

Western Mass. Entrepreneurship Hall Of Fame to Celebrate 10th Anniversary: Area Entrepreneurs Selected For Induction Into Class of 2009

Six individuals or organizations from the past or present of this region have been selected for induction into the Class of 2009 of the Western Massachusetts Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame, located at the Andrew M. Scibelli Enterprise Center at Springfield Technical Community College.



The announcement was made at a May 5 reception at the Colony Club in downtown Springfield. The formal induction will take place on Thursday, October 8, with an induction banquet at the Log Cabin Banquet and Meeting House in Holyoke.

This is the 10th anniversary of the Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame, which was created in 2000 to recognize the entrepreneurial heritage of Western Massachusetts, honoring individuals and organizations who have become part of that heritage, and to raise money to support programs that will foster future generations of entrepreneurs.

Proceeds from the banquet are used to support STCC's entrepreneurship programs in Western Mass., including the YES! (Young Entrepreneurial Scholars) program, which serves more than 1,000 young men and women in two dozen area high schools, as well as the Community Foundation of Western Mass. student business incubator.

The depth and diversity of the region's economy are demonstrated by the members of the Class of 2009:

- **Bacon Wilson**, a regional law firm based in Springfield;
- **The Cambi Family**, founders of Springfield Foodservice Corporation;
- **Larry Derosé**, founder of Texcel, LLC, a maker of medical instruments and devices for the health care industry;
 - **The Derosiers Family**, three generations of owners of Hadley Printing in Holyoke;
- **John Gormally**, founder of *BusinessWest* magazine and owner of ABC40 and FOX6; and
- **The Peters Family**, founders and owners of Universal Plastics in Chicopee;

Bacon Wilson

Bacon Wilson is a regional law firm based in Springfield. It traces its roots to the merger, in 1979, of two firms, one started by George Bacon in 1895, and the other acquired by

Peter Wilson in 1945. That entity, Bacon, Wilson, Ratner, Cohen, Salvage, Fialky & Fitzgerald, was soon shortened to Bacon & Wilson and then simply Bacon Wilson.

The firm was chosen for the Hall of Fame, said Thomas Goodrow, STCC's vice president of Economic and Business Development, because of an entrepreneurial nature that has defined the firm since its formation. This quality has manifested itself in several ways, from a broadening of its list of specialties – to include corporate and business work, litigation, estate planning, real estate and probate, bankruptcy, and others – to acquisition of the Ellis Title Co. (with the region's largest back-title base) in the early '80s.

However, the firm's entrepreneurial tendencies are best illustrated in its expansion over the past year into a regional law firm. While the firm is still based in Springfield, it has added, through merger and acquisition, offices in Westfield, Northampton, and Amherst. This process began with a merger with the Westfield-based firm Sharoff & Smith in 2000, and continued with a merger with Northampton-based Morse & Sacks in 2005, and a union with the Amherst-based firm Monsein Monsein & MacConnell in 2008.

Since 2000, the firm has nearly has nearly doubled in size, from 20 lawyers to 39.

The Cambi Family/Springfield Foodservice Corp.

Springfield Foodservice Corp. traces its roots to 1969, when Georgio Cambi purchased a small company called Frank's Distribution. Over the next three decades, the venture would experience explosive growth before being sold to the national foodservice giant Sysco.

In the beginning, Frank's Distribution supplied a few dozen food and related items to pizza parlors and small restaurants, and gradually grew to 10 employees and about \$1 million in sales. In the years after Cambi's son, Joe, joined the company in 1983, it saw exponential growth, eventually reaching more than 300 employees and \$150 million in sales.

It did by so by greatly expanding its client base within the so-called 'eating-away-from-home' market, which includes restaurants of all sizes, chain eateries, schools, colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, country clubs, banquet facilities, and other venues, and providing them with thousands of different products.

By 2000, Springfield Foodservice was a regional company that had expanded its base to all the New England states, New York, Pennsylvania, and other states in the Northeast.

Joe Cambi credits the company's growth to its independent status, and also an entrepreneurial nature that pervaded each department of the company. "Everyone was a salesperson," he said. "Everyone was focused on growth."

Larry Derosé/TEXCEL, LLC

Larry Derosé started Texcel, LLC in 1987 with a clear vision for the company – to specialize in the production of medical devices and components and partner with early-stage companies to bring exciting, ‘life-changing’ products to the marketplace.

Twenty-two years later, the vision has become reality.

