

EAU CLAIRE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS



Gordy's County Market won the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Year Award for companies with more than 25 employees. From left are founders Donna and Gordon Schafer, Jenna Schafer, Jeff Schafer, Rick Schafer and Dave Schafer. The group is pictured outside the family-run grocery chain's Lake Wissota store. Staff photo by Dan Reiland

All in the family

Gordy's County Market, Tru-Lock & Security earn small-business recognition

By Liam Marlaire
Leader-Telegram staff

Gordon Schafer's calling came at an age when most of us are still trying to make the varsity team or practice our driving skills.

"All I really wanted was to have my own little store," he said. "At 13 I was cutting meat and at 17 said to myself that I can do this. It's just evolved over the years."

To say the least, Gordy's County Market began in 1966 with a 2,800-square-foot store in Chippewa Falls. Today it has eight large grocery stores ranging from 8,200 square feet to more than 60,000. Gordy's bought a Copps grocery store in Eau Claire, Ladysmith County Market and Cornell SuperValu in 2009. It recently purchased Ron's Castle Foods in Eau Claire, which has since reopened as a Gordy's location.

Such growth helped Gordy's County Market earn the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Year Award last week for companies with more than 25 employees. Tru-Lock & Security earned the title for



Tru-Lock & Security in Eau Claire earned the Small Business of the Year Award for companies with 25 or fewer employees. The founders are Ken and Patty Lokken (holding the award). All five of the couple's sons work for the business. They are, from left, Chris, Andy, Matt, Dan and Scott Lokken. Staff photo by Steve Kinderman

businesses with fewer than 25 workers.

Four of Gordon and Donna Schafer's seven children work

for the company: Jeff Schafer, who is company president; Jenna Schafer, vice president of technology; Rick Schafer, vice presi-

dent of maintenance; and Dave Schafer, chief financial officer.

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Five named to latest HOF class

By Leader-Telegram staff

The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce announced the fourth class of its Business Hall of Fame during the organization's annual meeting last week.

John William Carroll of Dolly Madison Dairies/Marigold Foods, Mel Cohen of National Presto Industries, Ellis Huntzinger of Silver Spring Foods/Huntzinger Farms, Juel Market of Market & Johnson and Johannes Walter of Walter's Brewery make up the incoming class.



Way



Klinkhammer



Motszko



Rogers



Thrun



Glassbrenner

Others receiving recognition were: Kimera Way of the UW-Eau Claire Foundation, Woman of Achievement Award; Chippewa Valley Home Builders Association, Community Development Award; Marianne Klinkhammer of Gator Garb Promotions, Ambassador of the Year; Kristan Motszko of the Eau Claire school district, Outstanding Public Employee; Scott Rogers of Gloria Jean's Coffee, Outstanding Volunteer; Christina Thrun of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Wisconsin, Outstanding Young Professional of the Year; and Mary Glassbrenner of Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire, Top Membership Sales Person.

Bill Hilgedick of Edward Jones was introduced as the chamber's new chairman of the board.

Business Bytes

SBA seeking video submissions

WASHINGTON — In celebration of National Small Business Week 2012, the U.S. Small Business Administration is looking for creative videos from small businesses that show how they have been helped by an SBA program or service.

Three winning videos will be shown May 24 during a Google+ Hangout hosted by the SBA and the White House with SBA administrator Karen Mills. All qualifying videos will be showcased on SBA's YouTube page.

Contestants may enter the contest by producing an original video, two minutes or less, that shares their story. Videos should feature the SBA assistance the company received, the most rewarding aspects of starting a business and how the SBA assistance benefited the business and the local community.

Videos can be submitted until 5 p.m. May 11. For more information visit smallbizvid.challenge.gov.

Wisconsin earns foundation grant

MADISON — State Department of Workforce Development Secretary Reggie Newson announced the state has received a \$579,000 grant from the Joyce Foundation to empower low-wage working adults with new skills.

The grant will fund Regional Industry Skills Education, or RISE, DWD's partnership with the Wisconsin Technical College System and the business community.

