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## John G. Ullman & Associates Doing Things Right

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## 40 and still growing

When I produce these Re-Discover Corning pieces, I'm usually amazed at how certain aspects of life in Corning - a city that I was born and raised in - have completely flown under my radar.

John G. Ullman and Associates, located at 51 East Market Street, is just such a place.

In business on Market Street since 1978 - John G. Ullman and Associates is celebrating 40 years of serving the community's financial needs in August. Over the four decades, Ullman and Associates has not just survived - it has truly thrived.

What began in an 11x15.5-foot office space, Ullman and Associates now occupies more than 13,000 square feet of space on Market Street (in five buildings).

During this 40th anniversary year, plans are in the works to continue growing into a larger space on Daniel Zenker Drive - more than 28,000 square feet to be precise - while maintaining the company's current Market Street presence.

The company's philosophy is to help clients plan for a lifetime of financial security, creating highly customized financial plans to manage, grow, and protect wealth.

It was the dream of a younger John Ullman.

"When I finished up graduate school at the University of Chicago, I wanted to do this business concept that I had evolved when I was quite young," Ullman said. "The concept was that many people have complexity in their financial management - can have multiple people working with them. It can be a financial planner, an asset manager, a CPA



John Ullman, a big supporter of the Buffalo Bills, seated, and Jason Nickerson at the company's current headquarters at 51 East Market Street. (SHAWN VARGO/THE LEADER)

or someone doing the tax work, insurance agents, stockbrokers, an attorney working on wills, pension consultants. Each one might have a bit of a niche.

"The concept that evolved was - how about if there was one place that's totally committed to the highest standards of ethics and values with no conflicts of interest and try to do it all."

The concept was placed on hold while Ullman sought his first job after college. After finishing school, Ullman visited Corning to discuss a job offer from Corning Glass Works.

“I had a lot of offers coming out of graduate school. The thing that differentiated Corning Glass Works from the others was two things,” Ullman said. “It was my lowest offer, because of the community and it being rural. But it was certainly a good offer.”



**John Ullman, center, along with Meghann LaFortune and Paul Peck, visit the company's future office space on Daniel Zenker Drive.** [SHAWN VARGO/THE LEADER]

“The second was that community really intrigued us. This is a unique place in the United States. There was no city or village that headquartered a company the size of Corning that was as small as Corning, New York. Corning Inc. is a world-class company that is so involved with the community. That makes this place extremely special.”

After working five different jobs with three divisions with the Glass Works, Ullman made a fateful move at a critical time in his life.

“My 30th birthday was emotional in the sense that I figured if I did not do this business at some near period of time, I wouldn't have the opportunity,” Ullman said. “So I worked closely with a significant number of senior Corning executives. I was helping many of them with finances as a hobby. No financial benefit to me.”

“And when I approached them in the early summer of 1978 about starting the business, I was very fortunate they all said we're in - so we had a board of directors of seven - four were senior Corning executives, the other three of us remain on the board. Dr. Cole and me and my wife.”

And the business was launched.

One of the most amazing things about Ullman and Associates is the dedication of the employees. It's literally been the last job most employees have ever had.

Tom Snow and Julie Owen have been a part of the company for more than 36 years. Karen Meriwether and Nora Smith are 35-year members of the team, while Kate Gerwig has been on board for 31 years.

Out of 53 employees in 2016-17, 20 people had major anniversaries of 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 or 35 years, Ullman said.

“Our goal is for people to be here for their careers,” Ullman said.

Ullman's philosophy has been the key many said.

“This is exactly what I was looking for. A firm that was centered around the best interest of the client,” Senior Vice President Jason Nickerson said. “Knowing that was the backbone - not product sales, was extremely important to me. I don't plan on going anywhere. I hope to retire from here someday.”

It was an honor to get a tour of the facilities from Ullman and watch him interact with every employee. Ullman especially enjoyed introducing me to the long-timers, but was just as enthusiastic with the newcomers.

It will be interesting to keep an eye on the company as it prepares to make the move into its new building later in the year, while adding more staff members and maintaining its lofty standards.

To learn more about John G. Ullman and Associates, visit their website at [jgua.com](http://jgua.com).

Feel free to submit more “Re-Discover Corning” ideas by emailing me at [svargo@the-leader.com](mailto:svargo@the-leader.com).