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SPRING/SUMMER 2025
ISSUE TWENTY SEVEN

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The Story Behind
Serca Financial*



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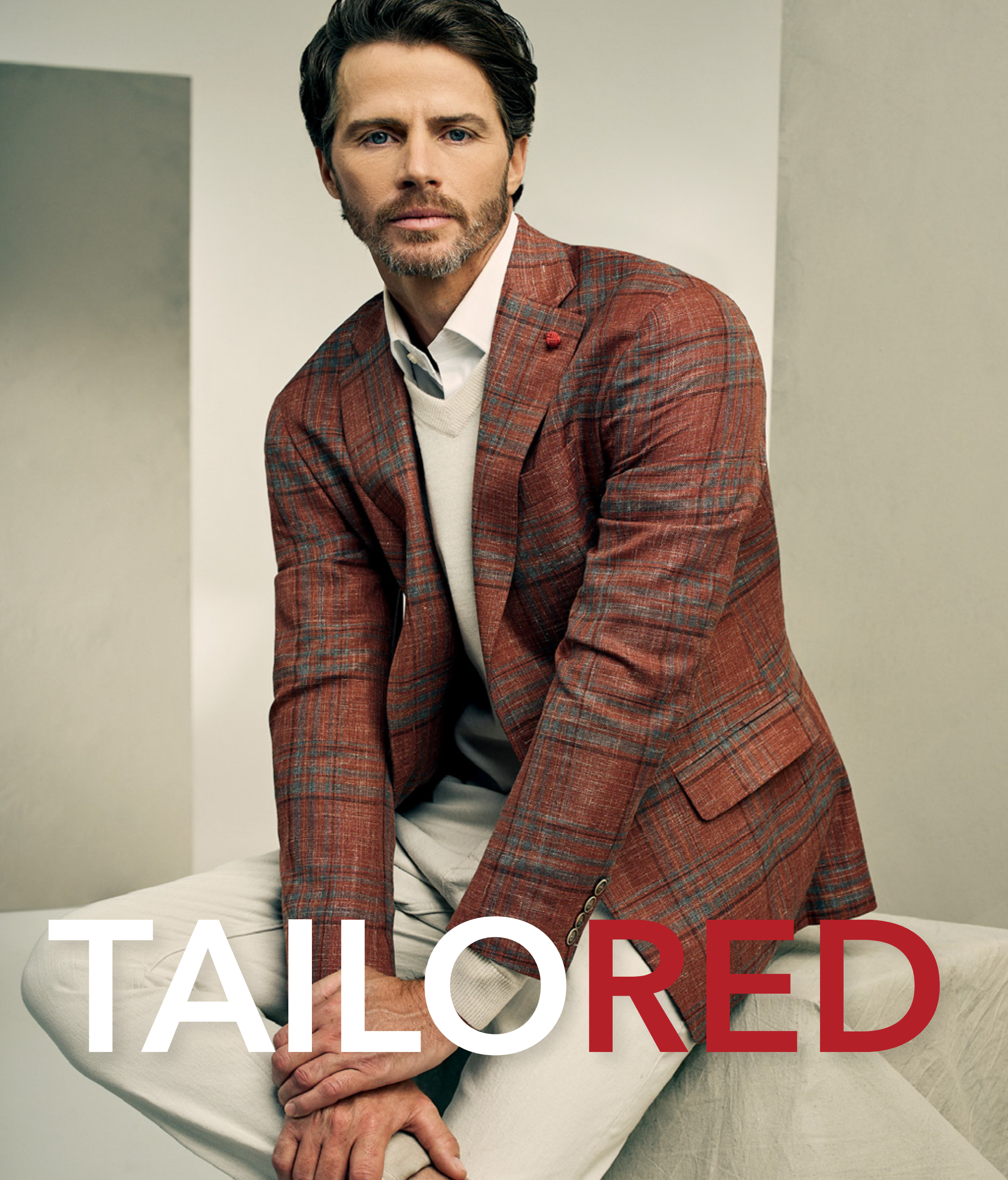
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A man with dark skin and short hair stands in a courtyard. He is wearing a white short-sleeved button-down shirt with a blue floral pattern, white shorts, and white sneakers. He is holding a dark blue jacket over a small wooden stool. The background features a terracotta wall and a stone column with carvings. The floor is made of large stone tiles. The word "BUGATCHI" is written in large white serif letters across the lower part of the image.

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Welcome to a very special edition of FREEDS Image as we celebrate an incredible milestone—95 years of style, service, and community.

This issue is a tribute to everything FREEDS stands for: quality fashion, strong local roots, and a deep connection to the people we serve. We're proud to highlight a range of fashion brands, with a special focus on Canadian designers who are making their mark both here at home and around the world.

You'll also meet some inspiring local business professionals—individuals who are shaping our community with passion, innovation, and hard work. Their stories remind us of the value of supporting one another and growing together.

Thank you for being part of the FREEDS family. Whether you've been with us for decades or just discovered us, we're grateful to have you on this journey.

Here's to 95 years—and to an even more exciting future ahead.

Warmly,

Ari Freed, Derek Freed, Evan Freed & Dan Orman



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SIGNATURE
STYLE

SPRING 2025

 PROUDLY CANADIAN MADE

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SERGO RICA

CEO of Serca Financial Mortgage Group.

Blazer: 7 Downie Street
Polo Shirt: Hörst
Brax Black Pant: Hi Flex Jersey

DRIVEN BY PASSION, POWERED BY PURPOSE:

The Story Behind Serca Financial

Story by Jessie Gurniak

Born in Albania and raised in Windsor, Ontario after moving to Canada at age 10, Sergo Rica has always been about two things: working hard and helping people. From a young age, he learned the value of adapting, pushing forward, and staying connected to what matters most: community, family, and passion.

His journey into the world of business started at Assumption High School, where he juggled school with his love for sports. Volleyball, basketball, and soccer were, and still are, a regular part of his life. After high school, Sergo went on to study Business Administration at Humber College in Toronto, later earning a designation from the Canadian Institute of Management.

Professionally, things kicked off in 2014 when he joined Equitable Bank, where he spent six years learning the ins and outs of the mortgage industry, holding roles like Mortgage Underwriter, Mortgage Officer, and Internal Business Development. After a brief time at Merix Financial as Director of Sales, the world changed with COVID-19, and so did Sergo's path. In 2020, he made a bold leap, got his mortgage license, and jumped headfirst into the world of brokering.

Fast forward five years, and Sergo is now the Principal Broker and CEO of Serca Financial Mortgage Group, a company built from the ground up with one mission: to help people make smarter, more confident decisions about their homes and futures.

Outside of the office, Sergo lives a life full of passion and play. He's a huge sports fan, catching NBA games (go Raptors!), watching Manchester United matches, and showing up at Windsor Express games whenever he can. When he's not watching, he's playing, weekly volleyball and soccer games keep him active, and basketball sneaks in when time allows.

He's also a big car guy, with a love for customizing and working on cars that started young and never left; and perhaps most importantly, he's a proud dog dad to three French bulldogs who run the house and bring endless joy (and chaos).

When he's not working or on the court, you'll probably find Sergo off on an adventure with Danielle, his life, travel, and business partner, exploring new places and making memories one trip at a time.

Through all the roles he's played, student, athlete, underwriter, broker, CEO, one thing has stayed constant: Sergo's love for helping others. Whether it's walking someone through their first home purchase or just being a good friend, he shows up with honesty, hustle, and heart.





