

## SMALL BUSINESS

# Large and small, tents are for rent for all events

Equipment is also supplied to meet needs of any social or corporate occasion

By LORI GABLE

Sean McCarthy, owner of McCarthy Tents & Events LLC, is heading into his busiest time of the year—so far his company has \$1.6 million in business booked for 2016.

The Henrietta-based company was founded in 2007 as a full-service tent and event rental business located on Commerce Drive. It has grown significantly in the last eight years, and on April 21 it relocated to a new 21,000-square-foot headquarters at 3353 Brighton-Henrietta Townline Road. The new location sits on close to four acres, allowing for additional expansion.

McCarthy had been renting at his former location but decided to purchase the building where the company is now headquartered.

“It was time (to buy),” McCarthy explains. “We had built an infrastructure but we were not as efficient as we designed the company to be.”

McCarthy Tents & Events provides all equipment needed for corporate or social events. The company also carries a line of catering equipment.

“When I first started I had a crazy thought: We would be the caterer, valet, all of it, but I’ve learned we have to focus on what we do best,” McCarthy explains.

There are 66 seasonal part-time employees and 16 full-time staff, including McCarthy’s wife, Heather, the head of marketing. The busiest time is May 1 to Oct. 31. Many of the seasonal staff are college students, and the company feels the pinch when they head back to school.

“I’m the owner, but I’m on the road six

### PROFILE

McCarthy Tents & Events LLC



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

McCarthy Tents employs 16 full-time staff and 66 part time in their busiest time, May 1 to Oct. 31. Sean McCarthy sees the greatest company potential in collegiate growth.

to seven days a week in the summer,” McCarthy says. “Even our office guys go out on jobs they booked sometimes.”

Business was initially focused in Monroe County but has expanded into the Buffalo market over the last two years. In response, McCarthy opened a satellite office in Cheektowaga in May 2015.

“We have had jobs as far away as Long Island. We did a job in Cooperstown and we’ve also had work in Syracuse, but we don’t want to expand in too many directions,” McCarthy

explains. “It has to be the right timing, the right budget and the right customer.”

In describing his customers, McCarthy says they are anyone who holds an event, from garage sales to funerals.

“We service any event in life where you need equipment to accommodate guests, indoors or outdoors,” he says.

McCarthy does not do package pricing since most events are customized. He estimates a standard graduation, birthday or anniversary backyard party to be in the

range of \$400-\$1,200.

“Once you get into weddings, all bets are off. We have had events ranging anywhere between \$2,000 and \$140,000,” McCarthy says. “People want to create something amazing.”

Locations can be almost anywhere. Currently, McCarthy estimates a third of the venues are residential, another third are parks, wedding locations and commercial event spaces, and the rest are split between corporate and college sites.

One of the company’s largest accounts is the Lilac Festival, which McCarthy has

had for two years.

“We respect the small jobs. That’s how we had our start,” McCarthy says. “We made \$90,000 our first year and it was all in backyard parties. And the connections you make are valuable. Some of our biggest accounts grew out of setting tables and chairs at a small party.”

Looking to the future, McCarthy sees the greatest potential in one particular market.

“We’re working on collegiate growth,” he says. “We’re spending a lot of time building trust and establishing ourselves as a key player. It was very challenging at

first as a new company trying to break in.”

For now, McCarthy is pleased with the pace of growth and the direction the company is taking.

“One of our challenges now is keeping up with our growth, not biting off more than we can chew and staying the company we always wanted to be,” he says.

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*Small Business is a biweekly feature focusing on entrepreneurs. Send suggestions for Small Business stories to Associate Editor Lisa Granite at [lgranite@rbj.net](mailto:lgranite@rbj.net).*