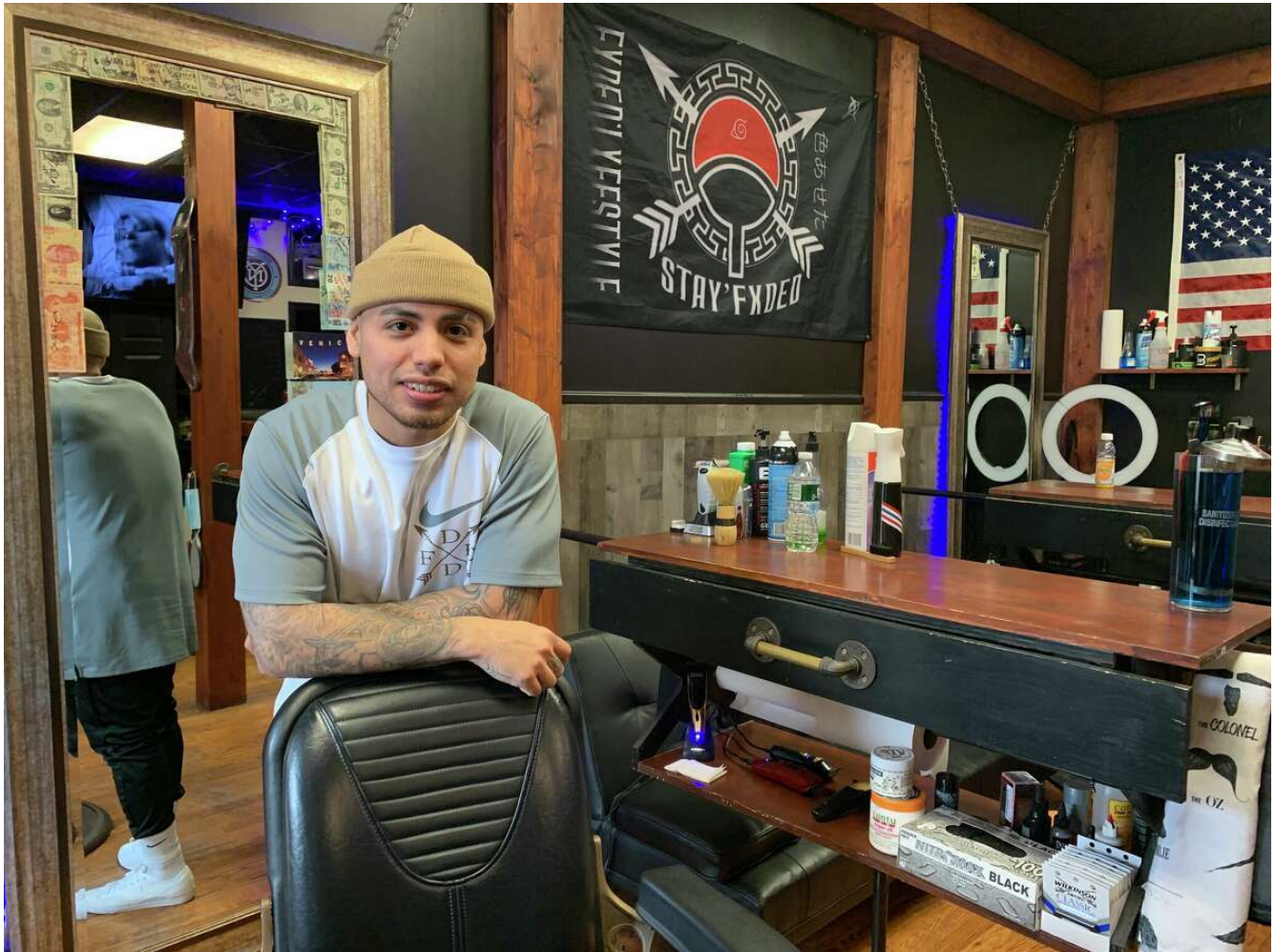


Newburgh's local barber also mentors city's youth

Efrain 'Gordo' Acosta 'relates to people in Newburgh more than most public service workers or volunteers'



"I'm a business, but I also want to leave my mark here," said Efrain "Gordo" Acosta, who owns Casa De Fxdes BarberParlor in Newburgh. "I want people to see my logo in 100 years and remember it for everything I've done."

The 30-year-old entrepreneur opened his shop on Liberty Street in 2018, but it's not all he's known for locally. Acosta also mentors youth in the city where he grew up, whether that's working with the Newburgh Enlarged City School District high school barbering program, sponsoring a local soccer team, and being a regular at the Newburgh skatepark and at community events.

