



## **Meet Stacy Gray, owner of FLX Best...**

### **1. Describe Your Business:**

I specialize in providing personalized wine and brewery tour transportation, with a focus on trips originating in the Watkins Glen area and visiting locations on Seneca Lake. While that is my focus and my "wheelhouse," I am flexible and can accommodate just about any request for transportation in the Finger Lakes for up to 7 people. I'm starting off as a lady with a van and a dream.

### **2. Tell us your story:**

First, my fiancé Brad and I have moved around quite a bit in our lives. We used to visit the Finger Lakes and Watkins Glen on day trips from Rochester, and absolutely fell in love with the area. I was particularly smitten with the quirky, small town character of Watkins Glen. When he was offered a job in Horseheads in 2015, we jumped at the opportunity to move here. In 2017, we bought our rental house and decided to grow roots.

I have been the Retail and Tasting Room Manager of a large, well-known local winery for the past three years. During that time, I have

interacted with tens of thousands of visitors, and one of the things I've most enjoyed is not just telling them about the winery where I worked, but also helping them plan to make the most of their visit to the area and recommending other great local businesses to check out. I "geek out" talking with first time visitors and always say, "This might be your first time here, but it won't be your last!" I have been longing to contribute to the community of Watkins Glen as a business owner, and so with Brad's amazing support and encouragement, we came up with FLX Best.

### **3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?**

I am drawing on my past experiences in customer service, marketing, and the local wine industry to put everything I've learned over many years into this business. I also have had many great mentors along the way - sometimes a person can say one phrase that resonates with you and becomes a mantra when you need inspiration years down the road.

### **4. What inspires you?**

All the other small business owners here, all doing amazing and creative things. I feel so privileged to become a part of their ranks. ~ Also, the community spirit here is incredible. People really come together to help their neighbors, you see it all the time. ~ Our local public service workers - the tireless folks going above and beyond to keep the lights on and the water running and the streets clean and the people safe. ~ The people who work really hard but struggle to get by. The people who get up every day and put one foot in front of the other in spite of difficult or discouraging circumstances. I think it's important to recognize these heroes who are often misunderstood and normally don't get any acknowledgement for their contributions to the community. Last but not least, my mom. She would always talk about how she wanted to have a business of her own. She passed away before she was able to pursue her dreams, so to my Ma - this is my hot dog stand!

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

I guess the only thing really is fear of the unknown. It's scary jumping off from a stable, regular job into something that I am creating from scratch. But, it's also incredibly exciting! I don't think I would have made this move if it weren't for the amazing support I have seen for the local businesses. As long as you do right by the community, the community will do right by you and you will be successful. We are all on the same team here, and knowing that I don't lose too much sleep.

### **6. What is your favorite local activity?**

My absolute favorite day of the year in Watkins Glen is the Vintage Grand Prix. We live in town so we love to wander down and check out everything going on, starting in the morning listening to the announcements from our front porch. It's such a fun energy and it brings you back to a simpler time. Brad and I also like to go kayaking on Seneca and Waneta, and we live one block from the gorge so it's cool to get to see it as it changes through the seasons. We also truly enjoy all of the diverse and delicious restaurant, winery, and brewery choices we have. We are very lucky to live here!

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

Brad and I also host a local podcast called Wet Couch Radio. We had found that it was sometimes hard to get information about what is going on in the village, and so we endeavor to communicate to everyone about local meetings, issues, candidates for office, and so on. Recently we have started live streaming local government meetings on our Facebook page for people who can't make it out but want to stay informed. Our little hobby has really taken off and I hope everyone will check it out!