From staff reports

Financial literacy starts early

Parental money lessons can provide children valuable head start

April is National Financial Literacy Month and this week is Money Smart Week in Wisconsin.

One component of all these gala festivities happens Tuesday, when Teach Children to Save Day occurs. As much as we appreciate an entire day devoted to this very important subject, anyone who has ever been a parent (or a child) knows that for the lessons to really take hold, the education has to last year-round and begin at birth.

So here are some other ways you can help children learn that it is spend less of it.

Set up savings

Opening an account with your child's name (and Social Security number) accomplishes several philosophical and financial goals.

First, it serves as an appropriate destination for any money given to children at birth or on birthdays, rather than being lumped in with



Kevin McKinley

your money in your checking account.

Once the children can read (and comprehend the concept of money) they can accompany you to the bank or credit union to participate in the process of depositing money meant for them.

Instead, larger sums can be kept for the child but under the control of a parent or grandparent by using a 529 college savings plan, such as Wisconsin's EdVest program (edvest.com).



Save the change

A more regular educational exercise is to give the spare change you accumulate each day to your child to deposit into your piggy bank or some other kind of container.

Once the coins get to a certain level, you and your kids can take it to a bank or credit union to be counted. You can make a game out of guessing how much money is in the piggy bank, where the one closest to the actual amount gets a dollar.

Better yet, tell the kids that if the final tally exceeds a certain (obtainable) amount, the whole family will stop for a treat.

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Briefcase

Area bank announces VPs

Chippewa Falls-based Northwestern Bank recently announced three new vice presidents.

Greg Mifseld and Kent Pickering were promoted to the position. Mifseld is a Chippewa Falls native who joined Northwestern Bank in 2006 as an assistant vice president in commercial and residential loans. He works out of the main location in Chippewa Falls and a branch in Eau Claire. Pickering, also a Chi-Hi graduate, joined Northwestern in 1986 as a loan officer for a branch in Cornell, where he continues to work.

The bank also added Jodi O'Brien to its staff as vice president, commercial loans. O'Brien has 16 years of experience in the financial industry in the Chippewa Valley. She can be reached at Northwestern's main bank in Chippewa Falls.



Mifseld



Pickering



O'Brien

Credit union tabs directors

MENOMONIE — WESTconsin Credit Union, which has been in business for 73 years, recently held its annual membership meeting.

Members in attendance re-elected two Menomonie residents to three-year terms on the credit union's board of directors: Dave Maves, member of WESTconsin since 1993 and active board director since 1994; and Rita Lunderville, member since 1975 and active board director since 2003.

Those with leadership positions are Maves, chairperson; Gerald Wolf, vice chairperson; Lynn Brantner, secretary; and Lunderville, treasurer. Dale Dahlke, Colleen Mensing and Todd Leipnitz round out the directors. Visit westconsin.org for more information.

Contract program nears

The Western Dairyland Business Center, Women's Business Center and Western Wisconsin SCORE are hosting a free workshop — "Contracts & Certifications: Market Opportunities in Government Contracting for Small Businesses" — from 9 a.m. to noon Friday at The Plaza Hotel & Suites, 1202 W. Clairemont Ave.

Space is limited and preregistration is requested at successfullbusiness.org. For more information call 715-836-7511, ext. 171.

Lean issues to be covered

CHIPPWEA FALLS — The Chippewa County Economic Development Corp. is holding the program "Lean Office Strategies" from 8 a.m. to noon Tuesday, May 8, at 8296 Commerce Parkway.

The keynote speaker is Laurie McNicol. The cost is \$50 and advanced registration is required.

For more information or to register, contact Jerilyn Sahr at 715-723-7150 or info@chippewa-wi.com.

Conference slated in RL

RICE LAKE — An Economic Gardening Conference will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 2, at the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Conference Center, 1900 College Drive.

"Economic gardening is an economic development model that embraces the fundamental idea that entrepreneurs drive economies," according to the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

The cost is \$30 for the event, which will include featured speakers and panel discussions. For more information call David Armstrong at 715-234-2845 or Bob Missling at 800-529-4148. Visit http://bit.ly/HtyTAo to register.

