



Meet Samantha Moon, owner of Samantha Moon Photography...

1. Describe Your Business:

Samantha is the sole proprietor of a photography business. "I'm the owner, the editor, and the designer of my business," Samantha explained. "I have always been interested in photography, and I finally made the leap in July. I graduated from the New York Institute of Photography. It's an online school with a professional photography certificate program. I love people. I love capturing moments." Samantha focuses on natural light photography, and particularly loves working with families, high school seniors, and food photography.

2. Tell us your story:

"I am the typical kid who grew up with a camera in her hand," Samantha said. "I love taking pictures of everything. I actually went to school for elementary education and graduated from Cortland. I came back home and got a job at Chemung Canal Trust Company and became a trainer. I love training and teaching and sharing information. But something in the back of my brain kept saying 'Are you going to let this photography thing go? Are you really going to let this dream go?' So, after my husband and I got married this past September, and decided I would finish my photography course. I'm really excited to be following through on my dream. I didn't want to get to my forties or fifties and regret not becoming a photographer. So, that's what I'm doing!"

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

"Our wedding photographer last year was Lore Leah Basilion. We kept in contact after our wedding, and she has taken me on as an apprentice and second shooter at her weddings," Samantha said. "I offered up my services to her as a semi-green photographer. Starting out as an assistant for her: helping with equipment, carrying things for members of the wedding parties, assisting with bride's dresses, as well as other things to help the wedding photography run smoothly. I would also shoot next to her and through her guidance. Through her, I have met other photographers. I luckily kept in contact with Lore Leah, and she has shared knowledge with me and shared me with her photographer groups. You can learn a lot by going to school, but I did it online so it was self-paced and self-guided. You learn so much by actually standing beside somebody and watching interactions. I've learned so much by watching how Lore Leah interacts with people."

4. What inspires you?

"People inspire me a lot. Especially through doing weddings," Samantha said. "When I first started as a photographer I didn't want to do weddings. They are such a big undertaking, and I didn't want to touch it. But after going to a couple of weddings, you realize that capturing love and family is so important. It is so touching to watch. A lot of times my job is to capture the groom's reaction to the bride, and watching that is one of those moments where you see true love. Love is so inspiring, and relationships are so inspiring."

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

Samantha said that marketing is what keeps her up at night right now. "I think that's one of the things small business owners have challenges with," she said. "Not only keeping yourself out there, but doing it effectively is kind of my challenge. Right now I'm working with the Chamber, Instagram, and Facebook. I've also started giving out my business cards to local businesses. But it is a challenge because there are tons of photographers out there. It's great because everybody has the niche, but it's hard to establish your clientele and build relationships that are going to lead to other relationships. It's a challenge, but I'm up to the challenge."

6. What is your favorite local activity?

"My husband and I have a lot of local things we enjoy," Samantha said "Earlier this week we went apple picking, and I love that. I'm kind of an old soul, so next week I'll make apple butter and apple sauce and can it. Matt and I also love visiting local wineries and breweries. I also crochet in my down time and I've recently taken up weaving on a loom. Especially around this time of year. I kind of nestle in and do fun crafts at home."

7. Is there anything else we should know about you?

"I'm super outgoing. I love people, and I love getting to know people," Samantha said. "It's fun to be behind the camera and watch people come out of their shell and unfold. I recently did a senior session, and I knew the mom but I didn't know the daughter. The mom was worried because her daughter doesn't usually like to be in front of the camera. So the mom kind of let the two of us go off by ourselves, and the daughter came out of her shell and turned into this sassy, awesome woman. She was posing for the camera, and you could tell in the pictures that she was who she really is or who she dreams of being on the inside. That's something I've always loved, no matter what job I'm in. Letting somebody be comfortable being themselves and being able to capture that is really awesome."