

Headlines & More



“Profit Fest 25” Planning Leads Aggressive Education Plan



NEFA'S 17TH ANNUAL PROFITFEST CONFERENCE WASN'T HAD JUST ENDED WHEN PLANNING FOR NOVEMBER 2025 WAS ALREADY UNDERWAY. (SEE THE SAVE THE DATE AD ON PAGE 11 OF THIS NEWSLETTER!)

While “ProfitFest” remains the cornerstone of NEFA’s Educational plan, it is far from the only event. The NEFA Board and the Events Planning Committee meet virtually every month to plan, evaluate, and implement an aggressive slate of educational and networking opportunities.

“After 17 years, it can be difficult to find new and innovative ways to attract people, offered NEFA President Larry Fish, “but Peter Blake and our ProfitFest Committee have done a terrific job in the past and will do a great job this fall. Education and peer-to-peer interaction are two critical membership benefits and we are looking to do even more in the coming year.”

In addition to the very popular ProfitFest, NEFA will be having more “Meet&Greet” Dinners. The Committee is already planning on hosting programs in Middletown, CT, Wakefield, RI and Larchmont, NY. These events will feature a plant tour followed by a dinner at a restaurant nearby. Its a great opportunity to see some of the new innovations cleaners have put in and learn some tips and tricks to improve productivity.

“These programs are very popular,” commented Blake, “and we had some great ones in 2024 in Springfield, MA, Quincy, MA and Buffalo, NY. We are excited to have even more, they are fun and members love getting together with other members.”

NEFA is also developing a Leadership Training Program at Wedding Gown Preservation and Cleaner’s Supply in western, NY on July 18th. The program will feature workshops on Leadership by Jennifer Whitmarsh of Snappy Cleaners and The Route Pros, an advanced stain removal with bleaching demonstration, tours of both facilities, and will finish up with a “State of the industry” discussion based on the recent Cleaner’s Supply survey results. The program is cosponsored by Mid-Atlantic Cleaners Association. NEFA and MAC held a program their in 2023 and it was incredibly popular.

There are even more opportunities under development including local production training on Stain Removal and Finishing as well as business development workshops. Want to have a program in your area? Want to help in the planning? Contact the NEFA Office today!

North East Fabricare Association
www.nefabricare.com

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2025

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE...

Looking Ahead to 2025

USUALLY AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR WE LIKE TO REFLECT ON THE PAST, EVALUATE WHERE WE ARE. WE MAKE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS AND PLANS TO MAKE BIG CHANGES GOING FORWARD.

Last year I made only one resolution --to be better than I was. I think I accomplished that, but I have a very long way to go, so I am going to make the same resolution this year. I want to keep getting better, and I want to help you do the same. Wherever you and your business want to improve and be better, I want to help.



*Peter Blake,
NEFA Executive Director*

One of the keys to growing any business is effective networking. I think it is as important for me as an association executive as it is for you as an entrepreneur. One of the best programs DLI has established is the Peer-to-Peer open forum zoom calls held every Tuesday at 11:30 EST. This has been a tremendous resource for the membership, for DLI Leadership and even association executives like me. It keeps me in constant touch with the members and what questions drycleaners are looking for answers to. I find it's a great way for me to keep a handle on all the important issues facing our industry. I then can take those issues and try and help cleaners to answer those challenges and take advantage of opportunities.

One of the next steps was to go out and meet with our members and prospective members. To get out of the office, and on the road, to explore the challenges and opportunities our members were experiencing by visiting with cleaners up and down the eastern seaboard. I set a personal goal to visit at least 50 DLI members plants and 100 non-member plants in the course of 2024, and I am pleased to say I EXCEEDED that number. The information I was able to learn is invaluable. I plan to do even more in 2025. I have raised that Goal to 200 total visits. This is your chance to reach out to me if you are somewhere within my territory and let me know if you would like me to stop by at some point. I would love the chance to meet you and see how we can work together. This industry is full of great people and I would love to help aid in your success.

