



**IGNITE grows: Welcome to our new Steering Committee members (pictured above from left to right)**

- Jim Casasanta, *Mechanical Systems and Design Engineer*, Carrier Corporation
- Kevin Donnelly, Fire Fighter, Auburn Fire Department
- Jennie Huling, *Domestic Violence Advocate/Educator*, Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency
- Dan Lovell, *Director of Technology and Digital Communications*, United Way of Central New York
- Amanda Sigona, *Payer Recovery Specialist*, Upstate Medical University
- Doug Weed, General Manager, New Hope Mills



**IGNITE on the move: Downtown Auburn Holiday Parade** This year for the first time, IGNITE participated in the Holiday Parade that made its way through Downtown Auburn. It was great driving through a cheering crowd and only one balloon popped on the way. The rest of them were given out to future young pros afterwards. The kids loved it and so did we!

**IGNITE clarifies: What is a young professional?** It appears that young people in the community seem to have a hard time defining “young professional” and figuring out if they belong to that category or not, hence if IGNITE is for them or not. Let’s talk about that.


We believe the term “young professionals organization” was coined simply for lack of a better alternative. That’s why each of those organizations has to come up with its own definition of who they want to appeal to and attract, be it based on age only, years in a career, type of career, or all of the above. In essence, they are all trying to engage the next generation, the “net” generation or generation “Y” – but all those terms wouldn’t sound that great in a name, just think about “IGNITE - Cayuga County’s Next Generation.”

IGNITE’s mission states that the organization is governed by young professionals and that it aims to empower members to recognize and enhance the value of living and working in Cayuga County by connecting people and ideas. You see already that this is a very broad interpretation, and here is why.

*Governed by young professionals.* Our steering committee members who lead the program and carry out activities are below forty years of age. That’s probably the only commonality; otherwise they are very diverse. They work in the public, private, non-profit, service and education sector. Some own their own business, others are civil servants or part of a family business. They are in their twenties and thirties, single, in a relationship, married, about to get married, with and without children. We proudly cover a wide variety of industries, personalities and backgrounds.

*Connecting people and ideas.* This is probably the core message. We want to connect young people with the rest of the community, so we can all come together and work towards making it even better. We can’t and we don’t want to do it alone, so we need to engage in a dialogue with other community members and leaders, pick their brains, exchange ideas, collaborate and involve as many people as possible. The people you’ll meet and the connections you’ll make will be invaluable.

So, the real question is not whether you are a young professional, but rather if our aspirations for this community are in line with yours. If what you just read speaks to you, then IGNITE is right for you.

 **Upcoming event:**  
December 13: “Tour, taste & shop” at New Hope Mills on York Street