

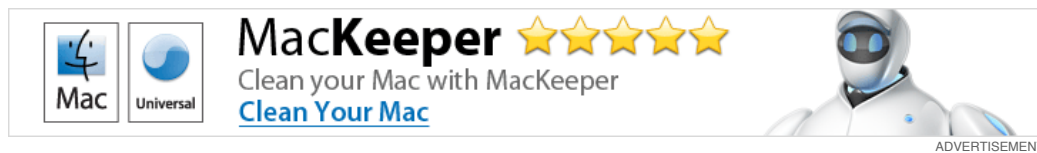
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Recession rebounds: Turning passions into professions

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Scarsdale's Claire Paquin lost her job as a managing director at Bear Stearns in June 2008, and rather than going after another Wall Street position, she decided to open her own interior design firm, Clean Design. "I'm happy with my new life and new career," she says. / Carucha L. Meuse/The Journal News Ricky Flores/The

Written by
**JOURNAL NEWS
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About 8.8 million jobs were wiped out during the economic downturn. And while recent employment numbers indicate the market is improving, it doesn't take a spreadsheet to see that plenty of Americans are still struggling.

In Westchester and Rockland, residents certainly aren't immune to pink slips, but somehow in the face of adversity, many know how to find — or better yet,

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create — opportunity. In fact, we found five recession casualties who, after being shown the door, took their personal passions — pie-baking, plants, exercise, decorating and antiquing — and turned them into new, fulfilling careers.

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Pam Stone, left, combined 20 years of Wall Street experience with her childhood love of antique shows, flea markets and tag sales when she opened The Benefit Shop in Bedford Hills, an antique store that benefits local charities. Her advice for career-changers? "Do what you love," she says. "I am so happy. I'm like the Energizer Bunny. I just love this." / Ricky Flores/The Journal News

Now these folks get to go to work and do what they love most. Even better: They're in charge of their own professional fates — how's that for economy-proof?

Here, these inspiring residents share their journeys and reveal how they turned crisis into triumph. Are you mourning a job loss? In a rut from the recession? There's hope. As these career re-inventors will tell you, sometimes when you lose a good job, you land a better life.

Paul Tappenden, Nyack

Former life: An award-winning painter and fine artist, with a studio in the GAGA Arts Center in Garnerville.

Life today: Founder of Rockland Forager, teaching classes on edible and medicinal plants (the season's first workshop is today at 2 p.m.; 845-304-5822; www.rocklandforager.com).

The journey: Paul Tappenden has done it all: He's taught music and art in Bermuda, played saxophone, fixed musical instruments, worked on movie sets ("Sophie's Choice," "The World According to Garp" and "Trading Places"). He and his wife, Kathy, even sold American encyclopedias door-to-door in Germany.

"That wasn't an easy job," he laughs.

In 2001, after a kidney transplant gave him a new lease on life, he began a career as an artist. For seven years, Tappenden painted commissions, won awards and sold original work at expos and in galleries in New York and Santa Fe.

Then the recession hit.

"I couldn't get galleries to pick up the work anymore," he says.

A longtime nature lover, Tappenden recast himself once again, this time in perhaps his

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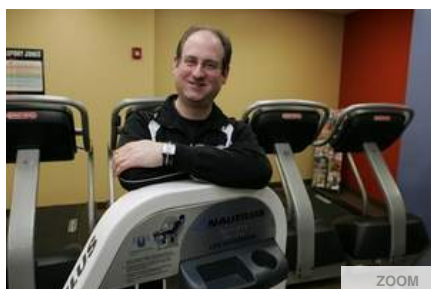
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After losing his job as a financial services manager, White Plains resident Joseph Englander launched an aggressive job search in his field but also kept an eye open for business opportunities. He jumped at the chance to buy the New Rochelle franchise of the Personal Training Institute. "On my 40th birthday I joined a gym — on my 41st, I bought one," he says. / Matthew Brown/The Journal News



Paul Tappenden of South Nyack, an artist, now teaches classes in foraging. "I put my pack on and I think 'What am I going shopping for today?'" says the 64-year-old leader of the "Afternoon and

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the 64-year-old London native. "After years and years of doing this as a hobby, I've got it down." / Vincent DiSalvio/The Journal News



Former film producer Dave Tuttle launched his own pie-baking business. This weekend, he opened a farm-to-table restaurant, Graze, at the Garrison Market. / Joe Larese/The Journal News

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most unusual role — a forager and wild-foods educator. Now, in two-hour classes, he shepherds nature-lovers through Rockland's parks and woods in search of supper, or plants that can be dried for teas or tinctures.

