



Tommy Flaim

A Modern-Day Robin Hood

By Jenna Caputo | Photos by Angela Mia Photography & Contributed by the Flaim Family

Tommy Flaim knew from a young age that he wanted to do something that would make a positive impact for others. He just didn't know at first what that "something" would be.

Growing up here in Clifton Park, he played soccer and tennis at Shenendehowa. He also was involved in student government, serving as class president his senior year. He's proud to have helped organize the Lukestrong Olympics, an event his class hosted in honor of their classmate that tragically passed away due to cancer. The money raised from that event went to the Make-A-Wish Foundation to sponsor a local girl to fulfill her dream of attending the Olympics. When at home, he loved to play Four-Square with his neighbors and had a knack for losing pretty much any object he touched. He has always loved animals and nature, but his allergist father soon realized that Tommy had allergies to a handful of animals that would make becoming a vet difficult. So, Tommy looked elsewhere for career inspiration.

When the economy began to crumble in 2008, he became fascinated with how our economic system worked. "I still have

not figured out how it works (nor do I think anyone has), but its complexity remains intriguing to me," he says. He decided to study Finance and Education, Schooling & Society (ESS) when he went to college at Notre Dame. As a target school for many Wall Street banks, that seemed like the obvious path after graduation. "It was competitive, fast-paced, and it would help me pay off student loans faster than alternative career paths," he explains. "Additionally, as a generally aloof person with a self-deprecating sense of humor, I needed the extra stamp of credibility as I began my professional career."

But Tommy quickly realized he hated it. "I was working 80-100 hours per week and felt like a shell of a human being. While there were many negative aspects of the job, I'm very grateful for the experience. It gave me conviction that the finance career path wasn't for me. I think building Fox & Robin is the right journey for myself. For me, the pros of the entrepreneurial journey outweigh the cons, like having essentially no money in savings and not having job stability. I have a delusional sense of optimism related to the success of

Fox & Robin—something that is probably pretty typical with most founders.”

Tommy is a self-proclaimed not-so-fashionable guy, so venturing into the fashion industry seemed like a leap to those who know him. But watching the documentary, *The True Cost*, changed his life. “It opened my eyes to how dirty the fashion industry is,” he says. “The human rights issues specifically are what pull at my heartstrings and motivate me to make a difference.” Learning about not only the humanitarian but also the environmental issues within the industry prompted Tommy to create a company that could shed light on these problems and be a force for good within a very dark industry.

The traditional story of *Robin Hood* inspired the Fox & Robin name. The character of Robin Hood is someone that stands up for what is right on behalf of a more vulnerable population. Since the Disney version of the novel portrayed Robin Hood as a fox, marketing added it to the name. “The fashion industry is in desperate need of a Robin Hood-like character,” says Tommy. “About 97% of the clothes on our backs come from overseas, in some of the poorest regions of the world. While we benefit from affordable clothing, nearly all negative externalities (e.g., carcinogenic fabric dyes being dumped into local water sources, factory collapses, etc.), impact those

most vulnerable and without a voice in the room. We reap the benefits while they suffer the consequences of unethical business practices. For too long we have allowed the brands we wear to have an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ mentality. Ignorance may be bliss for existing brands’ shareholders, but we know it is far from bliss for workers and our planet.”

Tommy wanted to create something to spotlight those issues and turn the tide a different way. First, he had to figure out what that would be, and he decided on becoming an activewear company for those that went pro in something other than sports. Most activewear brands have incredibly intense slogans like ‘losing is not an option,’ ‘nothing is impossible,’ or ‘the only way is through.’ But what about those of us who will never play sports professionally but still want to play in a rec league or even just want to take a walk around the block? Fox & Robin provides a more welcoming and realistic brand to encourage people to move more, no matter how they look or what their daytime job may be.

In keeping with their mission of making a difference, Fox & Robin has filed as a Certified B Corporation, which means they are legally obligated to optimize for a triple bottom line—not just for profits like C Corps. B Corps need to take into consideration not just their investors, but their workers and





the planet. To do that, Fox & Robin pays their factory workers significantly more than the industry average. They also use eco-friendly fabrics, plastic-free packaging branded with algae ink, and donate 1% of their sales to environmental non-profits to help protect the planet and replenish the resources they spend. Fox & Robin is only one of two independently-owned certified B Corps in the activewear space.

