



Meet the Owner, Robert Kurz, Owner, Watkins Glen Wine & Spirits

Describe Your Business:

Watkins Glen Wine & Spirits is conveniently located at the corner of 100 N Franklin and First Street, next to the Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel. We have a wonderful selection of Finger Lakes wines and spirits, domestic and imported wines, and a selection of various spirits. We have everything you need to stock your bar, for weddings, conventions, and private parties. We are proud to have a very unique, inviting, and pleasant atmosphere that makes our customers feel at home.

Tell us your story:

My family moved from Long Island in 1968 to Bluff Point to our new grape farm. We lived next to the Keuka Lake State Park, so we had a great place to swim and play. My father ran the ABC Board (Alcohol Beverage Control) in Yates, Seneca, and Ontario counties. My mother worked on the farm and raised us kids. This is where we worked and learned our good work ethic. In 1984 I drove a truck for Penn Yan Wine Cellars, delivering wines and spirits all around New York State. In 1986 I started working for the United States Postal Service (USPS) as a letter carrier, and later retired in 2019. After losing my parents to cancer and promising them that I would stay happy and productive, I started Watkins Glen Wine & Spirits. Lucky for me I had some of the hardest working and talented friends to help me renovate the old Chamber building, transforming it into the store it is today. This was not easy, as we all had full-time jobs and could only work during our free time! We closed financing on the building in June 2013, and we opened for business about two months later on August 8th. Not an easy task for sure!

What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

My parents did a great job making sure that my siblings and I were happy, healthy, and successful in life. My talented and hardworking friends and employees have been a very big part in helping make the store successful. Over the years my employees and I have learned a great deal about the products we offer through our relationships with people in the wine and spirits business.

What inspires you?

My mom's last request to me, which I took to heart, was "keep going after your ideas and dreams, you're going to do something very special, I just know it!" So, it's very important to me to keep making my parents, family, and friends proud. The store can't be just good, it's got to be phenomenal! Because we meet so many people from all around the country and world, I feel that it's important that we represent Watkins Glen and our Finger Lakes the best we can!

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

My biggest worry is failure. My biggest challenge was working full-time at the USPS while keeping the store going. But I've always known that an idea or dream is a guaranteed failure if you don't pursue it, and that always helped me keep going!

What is your favorite local activity?

I enjoy meeting our visitors and helping them make decisions with their vacation. Raising money for our local Humane Societies with my "Hotdogs for Dogs" hotdog cart in front of the store, and putting together the SCUBA clean-up of Seneca Harbor and the Lake after Labor Day, to help keep our Finger Lakes clean, are some of my favorite activities to give back to the community.

Is there anything else we should know about you?

I enjoy joking around and making people laugh, but it's hard for me to remember everybody's names, so if you see me struggling please help me out!

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