



## Cleaning roofs means back to work by [Andrew Keller](#)

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### Two Northern Michigan men started their own business after losing their jobs

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GAYLORD, MI -- Two Northern Michigan men said the road was paved: a family-ran business meant job security.

But when the economy turned sour, the business crumbled.

But the guys pooled their resources and turned things around.

So you're down on your luck, you're unemployed, and you're not sure what you're going to do. A pair of Northern Michigan men said that they weren't going to roll over, so they made an investment that could pay off, for more than just themselves.



"You're bringing back the color of the shingle and restoring it back to a new appearance," explained Andy Janssens, co-owner of a new roof cleaning bus

Apply a little bit of soap, run the bristle machine over it, and the roof looks like new. Andy Janssens and Doug Gilpatrick never thought they'd clean mold off of roofs.

"We had the rug pulled out from under us, didn't know how we were going to do it," said Janssens.

Both of them were carpet supply salesmen for years but lost their jobs in 2009. They went on unemployment; it helped put food on the table, but their savings accounts were slowly emptying out.

"This was huge, this was a major opportunity for us to get involved with," said Gilpatrick.

The two pooled their money together and with the help of small business consultants, created a business plan with sky-high ambition. [Eco-North Roof Cleaning](#) was formed late last year.

"It's definitely a risk, and I think it's going to pay off in the end," said Gilpatrick.

"Risk is huge, if it was easy, everybody would be doing it, I mean it's that old cliché," explained Jeff Ratcliffe, Executive Director of the [Otsego County Economic Alliance](#).

Ratcliffe said this year, more people have used his services to launch their ideas than last year all-together. He, along with other consultants in the area, help determine if the idea makes sense.

"They show it's viable, then there's going to be more of a likelihood that they'll get the financing from some source," said Ratcliffe.

And if the risk is worth it, small businesses like roof shampooing could help cut into the 13.9 percent unemployment rate in Otsego County, and they plan. They've already hired one person to help, and are ready to hire another.

"You've got to try it I guess, what else is out there? Stay on unemployment for two or three years, or whatever you got, so just go out there and try it, that's the big thing," said Gilpatrick.

The two guys took a big chance, but they say without the support that they've received from the community, this would have been much more difficult.

If you're interested in starting up your own business, the Cadillac Business Training Alliance is offering workshops all summer.

