

## BUSINESS

## Nurturing business: As cleanup company grows, so does its outreach



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**SOUTH GLENS FALLS** -- A business philosophy that puts investment in people first can have effects far beyond a company's walls.

In Uganda, for instance, five rainwater collection tanks sponsored by a local company are providing clean, fresh water to a village.

Allpro Restoration Services, a restoration and reconstruction company on Route 9, sponsored

the tanks.

When Steve Noffle bought Allpro from Hugh Sinclair in 2004, he fulfilled a dream he had since college: to own a business.

Today, the business helps change lives, both on a local level and internationally as his family and employees helped raise \$23,000 for the Ugandan Water Project.

The project collects donations to bring fresh drinking water through rainwater collection systems to rural communities in Uganda. Each 2,500-gallon tank provides a stable source of drinking water for about 400 people. Each tank system lasts about 30 years and costs \$3,500.

"That's like a couple pennies a day," Noffle said.

In May, Noffle and his wife Linda and two sons, Ben and Josh, who also work at Allpro, traveled to Uganda to see the tanks after they were installed.

Each tank is attached to the gutters of a large building, so that with a couple of storms thousands of gallons of rainwater can be collected and filtered.

"It's very economical. It's very sustainable. There's no parts to repair or fix. They attach a Sawyer filter and it filters up to a billion gallons of water. There's no replacement parts or anything. You backflush it to clean it," Noffle said.

The alternative to the tanks was a muddy drinking hole. Noffle said they'd hold up a bottles of water from the drinking hole and the filter, showing clear water, and ask, "Which would you like to drink?"

"They would laugh and chant, some would cry. Their reaction to seeing clean drinking water — it was very powerful," Noffle said.

Allpro Restoration provides full recovery restoration, remediation and reconstruction services after disasters such as fires, flooding or heavy winds. They also offer janitorial services.

Noftle's brother-in-law runs a division in New Hampshire for that state and parts of Massachusetts.

Allpro started a construction division about five years ago so customers can get all the services they need from his company when recovering from a disaster, Noftle said.

"It used to be more of a cleaning company that did some restoration," Noftle said. "We quickly changed that to a restoration company that did some cleaning."

Broadening those services has led the company to expand from two employees to 40 and to go from doing a couple hundred thousand dollars of business a year to a couple of million.

Increased income allows the company to keep up with technology and training, Noftle said.

Drying technology, for instance, has improved with thermal drying.

"New technology is heating up direct surfaces and increasing evaporation potential, causing drying to happen 10 times faster," Noftle said. "We can dry carpet pad now in several hours versus drying it in a couple days. You minimize mold. Mold is very difficult to grow over 90 degrees, so we can raise wet surface temperatures to above 90 degrees. We can save more things and reduce the loss that a customer has in both property and contents. Customers like that, and insurance companies like that."

Mold remediation has also changed over the years.

Jim Palmieri, general manager of the restoration division, said a "soda blaster," which uses baking soda shot at high pressure to eliminate mold, was a great technique.

It's very effective, but it's also messy, expensive and labor intensive, he said.

"We've found new methods that have eliminated a ton of time. There's virtually no cleanup, and the results are the same if not better," Palmieri said. "Our company isn't just sitting here doing the same thing over and over. We like to think it's a state-of-the-art cutting edge company."

Allpro now has a hydroxyl generator, which can be used to purify the air and get rid of bacteria and mold.

A former chef, Palmieri said his life has improved through working at Allpro, and the company philosophy of giving is the reason he enjoys working there.

"Steve believes if you give back, you get back 10-fold," Palmieri said.

"The chance to grow a business and nurture it into something big is a chance to change other people's lives. When you come in here, it's not so much as a boss-employee relationship. We get intertwined with each others' lives and try to better ourselves," Palmieri said.

Palmieri and Nofle said they'll never forget when the company was called by a customer to Long Beach after Superstorm Sandy.

Allpro dispatched a crew of about a dozen people, and before they made it to Long Island they had six more jobs lined up.

"By the next day we probably had another 10 jobs," Nofle said.

A year later, the devastation the crew saw still shakes them. Palmieri said they had to deal with dangerous contaminants such as medical waste and spilled fuel.

"It was devastating. The hardest part for me was watching the cadaver dogs and police going house by house. That's when it struck home with me. It got really serious then," Palmieri said.

Nofle said the company also worked on several homes after Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011, but in general they don't chase storms.

"There are restoration companies that travel around the country following storms. That creates a tremendous amount of logistics and expenses to be able to fly people around the country and send equipment," he said.

But after Sandy, the company kept crews in the Long Beach area for about six weeks, restoring about 100 homes.

On the first block Allpro went to on Long Beach, Nofle said the company did about 40 houses.

"Within that block, we felt part of that community. People were wonderful. They invited us to dinner. They cooked and brought us food for a 16-man crew," Nofle said. "It was a powerful experience seeing the devastation. But the community spirit and the welcoming to us was humbling."