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# Niskayuna NEIGHBORS

*Sarah  
Rinaolo*

USING HER  
SECOND CHANCE FOR  
THE COMMUNITY



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*resident feature*

# *Sarah Rinaolo*

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BY JENNA CAPUTO  
PHOTOS BY MIA ERTAS  
AND CONTRIBUTED BY  
SARAH RINAOLO





*family* is an important foundation of Sarah Rinaolo's history and present life. She comes from a long line of entrepreneurs: her maternal grandfather managed an accounting firm and real estate, her paternal grandfather owned an insurance brokerage, her great aunt and uncle ventured into restaurants and real estate in NYC, her aunt established a medspa, her uncle oversees a law and accounting firm, her mom owned a law office, and her father previously owned an ATM company with his family. "It brings me immense pride to be the first grandchild on both sides to carry forward the legacy of entrepreneurship," says Sarah.

Initially, Sarah didn't know how she was going to follow in her family's footsteps, but with an ancestry of hard-working immigrants, she was destined to start something of her own. Her great-grandparents migrated from Germany and Italy to the United States and Canada, one set arriving through Ellis Island. They all changed their last names to sound more American and began their lives in their new country. Sarah has lived in Niskayuna since she was 10 years old. "The friends I made during my time in Niskayuna made it such a wonderful place to grow up," she says. "Our home was in Woodhaven on the opposite of the bridge from where our friends lived. We always tried to persuade our mom to move to their side of town." Her mom, Lisa, was a big part of her memories growing up as well. A stay-at-home mom until Sarah turned 10, Lisa organized some of the most memorable birthday parties for Sarah and her sisters. "She truly was an exceptional mom!" says Sarah.

Lisa was a graduate of Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs before continuing on to Albany Law School. She opened a law office for a time before taking time off to be home with her children. She now works in the Admissions Department at Skidmore. Sarah and her sisters all followed in Lisa's footsteps, graduating from Skidmore themselves. After graduation, Sarah's sister, Julia (26), went into marketing and now works at Emma Willard. Katie (24) is currently an Organic Chemistry PhD student at Yale. Sarah's father, Ron Rinaolo, is a retired engineer from GE. Sarah also ended up in the marketing business. The interest started when she secured a summer grant at Skidmore to research her topic, "Love or Hate Relationship with Social Media: The Case of Small Restaurants." Concentrating on the restaurant industry, Sarah worked with her Skidmore advisor to interview local businesses about the effect on sales when using marketing services. Sarah was not only the sole business student that applied for the grant, she was also among the youngest of the applicants. The three years of research highlighted a pressing need for affordable marketing solutions within the restaurant industry. Her Skidmore professor presented her findings at two international conferences, including the 19<sup>th</sup> European Association for Education and Research in Commercial Distribution Conference in

Dublin, Ireland. Her research also became the foundation for her vision of creating an economical marketing company here in the Capital Region.

In 2016, she established LocalMarke, LLC to fulfill that need, but it didn't gain much traction. Business owners were not yet ready to make the leap to social media marketing. She shut it down in 2018 and joined Lia Auto Group where she refined her marketing skills in the meantime.

Many things changed in our world the last few years, and now in 2024, business owners better understand the importance of social media marketing. Sarah reopened her company under the name of Wave Marketing, and this time, things really took off.

—continued





Her first client back in business was Jackie Silvestri of 518 Foodies. Sarah was responsible for curating 518 Foodie's content and elevating their presence in the Capital Region. Under her management, their Instagram followers climbed from 13K to 25K in only eight months. Over the last few months, they highlighted more than 50 local restaurants, embodying their commitment to promoting the diverse culinary scene in the 518 area.

Wave Marketing specializes in the restaurant industry but has clients from all types of businesses, including home builders, HVAC, and others. They offer a variety of services in addition to social media, including website design, graphic design, Google Ads, traditional advertising, and consulting. Their client list continues to grow as word has spread. "The journey has been a learning curve, and I am excited about what lies ahead," says Sarah.

Sarah has a demanding work schedule, but she tries to squeak in volunteer work whenever she can. In the past, she has spent time with the STEP organization based in Glenville. STEP focuses on providing therapeutic horse lessons for children with special needs. Sarah learned about the group through a program in her middle school, and the organization has held a special place in her heart ever since. She's no stranger to horses either, since she used to play horse polo during her Skidmore days. In addition to STEP, she has also spent time volunteering with the Regional Food Bank and the City Mission.

Each year, her family honors Sarah's stepfather, Kent Johnson, by sponsoring children through Things of My Very Own—an organization based in Schenectady that helps provide for the needs of local foster care children. Kent passed away in 2021 from colon cancer, and this is one small way they keep his memory alive. "He was truly one of the most remarkable individuals I've ever known, importing valuable life lessons and wisdom," says Sarah.

When she's not working or volunteering, Sarah can often be found out on the slopes with her family. "My entire family skis," she says, "My grandpa started skiing in his 40s, and it is something he has passed down that we all partake in. My sisters and I all learned to ski at the age of five."



*Kent Johnson*

She's also an avid hiker, climbing many of the mountains in the area and around Lake George. She has hit two of the Adirondack high peaks so far, and her favorite hike is Sleeping Beauty in Lake George. Sarah enjoys traveling as well and looks forward to visiting new destinations, although anything else will have to compete with her trip to Monaco. "The breathtaking views and the charm of the city left an unforgettable impression!" she says. Bradenton, FL also holds special meaning since she has visited her grandparents there almost every year of her life. She even kept the tradition up through college when she shared the experience with friends.

When not out and about, Sarah loves to read—her current record is 72 books in one year, with psychological thrillers ranking as her favorite genre. She usually reads with her Coton de Tulear dog, Caroline, and her cat, Charli, by her side. When out in the Capital District without her hiking shoes, Sarah looks forward to visiting the many fantastic restaurants in the area.







*"With  
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reality."*

Sarah with her grandparents

But family is always on the forefront of her mind and a guiding light in all her choices. Her grandfather, Dominick Shallo, has been one of her great influences throughout her life. "My grandpa has been a tremendous support, not just in my business, but in all aspects of my life," she says. "He is a profound inspiration to me, turning 88, and I'd love to honor him."

Her experiences in starting her business and building her life have taught her many lessons that stretch well beyond the realm of business. "Venturing into entrepreneurship, especially at a young age, can be daunting, but it proved to be an immensely rewarding risk that I successfully navigated and embraced," she says. "Persevere. The initial setback doesn't determine your journey's end; there are second chances, and it's worth trying again. With unwavering determination and hard work, your dreams hold the potential to become a reality. Recognizing the significance of continuous learning, especially from those who have achieved success or experienced setbacks, is crucial." ∞

For more information on Wave Marketing, visit  
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