At first, it was hard for Tommy to find the investors needed to get his company off the ground. It took long days of cold outreach to get people interested. He messaged influencers on Instagram and offered to send them some of his products to try. After wearing the products and learning more about the company, they had more receptive ears, and he secured investments from some professional athletes, former Bachelorette contestant Connor Saeli, and NBA agent Sam Goldfeder.

It was enough to get things started, and they've launched a limited line of clothing for both men and women designed by fashion designers from Lululemon and Under Armour. They have many more products now in development and will be launching new options within the next year. Their clothing is available to buy on their website or here within the Capital District at iRun Local in Saratoga Springs and Fleet Feet at the Albany and Malta locations. It has been a fantastic start with

national press attention, but there is still much more to do, so they continue to actively seek angel investors so they can expand their product offerings, hire a Chief Branding Officer, and to step out of word-of-mouth advertising and begin experimenting with paid ads as well to spread their message far and wide.

Tommy's parents, Tom & Kathy Flaim, are originally from the Bronx and Long Island. After finishing his residency, Tom had two allergy practices to choose from—one in San Diego and one in Clifton Park. They decided Clifton Park would be the best decision for their family. "I think Clifton Park is special because of the people," says Tommy. "Having visited and lived in a handful of other cities now, I've realized how fortunate I was to have grown up in the area. I find nearly everyone in Clifton Park to be extremely kind, charitable, altruistic, and grounded. Thank you all for making Clifton Park such a special place!"

Tommy's parents have instilled strong values and a strict upbringing that has shaped his life in a positive way. "My dad does a good job keeping us all grounded and reminds us that being a good person is the most important thing. He sends us kids many articles and videos that remind us what's important in life. Mom was very strict and hard on us growing up.



Especially me because I was always losing things and leaving messes behind. But during COVID, I spent a lot of time living at home and saw a different side of her. I never viewed her as ‘funny’ or ‘goofy’ growing up, but we actually have a similar sense of humor. It feels weird even saying that, but I now find her rather funny.”

Tommy’s sister, Meghan (30), also went to Shen, playing tennis and heavily involved in community theater. She now lives in NYC and works for an experiential marketing agency. Tommy says she is very funny, social, and has a wonderful singing

voice. “I envy her ability to public speak and be comfortable with many eyes on her,” he states. His brother, Christopher (26), went to LaSalle where he also played tennis and was involved in theater. As a child, he landed a part playing Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins* at the New Amsterdam theater on Broadway. Through that experience, he met and performed for many influential people in our country, including Barack and Michelle Obama and Serena Williams. He went on to continue the role with the 1st National Tour and performed on TV during the *4th of July Special for President and First Lady Obama*, the *STRO Tribute to Susan Stroman*, and a guest role on *Law & Order: SVU*. He has also performed in a short film and multiple regional and university theatre productions. Christopher is now based in the Hamptons working as the assistant for the directors of a new Disney live action movie. Tom continues his practice as an allergist and hosts a men’s conference for practicing Catholics. Kathy is a part-time physical therapist at local nursing homes. When she’s not working, she’s often out and about and walking Cali, their cockapoo, in Deer Run Hollow.

Tommy is busy balancing life as head of a fast-rising, start-up company with exercising and maintaining a social life, but in his off time, he loves to hang out with friends and play rec sports. He is on three rec soccer teams, a volleyball team, and continues with his tennis. He enjoys traveling and generally stays within the US but also went to the Galapagos Islands on a class trip organized by Shen Spanish and Biology teachers. Despite a case of food poisoning, he had a fabulous time! When home in the Capital District, he looks forward to playing tennis at the Shen courts or card games with friends on the back porch. He also loves to play the piano, but don’t expect to find him out dancing anywhere. “I’m the world’s worst dancer, according to pretty much any of my friends!” he laughs.

But that’s okay because his focus is on Fox & Robin to be a positive force for good within an industry that is long overdue for change—and for everyone to look and feel great while doing it!

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