"There's just a resurgence of people wanting to get back to the land and wanting to learn the old ways," he says. "It's about this philosophy of sustainable living."

For those who want to take foraging even further, Tappenden has an eight-month course that will guide you through harvesting and preparing foods and medicines; preserving, canning, twine-making and dyeing. It culminates in a Foragers' Thanksgiving Feast.

"I didn't realize it would be so incredibly popular," says Tappenden, who had six people sign up on word-of-mouth.

For anyone thinking of launching a new career, he offers this: "It's really about networking and getting the word around.

You never know where things are going to come from."

As for Tappenden's own new business, the word appears to be out. In 2011, he'll be doing more than leading tours. "I'm actually going to be making a profit," he says.

Pam Stone, Bedford

Former life: Wall Street broker

Life today: Owner of The Benefit Shop, a Bedford Hills antique store that benefits local charities (720 North Bedford Road, Bedford Hills, 914-602-3348).

The journey: Pam Stone spent 20 years on Wall Street — the last 16 at Needham & Company, where she says she was "their only female partner for years."

Although she enjoyed her "alive and energetic" job, typical workdays began with a 6 a.m. train and ended 12 hours later. "It was very busy, very hectic," Stone says. "At the beginning, my daughter was calling our nanny, 'Mommy.'"

In May 2009, Needham & Company had a round of layoffs, and Stone was let go. While considering new employment options, she recalled her childhood love of antique shows, flea markets and tag sales.

"At six years old, I was collecting tea cannisters and lining them up

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on the shelf in my room; they were very colorful and pretty," she says. "When I was laid off, and I was going to these estate sales, I was thinking, 'I love this so much. I should figure out a way to get in this business, but in a different way.'"

She thought about pairing her lifelong passion with her brokerage skills.

"I was thinking, 'What if I kind of could be a broker, like what I was doing on Wall Street, but I broker the distribution of (donated items) to people in the community, and just let all the proceeds go to charity?'"

She started late last year with a benefit for Northern Westchester Hospital Center — raising \$45,000 in four weeks for the cause — then opened The Benefit Shop, on North Bedford Road, in January. To stock the shop, she frequents estate sales for quality, tax-deductible donations. Napkin rings sell for \$1, furniture can run up to \$4,000 — but you can probably find a nice couch for about \$200.

The sold donations raise cash for local charities, including the Boys and Girls Club, Open Door Family Medical Centers, the Mount Kisco Child Care Center and Neighbors Link.

In the process, Stone applies many of the skills she used in the financial sector.

"It's the same thing on Wall Street: They can spend money on your bank or they can do it elsewhere," Stone adds. "And, at the end of the day, it's relationships. Are you good with people? Do people like working with you?"

Her advice for anyone going through a career change? "Do what you love," she says. "I am so happy. I'm like the Energizer Bunny. I just love this."

Claire Paquin, Scarsdale

Former life: Managing director, Bear Stearns

Life today: Founder of Clean Design, interior design firm (917-363-2356; www.cleandesignpartners.com)

The journey: As a managing director specializing in convertible bond sales at Bear Stearns, Claire Paquin finally felt as if she'd found her professional home. She loved the energy at the investment bank, where she enjoyed strong relationships with her colleagues and her clients.

"I would have been there for the rest of my career," says the 35-year-old.

She was stunned and saddened by the collapse of the once-venerable institution, which failed in part due to risky mortgage-backed securities. Bear Stearns was acquired by rival JPMorgan Chase in 2008, a deal that cost Paquin and thousands of others their jobs.

Though Paquin launched an aggressive job search, interviews at other financial firms left her disinterested. With Wall Street in such turmoil, she wasn't sure if she'd get any job offers anyway.

