

PAY DAY

Blackjack dealer: \$26,000



Dennis Nett / Staff photographer

KAY NAROLIS: "I think my main job is entertaining." /BB-7

Children's book illustrator: \$35,000



John Berry / Staff photographer

PAY, PAGE AA-2 TONY SANSEVERO: "I create for a living, and for me, there's nothing better than that." /AA-17

A look at what people earn in Central New York

By Rick Moriarty
Staff writer

How well do Central New Yorkers' pay checks stack up to their counterparts' across the nation?

That's not an easy question to answer. But let's give it a shot.

According to a federal government report, people in technology fields in the Syracuse area tend to earn less than the national average for their occupations.

Computer engineers, for instance, make 16 percent less than the nation-

al average. Chemists make 12 percent less, computer programmers 17 percent less and systems analysts 10 percent less.

People who work in unionized jobs — for example, teachers, factory workers, corrections officers and truck drivers — tend to make better wages in the Syracuse area than they do elsewhere. The numbers come from the 1997 Occupational Employment & Wage Estimates, published

Children's book illustrator \$35,000

Illustrating keeps artist's integrity... and the odd alien

By Jim Emmons
Staff writer

As a successful illustrator of children's books, Tony Sansevero gets his share of speaking dates at local schools. His advice to aspiring artists, grades three and up, runs something like this: "Think of yourself as a spider sending out webs. The more webs you spin, the more work you're likely to catch."

At 32, Sansevero is quickly becoming a master of that networking principle. During a typical week in mid-January, he planned to speak at three schools, paint a 4-by-6-foot portrait of Jesus for a local church, produce a portrait of a pet canary and start on the first of 14 illustrations for "Don't Fry My Veeblax," the latest in the Bruce Coville children's series, "I Was a Teenage Alien."

In a good year, such as 1999, this varied work can earn Sansevero more than \$35,000. In lean years, he earns as little as \$15,000.

It's not the path to riches, but it meets Sansevero's needs and leaves him feeling fulfilled.

"I create for a living," he said, "and for me, there's nothing better than that."

Sansevero came to Syracuse two years ago from Boston. His father and grandfather were amateur artists. When he was younger, he was artistically gifted but not interested in art as a profession. He liked messing around with snakes and drawing aliens.

Then, in his early 20s, he experienced a kind of epiphany — an awakening to the art in Boston's museums. Soon he was studying at the Massachusetts College of Art, intent on becoming a fine artist.

The path was not what Sansevero expected. He sold paintings in galleries, but supported himself by tending bar and waiting tables. Worse, he found himself adapting his creative work to the trends and tastes of the art market. He felt he was selling out.

In his mid-20s, looking for something more lucrative and honest, he switched to commercial illustration and, soon after, to illustrating children's books.

The work gives him the kind of balance he was seeking. He still does fine art, but without the pressure of having to sell it. The work that pays him, his children's work, also gives him creative satisfaction.

And, to his parents' chagrin, he still gets to draw aliens. Their advice, when he announced his artistic intentions, was to stick with fine art and dump the sci-fi stuff.



Gary Walts / Staff photographer

▼ CAROL PERRY, NEWSSTAND OWNER: "I know my principles aren't making me rich. But I see this community is in need, and sometimes we have to step forward. To me, this is a place where adults can come and relax, read and get educated."

back issues of many magazines, sells legal forms, offers a copying, typing and fax service, and will notarize items for customers.

She also helps customers file papers, does research for customers on topical issues and offers a magazine and recipe clipping service. Recently, she began selling single sheets of paper, envelopes, folders and more.

"I think of this store as a community resource, and that part of the business is beginning to take off," she said.

Perry refuses to sell cigarettes at her store, even though she's forfeiting income.

"I know my principles aren't making me rich," she said. "But I see this community is in need, and sometimes we have to step forward. To me, this is a place where adults can come and relax, read and get educated."

Perry said her job at Wal-Mart has been the answer to her prayers, as she doesn't worry as much about her finances.

"I love having a retirement plan and a stock plan," she said. "And working at Wal-Mart there will help me reach my goals here at the newsstand."

very, very nicely," he said. "Part of the growth is because the economy is doing well. As long as the economy is booming, there will be business."

He takes clients by appointment. Most of his customers are referrals from architects, vendors or other customers. He builds wall units, desks and even some furniture, but he specializes in kitchens, which is about 80 percent of his work.

According to the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, kitchens are the No. 1 remodeling project in America, followed closely by bathrooms.

Service is important, Morley said. That's why he prefers to see customers by appointment, so he can spend some time learning their needs. He also makes it a practice to visit a home a year after a kitchen is installed to see if there are any problems.

The software he uses can show a customer what a kitchen will look like. He also has a Web site where people can get an impression of his work.

"People will always need kitchens," he said. "It isn't just a functional place any more. It's the center of the home. It's where families meet."

"The pay is good, in general, although civil engineering tends to be lower than chemical or, certainly, computer engineers. I have everything I want," he said, noting that his needs tend to the unspectacular.

"Have you seen my boat?" he asked. "It's a 1938 refurbished buoy tender with a steel hull. My father calls it the African Queen. I drive a truck."

But talking with him even briefly makes it clear he enjoys what he does and wouldn't change professions if he had it to do again.

"It's something different every day," he said. "There's a lot of satisfaction. Every job has its frustrations, and there are days after 20 years of doing this, but I can't think of anything better — that would be more fun or interesting."

"People still generally have respect for engineers. So far, there's not a lot of engineers jokes."

Among the negatives, he said are occasional feelings of helplessness and the need for perfection.

"The thing that bothers me most in the environmental area is the feeling that I'm not helping the client," he said. "Environmental issues are very expensive, and they're regulatory-driven. I often find where I'm cleaning up something when (everyone) knows you don't have to."

"The other dread is when you wake up in a cold sweat wondering if the bolt you've specified for that bridge is the right one."

That need for perfection, he said, filters into his home life.

"If you talk to my wife, you'll get a real story," he said. "We built a house four or five years ago, and the only thing we could agree on was the color of the lawn."

Cabinetmaker
\$50,000 to \$70,000

Career change
puts hobbyist in

Civil engineer
\$75,000

Environmental

Web page designer
\$45,000

An office in a
laptop and work



Gary Walts / Staff photographer

▼ MARIE WILLIAMS, WEB DESIGNER: "I like making computers useful for people."