

for

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Roy Saper and his son Jay are pictured in the garden on the roof of Saper Galleries in East Lansing, Mich. Saper, who used picture frames to create solar panels, donated fruits, vegetables, and herbs to the Greater Lansing Food Bank, where he is a member of the board of directors.

Framer helps food bank

Saper Galleries uses frames for solar panels in rooftop garden

Roy Saper, owner of **Saper Galleries** in East Lansing, Mich., not only helps people choose beautiful art and have treasures custom framed – he also is helping the needy by growing food in a garden on the 1,500-square-foot flat roof of the building he has occupied for 23 of his 31 years in business.

Saper donated a harvest of fruits, vegetables, and herbs to the **Greater Lansing Food Bank**, where he is a member of the board of directors and has seen a great need in these challenging economic times.

“The demand for emergency food needs by many is greater than ever before,” he says. “To create a productive rooftop garden that benefits those with the greatest need is a small step that may motivate others to similarly find creative ways to make a difference in their local communities.”

Saper, who started the rooftop container garden last spring with his son **Jay**, also put extra picture frames from his gallery to unusual use. He built three solar panels to see if they would work on a small scale before investing in a larger project.

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The new member list is published separately on inserted pages.

Each solar panel produces a maximum of 63 watts – a little more than a 60-watt light bulb. They power a computer, a 20-watt outdoor security light, and a webcam that monitors the plants, reducing the need for frequent climbs up a ladder to the roof.

Saper, who hopes to expand the rooftop garden and solar panels this year, would like to see more businesses and individuals using roofs to harness solar energy.

“If larger businesses follow our lead, together we can make progress toward reducing our carbon footprint, while increasing the productivity of our building space,” he says.

The rooftop garden is another feather in Saper’s cap, in a long career that has seen his gallery showered with awards.

It’s a long way from humble beginnings in 1978, when Saper saw customers by appointment, in his home, a business called **20th Century Fine Arts** he started after completing graduate studies in economics at **Michigan State University**. By 1985, he was ready for a brick-and-mortar gallery, finding a “junky, vacant lot” and designing his dream.

In May 1986, Saper Galleries was born – one week after the birth of his son **Adam**.

Two years later, the gallery won a Crystal Award from the City of East Lansing, the

Saper’s six tips for success

1. Focus on what you know best.
2. Have a strong commitment.
3. Don’t treat it like a job. Do it because you enjoy it.
4. Don’t copy others. Wipe the slate clean, create something so it is the best that has ever been created, and make it unique.
5. Build a relationship with customers, and give them the time and attention they deserve.
6. Listen to what customers say, and give them exactly what they want.

first year the awards were given.

In 2003, Saper – who has been collecting artwork since his teens – was named Outstanding Small Business Person of the Year by the **Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce**, and his gallery was named one of the Top 100 galleries in the country by *Décor Magazine*.

In 2007, *Décor Magazine* presented Saper with its top award for his 2006 **Picasso** exhibition. In August 2009, the gallery received the national Award of Excellence for Best Gallery Exhibition from *Art Business News* for its 2008 exhibit, *The Art of Dr. Seuss*.



Roy Saper, owner of Saper Galleries, is pictured with staff members Jennifer Cuthbert and Nathalie McGill, CPF.

“Green” gallery

Roy Saper, owner of **Saper Galleries** in East Lansing, Mich., has conserved natural resources and used green business practices for more than two decades. He minimizes paper usage by processing internet orders electronically, including invoicing and appraisals, recycles extensively, and donates scrap material to reduce trash output.

Throughout its 6,000-square-foot building, Saper Galleries relies mostly on natural daylight through numerous skylights up to 48 feet long. Lights are rarely turned on and, when used, are programmed to dim down when spaces are not occupied.

UV-filtering on the double-layer skylights reduces heat during warmer months and provides additional insulation. Ceilings, roof, and 14-inch-thick walls are highly insulated so the high-efficiency zoned furnaces rarely cycle on in the gallery.

Local newspaper readers consistently laud his business as Favorite Art Gallery, Best Art Gallery, and Best of the Best for art gallery and custom framing.

How does Saper garner such loyalty and success, especially in the current economy?

He and his staff members – **Jennifer Cuthbert**, who is in her 15th year with the gallery, and **Nathalie McGill**, CPF – will help everyone find and enjoy fine art, whether it’s a corporation or a college student, a beginning collector who pays \$30 for a signed print, or a sophisticated connoisseur shelling out hundreds of thousands of dollars who gets top-notch treatment, including courtesy invitations to artist studios, private dinners and visits with artists, signed and dedicated books from artists, and other special and unexpected courtesies.

Saper can’t be found behind a desk in an office while his staff meets customers. He is showing patrons around his 6,000-square-foot gallery, sharing information about the art and artists, and serving as a personal guide to exhibits.