Blazer: A Fish Named Fred
 Shirt: Blu by Polifroni
 Pants: Hi Flex Jersey

At Serca Financial Mortgage Group, the mission is to help individuals and families in Windsor-Essex achieve their homeownership goals. Whether you're a first-time buyer, an investor expanding your real estate portfolio, or someone in need of refinancing, they offer tailored mortgage solutions to meet your needs. Their expertise covers a wide range of services, including first-time home purchases, investment properties, refinances, second mortgages, and construction loans. They are committed to guiding their clients through every step of the mortgage process, ensuring they make informed financial decisions that set them up for long-term success.

Over the years, the mortgage market has experienced significant changes. We've seen historically low interest rates and high property values during the COVID-19 period, followed by a shift toward rising rates and declining home prices. These fluctuations have had a major impact on homebuyers and homeowners alike. Additionally, lenders have adjusted their risk thresholds, making it crucial for borrowers to work with experts who understand these market dynamics. At Serca Financial, their experience allows them to help clients navigate changing conditions and find the best mortgage solutions available.

They don't just secure mortgages—they provide solutions tailored to their clients' financial situations. While they love working with first-time homebuyers to help them get the best possible rates, they also assist those facing financial challenges such as bad credit, divorce, foreclosure, or job loss. Their team is committed to finding the right mortgage product for each individual and guiding them through the entire process.

They take a client-first approach, ensuring that every borrower understands their options and feels confident in their financial decisions. Whether you're looking to buy your first home, secure a second mortgage, or explore refinancing options, they're here to help.

To improve your chances of mortgage approval, focus on these three key factors:

1. **Credit Score** – Avoid opening new credit cards, taking out auto loans, or making large purchases during the mortgage process. Keep credit utilization low.
2. **Income Stability** – Try not to switch jobs or take unpaid time off. We can use various income sources, such as child tax benefits and rental income, to help with qualification.
3. **Down Payment** – Avoid frequent fund transfers between accounts and depositing untraceable cash. We can use multiple sources for down payments, including gifts from family, RRSPs, and refinancing existing properties.

The mortgage market is constantly evolving, influenced by the housing market, government policies, and global events. Currently, we're seeing interest rates start to decline after recent highs, but market conditions can change. That's why they work with clients to create long-term plans based on their goals and financial situations.



If you're planning to buy a home in the next 12 months, securing a mortgage pre-approval is one of the most important steps you can take. Pre-approvals provide clarity on your financial position, allowing you to understand how much you can afford before you start house hunting.

At Serca Financial, they guide clients through the pre-approval process, ensuring they understand:

- Their borrowing power and how much home they can afford.
- The down payment requirements for different types of loans.
- Steps they can take to improve their credit score if needed.

Without a clear financial plan, purchasing a home can be overwhelming. That's why they encourage every potential buyer to get pre-approved and work with them to develop a tailored home-buying strategy.

The team at Serca Financial, simplifies the mortgage process. They begin by thoroughly reviewing each client's financial situation, including credit, income, and overall financial health. Once they have a complete picture, they present the best mortgage options and guide their clients through every step of the process.

Their goal is to build long-term relationships with their clients, ensuring they receive the support they need not just for their first mortgage but for every financial milestone in the future.

Their team consists of experienced mortgage professionals with diverse expertise, including prime lending, alternative financing for self-employed borrowers, commercial mortgages, and private lending. This breadth of knowledge allows us to provide comprehensive solutions tailored to our clients' needs.

Beyond their technical expertise, they are committed to continuous learning. They stay up to date with market trends, interest rate shifts, and regulatory changes to ensure they provide the most current and relevant advice to their clients.

At Serca Financial, they're dedicated to helping you achieve homeownership, whether you're purchasing, refinancing, or exploring other mortgage options. their team is here to support you every step of the way, providing expert guidance and personalized solutions to make your homeownership journey a success.



SERGO RICA

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White Blazer: Blue Industry
White Shirt: Blu by Polifroni
Pants: Marco





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*For over 95 years, **FREEDS** of Windsor has stood as a proud family-owned business, dedicated to providing exceptional service, impeccable tailoring, and a carefully curated selection of top-tier fashion.*



Story by Jessie Gurniak

Through decades of service, FREEDS has become a cornerstone of the local community while proudly offering a diverse range of Canadian fashion labels, including Jack Victor, Joseph Ribkoff, Coppley, Robert Barakett, and Patrick Assaraf.

FREEDS has evolved from a small menswear shop to one of the most respected fashion retailers in Windsor and beyond. Despite its growth and the changing landscape of fashion, the store has always stayed true to its roots in the local community.

At a time when fast fashion and mass production are increasingly common, FREEDS has remained steadfast in its belief that supporting Canadian designers is more important than ever. By carrying these premium Canadian brands, FREEDS ensures that the tradition of high-quality, locally made fashion continues to thrive.

As global supply chains continue to evolve, the importance of shopping locally and supporting homegrown talent has never been more relevant. Canadian fashion brands, like the ones carried by FREEDS, represent the best of what Canada has to offer—creativity, quality, and craftsmanship. For FREEDS, promoting Canadian fashion is more than just a business strategy; it's a commitment to preserving a rich tradition of design that is uniquely Canadian.

Whether you're looking for a classic suit, an elegant evening dress, or a casual wardrobe update, FREEDS is proud to offer the finest Canadian-made clothing, providing its customers with style, quality, and a connection to the rich heritage of Canadian fashion.

Known for its expertly crafted suits and outerwear, **Jack Victor** creates garments that speak to the modern man who values style, comfort, and quality. Whether it's a traditional two-piece suit or a bold checkered jacket, **Jack Victor's** collection is versatile enough to suit any occasion.

FREEDS selection of **Jack Victor** clothing ensures that Canadian men have access to premium tailoring that meets the demands of both work and leisure.

Based in Montreal. 🍁

JACK VICTOR



Joseph Ribkoff is one of Canada's most beloved womenswear designers, offering collections that combine modern design with a timeless aesthetic.

Ribkoff's pieces range from bold statement dresses to elegant office attire, with each item reflecting a commitment to quality and attention to detail.

At **FREEDS**, the **Joseph Ribkoff** collection continues to be a favourite, offering women pieces that make them feel both confident and stylish no matter the occasion.

Based in Montreal. 🍁

Joseph Ribkoff



This Canadian brand has earned a reputation for creating impeccably tailored suits that emphasize the art of fit and fabric.

Specializing in made-to-measure garments, **Coppley** is renowned for its dedication to precision, ensuring that each suit or jacket is designed to flatter and fit perfectly.

FREEDS, proudly carries **Coppley's** line of men's formal wear, offering clients the opportunity to invest in a wardrobe staple that exudes sophistication and luxury.

Based in Hamilton. 🍁





Known for his luxurious yet relaxed approach to menswear, **Robert Barakett** has built a reputation for blending sophistication with comfort. His designs are perfect for the man who values both style and ease, with a focus on high-quality fabrics and refined silhouettes.

Robert Barakett's collection offers men a sophisticated alternative to traditional casualwear. At **FREEDS**, his pieces are popular for their versatility and timeless appeal, providing customers with effortlessly chic options for everyday wear.

Based in Montreal. 🍁

R O B E R T
B A R A K E T T



Patrick Assaraf is a rising star in Canadian fashion, known for his bold and innovative menswear. With an eye for modern tailoring and luxurious fabrics, **Assaraf's** designs stand out for their sleek, clean lines and forward-thinking approach to style.

The bold and innovative designs make it the perfect choice for the fashion-forward Canadian man. At **FREEDS**, **Patrick Assaraf's** pieces offer customers the chance to wear something truly unique, while maintaining a sophisticated and polished look.

