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## Designing spaces that work well, feel good

Jackie Driscoll's acumen for interior design started in childhood

By KERRY FELTNER

Unbeknownst to her, Jackie Driscoll started preparing for her career at age eight.

Her parents, both architects, decided to build their own home. Their daughter was ready to spackle, paint and learn about an industry that she would make her own in the decades to come.

Today she is the interior design studio manager for LaBella Associates DPC.

Driscoll is a native of Elmira. She found the experience of helping to design and build her childhood home to be very powerful.

"The unique side of it is I actually helped my dad spackle and sand things in my room, not just paint colors," Driscoll says. "He really had us all be hands on."

Her mother influenced her future career as well, Driscoll says.

"She got me more interested in interior design. I was always really interested in the interior space and designing that, and designing how people function in that and how it affects people in their daily lives. When I knew it was an actual career path, I jumped on it."

Driscoll, 30, attended Endicott College in Beverly, Mass., earning a bachelor of applied science in interior design in 2006. She transferred to Rochester Institute of Technology and graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree in interior design in 2008.

She interned during her RIT years at Clark Patterson Lee and began her career there full time in December of 2008.

"We were just so busy that I wasn't the intern that went and got coffee. I actual-



Photo by Kimberly Simpson

ly worked on projects. I got to see some projects that I worked on be constructed," she says.

After over three years there she took a new position at Bergman Associates.

"Strictly for my career, each firm has a different understanding of what an interior designer does and how important or not important we are on a project," Driscoll says. "So I've definitely seen that progression go more in a positive direction."

In November 2013 she jumped at the chance to start an interior design team at LaBella Associates.

"They didn't have interior designers on staff; it was really starting from scratch," Driscoll says. "All lessons learned from the previous firms and understanding the company culture here, I really knew what I didn't want to do and what I wanted to do. LaBella Interiors—I already had an idea of what it could be."

As interior design studio manager, Driscoll determines the direction of a six-person interiors team. Her philosophy: Every design says something.

"It (design) is your first impression ... of that company, your first impression of that school," Driscoll says. "It's not just the space; it's the overlying company or their brand or what they're trying to enforce when you walk in."

"Without throwing it in your face, it's exactly how you feel in that space," she adds.

Clients come from a variety of sectors, including higher education, government

and commercial enterprises.

"The most important thing to look at when you're starting any project is what is the client's mission, what is their vision, and what are they trying to get out of this space," Driscoll says. "Whether it's a renovation or a brand new building, every space really has an emotional effect on you—and a good design is when you don't notice that."

Interior design can be done by architects, but interior designers see things differently, Driscoll contends. They can look at interiors holistically and see elements that others might not.

"I think when you have an interior designer on board, it just really pushes everything to the next level," she says. "I'm not saying that it necessarily needs to be more expensive, but some projects we have are massive; there's absolutely no way that one person, two people, or maybe even three people could get their hands wrapped around all these elements."

Seeing clients inhabit a newly designed space is exciting to Driscoll.

"The impact that you have on those who use the space daily—whether it's the teachers or the students or the police officers in public safety buildings—it has to function for them and feel like a positive space for them," she says.

When designing her career path, Driscoll has not been afraid to change things up. LaBella, she says, gave her a chance to make her mark.

"Opportunity for growth: that's a big

reason that drew me here," Driscoll says. "I could see it was starting from nothing, so if anything, there was only one way to go. You can't crash and burn if you're already at the bottom, and I've always liked a challenge."

Driscoll believes the importance of design is embraced in Monroe County.

"I think we have a great community," she says. "We have a lot of opportunities locally. There's great universities here, there's great health care systems, and they're all really focused on getting the right buildings and the right facilities for them and growing themselves and growing their vision for the company."

With today's technology and sites like Pinterest, inspiration is everywhere. While Rochester companies might not have the budget of large firms like Google, they can still incorporate some creative elements of Google's vision for a workspace, Driscoll says.

"Architectural firms and designers are posting things on there all the time, and if that's at your fingertips and you can scroll through and see what other people are doing, you're just constantly being inspired by other physical environments," Driscoll says. "(It's) that 'Why couldn't you take some of those elements and bring them in?'"

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