New Toppers to open in area

Whitewater-based Toppers Pizza is adding a 26th location in its home state Saturday at 406 Main St. in Menomonie.

Toppers will give the first 50 guests in line free food for a year and reward fans that day with prizes and other giveaways. The company plans to reach 150 restaurants by the end of 2015 and 500 by 2020. Toppers currently has 39 locations.

Career event approaches

UW-Eau Claire is hosting "Marketing Analytics Career Day" Thursday at various locations on campus.

Representatives from eight companies will attend the event, which is open to

the public. Visit tinyurl.com/7zj6lf for more information.

Thermal heating fair set

The Heating the Midwest Thermal Heating Fair is 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday at the Ramada Convention Center, 205 S. Barstow St.

Admission is free. Visit heatingthemidwest.org for more information.

Security firm adds service

Access Security of Chippewa Falls is adding security officer services to its business.

Philip Low will be heading up the physical security department. He has 10 years of experience in the physical security field as a working security officer and in various management positions.

Access Security specializes in the installation and service of access control, fire detection, security camera and burglary alarm systems. Tony Kovach and Randy Slaby own the business, which also has a location in La Crosse.

Short Takes

Chris Wolff has joined Citizens Community Federal in Eau Claire as a mortgage sales manager. Wolff has more than 19 years of sales experience, including six in the mortgage area. Citizens Community Federal has 26 branches in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan.



Wolff

A free seminar, "Key Financial Decisions in Retirement for Seniors" will be held from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Wednesday at the L.E. Phillips Senior Center, 1616 Bellinger St. Space is limited. Register by calling 715-839-4909.

RCU received the 2011 Loss Mitigation and Home Preservation Excellence Award from CUNA Mutual Group. The award recognizes credit unions whose collections departments have gone above and beyond in reducing losses and keeping people in their homes.

A downtown clean-up event is 8 a.m. to noon Saturday in Menomonie. Visit mainstreetmenomonie.org, email mainstreet342@wvt.net or call 715-235-2666 for more information.

Bauman Construction of Chippewa Falls recently recognized Bohl & Proulx Plumbing with its Outstanding Sub-Contractor Award. The award recognizes employee job-site safety adherence and safety practices. Bohl & Proulx has surpassed 940 days without a loss time accident and is closing in on Bauman Construction's past record of 965 days.

Royal Construction of Eau Claire has hired Jeff Hilden as a project manager. Hilden is experienced in projects related to the commercial, health care, industrial, retail, governmental and financial sectors in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin has hired an area team leader for its Eau Claire and Lake Hallie retail stores and training centers. David Kristufek, who previously worked for eBay, is the new area team leader for the Eau Claire location. Renee Monnier, a former Kwik Trip employee, has joined the Lake Hallie location as an area team leader.

The Chippewa Valley Society of Human Resource Management earned the Gold EXCEL Award from the national Society for Human Resource Management in Alexandria, Va., for its scope of work in 2011.

Ohio-based Fairmount Minerals, which includes its Maiden Rock-based Wisconsin Industrial Sand Co., was named to the Center for Companies That Care honor roll. The not-for-profit organization "is dedicated to enhancing the well-being of employees and communities," according to its website.

Randy Risler, an independent financial adviser affiliated with Commonwealth Financial Network and president of Security Financial Solutions in Eau Claire, was named to Commonwealth's President's Club. The distinction recognizes financial advisers based on a ranking of annual production among Commonwealth's network of 1,400 financial advisors.

Joni Zich has been promoted to director of gas system strategy and business operations for Xcel Energy in Denver. Zich earned a master's in business administration from UW-Eau Claire and worked for Xcel Energy in Wisconsin for 24 years. She also serves on the boards of directors for Junior Achievement and Eau Claire Regional Arts Center.

From staff reports

Awards/Tru-Lock & Security founded in '71

from Page 1D

If You Go

What: Small Business of the Year breakfast honoring Gordy's County Market and Tru-Lock & Security.

