

Passion, Pride, Perseverance

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In May 1998, when I walked into a golf clubhouse full of NYACS members in Lockport NY knowing virtually no one, the first person I encountered was a friendly, energetic, talkative gentleman who welcomed me to my new job by spontaneously signing the visor of a Budweiser baseball cap, and presenting it to me.

His boundless enthusiasm seemed to imply that this autographed hat, depicting the two lizards featured in Budweiser TV commercials back then, was something I'd want to take home and hang onto forever as a treasured memento of the occasion. I thought he was nuts.

But, as I later would discover, it was just Kevin Noon being Kevin Noon.

For each of NYACS' first 20 years, Kevin has served on our Board of Directors and chaired our annual Trade Show and Convention. Much of the success this event has enjoyed during that time can be traced to Kevin's passion, pride and perseverance.

Those same qualities enabled him to build Brockport-based K&K Food Marts into a strong, innovative, food-service-oriented chain of 11 C-stores (K&K stands for Kevin and his wife Kathi. Although they no longer own the company they co-founded in 1973 with one store, Kevin still works for the current owners).

Working closely with Kevin planning trade shows and conferences for the past eight years, this is the Kevin Noon I have come to know.

He is terminally optimistic. Even his blood type is "B positive."

He keeps things in perspective. Whenever I fret about details of an event not being up to his standards, he'll grin and say, in all sincerity, "I'm just happy to be here." He's great at seeing the big picture and spotting trends.

He can't sit still. The man is an Energizer Bunny. You wouldn't believe the gardens he tends, the woodworking projects he tackles, and the hustle he displays during pickup basketball games at SUNY Brockport against players half his age.

He has a big heart. You would marvel at some of Kevin's unheralded acts of kindness and generosity. Friends, family and faith mean the world to him. He loves interacting with people, and he cherishes NYACS as a vehicle for such interaction.

He can get fanatical. One year, when his committee chose Cooperstown for our annual Fall Conference, Kevin became obsessed with the idea of having the attendees play softball at fabled Doubleday Field. He called the office every day to offer instructions for the game, telling us what color shirts and hats to order, how to divide up the teams, where to get an announcer. He drove the staff crazy. Yet those who played softball that warm, sunny September afternoon – myself included – will tell you it was a magical, unforgettable experience that bonded our attendees like no cocktail party ever could. We owed that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to Kevin's vision and persistence.

Which brings us back to the autographed Budweiser baseball cap. I still have it. It's a treasured memento of the first time I met Kevin Noon – a respected colleague, good friend, and proud, passionate NYACS leader.

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