Based in Toronto. 🍁

PATRICK ASSARAF



Sophia Sladic
Denim Jacket: Central Park West
Pink Bodysuit: Steve Madden
White Denim Pants: A.Z.I New York
Shoes: CL by Laundry

Kaitlyn King
Black Jacket: Mos Mosh
T-shirt: Rino & Pelle
Jeans: Camino
Shoes: Michael Kors

Andjela Dragicevic
Multi Print Top: L'agence
Jeans: Mavi
Shoes: Badgley Mischka Jewel

SPRING / SUMMER 2025



Kiana Dobson
Black Top: Bishop + Young
Jeans: DL1961
Black Shoes: Badgley Mischka

Brienna Tiessen
Black Jacket: Mos Mosh
T-shirt: Oui
Jeans: DL1961
Black Leather Shoe: Michael Kors

Biance Georgescu
Jeans: Mother
Red and White Stripe T-shirt: Oui
Leather Belt: Brave
White Shoe: CL By Laundry



CLASSIC CUTS. MODERN POWER





Brienna Tiessen
 Black Suit: Mos Mosh
 Ivory Silk Top: Cinq á Sept
 Black Leather Shoes: Michael Kors

Kaitlyn King
 Black Suit: Mos Mosh
 Ivory Lace Cami: Simkhai
 Leather Shoes: Michael Kors

Andjela Dragicevic
 Navy Suit: Mos Mosh
 Sand Top: Simkhai
 Blush Leather Shoes: Michael Kors

CLASSIC CUTS. MODERN POWER

CLASSIC CUTS. MODERN POWER



Biance Georgescu
Navy Suit: Couture 1910
White Blouse: Desigual
Navy Leather Shoe: Michael Kors

Kiana Dobson
Ecru Suit: Mos Mosh
Black Top: Simkhai
Gold Chain Belt: Leell
Black Shoes: Badgley Mischka

Sophia Sladic
Charcoal Suit: Couture 1910
White Dress Shirt: Foxcroft
White Puff: Aladdin
Silver Chain Belt: Leell
Silver Leather Shoe: Michael Kors



Nico Gualtieri
Black Suit: Hugo Boss
White Shirt: Eton
Loafer: Hugo Boss
Belt: Hugo Boss
Puff: Dion
Bag: Hugo Boss





Andjela Dragicevic
White & Black Dress: Simkhai
Black Satin Shoe: Badgley Mischka
White Flower Handbag: Badgley Mischka





Nico Gualtieri
Sportcoat: L.B.M. 1911
Cotton Pant: Hugo Boss
Sweater Knit: Hugo Boss
Primera Runner: Magnanni
Backpack: Cole Haan



Andjela Dragicevic
 Dark Olive Green Top: Sanctuary
 White Denim Pants: Sadie & Sage
 Olive Green Handbag (Scarlett): Michael Kors
 White Shoe: Michael Kors



CHATHAM-KENT

Health Alliance
FOUNDATION

A SEASON OF IMPACT

SPRING AND SUMMER FUNDRAISING WITH THE CKHA FOUNDATION

With warmer weather finally upon us, the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Foundation (CKHAF) is in the midst of an exciting season of fundraising and community engagement. This time of year is always a highlight for CKHAF, with multiple high-impact fundraisers giving residents of our community the chance to support their hospital—Chatham-Kent Health Alliance (CKHA)—while taking part in thrilling events and initiatives.

From the Igniting Healthcare Spring 50/50 in May to the 20th Annual Charity Golf Tournament in June, and the Our Hospital, Our Future Wallaceburg Site Redevelopment campaign running throughout, there are plenty of opportunities for residents to support healthcare close to home. These initiatives not only raise crucial funds for essential medical equipment and hospital improvements, but also bring the community together in a shared mission of enhancing patient care across Chatham-Kent.

APRIL 24TH

OUR HOSPITAL, OUR FUTURE: WALLACEBURG SITE REDEVELOPMENT

April 24th marked the official launch of the Our Hospital, Our Future Wallaceburg Site Redevelopment campaign. A transformational \$9 million fundraising project focused on the redevelopment of CKHA's Wallaceburg Site. This ambitious initiative represents a significant investment in the future of healthcare in Chatham-Kent, ensuring that patients in Wallaceburg and the surrounding communities have access to modernized medical facilities and cutting-edge healthcare services.



This project is a testament to CKHAF's dedication to improving patient care through strategic investments. It aims to enhance emergency and diagnostic services, introduce advanced medical technologies, and create a more comfortable environment for patients and staff alike. Community support will be essential in bringing this vision to life, and CKHAF invites residents and businesses to join in this historic effort to build a stronger, more resilient healthcare system in our community.

IGNITING HEALTHCARE

— 50/50 FUNDRAISER —

MAY 1ST - JUNE 12TH

IGNITING HEALTHCARE SPRING 50/50: A WIN FOR HEALTHCARE, A WIN FOR YOU

One of CKHAF's most thrilling fundraising initiatives, the Igniting Healthcare 50/50, returns this spring, running from May 1st to June 12th. This popular lottery has become a key driver of community support for CKHA, giving participants across Ontario the chance to win life-changing cash prizes while directly supporting local hospital care. With a minimum \$50,000 guaranteed jackpot plus \$10,000 in additional Early Bird prizes, every ticket purchased for our Spring 50/50 will help fund state-of-the-art medical equipment and hospital enhancements.

Proceeds from the Spring 50/50 will support the Highest Priority Needs of CKHA, enabling the Foundation to support the hospital's most pressing needs. As the excitement builds for this latest edition, CKHAF encourages everyone to visit: www.ignite5050.ca to take part and make a meaningful difference in healthcare.

WWW.IGNITE5050.CA



JUNE 6TH 2025

20 YEARS OF GOLFING FOR A GREAT CAUSE

Mark your calendars for June 6, 2025, as CKHAF proudly hosts their 20th Annual Charity Golf Tournament—a milestone event that has been a staple of the Foundation's fundraising efforts.

Over the years, this tournament has united business leaders, healthcare advocates, and local supporters for a day of friendly competition and generosity. Participants will enjoy an elite golfing experience while every swing contributes to improving healthcare for the residents of Chatham-Kent.

This event offers a perfect blend of sport, entertainment, food and fun, making it an unforgettable day for its participants. Whether you're a seasoned golfer or just looking to support a great cause, you're encouraged to visit www.ckhaf.ca/golf to explore opportunities to support.

WWW.CKHAF.CA/GOLF





JOIN THE MOVEMENT SUPPORT LOCAL HEALTHCARE



CKHAF.CA

At the heart of CKHAF's mission is a commitment to enhancing healthcare through philanthropy. Government funding alone is not enough to cover the cost of essential medical equipment for hospitals across Ontario, and that's where the generosity of local donors, businesses, and community members makes all the difference.

Every dollar raised by CKHAF stays in Chatham-Kent, directly benefiting their two hospital sites in Chatham and Wallaceburg, as well as the many patients who rely on them. With a clear vision for a healthier community, CKHAF continues to build partnerships, engage volunteers, and lead impactful fundraising initiatives. Whether it's by supporting 50/50s, participating in golf tournaments and gala events, or making direct financial contributions, there are countless ways for individuals and businesses to contribute to the health and well-being of our community.

As CKHAF embarks on another sunny season of philanthropy, you are invited to be a part of the journey. By supporting their spring and summer fundraising initiatives, you are making a lasting impact on healthcare in Chatham-Kent. To learn more about CKHAF and how you can get involved, visit www.ckhaf.ca. Let's ignite a future of excellence in local healthcare—one gift at a time.