PLANT VISITS

My 2025 road tour will kick off in Central Florida in early March when I attend SEFA's "Training Day" and then return the end of March to visit cleaners in the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale area prior to the SEFA Workshops in Tampa. I plan on visiting 15 members and another 25 prospective members putting me at 20% of my goal already. As I said before with DLI Zoom calls, this networking provides an opportunity to learn firsthand where people are struggling, and I can use that information to better develop tools and programs to help them succeed. My goal is to have at least 5 new members signed up before April 5! I will also be working in the Northeast visiting cleaners in the Boston area and CT.

In 2024, I did a number of these membership retention/recruitment trips up and down the Eastern Seaboard. I visited 70 plants for SEFA, 40 for NEFA and another 40 for MAC. I was able to recruit over 25 new members as a result of those trips to DLI and my local associations while reenforcing the benefits DLI and Affiliate Membership provide members. There is no question -- our members are better positioned to succeed.

Continued on page 7

IN MEMORIAM...

Bill McCann: Industry Leader



WILLIAM J. MCCANN III, THE SECOND-GENERATION OWNER OF CONNECTICUT-BASED BEST CLEANERS, DIED HERE ON DEC. 15. HE WAS 78.

A Navy veteran who joined Best Cleaners in 1966, McCann worked alongside his parents, William Jr. and Esther, and his brother Tim to modernize the company's operations. Under McCann's leadership, Best Cleaners developed same-day service, brought onsite tailoring to all the company's stores, and expanded to 13 locations across central Connecticut. He also introduced barcode tracking and automation systems while maintaining the their family-oriented culture.

McCann acquired full ownership of Best Cleaners in 1997 and later hired his son Shawn as company president while growing the workforce to more than 100 employees. In 2001, McCann made Best Cleaners the first chain in the United States to adopt GreenEarth Cleaning, an environmentally friendly drycleaning method. This initiative earned the company the State of Connecti-

cut Department of Environmental Protection Green Circle Award.

McCann was a founding member and active board member of Management Concepts, a national industry cost group. He also served on the board of the North East Fabricare Association (NEFA).

"Bill's voice was always a steadying current in dealing with the Connecticut Legislature, especially with the CT Clean-Up Fund," says NEFA President Peter Blake. "I remember him always supporting the industry and our associations. I will always remember his smile and the laughs we shared at the NEFA Clean Classic Golf Tournament (Pictured here with Don Fawcett of Dependable Cleaners) and the frequent meetings with the Greater Hartford Drycleaners and Launderers Group. I am a better industry advocate from having known him. He will be missed."

McCann's community involvement included founding the annual Coats for Connecticut program, which provided cleaning and distribution of donated winter coats to those in need. He also instituted free cleaning services for military uniforms and American flags.

Born in Southbridge, Massachusetts, and raised in East Hampton and Middletown, Connecticut, McCann is survived by his wife, Susan; three children, Kelly Leighton, Jill Collins, and Shawn McCann; his sister, Margaret Wilcox; brothers Patrick McCann and Charlie McCann; and eight grandchildren.

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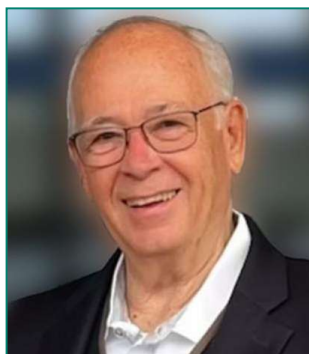
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Eric Kloter: NEFA Leader, Industry Icon



ERIC L. KLOTER, 78, OF ELLINGTON, BELOVED HUSBAND OF 56 YEARS TO SHARON (LUGINBUHL) KLOTER, PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY AT HIS HOME SURROUNDED BY HIS FAMILY ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025, AFTER A LONG ILLNESS.

He was born on April 9, 1946, in Vernon, son of the late Emmanuel and Helen (Hoffman) Kloter. Eric grew up in Vernon and was a graduate of Rockville High School, Class of 1964. In October 1966, he was drafted into the United States Army where he proudly served his country as a medic before his honorable discharge in October 1968.

