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As AI and fraud risks multiply, demand for forensic accounting surges.

# ROCHESTER BUSINESS JOURNAL

VOLUME 41 NUMBER 14

Part of the BRIDGETOWER MEDIA network

AUGUST 29

## L3Harris' Rochester operations fuel company's defense growth



Photo provided by L3Harris

## Leaders in Construction & Real Estate Projects honored



By RBJ Staff

The Rochester Journal & Observer announced 14 individuals as 2025 Leaders in Construction & Real Estate. The winners include 14 companies as 2025 Top Projects winners. The 2025 Leaders in Construction & Real Estate Awards recognize individuals and companies changing the landscape of the industry.

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By ANDREA DECKERT

L3Harris Technologies' tactical communications segment in the Rochester region continues to be a major revenue driver for the multibillion-dollar defense

contractor, supported by strong demand from U.S. and allied militaries.

With billions in new defense contracts, expanding manufacturing capacity and a deep pipeline of local talent, L3Harris' Rochester operations remain at the center

of the company's global communications business, company leaders said.

Sam Mehta, president of the Communications Systems segment — which includes the Rochester-based tactical com-

## Cheryl Snead and The Esther Project: A mission of compassion rooted in experience and faith

By VELVET SPICER  
for LaLew Public Relations

For Cheryl Snead, the work of the Esther Project is not just a job — it's a calling rooted in personal experience, enduring faith and a deep commitment to community. As she puts it, "We're in full swing with just about every program that we have." And those programs — ranging from transitional housing to teen education — are



Cheryl Snead

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## Food by DeLeo shifts focus to elite catering in Rochester

By KEVIN OKLOBZIJA

When Jason DeLeo decided to add a prepared meals line to his food service business 10 years ago, he was driven by passion.

His own weight struggles, due in part to a back injury, made him realize there was a need in the marketplace for healthy, pre-made meals. He found a niche and the new product line was a nice complement for his catering business.

But over the years, he found that consumer desires can change, as can chef preferences. DeLeo realized he needed to pivot. Food by DeLeo dropped the Meals by DeLeo prepared food line and once again became a catering-only venture, one he launched in 2002.



Jason DeLeo

"Business was always good," he said of prepared meals, "but the craze kind of died down. I enjoyed working with the people, but the margins were so very, very small."

So, while his heart said prepared meals needed to remain a part of the business, the balance sheet — and his son — said otherwise.

Executive chef Antonio DeLeo, like his father a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, had joined Food by DeLeo to start 2023. He gained industry experience at Michelin-rated restaurants in New York City and the Silicon Valley before returning home to join his father in the kitchen.

"He appreciated the (prepared meals) business but he said he didn't want to serve leftovers," Jason DeLeo said.

That's because Antonio DeLeo, along with sous chef David Degroat, believed

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### FOOD BY DELEO

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it made much more sense to build an elite catering business.

"They were trying to get me to see it in a different way," the elder DeLeo said.

He finally made the decision to exit the prepared meals sector and focus solely on catering in the fall of 2023. But only after meeting with a group of business mentors.

When you change the business model, it's never a bad idea to tap into the knowledge of others. He met with his trusted advisors; he passed around his profit and loss statement and they discussed the future of his business without prepared meals.

"There were six of us and we were pretty much split," DeLeo said. "It wasn't an easy choice for business people to see, but by the end of conversation I made a believer out of them."

"We put together a plan and moved forward. We said, 'Let's change the way we do catering and how Rochester sees catering.'"

Food by DeLeo is now strictly catering. The company headquarters on Bernard Street in the city of Rochester, a building DeLeo bought in 2023, provides space for a 5,000-square-foot kitchen, their tasting room and offices. Preferred event venues include Arbor venues, The Venue at the Trail in Victor, Whitehall Mansion in Brockport and Willow Creek in Lakeville.

They don't just provide meals at event venues, however. If you're planning a special dinner, they'll come to your house. Julia Nuccitelli, Antonio's fiancée, is the culinary

events coordinator.

"It's like the dinner party you always wanted to have," said DeLeo, who co-owns the business with his wife Nicole. "We can serve 12 to 16 people. We'll bring the prepped food, finish cooking in your house and use your china."

Typically such dinner parties feature five-course meals with an appropriately paired wine, but they have done up to eight courses, DeLeo said.

The tasting room at the Bernard Street facility allows prospective customers to sample the foods they want served at their wedding, corporate event or party.

"We can do Asian, French, Italian, pretty much anything," DeLeo said.

He heavily invested in the pivot, as well. Catering at outdoor venues and even indoor events often relies on what the industry calls a hot box. Heat-controlled boxes are used to transport the food from the prep kitchen to the venue.

DeLeo wanted the foods they prepare to be more authentic, more specially made, so he bought a 24-foot food trailer that features a convection oven, range-top and flat-top stoves, a deep fryer and three-compartment sink.

"It has everything you could possibly need," he said. "We've done a 500-person, sit-down plated dinner out of that trailer."

So even though they don't have their own restaurant — yet, anyway — DeLeo likes to say, "We bring the restaurant to you, one plate at a time."

[koklobzija@bridgetowermedia.com/\(585\)653-4020](mailto:koklobzija@bridgetowermedia.com/(585)653-4020)



Photo provided by Food by DeLeo

Pictured are chef and co-owner Jason DeLeo, co-owner Nicole DeLeo, culinary events coordinator Julia Nuccitelli, executive chef Antonio DeLeo, sous chef David Degroat.



Photo provided by Food by DeLeo

One of many dishes offered by Food by DeLeo.



Photo provided by Food by DeLeo

Another delicious dish by Food by DeLeo.