Together, we can ensure that our local hospital sites remain well-equipped, staff are empowered to provide exceptional care, and patients receive the treatment they deserve—close to home.



Nico Gualtieri
Coat: Fish Named Fred
Shirt: Johnny O
Shorts: Johnny O
Sandals: Cole Haan



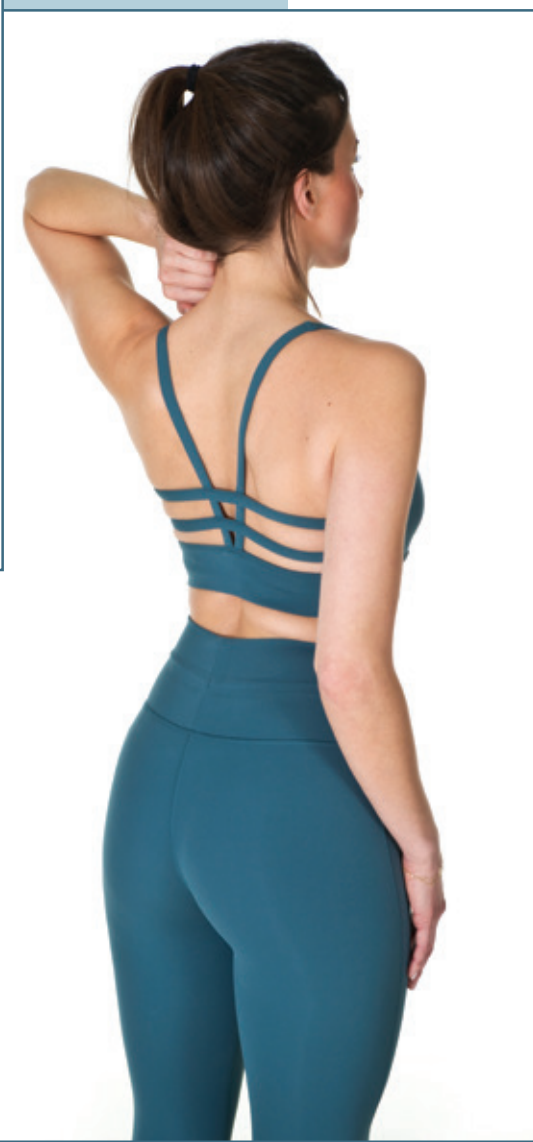
Nico Gualtieri
Shirt: Public Beach
Swimwear: Public Beach
Loafer: Ilse Jacobsen



Nico Gualtieri
Zip Coat: Ralph Lauren
Chino Pant: Ralph Lauren
Polo Shirt: Ralph Lauren
Runner: Ralph Lauren



POLO
RALPH LAUREN



Andjela Dragicevic
 White Nylon Jacket: Vuori
 White Energy Top: Vuori
 Teal Bra: Vuori
 Teal leggings: Vuori
 Cloud Monster Shoe: On Running



Nico Gualtieri
Sport Coat: Canali
Shirt: Tiger of Sweden
Cotton Pant: Brigila
Loafer Hugo: Boss
Puff: Eton





Andjela Dragicevic
 Blazer: Mos Mosh
 Jeans: 7 For All Mankind
 Ivory Knit Tank: Allie Rose
 Brown Belt: Brave
 Brown Shoes: Cole Haan

Nico Gualtieri
 Grey Pant: Redvanly
 Knit Golf Shirt: Redvanly
 Golf Shoe: G Fore
 Knit Belt: Polo
 Spring Coat: Nautica





Nico Gualtieri
 Sage Plaid Sport Coat: Blu Industry
 Shirt: 7-Downie
 Jean: Mavi
 Loafer: Donald Pliner
 Suede Belt: Miguel Bellido

JENNYBIRD

Gold & Pearl Earrings: Jenny Bird
Pearl Necklace: Jenny Bird
Gold & Pearl Necklace: Jenny Bird



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Black Satin Double Bow Shoe: Bagley Mischka Jewel

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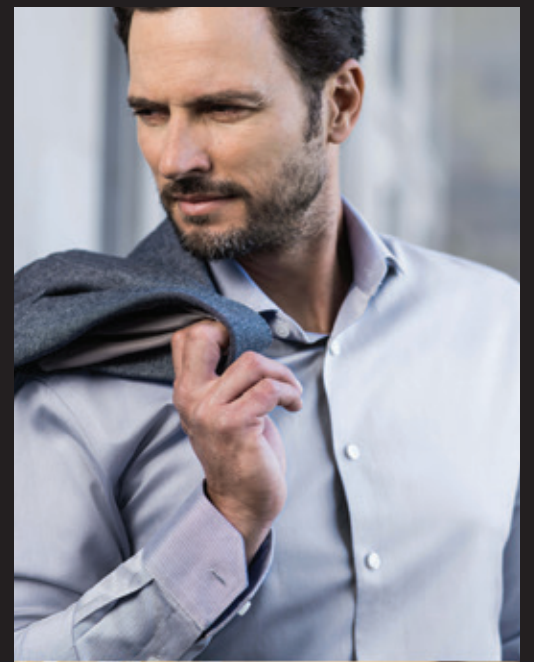


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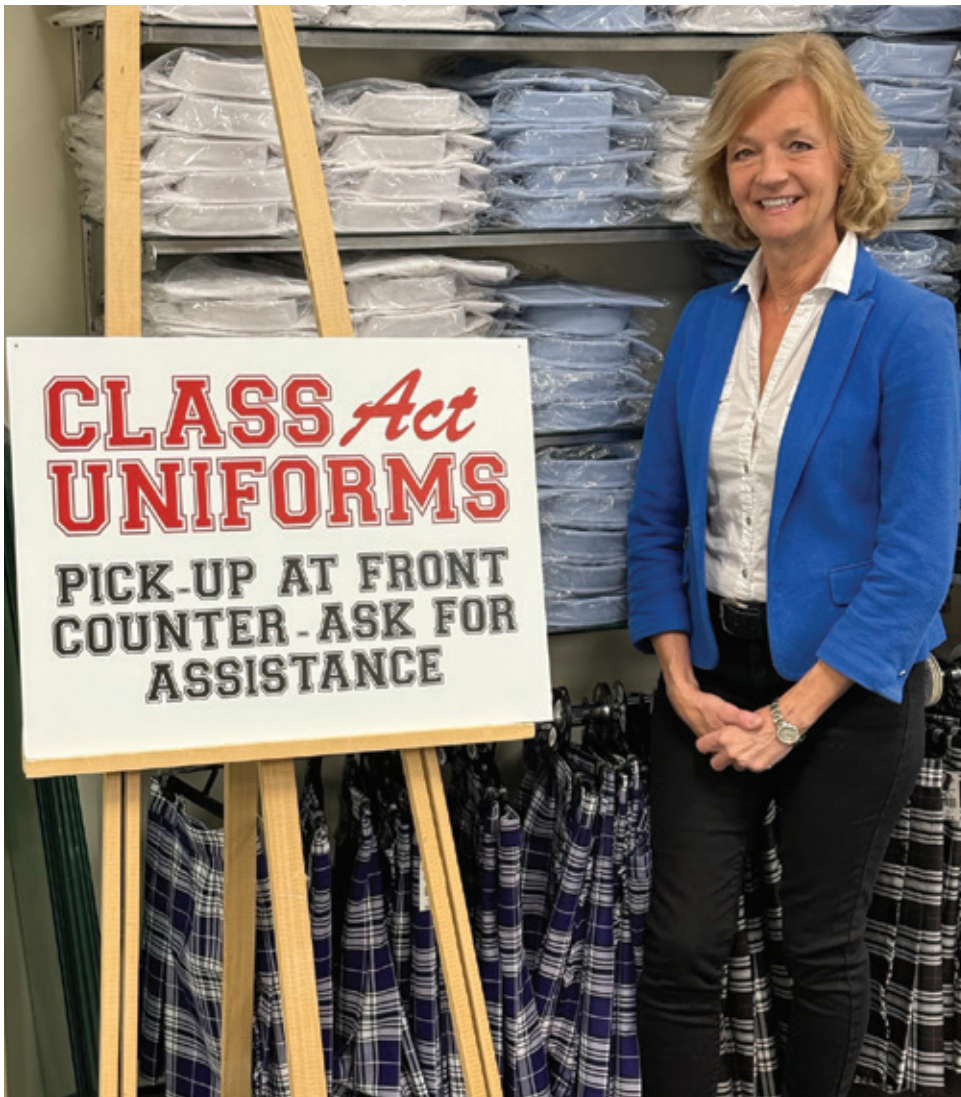
IN SUPPORT OF THE CARDIOLOGY PROGRAM AT