"So I started to think about what I could do, and what I'd be good at," she says.

Interior design was something that had always held Paquin's interest. Over the years, she'd plunged eagerly into projects for her own home; she'd even spearheaded a few small jobs for friends, including helping to renovate a pal's master bedroom.

She'd never thought about starting her own company before, but once the idea for a design firm popped into her head, she couldn't shake it. Within weeks of leaving Bear Stearns, she'd launched Clean Design and told everyone she knew that she was open for business. Almost instantly, she was hired for three residential jobs.

Soon she signed up for classes at the New York School for Interior Design and began to line up vendors who could create custom-made upholstery, cabinets, window treatments and other specialty items.

Cautious about start-up expenses, she handled all of the initial paperwork herself, saving on the cost of lawyers and accountants. Running Clean Design out of her home kept overhead expenses low.

Her careful planning paid off. By the end of its first year, the company had already turned a profit.

In less than three years, the company's customer base has more than tripled, and Paquin is already wondering if she needs to hire another designer.

"I work way longer hours with my own business than I ever worked on Wall Street," she says. "I'm often working until after midnight."

But Paquin's schedule is more flexible, which means she's able to see her children more. She's also able to volunteer. Recently she read to school children at a local literacy fair, "something I never would have been able to do working 7 to 7 in Manhattan."

So what would Paquin's advice be to anyone thinking about starting a company? Be confident, but get ready to roll up your sleeves.

"You have to be a go-getter and willing to put the hours in," she says. "When you own your own business, you only get out of it what you put into it."

Joseph Englander, White Plains

Former life: Financial services executive, including manager of investment operations for a Greenwich, Conn., insurance firm

Life today: Owner of a small gym, a franchise of the Personal

Training Institute, in New Rochelle (1293 North Ave., New Rochelle; 914-740-4118; www.personaltraininginstitute.com/clubs/newrochelle).

The journey: After earning his MBA from the Columbia Business School in 1997, Englander held a series of jobs in the financial services industry, managing client services and operations. He seemed to have found a comfortable niche in the business community, and the jobs paid well.

But that all came to an end in November 2009, when he lost his job at a Greenwich insurance firm (he can't name the company because of confidentiality agreements). The timing couldn't have been worse, says Englander. "It was my oldest son's birthday, the day before my wedding anniversary, a week before we were set to refinance our mortgage and a month before my third son was born."

He was devastated, of course, but he tried to see his job loss as an invitation to try something else, perhaps something that would put him more in charge of his own destiny — and offer job security. "I had always wanted to own my own business and I decided to buy one before my savings ran out," he remembers.

But with two young sons and a wife who was also unemployed, he kept looking for work in finance.

"First I decided to look for another job in financial services and — on a parallel track — to look to buy an existing business," he says. "So I was looking for a job but also looking for business opportunities."

He talked to lots of firms and headed into Manhattan for several rounds of job interviews. "If a job had come along, I would have gone back," he says. "It came down to whichever came up first — a business opportunity or another job in financial services."

Meanwhile, being unemployed, Englander had lots more time to hit the gym and for the first time, began meeting with a personal trainer. So when Englander heard that the New Rochelle franchise of the Personal Training Institute was for sale, everything just kind of clicked into place.

"I came to understand that the core concept of PTI — one-to-one personal training and nutrition — was a formula that really works," he says. "After a couple of months of due diligence and much discussion, I decided to pursue this business."

He closed the deal on his birthday last June, eight months after losing his job. As Englander says, "On my 40th birthday I joined a gym — on my 41st, I bought one."

To get the business going, he's putting in a lot of hours — at the gym by 8:30 a.m. at least five days a week and home for dinner, hopefully, by 7 in the evening.

But he's crazy about the flexibility that comes with being your own boss. "I certainly have more time with my family than if I was still commuting," he says. "If I need to do a day-care pickup or attend a school play, I can."

The Personal Training Institute is all about face time with a trainer (Englander has 10 on staff). Clients set up 30-minute training sessions and they're never alone when working out, except for the time on the cardio equipment.

"It's a smaller, more comfortable environment for people who don't feel at home in what we call big-box gyms," Englander explains.

