# Portraits of Western New York

**By Staff**
*Published October 3, 2019 | Updated January 16, 2020*

***Photography by James P. McCoy/Buffalo News***

To those who have never been here, Buffalo is our sports teams, or our weather, or maybe even our food. Those of us who call Buffalo home know it's something else: our people. But it's much more than the famous people whose names and faces you recognize. That's what Portraits of Western New York will celebrate, as each week we introduce you to someone who calls this region home. You might not think you know any of them. But if you are from Buffalo, you will know all of them.

## Joey Todaro: Carrying on the Todaro chicken wing legacy

Even if you've never heard of Joey Todaro, if you live in Buffalo, you've probably heard of his family's business: La Nova Wings. He's the fourth generation of the Todaro family to work there.

"I grew up knowing that I, my siblings and cousins would all join the family business because of our love and passion for pizza and wings and rich family history," Todaro said.

Todaro, who grew up in North Buffalo and was the first in his family to graduate from college, traces his roots in the industry right to childhood.

"My parents used to take me out to eat at a very young age and the different food cultures gave me a more explorative and imaginative food appreciation."

He joined La Nova right after earning a degree in food service management from Johnson and Wales University. "Days change all the time," he said. "I travel from trade show or sales conferences to creating pizza and chicken wing masterpieces at the pizzerias, or La Nova's state-of-the-art R&D kitchen."

"I'm a diehard Bills and Sabres fan, so you know I have patience for the ever changing food scene!"

• • •

**How he got the shot:** Chicken wings, it turns out, are more difficult to photograph than you might expect. (You can thank the grease for that.) It took four strobes, four people — McCoy; Todaro; Todaro's brother, Dante; and Todaro's father, Joey III — and more than 100 chicken wings to get this final image,

"The specular reflections on the metal bowl are very difficult to avoid. I selected the light direction that would minimize the highlights and reflections from the bowl and the sauce on the wings," McCoy said.

One light went underneath the bowl; two lights went at the sides at 180-degree angles, pointing at each other; and a fourth was positioned to illuminate Todaro's face.

"I had Joey shake the bowl and flip the wings toward him. He only had about 10 wings inside the bowl. Joey's brother Dante stood on a ladder directly over him and dropped the majority of the wings into the bowl on my command. Joey's father, Joey III, wiped the bowl after each shot was taken."

"It took several attempts to get the sauce texture the way I wanted it," he added. "The entire shoot took over two hours."