“What differentiates this gallery from many is the welcoming and comfortable, friendly feeling all experience from the moment they arrive and throughout their visit,” he says. “We treat everyone with the highest degree of respect and courtesy,



Saper Galleries owns and inventories more than 1,500 original works of art by 150 artists – paintings, drawings, limited edition prints, sculptures, hand-blown glass, raku, bas-reliefs, Polages, kinetic light sculptures, mobiles, marble vases, and holographs. Services include art selection assistance, special commissions, appraisal services, archival-quality matting and framing, conservation and restoration services, and installation services worldwide.

and provide helpful and knowledgeable assistance, time, and expertise to guide our visitors.

“This business has been built one transaction at a time by giving all we can to make the client’s experience the best possible.”

World-class exhibitions

Since opening the present building in 1986, **Saper Galleries** has created more than 30 major exhibitions, including **Norman Rockwell**; Three Generations of the **Pissarro** Family; Meeting of the Masters: **Rembrandt** and **Picasso**; From Pop to Patriotism: **Peter Max** Comes to East Lansing; and The Art of **Dr. Seuss**, among others.

Saper says he prefers fewer exhibitions and making them the most exciting and informative shows possible.

“I achieve that by dedicating months – and many times years – researching and building the collection and writing about it so visitors take away much more than they expect when they come to the exhibition.

“It’s easy to simply hang artwork; but that, in my mind, is not the way to build an exhibition. A noteworthy exhibition tells a story about the art, the artist, and influences guiding the artist’s creativity. I like to create exhibitions that get people excited and have them smiling, brimming with the joy of new-found knowledge they gained from their visit.”

While the economy has somewhat impacted walk-in business, online sales have exploded. In recent months, the gallery website attracted visitors from 96 countries, speaking 28 different languages. Saper might know some of them. He has traveled to Australia, China, Europe, Japan, and South America in pursuit of art, although the internet also provides an effective mode of establishing contact and doing business with artists around the world.

The gallery also is well known locally. Professional offices, corporations, and associations receive personalized assistance selecting works of art.

Designers often use Saper Galleries as an art division of their businesses, leaving the selection, acquisition, framing, and installation to Saper and his team. The gallery has won contracts from hospitals, attorneys, medical facilities,

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financial institutions, associations, hotels, government offices, and universities.

Locally, custom framed art graces the wall of the **Michigan State University Federal Credit Union** board room, and the gallery designed and had cast a set of bronze sculptures for the entrance to the **Lansing Lugnuts** baseball stadium.

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Of 1,000 artists a year who hope to make it into the gallery, Saper selects about four. It doesn't matter if they're renowned or unknowns. He represents what he loves, viewing the gallery as an extension of his own living room.

“Our greatest success results from simply practicing the Golden Rule. Give everyone the time they deserve, have patience, and treat them just as you would want someone to treat your parents,” he says.

Lifetime relationships developed with clients result from finding what they want; committing to providing the most responsive, helpful assistance possible; and,



Roy Saper started his business in 1978 in his home. Saper Galleries opened in May 1986, and has garnered awards and kudos ever since. It also has created more than 30 major exhibitions.

most important, never saying no, he says. It's the reason he's still in business after three decades.

“If every visitor is treated with a consistent level of respect, courtesy, and kindness – all coupled with the highest level of knowledge about the artists and services we provide – the client receives what they expect; but

that is not even enough for me. I always want to deliver to our clients more than they would reasonably expect.

“The testimonials on our website provide evidence that delivering beyond expectations provides a high level of satisfaction for all parties, and lifetime clients for our services.” ♦

PPFA framer on PMA TV

See how these two segments on local cable TV attracted new business

A prehistoric shark's tooth, a Confederate battle flag from the Civil War, and an alimony check signed by baseball great **Babe Ruth** are among the fascinating items **Fran Gray**, MCPF, has framed.

Gray, owner of **Roney's Creative Picture Framing** in Florence, S.C., was featured on “Value TV,” part of a 30-minute program, running 64 times a month in South Carolina. In the show, Gray also discusses how to provide value for customers, and the importance of Certified Picture Framer and Master Certified Picture Framer designations.

A photograph preserves a moment in time forever; but very old photographs – perhaps the only existing images of loved ones – are often torn, in pieces, or with spots missing. Photo restoration and preservation are the focus of a second “Value TV” segment featuring Gray, in which she also explains Visualization Services, where she can show customers on her computer what the finished framed item will look like, before she even starts the project.

Both these TV segments are available on **PMA TV**. Visit www.ppfa.com and click on Marketing Toolkit in the top toolbar. They also are posted to the PPFA Framers Corner Forum at www.ppfa.com. ♦