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## Coming home to grow a business

### King Ferry native makes significant lifestyle change

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On the surface, the world of mechanical engineering and shoe manufacturing might not seem to have a lot in common.

In fact they may seem worlds apart, save for at least one unifying factor, David Binns, owner and president of the Aurora Shoe Company.

Before purchasing the Aurora Shoe Company in January, Binns was an operations manager for Georgia Pacific in Plattsburgh, but the King Ferry native was looking for a different kind of job and an opportunity to forge his own path.

"I always wanted to own my own business," Binns said. "I grew up here and my wife and I wanted to start a family and we are expecting our first child in July. At Georgia Pacific I was working 24-7, I was always on call. It was a lot of pressure. And there is a lot of pressure here because now it is my own business and whatever happens rest on my shoulders, but I am much more comfortable with this. It is a very fulfilling feeling for myself."

The Aurora Shoe Company was originally founded by Mary Jane Dann in Aurora in 1991 and began manufacturing shoes based on 16th-century styles from various cultures from China to Mexico to England - styles that Binns said have continued to endure and have a timeless element that continues to make them appealing.

Growing up in the area, Binns was more than familiar with the shoes.

"I bought my first pair when I was 13," Binns said. "And I have had a pair ever since."

When Binns and his wife were contemplating their move from Plattsburgh, Binns saw that Dann had put the business up for sale and it seemed like the perfect opportunity.

Since taking over the business, Binns has had a crash course in shoe manufacturing, but he said he has been fortunate to have a good guidance.

"Mary Jane has agreed to stay on," Binns said. "She has been a big help and we have eight employees that are all the same since Mary Jane started the business. There are 85 combined years of experience here."

While a great deal of the Aurora Shoe Company's business has been directed to the overseas market of Japan, the shoes are also available locally... There is a selection of factory shoes available only directly at the shoe factory in Aurora, for up to 50 percent off the U.S. retail price.

"We target customers who put comfort and quality ahead of fashion trends, are eco-conscious, and appreciate the value of a handcrafted pair of footwear," Binns said. "In an industry that is dominated by imports, we are proud to produce all of our shoes in the USA at our small factory in Aurora."

Binns said that the company has a strong base of clients in Ithaca and the surrounding areas, which is something he hopes to continue to build on and increase domestic sales through the company's Web site, [www.aurorashoeco.com](http://www.aurorashoeco.com).

A great deal of the appeal of these shoes, Binns believes is that they are one of the few products these days to be made almost completely domestically.

Aurora also promotes itself as providing a one-of-a-kind service that is difficult for other companies to match.

"It is all about the fit," Binns said. "With shoes, getting just the right fit is incredibly important and that is something we can do, we can make sure the fit is right for each person. We want each person to have a shoe that fits and works for them."

Binns said that the company also guarantees its shoes.

"The leather can last a lifetime," Binns said. "The sole is usually what wears out and people can bring their shoes into us and we will re-sole them. We want them to have something that will last for many years and they will be happy with."

Binns believes that the company's dedication to detail and service can ensure a strong future for the company and he is looking toward a strong future.

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