



## DIVERSE ERIE SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PROFILE

"The Lake Erie School of Woodworking was an idea of mine to make sure that the shop was part of the community. Owning a business is not just a way of saying, 'here's my business, please come support me.' I think every business has an opportunity to open themselves up to the community more than just by offering their services. We have a workshop, and I know when I was getting started in woodworking, I would have loved to take in a class to learn a skill or just ask questions about something that maybe was confusing me at the time. We have a shop, we have space, let's open it to the public and be part of the community."

# ARMANDO REYES

## Owner & Craftsman




# ARMANDO REYES

## COMPANY

## LAKE ERIE WOODWORKS

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### YEARS IN BUSINESS

8 YEARS

### NAICS CODE

238350

### INDUSTRY

1751

### NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

2 Full-time

## HIGHLIGHTS

Lake Erie Woodworks, founded in Erie, Pennsylvania, is a custom furniture and cabinetry business that evolved from a personal hobby into a full-time enterprise. The owner, originally from Chicago, grew up around woodworking as a family pastime but only pursued it seriously after moving to Erie. Starting with small projects for family and friends, the business gained momentum through social media and local commissions. A major turning point came in 2019 with a large project for a local distillery, leading to the decision to establish a dedicated workshop. Despite setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, the business rebounded in 2021 and has since expanded, incorporating advanced technology such as a CNC machine to improve efficiency. The Diverse Erie Mini Grant helped cover hidden costs associated with this expansion, including tooling, dust collection, and specialized software crucial for streamlining production.

Beyond commercial success, Lake Erie Woodworks has emphasized community engagement through the Lake Erie School of Woodworking, offering classes in epoxy resin, cutting board crafting, and other woodworking techniques. These workshops provide hands-on learning opportunities, particularly benefiting women, who make up a significant portion of attendees. Many of these women, some of whom were previously excluded from shop classes when they attended K-12 schooling, find empowerment and fulfillment through woodworking. By opening its space to the public, the business fosters a deeper appreciation for craftsmanship while encouraging inclusivity in the trade. This initiative not only strengthens community ties but also nurtures a new generation of woodworking enthusiasts.