



Know of any business openings or closings, or changes and improvements at existing businesses? E-mail Jim Miller at jmiller@fltimes.com or call him at 789-3333 ext. 258.

CONTEST

Trips to two Naples up for grabs

CANANDAIGUA — Everyone from culinary connoisseurs to the pickiest palates is invited to wine, dine and Instagram their way to vacations in Naples, Ontario County, and Naples, Italy, as part of Finger Lakes Visitors Connection's new #FLXperience Foodie Revolution Contest.

Using the hashtag #FLXperience, participants are simply required to post their best Finger Lakes foodie experience photos to Instagram or the blog at www.FLXperience.com. A suggested list of more than 100 can't-miss stops for Finger Lakes foodies is also posted on the site.

"We wanted to create a program that encourages locals and visitors to experience all of the delectable, delightful, unique opportunities that a visit to the Finger Lakes region can offer," FLVC President Valerie Knoblauch said.

Prizes, such as overnight stays, New York Wine & Culinary Center cooking classes, an iPad mini and restaurant gift certificates, will be awarded monthly for highly shared content, all-star participants and the best photos. In November, top participants will be invited to a celebration at the NYWCC where judges from FLVC will announce which Finger Lakes foodie posted the best content throughout the contest. The lucky gourmet will win vacations in Naples, New York, and Naples, Italy.

Official rules and contest regulations, as well as prize details, are available at www.FLXperience.com.

EVENT

Multi-chamber dinner

CLIFTON SPRINGS — The Phelps and Clifton Springs chambers of commerce will host a multi-chamber dinner Sept. 30 at Warfield's Restaurant and Lounge.

The event is for members of the chambers of commerce from Bloomfield, Canandaigua, Clifton Springs, Farmington, Geneva, Honeoye, Macedon-Palmyra-Walworth, Naples, Newark, Phelps, Shortsville-Manchester and Victor.

For details, including the time of the event, call the Phelps chamber at 548-5481 or the Clifton Springs chamber at 462-8200.

WINES

Lakewood turns 25 today

READING — Lakewood Vineyards is celebrating its 25th anniversary as a winery today, and it continues to be a family affair.

Bev Stamp, who remains active in the business, has held leadership positions throughout the wine industry. Her late husband, Monty, served as treasurer of the New York State Wine Grape Growers for decades.

Three of their children are involved in Lakewood: Chris is the winemaker, while Dave and Teresa work in the tasting room. Two of Monty and Bev's grandchildren work there as well, as do Chris and Dave's spouses.

Lakewood Vineyards is on Route 14, a few miles north of Watkins Glen.



Also Inside: Classifieds

SECTION C

Memorials set in stone

“When only the very best will do”

By **SUSAN CLARK PORTER**
scporter@fltimes.com

PENN YAN — A Nielsen has been selling granite monuments in this Yates County village for 50 years.

Jack Nielsen, 60, is the current owner of the Route 54 business that overlooks Keuka Lake — and the third generation to run a monument business.

His grandfather, Chris, started one in Bath; it closed upon his 1959 death. Nielsen's father, Fred, worked for a monument business in Canandaigua before opening his own in Penn Yan when the Canandaigua company was sold.

Fred Nielsen launched Nielsen Granite in 1964; it was first located on Route 54A, across the road from Seneca Farms. In 1974, the business moved to its current location across the lake.

Jack Nielsen worked a bit for his father during high school. When his father retired in 1977, Jack and his brother, Tom, took over.

After a few years, Tom Nielsen decided selling gravestones was not for him, so Jack assumed the helm. His father returned to help a bit until he retired for good in 1980.

About 10 years ago, Nielsen opened a Nielsen Granite office on Liberty Street in Bath after another monument business in that Steuben County village went out of business.

"I saw the chance to open a place there and it's worked out well," he said, noting a full-time person runs that site — Nielsen Granite's only other employee.

Much has changed in the monument business during the past half-century.

Nielsen praised the advent of fax machines and computers. He noted each gravestone requires a drawing to be done, and they can be transmitted to customers quickly via email.

The use of different colors and personalized etchings is another big change.

"Colors are a big difference," he said. "Seventy-five percent used to be gray, and that's the Vermont granite, but now granite comes from all over the world."

Black is especially popular these days, primarily because personal etchings work best on that color. "You can also use dark red, but the picture doesn't show up as well," Nielsen explained.

In addition to seeking out more varied colors, people are personal-

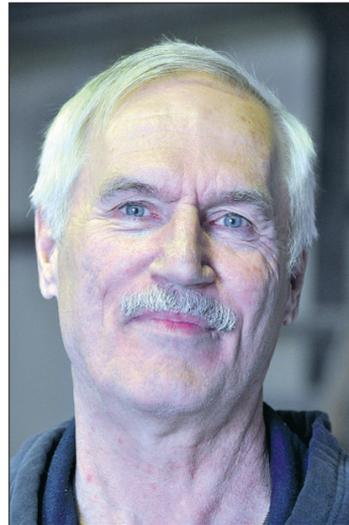


NIELSEN GRANITE COMPANY
BARRE GUILD MONUMENTS



Susan Clark Porter photos / Finger Lakes Times

The Nielsen family has been providing quality monuments for the past 50 years. Jack Nielsen (right) currently owns Nielsen Granite Co. Nielsen can provide customers with various types of granite from around the world and can customize the wording or graphics to suit their needs.



izing gravestones more. Among the images Nielsen said families have requested for etching are ones of a train, the family farm and a fire department emblem.

Nielsen works with manufacturers in Vermont and Canada to procure his monuments, receiving deliveries every two to three weeks. His Route 54 building includes a small office and two separate areas — one a showroom displaying different stones, the other an area where they are lettered and etched.

He does in-house lettering, calling the business "a one-stop shop." Occasionally, a master etcher will perform that work.

A cabinet houses rubber stencil sheets and a selection of different fonts. Nielsen uses a stencil cutter to make rubber stencil sheet he then attaches to the monument, which is then placed in a large,

wooden sandblasting cabinet. Nielsen reaches in through a window and sandblasts the letters onto the stone.

The growing popularity of cremation has hurt the monument business, Nielsen reported; he estimates more than 50 percent of families choose that option now. He also said fewer people are pre-planning their funerals, which makes the decisions for surviving family members more difficult.

Nielsen houses a variety of monuments, giving people a starting point. The gravestones he sells range in price from \$300 to \$5,000.

He also shares catalogs with families who want to take their time. It can be an emotional process — even for Nielsen, who has lived in Penn Yan his entire life and knows many of his customers.

"People have no idea what they are looking for or what to expect," he said. "I usually find out their interests, what they did in their lives. Stones are more personalized than they used to be."

As the only monument dealer in Penn Yan, Nielsen said most of his business comes from within a 50-mile radius, although he has had clients as far away as Watertown and Gloversville, thanks to the Internet and word of mouth.

Nielsen envisions working for awhile even though "the granite seems to be getting heavier every year." He said his two children have their own careers and are not interested in taking over the business, but he is hopeful about potential buyers.

For now, he is grateful for this milestone of 50 years in business. "I'm kind of proud of it," he said.



Business of the WEEK

Nielsen Granite Co.

Location: 21 Route 54, Penn Yan

Founded: 1964

Employees: 2

Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays; or by appointment

Phone: 536-8181

Website: www.nielsengraniteco.com