His advice to other career changers? "Do your homework," he says. "But understand that there will be surprises. I never could have predicted that I would own a gym at this point in my life," he says. Meanwhile, Englander continues to work out and get into shape, right alongside his clients.

"Most people need a lot of motivation to exercise," he says. "I needed so much motivation I had to buy a gym!"

Dave Tuttle, Croton-on-Hudson

Former life: Television and movie producer with more than 20 years experience, including production supervisor at New York Times Television and founding partner and executive vice president of the Shooting Gallery, a cooperative for independent filmmakers that produced 26 feature films in 10 years.

Life today: Pie-baker extraordinaire and founder and owner of Tuttle's Homemade (at the Garrison Market, 1135 Route 9D, Garrison; 845-424-6300; www.garrisonmar-ket.com; www.tuttleshomemade.com.) This weekend, Tuttle is opening a small-plates, farm-to-table restaurant called Graze at the Garrison Market. It will be open from 6 to 10 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.)

The journey: Starting in 2005, when, in a cost-cutting move, The New York Times wiped out his division, Tuttle lost a series of jobs in the film industry. The slide culminated in late 2008 when the Independent Feature Project eliminated his position as executive producer of the Gotham Awards.

"For a good solid year, I made it my full-time job to get back into TV and film production," Tuttle said. "But the industry had dried up — there was nothing going on in New York."

He expanded his search to include cultural institutions and local media, too.

"My unemployment was running out — not that it was ever much to begin with — and I began to see there was very little hope for me to re-enter the business," says Tuttle, who had two teenagers and a wife in graduate school.

Then one night Tuttle brought a fresh-baked pie to a dinner party. There, his wife said to him, 'Honey, you have to do something — you have to try something,' " he remembers.

Well, why not pie? A self-taught baker, he's always been good with any kind of food. And so Tuttle's Homemade launched in late 2009.

He started out slowly, sending weekly email blasts to friends telling them what he was baking and offering to deliver a freshly baked pie — handmade and with nothing but seasonal fruit gathered from Hudson Valley farms — right to their doorsteps.

His wife was working as a special education teacher at Northern Westchester-Putnam BOCES in Yorktown Heights, so on Friday afternoons, Tuttle would load up his trunk with just-baked pies and sell them, for \$20 each, in the BOCES parking lot.

"My poor wife and family — they had no access to the kitchen when I was working, and the house was full of flour," he remembers. Before long, he was making dozens of pies a week, way too many for his home kitchen. So he began to borrow time and space in Croton restaurant kitchens. To make ends meet, he also waited tables in those same restaurants.

"It was very difficult to produce the amount of pies I wanted out of borrowed kitchens," he says. "I couldn't bake when I wanted to bake."

"By then, all my savings, my IRA, my kids' college funds were gone," he adds. "I was broke. I was working and I had a business, but I was broke."

Still, he was getting great word of mouth around town: That Dave Tuttle, he can really bake a pie — have you had one? His double-crust fruit pies were showing up on restaurant menus and sold at local markets like Grouchy Gabe's and the Hilltop Farms Market.

Finally, around last July, Tuttle's luck began to turn when he formed a partnership with the owner of the Garrison Market, which had a big, underused kitchen that would be just the spot to turn up the heat on Tuttle's Homemade. Last Thanksgiving, he cranked out 250 pies in five days, all made by his swift, gifted hands. At the height of berry season last summer, 300 pies a week flew out of Garrison Market's busy ovens.

Despite all the long hours, aching muscles and money anxieties that have defined Tuttle since he lost his job, he remains relentlessly upbeat and optimistic about the future. And he encourages anyone going through a job loss to be positive, too.

"I was able to humble myself, he says. "I had to get over the fact that I was waiting tables and serving dinner to my friends. Once I was able to do that, I was able to find things, create opportunities that I hadn't been able to see."

And speaking of creating opportunity, now Tuttle is looking for ways

to grow and expand Tuttle's Homemade. "I'm still trying to figure out how to ship a pie," he laughs. "I now get requests from all over the country."

Bill Cary

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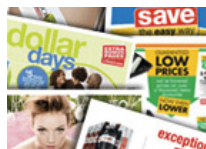
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