Eric was the retired third generation President and Owner of Swiss Cleaners & Uniform Services. He loved his community and served for many years as a board member of Visiting Nurse & Health Services of CT, ECHN, Dry Cleaning & Laundry Institute, International Fabricare Institute and the former Rockville Bank. Eric was a founding volunteer at Midwest Food Bank of New England. He was an active member of the Apostolic Christian Church and openly shared his faith with those around him.

“Eric played an important role in the stability of DLI and NEFA, observed Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Director. “His quiet, but inspirational leadership helped shape the future of the associations -- and the industry. I am honored to have known him, and inspired by his friendship. He has meant a lot to me throughout the years. He will be missed by so many.”

Some of his favorite things included traveling, spending time with family and friends and woodworking. He made new friends wherever he went. His joy for life and faithful example have been an inspiration to many.

In addition to his wife, Eric is survived by his four children, Jennifer Kloter, Mark Kloter, Bruce Kloter and his wife Karyn, and Jessica Mattson and her husband Tim, all of Ellington; his eight grandchildren, Scott Kloter and his wife Laura, Melissa Schlechtweg and her husband Andrew, Benjamin Kloter, Owen Kloter, Luke Kloter, Clara Mattson and her fiancé Matthew Togher, Emma Kloter, and Eve Mattson; his three great-grandchildren; his three siblings, Keith Kloter and his wife Mary, Kay Luginbuhl and her husband Kenneth, and Carole Bahler and her husband Dan, all of Ellington; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, in-laws and cousins.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Midwest Food Bank of New England, 440 Adams St., Manchester, CT 06042.

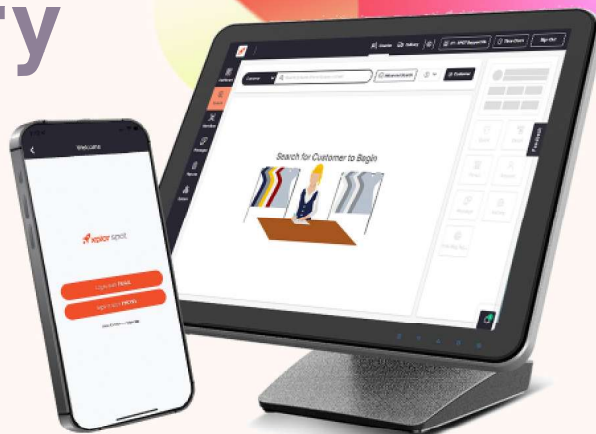


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BOI Reporting Back On the Table... Again



A FEDERAL COURT RULED ON FEBRUARY 18 THAT THE BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP INFORMATION REPORT (BOIR) FROM THE US TREASURY'S FINANCIAL CRIMES ENFORCEMENT NETWORK IS RE-

QUIRED YET AGAIN. THE NEW DEADLINE IS MARCH 21, 2025.

The BOIR was introduced under the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) for businesses in the United States to ensure transparency in ownership structures and plays a significant role in combating financial crimes, such as money laundering. This report requires business owners to divulge all owner information and upload drivers licenses onto the website. The (BOI) report is a filing that provides details about the people who own or control a business in the United States.

Both Domestic companies, including those created by filing with a secretary of state, and Foreign companies that are registered to do business in the United States. The report can be filed by an employee, owner, or third-party service provider who is authorized by the reporting company.

Large operating companies are exempt from BOI reporting requirements. To qualify, a business must meet the following criteria:

- Have at least 21 full-time employees in the United States
- Have a physical office in the United States
- Report more than \$5 million in revenue on the previous year's tax return

BOI Reports can be filed online and the process is very straightforward.

Groups are still fighting against this requirement. NEFA and DLI will keep you apprised if the status changes again. In the meantime, DLI is developing further guidance and a potential webinar to walk companies through the reporting process. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, members are invited to contact Peter Blake at the NEFA Office.

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Looking Forward to 2024

Continued from page 2

I was really amazed at some of the things I saw and some of the things I learned. Keep in mind – I am approaching each of these through the front door, so my initial impressions are as a consumer would see the plant. I always take a few moments to look around the call office and make mental notes of what I see and how I am greeted. It helps to see how that particular company is positioning their business.

