

OXFORD BANK SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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Every local business has a story worth sharing with the community. That is the belief behind Oxford Bank's "Business Spotlight" series – to shine spotlight on all of our favorite local businesses and connect businesses with their surrounding communities.

With over 25 years of industry experience, Hamilton's is dedicated to keeping customers warm and cozy even in the harshest climates. After operating the business as a fuel company, Bob Kratt noticed an increase in propane use. In order to ensure customer satisfaction, he set out to offer reliable propane service to those in the Ortonville, Michigan, area. I had the pleasure of talking with Jeremy Kratt, son of Robert Kratt who founded Hamilton's Propane. Here's what we got to know about this great local business!



AW: What inspired you to start your business?

JK: My dad, Bob Kratt, started Hamilton's in 1979 by purchasing Hamilton's Feed and Heat store in downtown Ortonville. The store catered to the area for many years. In 1988, he saw an opportunity to venture into propane, and opened Hamilton's Propane. We have over 25 years' experience and have always been family-owned and operated. Myself and my two brothers work here as well.

AW: What products/services do you sell?

JK: We have always been in the business to help make our customers' life warm and cozy. We not only take care of their propane needs, but we offer appliances such as washers and dryers, grills, stoves, generators, and more. We have always wanted to be an easy stop of our customers so they can take care of many of their home needs right here in our storefront.

AW: What's one thing your business is known for, over your competitors? Why are you known for that?



JK: At our family-owned-and-operated business, we strive to provide impeccable customer service. With the help of Hamilton's Propane, you'll never have to go without heat or pay unreasonable prices. Our ultimate goal is to provide excellent, convenient services to our clients. That's why we opened an additional service location in Otisville, Michigan, and a filling station in Fenton, Michigan. We are currently in the process of building a site in Howell, Michigan as well. That project is looking to be completed by Spring 2018.

AW: What has been your business' proudest moment? Why?

JK: A customer thanking us for our great service is our pride and joy. Other proud moments happen when we are able to help make the working life better for our employees that receive these great responses from our customers. We have 38 employees, 18 of which are drivers. When we can purchase a new truck or new equipment, that's a big deal. We strive to offer a great work environment for our employees.

AW: What has been the biggest risk you ever took for your business? What was it, what could have gone wrong, and what was the end result?

JK: Our risk is always how much supply to purchase and when to do it. It is always a gamble. Our customers can prepay for their propane for the year and this can fluctuate which can affect our business and bottom line too. We are here to service all of our customers across a large footprint. It is risky business being in the home heat industry with a lot of the changes that have come along in the last several years to stay eco-friendly and also money saving. We are thankful for the customers we have and that they continue to allow us to serve them year after year.



AW: Tell us something interesting/fun about your business.

JK: We love to collect memorabilia. If you stop into our locations, you may see a Detroit Tigers Jersey on the wall or even a few seats from the old Tigers Stadium. We love to support local not-for-profit organizations and enjoy giving back to charity. We have gained most of these items from auctions and charity events in our community. It's a great way to give back and we enjoy the pieces we have collected.

AW: What is your favorite product that you sell?

JK: Generators! I love to sell generators. They are good for the whole house. It is a piece of insurance that we give to our customers when we install them. They won't have to ever worry about being out of heat or power during a storm with our generators.



Hamilton's Propane

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