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AFTER 4 DECADES, DIANE HILLMAN IS FREEDS' CLASS ACT

Story by Jessie Gurniak



***“We can’t thank her
enough for everything
she does at FREEDS!”***

- Ari Freed

Since joining FREEDS in 1987, Diane Hillman has been a cornerstone of the store’s success, bringing with her a unique blend of passion, creativity, and unwavering commitment. Over the years, Diane has worn many hats, from setting up displays to working in the haberdashery department, but she is best known for her leadership in the Class Act department.

“It’s very rare to find an individual like Diane,” says Evan Freed. “She’s a joy to work with, always level-headed, consistently positive, especially during our busiest times, like back-to-school season. We’re incredibly lucky to have her.”

Though Diane prefers to stay out of the spotlight, her dedication shines through in everything she does. Her commitment to FREEDS, her customers, and her team is evident in the way she works, with grace, reliability, and a genuine passion for service. “Diane has always led by example and takes great pride in all her key roles at FREEDS,” said Ari Freed, Co-Owner of FREEDS. “We can’t thank her enough for everything she does at FREEDS!”

As the head of the Class Act department, Diane oversees the outfitting of students across the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board with their high school uniforms. Her ability to connect with both parents and students ensures each young person not only looks their best, but feels confident and comfortable. With decades of experience, Diane has a knack for helping growing kids find the right fit, balancing style, durability, and practicality for the school year ahead.

Her nurturing approach also extends to her team. Each year, Diane hires ten high school students to assist with uniform fittings, often giving them their very first experience in customer service. “These students know the ins and outs of their schools,” Diane shares. “They tell me what students and teachers expect, and even let me in on the class jokes.”

Under her guidance, these students learn the fundamentals of great service and professionalism. Diane’s kindness, patience, and example set the tone, leaving a lasting impression on both her team and her customers.

Reflecting on nearly four decades in Windsor’s fashion scene, Diane is proud of the role she’s played at FREEDS. Whether in the Class Act department, haberdashery, or anywhere else in the store, her work ethic and dedication have remained constant.

As FREEDS continues to grow and evolve, Diane remains a trusted and valued member of the team. She extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported her throughout her career, especially Keith White, Dan Orman, and Ari Freed, whom she can always count on.




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ANTHONY MALANDRUCCOLO

MILAN STIPIC

NOUR JOMAA



STIPIC WEISMAN LLP

What Anthony Is Wearing
Jacket: Tommy Hilfiger
Shirt: Blu by Polifroni
Pants: Jack Victor
Shoes: Johnston Murphy

What Milan Is Wearing
Jacket: J. Grill
Shirt: FX Fusion
Pants: Marco
Shoes: Cole Haan

What Nour Is Wearing
Jacket: Jack Victor
Shirt: Blu by Polifroni
Pants: Alberto
Shoes: Magnanni

Stipic Weisman LLP is a Windsor-based law firm offering a wide range of legal services in real estate, estate planning, corporate law, family law, employment law, and litigation. Known for their approachable and professional manner, the firm's team is committed to providing effective, solution-driven legal advice tailored to the needs of each client.

With over 35 years of experience, Partner Milan (Mike) Stipic leads the firm with a focus on clear communication and cultivating strong, trust-based client relationships. Mike's leadership philosophy is grounded in helping clients navigate significant decisions and life changes with clarity, integrity, and respect for their circumstances.

Associate Lawyer Nour Jomaa brings a profound commitment to fairness and justice to every case. Nour's background in the Canadian Armed Forces instilled a strong sense of duty and responsibility, which continues to guide his work in the courtroom. His approach to litigation is methodical and strategic, always centered on upholding the rule of law while ensuring that each client's rights are rigorously protected.

Associate Anthony Malandruccolo, deeply rooted in the Windsor community, is dedicated to helping clients confidently navigate complex legal matters, particularly in real estate and business law. His client-first approach, coupled with his commitment to clear communication, ensures that each client's interests are well represented.

What distinguishes Stipic Weisman LLP is the firm's collaborative approach. While each lawyer manages their own client relationships, they work together across practice areas to provide comprehensive, well-rounded legal solutions. This teamwork ensures that clients benefit from the collective expertise of the firm, enabling them to tackle multifaceted legal issues with confidence.

The firm's guiding principles are simple: listen intently, explain clearly, and work relentlessly to protect clients' interests. Whether managing a straightforward transaction or a complex legal dispute, Stipic Weisman LLP guides clients every step of the way with professionalism, transparency, and care.

To speak with a member of the team or schedule a consultation, please reach out to the firm's conveniently located offices:

Windsor Office
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519-258-3201

Belle River
587 Notre Dame St.
519-728-0555

Story by Jessie Gurniak | Photo by Pat Scandale



SONNY BORRELLI

Sonny Borrelli is a dynamic leader in the world of Canadian pageantry, currently serving as the National Director of Miss Universe Canada. With a deep passion for empowering women and boosting confidence, Sonny plays a pivotal role in Canada's pageantry industry.

His journey in pageantry began in the early 2000s, and his dedication quickly earned him a leadership role. Before stepping into a national position, Sonny was actively involved in regional competitions. As a native to Windsor-Essex, he is thrilled to be bringing the Miss Universe Canada pageant to Windsor this year. As contestants from across Canada gather to compete for the coveted title, Windsor will become a focal point for beauty, talent, and empowerment. The competition will not only highlight the achievements of remarkable young women but also showcase Windsor's vibrant culture and welcoming community.

Under his leadership, Miss Universe Canada aims to break new ground, attracting a diverse and talented group of participants who embody intelligence, resilience, and grace. His vision is to grow the competition's prestige while ensuring that it remains a powerful platform for empowerment and advocacy. Sonny is committed to making the 2025 Miss Universe Canada pageant a landmark event, not just for the contestants but for the entire Windsor-Essex region. By bringing the national spotlight to Windsor, he hopes to inspire young women across the country to step forward, share their stories, and embrace the opportunities that pageantry offers.

Prelims for the pageant will take place on August 7th at the St. Clair Centre for the Arts, and the competition itself will be on August 9th. Tickets will be available online or at the venue box office.

Aside from pageantry, Sonny's experience extends to hosting events and competitions of all kinds. From emceeing weddings and charity events to volunteering his time to host numerous community initiatives, Sonny has always given back to the city. His engaging presence and dedication to service are qualities that translate seamlessly to a national stage. Sonny Borrelli has a flair for the theatrics and a love for a good audience. He is proud of what he has accomplished and can't wait for Windsor to see it on the National scale.