I think our industry is facing some serious challenges, but there are also some incredible opportunities ahead. We are faced with a changing consumer mind set and a lack of understanding of the services we provide. Do your customers know what you do? Do your potential customers know the services you can provide?

Even if you don't realize it, there is a growing majority of people that have never used a drycleaner or professional laundry. They don't even understand the service. Many of the younger adults don't know they can give you their sweaters, their coats, their casual attire. They think "drycleaning" is for formal wear only. We need to work to change that. We need to stop relying on the term drycleaning and use fabric care or textile care. We need to educate the potential consumer what it is we can do for them.

We are selling time, convenience, ease of doing a chore. The younger generation is not shy about spending money on things to make their life easier. They will gladly pay door dash \$16 for an \$8 drink just so they don't have to go out. What if they understood that for that same \$8 you can do a load of laundry for them -- picked up, cleaned, folded and returned! We need to educate our potential consumers as to our value. If they understand it -- they will invest in their wardrobe. They want to make life easier, and that is the crux of what we can offer.

I am a firm believer that branding matters. Drycleaning and laundry may be seen as a luxury service, but it is a valuable, needed and desired service when done right. You need to ask yourself what makes you different and why you are different from the other cleaners in your area. Once you can answer those two basic questions then you can begin to focus attention on your brand.

FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

Dry cleaning is important. It prolongs the life of your wardrobe. It keeps people looking their best and helps build confidence. We often fear the younger generation won't appreciate the service, but I think there is great potential to expand your services. The younger generation is more apt to spend money to save time. They value their time a great deal more than our generation does. Trust me, there is a place for drycleaning, and the future is brighter than you think. I am just starting to learn about the effect of the secondary market for apparel. Whether it is high-end re-sellers like Poshmark and TheRealReal, or vintage clothing stores, there is a growing used clothing market with some very highly fashionable and very difficult to clean garments. I have even heard that people are trading clothing like I used to trade baseball cards. At least with baseball cards, I didn't have to clean and sanitize them, lol.

Another observation was the lack of professional training for the Customer Service personnel. I was amazed at how I was greeted in a few shops. Counter people were unable to identify the name of the manager or even the owner. I firmly believe that some counter personnel didn't even know the owner's name – or what cleaners they were working for. They were just punching the clock at "The Cleaners".

Am I wrong? Secret shop some of your competition or just drive down the main streets in towns nearby and share your observations. There is a very wide discrepancy between cleaners out there, and some very big differences. My suggestion to you is to look at your front counter with a fresh set of eyes. Really look at the image you and your staff are projecting and make sure it is the message you want to convey.

I would love to hear your thoughts... or bring you a cup of coffee and talk about the industry. If you are in my service areas, let me know and I will try and make it happen in 2025! As for me, I sincerely hope I can just be better than I used to be and keep moving forward. I would love to play a part in you also meeting that simple goal in the coming year.

Peter Blake

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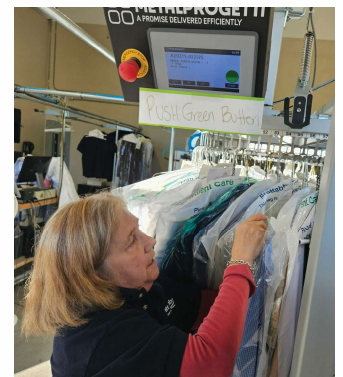
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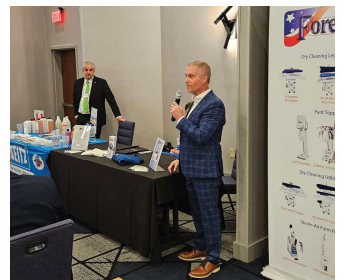
A Look back at 2024

From dynamic educational sessions to great networking events to NEFA's highly successful ProfitFest '24 Conference and Table-top Exhibit... NEFA had it all in 2024.



Thank you to all the Members, Allied Trade Partners, Speakers, Sponsors and Board Members for helping make the year one to remember!

Keep an eye out for even more innovative programs and events in 2025! Get involved and help make it an even better year. Contact the NEFA Office to help plan this years events!