"Gordo went to school, dropped out of high school, started working different jobs, and then eventually found a craft and made something out of himself with haircutting," said Steven Majano, another community activist. "That's even more relatable to the people in the City of Newburgh, where there are people who are formally incarcerated, kids who dropped out of school, kids who didn't go to college. He relates to people in Newburgh more than most public service workers or volunteers."

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“Whenever I was hanging out around a bad influence, he’d tell me,” said 16-year-old Justin Ferman of Acosta’s role in his life. “He’s been a big brother to me and helped open my eyes.”

When saving a buck launched a career





Acosta said he never imagined he'd cut hair for a living. He picked up a razor for the first time mainly to save money by going to the salon less.

When his regular barber asked where he'd been, Acosta explained his money-saving choice, to which his barber said he was doing an excellent job and would tell him if a chair opened at the shop. Within just two weeks, Acosta at age 19 had started his first job there cutting hair.

"A lot of people started noticing my haircuts in the barbershop," said Acosta. "I was competing against eight good barbers, and I was the new guy who somewhat knew how to cut, not really skilled yet."

Before he knew it, friends and family were asking for cuts too, sending a few bucks Acosta's way while he improved his skills.

But it wasn't easy. For at least a year, Acosta said he didn't turn a profit — he made just enough to pay his rent, which he occasionally paid late, and to care for himself and his family as a father of a now 10-year-old and 14-year-old.

Acosta eventually moved to another barbershop, where he spent two and a half years expanding his skills and client list, charging \$25-30 for a haircut. It wasn't until Acosta saw a vacant retail location on Liberty Street, one of Newburgh's liveliest spots with Safe Harbors of the Hudson Green across the street and trendy eateries down the way, that he decided to take the leap as an entrepreneur.

The building is over a century old and was once a barbershop before, all the way back in 1916. But today, the space is both industrial and rustic, outfitted with three barber chairs and a section of locally made clothing for sale.

Acosta's friend and Newburgh resident, Nick Esposito, helped build everything in the shop from the ground up. On the walls hangs an eclectic mix of Acosta's favorite things: art from the popular anime

Naruto, skateboards mounted on wooden beams, a signed shirt from the Weeknd, and Star Wars memorabilia.

Throughout his time being a barber, he's worked to develop his Fxded Lxfestyle brand with his own customized clothing and skateboards, which are also available for sale.

"I'm a walking billboard," said Acosta. "I'm not trying to be Supreme or anything, it's just a barbershop thing."

Skateboarding for fun turned into youth mentoring





Although being a barber is one of Acosta's passions, so is helping the community. He has worked closely with community leaders like Joe Alvarez of We Are Newburgh to set up sessions to give free

haircuts to those in need. From his time at the Newburgh Enlarged City School District's barber program, he's made close connections with students, including Ferman, whom he's currently mentoring.

"He wants to make money, so I gave him a pair of clippers for two weeks and I told him to go see what he can do," said Acosta. "If you can figure out how to use the clipper on your own, you can be a barber. You just need to have a push afterwards."

"That was a big help," said Ferman. "I felt like he really does care about me and wants to see me do well."

Another person Acosta mentored decided to go to college to get their license to cut hair.

However, skateboarding is what really cemented Acosta's reputation as a youth mentor. What started as a hobby for Acosta and his children to spend time together has slowly turned into a community event every week in the summer where neighborhood kids show up to learn how to skate, whether they have a board or not.

"He's one of the most genuine human beings you'll meet," said Majano. "He's not doing it to gain any attention or recognition, he does it just for the sake of doing it — for the cause."

Because of the connections Acosta made as a barber, people began asking him how they could help out. Acosta started a donation program to collect boards and wheels to put together skateboards for children in need.

"When I went to go buy my son's first skateboard, it was \$160," said Acosta. "There's not a lot of kids that can do that. I've been fortunate enough to work as hard as I have to provide for them."

Acosta said the idea to give away skateboards was inspired by Danny Hairston of the Shred Foundation, a Newburgh nonprofit that provides underserved children [the opportunity to learn how to snowboard](#); the organization recently expanded to Albany.

Acosta has also encouraged the city to put lights in at the park so it can be used longer after sunset. "I want to see these kids at the skate park rather than chilling on the corner of the street somewhere," said Acosta. "I'm at the skate park all the time in the summer, so it's cool to guide some of these kids."

Acosta hopes to continue to shine a light on the City of Newburgh and its community. He said now more than ever he appreciates the city's beauty, which he especially likes to view from his skateboard as he commutes.