlapping deployments in Bahrain for a few months before ending up in Florida as flight instructors for the new students.

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Alex also is participating in Legacy Flight airshows throughout the country. These are Navy exhibitions where a modern era plane flies in formation with vintage WWII planes in recognition of the contributions made by those Naval aviators. Peter says, “We were fortunate enough to see Alex fly in the Rochester Airshow in August. It was a very proud experience for Monica and me to be there and watch our Fly Boy perform in front of the huge crowd!”

Alex enjoys living in the beautiful Gulf Coast, but always looks forward to their trips back to the Capital District. “I worked in the family store in high school and while home from college and still enjoy stopping in to see the new inventory when I’m in town. Kristen and I have always loved getting the sailboat or the canoe out on the lake at Galway – we only wish we weren’t 1400 miles away so we could do it more often!” says Alex.

Heidi always wanted to work with horses and other animals and eventually went to school at Cornell and Tufts to become a veterinarian. Between her undergrad and grad work, she connected with a vet in Uganda through the Christian Veterinary Mission, an organization that sends veterinarians all over the world. Travelling to Karamoja in Uganda, Heidi was able to use her veterinary knowledge to help train local Community Animal Health Workers, who acted as the tribe’s “Vets.” “Through this work, the group has been able to establish connections between warring sub-tribes, and over time, they have built ‘peace villages’ where they live together and even inter-marry, which was previously unheard of,” she explains.

Her work both in Uganda and with farm animals here in the states has provided many exciting stories over the years. “One time in Uganda, an open-bedded truck carrying about 30 cows had tipped over into a pond. As Dr. Val and I drove by we quickly pulled over and leaped out of the car to help, both wearing our traditional skirts as was the Karamojong custom. Balancing on the bars of the truck, waist-deep in the water, we started cutting free the living cows and passing them over to the locals who were helping bring them to shore. Just another day in Uganda! Life is a bit more tame these days, but I still love working with animals and

helping the humans who come with them,” says Heidi.

Large animals were always her passion, but now that she’s a mom, Heidi is currently working at a small animal clinic in Shrewsbury, MA close to home. Her family now includes her husband, Cesar, an engineer at the software company, MathWorks, and their son, Aiden (16 months), who is following in his father’s footsteps, already a pro at navigating any phone or tablet he can get his hands on! Cesar has been an integral part of the family store as he troubleshoots the entire family’s technology challenges. “We love to all work together as a family and utilize each other’s strengths, though I have to say, Cesar’s strengths seem to come in handy the most!” jokes Heidi.

Peter still loves to travel, especially with family, and often tries to pick trips based on nature, looking for time spent on mountains or water. One of his favorite trips was to Newfoundland, where they went on an ocean kayaking adventure to see an island that had one of the world’s largest breeding colonies of puffins. They spent a few hours kayaking around the island, surrounded by the puffins and jumping dolphins, then turned their boats back toward shore. “On the way across the bay, I spotted the spouting of a whale in the distance. Heidi and I were in a tandem kayak, and I shouted to her to paddle hard toward the breaching whale. Seeing us change course, Alex and Monica followed close behind. The whale was now under water, and we had no clue if we would see it again, but then his head popped up within twenty feet of our kayak. We were able to look directly into the eye of the whale. He was looking at us and checking us out, at the same time that we were marveling at how close he had surfaced and how large, quiet and calm he was being. He swam alongside for just a couple of breaths, and then he dove deep and was gone,” says Peter.

Back at home, Peter and Monica enjoy golfing; tennis; wandering the streets of Saratoga to take in the atmosphere of crowds, galleries and local shops; and enjoying the simple pleasures of spending time with family and friends at their lake house... connecting. ■