Texcel is not the first entrepreneurial success story Derosé has authored – he’s taken several start-up companies to profitability – but it’s clearly his best. The East Longmeadow-based company, which started as a multi-purpose laser-services company that produced systems for a number of sectors, has in recent years become the partner of choice for many small companies trying to bring new medical breakthroughs to the market.

Most are in the category of implantable devices (like pace makers) or ‘neurostimulators.’ “These devices sense a condition and send an electrical signal to some critical nerve to change an outcome,” said Derosé, listing the ability to control hunger and thus fight obesity as just one example. “These are life-changing therapies, and we’re phenomenally fortunate to have the opportunity to work with incredibly bright people on these fascinating therapies.”

The company expanded physically and added a number of facilities to become an attractive partner for start-up medical device makers, and in recent years it has added several employees and continues to grow at a steady pace.

The Desrosiers Family/Hadley Printing

Hadley Printing began operating in 1896, but the most compelling chapters in its long history have been written since 1944, when Alexander Desrosiers bought the small operation at bankruptcy auction. Three generations of the Desrosiers family have steered the company to continued growth and success in the region’s highly competitive printing industry.

Alexander Desrosiers was a one-time linotype operator for the *Springfield Republican*, who took his experience, passion for the printing business, and some entrepreneurial savvy and went into business for himself at Hadley. He first operated out of a small storefront in South Hadley Falls, and guided the company to stability and then consistent growth.

The second generation of the family, Alexander’s sons, Mark, Alan, and Dean, built on that solid foundation, and, in 1976, moved the company into much larger quarters in a former silk manufacturing plant on Canal Street in Holyoke.

Today, the third generation of management, Mark Desrosier’s sons, Greg and Chris, continue the pattern of steady, controlled growth that has been the company’s hallmark for the past 65 years. The company continues to make new investments in technology,

including a new six-color press, which has given it new capabilities and greater market share.

Meanwhile, the company is taking the lead in the 'green' movement within the printing industry, recently gaining coveted certification from the Forest Stewardship Council.

John Gormally/BusinessWest/ABC40, FOX6

John Gormally launched The Western Mass. Business Journal in 1984, after seeing a monthly business publication devoted to the city of New Haven, and deciding that there was a market for such a venture in Greater Springfield area. He created a four-page mock-up of his magazine, and showed it to dozens of business owners across the Pioneer Valley. Enough of them bought into the concept – and purchased pre-paid ads to give him some start-up capital – to get the publication off the ground.

Twenty-five years later, Gormally owns and manages what amounts to a media group.

In 2000, he expanded his publishing base with a new monthly publication called *The Healthcare News*, which is dedicated to coverage of the region's broad health care sector. In 2005, the business publication, renamed *BusinessWest*, in the late '80s, was expanded into a twice-monthly publication.

In recent years, Gormally, has expanded his media base into broadcasting. In 2007, roughly six months after making initial overtures to the owners of ABC40, Sinclair Broadcasting, he completed a deal for the Springfield-based station, bringing local ownership back to the local television market for the first time in more than 30 years.

Soon after taking over ABC40, Gormally launched a new station, FOX6, giving the Greater Springfield area its fifth television station and first FOX affiliate.

The Peters Family/Universal Plastics

Jim Peters was working for a small venture in Chicopee called Mercury Plastics when he decided it was time to take his mechanical aptitude and experience in that emerging field and go into business for himself.

He borrowed \$10,000 and actually built his first two forming machines, which he put to work creating components for defense contractors, including Pratt & Whitney, starting in early 1966.

Over the past 43 years, Universal, now under the leadership of Jim Peters' sons, Joe, Richard, and Mike, has greatly expanded its client base and thus the portfolio of products it has helped to bring to the marketplace. This long list includes such items as kayaks built from recycled detergent bottles, bus-stop signs created for New York City, housings for computers and other technology-related items, components for a product called the 'mosquito magnet', and even parts bound for vessels that will carry U.S. Navy SEALs.

Joe Peters, current president of the company, said his father gained a reputation in the highly competitive plastics industry for taking on challenges that most other manufacturers wouldn't or couldn't. This tradition continues today, as the company takes a leadership role in putting this strong, flexible material to new and different uses.

Steering Committee

The chairperson of the 2009 Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame steering committee is Andrew M. Scibelli, President Emeritus of Springfield Technical Community College. He led the team that created the Technology Park at STCC, located in the former Digital Equipment complex, and later, the Enterprise Center. Upon his retirement in 2004, the college renamed the Enterprise Center in his honor.

As many as 500 civic and business leaders are expected to attend the Oct. 8 banquet. For more information on this year's dinner event, contact Thomas A Goodrow, STCC Vice President for Economic and Business Development; (413) 755-4505.