Learn from Your Peers and Share Your Expertise



EVERY TUESDAY MORNING AT 11:30 EST, CLEANERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY JOIN TOGETHER ON DLI/NEFA'S PEER-TO-PEER CALLS.

The calls are designed as an open forum for members to ask questions,

pose thoughts or ideas, and to voice concerns over the latest happenings. On the calls, people share their ideas, problems and successes. Some of the cleaners who participate have very large operations, while others have only one location and just a couple of employees. But, they all say they gain meaningful information to help their business succeed in difficult times.

The open forum design allows for a very diverse and wide range of topics. Members are free to ask anything and to offer their opinions. DLI is on the call to facilitate discussion and to help bring up newsworthy topics if needed. Recent conversations have included discussions on:

- Insurance Coverages and Policies
- Anticipated Affects of Tariffs on Hangers and Machinery
- Education Programs hosted around the country
- Business Building tips: Marketing ideas
- Use of Automated messaging platforms for communications
- Questions regarding paid leave and mandatory time off
- Marketing best practices and the viability of some methods
- Lead generation & follow-up including incentives

“This is one of the best programs developed for our members,” offered Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Director. “It is a great way to get feedback from the people that are facing the same challenges, the same issues and are trying to accomplish very similar goals. You have this community of people ready and willing to offer their experience, and I hope you will take advantage of it. One of the best benefits membership gives you is access to a tremendous community of people who are invested in your success.”

The calls start at 11:30 a.m. EST. To Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83922500100?pwd=1UsPqnV2rMh611WwJgilN0eXjPr6FV.1>

Meeting ID: 839 2250 0100
Passcode: 796228

ALLIED TRADE UPDATE...

One Allied Trade Dues for All Associations



For years the Allied Trades that so generously support DLI and its affiliated local and regional associations have supported each association separately.

Starting in 2025, that will no longer be the case. Vendors in our industry (also known as Allied

Trades) can make the choice to pay one dues and have membership in DLI and all seven affiliated US. Associations at a discounted rate, including the MAC, SEFA and NEFA.

In addition to a substantial discount for bundling the dues, these vendors will receive discounts on sponsorships, preferred advertising pricing, and other unique opportunities to get in front of DLI members.

“We all realize that without the support of the Allied Trades, neither DLI or the regional associations could provide the education or networking opportunities that our members have come to ex-

pect and value,” said Mary Scalco, DLI’s CEO. “This is just a little way of saying thank you for their support and that we appreciate everything the Allied Trades do for the industry.”

The new voluntary dues structure started on January 1, and will mostly affect national and large regional allied trades. Local allied trades may still find it advantageous to join at the local levels where they do business.

“We appreciate the support these companies provide our members and the industry,” added Peter Blake, SEFA Executive Director, “and we believe they should be rewarded with some significant discounts. We also feel by making this program easy and affordable, we will actually see a growth in our allied membership. This is already evident in some of the new companies joining the national level.”

When choosing companies to use for products and services we urge our members to support those companies that provide the added value by supporting the associations and the industry.

For more information on the program or to explore some of the added savings -- contact Peter Blake at the NEFA Office.

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SCAN TO REGISTER



[CLICK HERE FOR UPDATES](#)

For 15 years, the hallmark of NEFA's ProfitFest has been new speakers exploring the most important topics in the industry and 2025 won't disappoint. Blending education sessions, networking, and allied trade exhibits together for a weekend-long educational event, ProfitFest will help attendees prepare for the new opportunities facing our industry. ProfitFest will provide you the tools and knowledge needed to succeed and prosper through the new challenges that lie ahead.



*Save the
Date for
2025!*



Jim Groshans, Sales Manager for Unipress Corp. redeems Rhonda Eysel's DLI Membership Voucher for a \$200 Freight Credit off her purchase of a new Unipress Steam Cabinet. Rhonda owns Master Kleen Dry Cleaners in Columbus, Georgia.

"We love how our new Unipress Steam Cabinet helps us save on labor costs. DLI Membership is a tremendous asset. We love DLI and will always be a member!"

Rhonda Eysel, CEO
Master Kleen Dry Cleaners
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