

Man of the Year Mark Barbero



Our Man of the Year, Mark Barbero, can be found at Debbie Supply located on Commercial Street in East Rochester. If you are looking for a tool or part not found in the big box stores, check with him.

Debbie Supply opened its doors in 1957. In June 2024, 67 years later, the business received a special honor. Located on Commercial Street in East Rochester, it has been designated as a historic New York business. Mark Barbero, after earning his business degree, took over ownership from his father, Frank Barbero. His father and two uncles, Doc and Frank started the business. Mark will tell you that his Uncle Doc, a plumber, wanted to buy a toilet flapper, and after having difficulty locating one decided to open their own shop. The Barbero family were among several Italian immigrants to East Rochester. They worked in car shops, the piano shops, paper mills, and built refrigerated rail cars.

Although the original owners are deceased now, the store and its community are Mark's flesh and blood and he spends from 8 am until 8 pm on most days running the store. Having endured competition from big box stores, his focus is still about his customers. The founders of Debbie Supply were sons of some of the first Italian immigrants. Mark learned from his parents to work hard and persevere. But above all, he learned that people matter.

About the store name: his father and uncles wanted a one-word, catchy name like Kodak or Xerox. Mark's cousin was born the same year the store opened. Her name was Debbie, and so it became the name of the store. Looking for some obscure part or tool? It can probably be found at Debbie's. This is what keeps Mark going—being able to hand someone a part that cannot be found anywhere else and he is always willing to go the extra mile.

Debbie Supply is also known for giving back to the community and for making a difference. There is a kitchen located in the back of the store where they prepare weekly meals for employees, and host an annual holiday party with a large Italian buffet. They support schools and other local organizations with not just money, but also space and supplies for fundraising efforts.