What Sonny Is Wearing
Jacket: Lief Horsens
Shirt: Blu by Polifroni

Story by Jessie Gurniak | Photo by Pat Scandale



MISS UNIVERSE CANADA

SIGNATURE REALTY'S 2024 BREAKOUT PERFORMERS

ALEXIS
TAYLOR

DARRIN
PRIEUR

CRYSTAL
ESKHARIA



What Alexis Is Wearing
Jacket: EsQualo
Top: Joseph Ribkoff
Pants: Joseph Ribkoff

What Darrin Is Wearing
Freeds Suit Package
Blazer: Lief Horsens
Tie FX: Fusion

What Crystal Is Wearing
Top: Gracia
Pants: Gracia

Real Estate in Windsor-Essex is changing—and so is the way it's done. At Signature Realty, a boutique brokerage rooted in Tecumseh, the focus is on delivering premium, high-impact service through a group of top tier agents that know the region and its people inside out. While the company was founded by seasoned Broker of Record Shan Hasan, its strength lies in the agents driving it forward, Signature Realty is taking this opportunity to celebrate their Breakout Performing Agents of 2024 including Crystal Eskharia, Darrin Prieur, and Alexis Taylor.

Born and raised in Windsor, Crystal Eskharia brings both business acumen and heart to her work. With a background in accounting and a Bachelor of Commerce, she balances sharp market insight with genuine care for her clients. Known for her energy and clarity, Crystal is driven by the relationships she builds—helping buyers, sellers, and investors feel confident every step of the way.

Darrin Prieur, entering his fifth year in the industry, is a steady presence in Essex County real estate. Clients trust him for his honest advice, strong knowledge of the local market, and consistent follow-through. His approach is straightforward and grounded—whether he's helping a young family land their first home, or guiding clients through big decisions with care and focus.

Alexis Taylor brings a different kind of experience—one shaped by motherhood, faith, and years of work in sales and customer service. Compassionate and hard-working, Alexis understands that real estate is personal. She meets each client where they're at, with a focus on trust, support, and real solutions.

Together, these Top Tier Agents reflect the kind of real estate Signature Realty stands for—community-rooted, detail-focused, and client-driven. With trend setting marketing and a collaborative office culture, the brokerage gives its agents the tools and support they need to deliver better outcomes for everyone they serve and strive to be the best version of themselves!

Signature Realty has now entered 2025 with full force. Growing their Agent roster selectively, this brokerage of almost 50 realtors have embodied the principles of collaboration over competition.

Story by Jessie Gurniak | Photo by Pat Scandale

SHAWN LAPORTE

RENE LAPORTE

SCOTT MCINTOSH



What Shawn Is Wearing
Jacket: Bruun & Stengade
Pants: 34 Heritage
Shoes: Cole Haan

What Renee Is Wearing
Top: Blu by Polifroni
Pants: 34 Heritage
Shoes: Cole Haan

What Scott Is Wearing
Shirt: Polo Ralph Lauren
Pants: 34 Heritage
Shoes: Blundstone

For over 35 years, Rene and Brandy Laporte have shared a passion for the outdoors—and for the past 15 years, they’ve channeled that passion into Matrix Landscaping, a trusted name throughout Essex County. From rock retaining walls and natural stone patios to decks, fences, lawns, and large-scale maintenance projects, Matrix Landscaping is known for transforming ordinary outdoor spaces into stunning natural escapes. Every detail is carefully considered, every project crafted with pride.

Rene Laporte, President, brings decades of hands-on experience and an unwavering attention to detail that continues to set Matrix apart. His dedication to quality and client satisfaction has helped shape the company’s strong reputation.

“One of our most memorable projects was working with Habitat for Humanity,” says Rene. “Seeing families enjoy their new outdoor spaces was incredibly rewarding.”

Brandy Laporte, Vice President, plays a key role in ensuring operations run smoothly and that clients feel supported every step of the way. The family legacy continues with Shawn Laporte, General Manager, whose background in heavy machinery operation and irrigation strengthens the team’s capabilities. His addition marks the next generation of Matrix leadership, helping the company expand into more complex and larger-scale work.

Joining the leadership team is Scott McIntosh, a seasoned professional with over 25 years of experience. As Director of Operations, Scott has become a valuable asset to the company’s continued growth, bringing new insight and strategic direction.

Matrix Landscaping’s success also stems from its hardworking crew and dedicated office manager. Each team member plays a vital role in delivering top-tier service rooted in care, craftsmanship, and community. Servicing all of Essex County, the company continues to grow—taking on larger projects while never losing sight of what makes them unique: their commitment to detail, quality, and customer relationships.

As they celebrate 15 years in business, Matrix Landscaping looks forward to the future—with more to come, and more outdoor spaces to transform.

Story by Jessie Gurniak | Photo by Pat Scandale

Faces of FREEDS

OLIVIA VRSALJKO

Story by Jessie Gurniak

Since joining FREEDS in August 2024, Olivia Vrsaljko has played a pivotal role in evolving one of Windsor's most iconic retail brands. As Manager of Marketing and E-Commerce, she brings a strong blend of creative vision, technical expertise, and strategic thinking to a position that's redefining FREEDS' presence both in-store and online.

Olivia's impact is immediately visible—from striking billboard campaigns to cohesive digital marketing strategies, an upgraded e-commerce experience, and engaging social content that resonates with both long-time customers and new audiences.

"What stood out to me immediately about Olivia was the strength of my first impression," says Dan Orman, Co-Owner of FREEDS. "Her confidence and love of life were evident from her first interview, and I knew right away she was someone I wanted on our team."

"What makes this role special is the trust and collaboration," Olivia shares. "Working closely with Evan Freed, I've been empowered to take initiative, lead campaigns, and implement new ideas. That creative freedom is something I don't take for granted."

Her day-to-day is fast-paced and diverse, encompassing everything from content production and campaign development to website optimization and customer engagement. That variety, she says, is what keeps her energized and constantly inspired.

"Olivia has exceeded every expectation we had for a Marketing Manager," says Evan Freed. "Her ability to balance creativity with organization is rare, and working with her has been an absolute pleasure. We're lucky to have her on the FREEDS team."

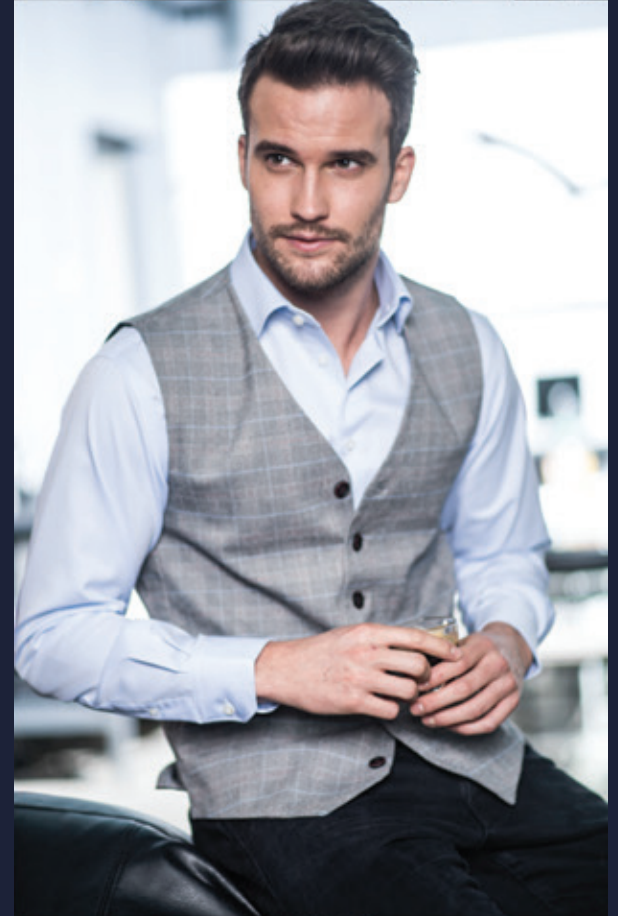
Currently, Olivia is focused on strengthening FREEDS' digital presence while preserving the legacy and personal touch the brand is known for. One of her key initiatives is a full website refresh, designed to make the online experience feel as inviting and curated as the in-store one.

For Olivia, what stands out most about her time at FREEDS is the culture and the people behind the brand. "In my first week, Dan Orman shared a piece of advice that stayed with me: 'When you love what you do, you never work a day in your life,'" she says. "As someone who grew up in a family business, I immediately recognized that same pride and purpose in the Freed and Orman families. Their passion is woven into every part of the store."

It's that same spirit Olivia aims to reflect in her work. "Whether someone is walking through the doors or exploring our website, I want the FREEDS experience to feel personal, welcoming, and true to who we are as a brand," she says.

With a clear vision and a passion for meaningful, community-rooted work, Olivia is helping guide FREEDS into its next chapter, where innovation meets tradition, and the brand continues to grow with purpose. Being part of FREEDS isn't just a job—it's an opportunity to create something meaningful. "I can't wait to see what's next and to keep bringing new ideas to life for this incredible company and its customers".





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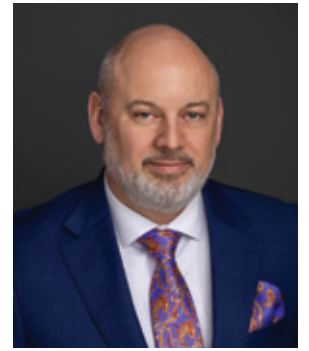


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SECOND OPINION

By Dr. Craig Schisler



"I just want the pain to stop."

I hear this almost every day from patients. They're not talking about minor aches—they mean chronic pain that lingers for weeks, months, or even years. It can be debilitating, life-altering, and relationship-straining.

Severe back pain often means disc damage—either a bulging or herniated disc. Many patients tell me the pain gets so bad they'd do anything to stop it. But before jumping to drastic solutions like surgery, there are more effective, less invasive options. The key lies in getting the right diagnosis because the right diagnosis leads to the right treatment.

So, what's the difference between a bulging and a herniated disc? It's all about severity.

A healthy disc acts like a cushion between the bones of the spine, allowing for movement and flexibility. Think of it like a jelly donut—there's a tough outer ring (the annulus) and a soft, gel-like center (the nucleus pulposus). When a disc is damaged, several terms describe its condition: disc prolapse, bulging disc, herniated disc, disc rupture, or extruded disc.

A bulging or herniated disc happens when the soft center pushes against the annulus, creating a bulge—similar to a weak spot in a tire. If the outer ring tears and the gel-like center leaks out, it's a herniation. Both can press on nearby nerves, causing intense pain, numbness, and weakness in the arms or legs.



COMMON CAUSES OF PAIN



There are four classifications of disc damage, each progressively more severe:

- 1. Annular bulge**
– decreased disc space with a bulge
- 2. Protrusion** (herniation)
– disc bulge with potential extrusion
- 3. Extrusion** – multiple discs affected
- 4. Extrusion** with free disc fragments (sequestration)

Healthy discs contain proteins that attract water, keeping them hydrated and functional. They don't have a direct blood supply, so they rely on movement—compressing and decompressing—to stay nourished. This process, called imbibition, allows the disc to heal naturally.

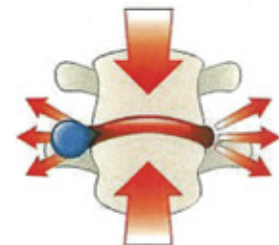
But when damage interferes, the disc dries out, weakens, and becomes unstable. This can lead to degenerative disc disease, arthritis, facet syndrome, herniations, and spinal stenosis.

There's an old saying: "The earlier detected, the easier corrected." Spinal problems are much easier to manage before they become severe. That's why a yearly spinal check-up with your chiropractor can help prevent bigger issues down the road. Once degeneration starts, it can worsen until the inner disc material pushes out—like toothpaste from a tube—compressing nerves and causing significant pain that radiates down the arms or legs.

If symptoms like numbness, tingling, or weakness accompany the pain, an MRI can confirm disc damage. And that's when patients walk into my clinic and say, "I just want the pain to stop."

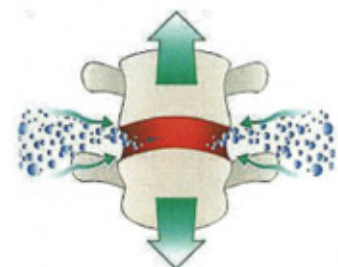
The good news? With the right approach, we can help them find relief—without resorting to drastic measures.

HERNIATED DISC



Pressure in the disc is so great that a tear occurs in the disc wall leading to sciatic pain (numbness and tingling).

SPINAL DECOMPRESSION



A reduction of pressure inside the discs (decompression) aids in pulling nutrients, oxygen, and moisture back into the disc.

SEVERE BACK PAIN ADVISORY!

Windsor: Windsor's premier centre for non-surgical treatment of spine related pain has just undergone an upgrade. Inclusion into the prestigious Disc Centers of America (DCOA), the largest group of non-surgical spinal decompression doctors in the world, puts Windsor's own Schisler Spine Centre at the forefront treating conditions such as severe back, neck, and sciatic pain.

The very first Disc Centre of Canada has opened and Dr. Craig Schisler of the Schisler Spine Centre couldn't be happier. "The association with DCOA gives us access to all the latest cutting-edge research and technologies related to the non-surgical treatment of the spine. Why shouldn't Windsor have the very best the world has to offer?"

Chronic back pain and sciatica have reached epidemic proportions affecting millions of people worldwide. Chances are you or someone you care about is suffering from debilitating back or neck pain and have tried many different medications and therapies that simply didn't work. Right now, there is a way for all of that to change, right here in Windsor, Ontario. A technology called Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression offered at the Schisler Spine Centre is offering an alternative path for those who may end up needing surgery.

For the last 20 years, Dr. Craig Schisler and his team have been dealing exclusively with chronic and serious cases of Back pain, Neck pain and Sciatica and have kept hundreds from needing surgery.

"Our approach differs from traditional methods because we use the latest technologies proven by research to offer long-term relief and correction of bulging and herniated discs," says Dr. Schisler.

It's true. Published studies show an amazing 85% success rate for those who qualify for this revolutionary treatment.*

"Now as the first Disc Centre of Canada, we'll be able to improve on our record. "One of the secrets to our success is we treat each patient individually and only accept those patients who we feel will benefit from our unique approach," says Dr. Schisler.



Actual reduction of disc bulge using Non-surgical spinal decompression.

In the last 20 years Dr. Schisler has developed proprietary protocols to treat such painful conditions as bulging and herniated discs, spinal stenosis, facet syndrome and sciatica.

At the cornerstone of the technology is the DRX9000- the state of the art, gold standard for all decompression devices.



DRX9000

How it Works: the process creates a negative pressure within the disc drawing in any bulge or herniation. This stimulates "fibroblast activity" producing fresh cells and tissues within the disc. This restorative action allows the damaged disc to heal naturally, and proper function is restored to the spine.

More information can be found at The Disc Centre's of Canada website, www.ontariodisccentre.ca, where you can get a free copy of The Patient's Guide to Severe Back, Neck and Disc Pain immediately.

If you or someone you care about is suffering and looking for a non-surgical solution for back neck or disc pain, there's great news. Mentioning this article will get you a free, no-obligation consultation with [Dr. Schisler](#). Call 519-988-0220 right now, or request your appointment through our website www.windsorspineandlaser.com. *References upon request.



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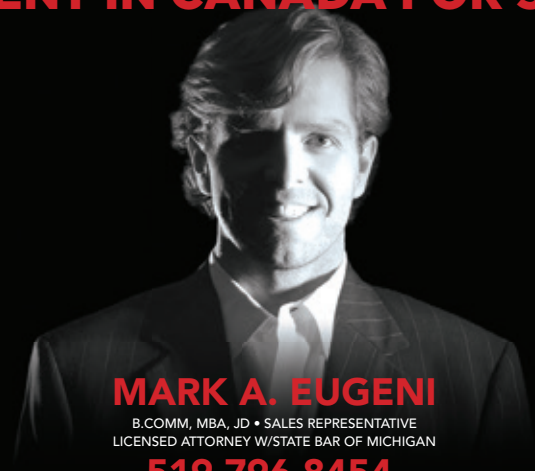
I can list several reasons why Mark and Tina are great realtors due to their experience and knowledge but that's not really what sets them apart from the rest. What sets them apart is their virtue. In the 2 years we spent with The Legal Edge Team, we never felt pressure to buy. When we grew impatient and came close to settling, they could sense our desperation.

They told us, "You need to love the home." And so, we learned a lot during our journey to find a home. The most important being that finding a realtor with experience is easy, finding a realtor with integrity is a challenge. With Mark and Tina, you can have both.

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ROBERT BARAKETT: **WHERE** *Timeless* **CRAFT MEETS** **CANADIAN** *Style*

Robert Barakett is a premier Canadian clothing brand known for its sophisticated designs, superior craftsmanship, and commitment to quality. Founded in Montreal in 1996, the brand embodies the essence of Canadian fashion—effortless, versatile, and built for modern living. With a focus on comfort, durability, and understated elegance, Robert Barakett has become a staple in the wardrobes of style-conscious men and women across North America.

A Proudly Canadian Legacy

The story of Robert Barakett is one deeply rooted in the Canadian textile industry. Montreal, historically known as the fashion capital of Canada, has long been a hub for high-quality garment production. It was here that Barakett, inspired by the city's rich sartorial tradition, launched his brand with the goal of redefining premium casualwear.

Unlike many fast-fashion brands, Robert Barakett takes pride in slow fashion—creating garments that stand the test of time. The brand embraces Canadian values of sustainability and craftsmanship, ensuring each piece is designed with longevity in mind. By sourcing top-quality materials and working with ethical manufacturers, Robert Barakett maintains a commitment to responsible fashion practices that reflect Canada's growing emphasis on environmental consciousness.

The Signature Barakett Tee and More

One of the most celebrated pieces in the collection is the Barakett Tee, a Canadian classic that has gained international recognition. Made from luxurious Pima cotton, this T-shirt exemplifies the brand's dedication to premium fabric selection. With its ultra-soft texture, rich color retention, and long-lasting durability, the Barakett Tee has become a go-to staple for those who appreciate comfort without sacrificing style.

Beyond the iconic T-shirt, Robert Barakett offers a full range of apparel, including polos, sweaters, jackets, and pants—each crafted with a refined yet laid-back aesthetic. The brand's designs resonate with Canadian consumers who appreciate high-quality basics that transition seamlessly from work to weekend.





Influence and Inspiration from Canada

As a designer, Robert Barakett draws inspiration from the natural beauty of Canada, incorporating a palette of earthy tones and subtle textures reminiscent of the country's landscapes. From the deep blues of the Atlantic to the warm autumn hues of Quebec's forests, the colour choices reflect Canada's diverse seasons.

The brand also embodies the Canadian spirit of adaptability. Whether layering for the brisk winters of Montreal or dressing light for the hot summers of Windsor, Robert Barakett's clothing is designed to suit the country's changing climate. This focus on versatility makes the brand a favourite among Canadians who value functional yet stylish apparel.

Expanding Beyond Canada

While Robert Barakett is proudly Canadian, its reputation has grown far beyond national borders. Today, the brand is carried in over 130 specialty stores, including high-end retailers like Freed's, Nordstrom, Von Maur, and Rothmans. Thanks to its expansion, Robert Barakett has introduced Canadian fashion sensibilities to an international audience, proving that quality and understated luxury know no boundaries.

A significant milestone in the brand's growth came in 2016 when it partnered with Jack Victor, another well-respected Montreal-based menswear company. This partnership allowed Robert Barakett to expand its distribution while maintaining its dedication to quality and design excellence.

Sustainability and Ethical Production

As sustainability becomes a defining factor in the fashion industry, Robert Barakett continues to lead by example. The brand emphasizes responsible production practices, ensuring that its garments are crafted with ethical labour and sustainable materials whenever possible. By producing high-quality, long-lasting apparel, Robert Barakett supports the movement against fast fashion and encourages consumers to invest in timeless pieces rather than disposable trends.

A Canadian Brand for the Modern Man

Robert Barakett has successfully positioned itself as a brand for the modern Canadian—one who values style, comfort, and sustainability. Whether dressing for a business meeting in downtown Toronto or enjoying a casual weekend in Whistler, Robert Barakett's clothing provides a refined yet relaxed look that suits any setting.

With a legacy rooted in Montreal's rich fashion history and a vision focused on timeless elegance, Robert Barakett continues to represent the best of Canadian design. As the brand expands and evolves, it remains true to its core principles: superior quality, effortless style, and an unwavering commitment to craftsmanship.


For those seeking a taste of Canadian luxury in everyday wear, Robert Barakett remains an essential name in menswear.



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Local businessman Sonny Borrelli has been appointed as the National Director of Miss Universe® Canada and is bringing the prestigious competition to Windsor. This is a monumental event, as the winner will go on to represent Canada on the global Miss Universe® stage.

The event will feature over 85 contestants from across Canada, competing for the coveted title. This marks the 74th year of Miss Universe® Canada, one of only two countries with such a longstanding history in the pageant.

Exciting Highlights:

Miss Universe® Canada, officially affiliated with Miss Universe®, will take place August 9th, 2025 at the Chrysler Theatre, with the Preliminary event taking place August 7, 2025. Tickets will be available for both events. The reigning Miss Universe® Canada, Ashley Callingbull, will be in attendance, proudly wearing her crown. The competition celebrates women, providing them with a platform to showcase their talents, advocacy, and ambitions.

Commitment to Giving Back:

Every year, Miss Universe® Canada raises funds for charitable causes, including support for children in developing countries. This year, the organization is partnering with the Canadian Mental Health Association to make a meaningful impact. Every contestant's fundraising efforts will contribute to this noble cause, with hopes of breaking records and reaching a \$300,000 donation goal before crowning the winner.

Be Part of the Legacy:

With new leadership and management, the focus is on producing an unforgettable show that uplifts and inspires. Sponsorship opportunities are available for local and national companies looking to support this prestigious event.

Sonny Borrelli,
National Director
Miss Universe® Canada

Madison Kvaltin,
2023 Miss Universe® Canada

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

FOR MORE INFO VISIT: [MISSUNIVERSECANADA.CA](https://missuniversecanada.ca) SONNY BORRELLI, NATIONAL DIRECTOR AT 519-818-9963

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