When: 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, May 23.

Where: Holiday Inn Campus Area, 2703 Craig Road.

Cost: \$15.

What: 2012 Business Hall of Fame luncheon.

When: Noon to 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 14.

Where: Eau Claire Golf & Country Club, 828 Clubview Lane, Altoona.

Information: Call 715-834-1204 or visit eauclairechamber.org about either event.

Gordon said he never insisted that his children follow in his footsteps.

"I encouraged them to learn how to put in a good day's work," Gordon said. "They all worked in the stores at one time or another; four just decided it's what they like to do." There is a 22-year gap between the oldest and youngest Schafer siblings working for the company. Jeff Schafer said each has their own strengths and weaknesses.

"Working with your siblings sometimes is a challenge, but in our case it's been very rewarding," he said.

Gordon, 72, has slowly decreased his role in the business as his children take on greater roles.

"I'm involved, but I've stepped back a long way," he said. "It feels great to sit back and watch some very good people run the day-to-day operations."

The responsibilities required of the expanding company have grown exponentially from Gordon's first job as a teenager.

"My brother set a pile of meat and a knife down in front of me," Gordon said of his introduction to the industry as a 13-year-old. "I trimmed the bones and never looked back."

Gordy's has established a trucking division to help with its growth. The hauling of groceries from SuperValu and milk from Land O'Lakes now is handled in house.

As for further expansion of the family business, Jeff did not rule out the possibility of future growth. He's worked in the industry since he was 12. "I enjoy people, whether it's the customers or people who work with us," he said.

Now his son, Nick, also works for Gordy's, which has grown to around 800 employees.

"We've had opportunities for other stores out there, but it has to be the perfect fit," Jeff said. "With the new generation coming up in our business, we're going to be around a long time."

Tru-Lock & Security

Coming to the aid of a local church provided the foundation for a family-run Eau Claire business that's been operating for more than four decades.

ed back to us. I never thought all five would; that was just a bonus."

Chris Lokken said the decision was an easy one. "Just the ability to help people is what fuels most of us here," he said.

The Lokkens insist that arguments among family members are a rarity.

"We're a family," Patty said. "We have discussions and disagreements, but at the end of the day decisions are made collectively, and we all live with them."

Patty works in the building and Ken continues to hit the road for service calls.

"I'm a stickler for detail," Patty said. "I'm kind of the glue that holds everything together around here."

"The boys are skilled in certain areas. I like to be here at the end of the day to make sure everything's done and everybody's happy."

Even the Great Recession did little to dent business, Chris Lokken said.

"We seem to have done pretty well," he said.

"When the downturn occurred, I think it may have made people more concerned about their own security."

Interesting service calls are common in an industry in which "every day is an adventure," Patty said. On a couple of occasions Tru-Lock has received calls from customers who flushed their keys down a toilet. Others have called to say their keys are at the bottom of a lake after going for a swim.

The company's products and services, however, have gotten decidedly more high-tech over time. Over the years, a growing number of new homes are being built with security systems, Chris said, and some are employing video features.

"For businesses, it's uncommon not to have some sort of access control," he said.

Patty has a few words of advice for others seeking an entrepreneurial path.

"Don't be discouraged; have faith in yourself and determination," she said. "Be willing to be a little more diversified and just hang in there. Do what you can to educate yourself and network with other people in your industry."

Marlaire can be reached at 715-833-9215 or liam.marlaire@qccp.com.

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Alumni Association
Women's Day Luncheon
Wed., April 25, Noon-1 p.m.
Fanny Hill Restaurant
3918 Crescent Ave., Eau Claire
Luncheon buffet, no reservations. Open to the public; reservations requested. Cost of \$10 includes presentation. Fanny Hill Restaurant, beverage tax included. Make reservations by contacting the UW-Eau Claire Alumni Association at 715-838-3266 or alumni@uwec.edu.

Steps to Recovery: Fitness Program Helps Cancer Patients Regain Physical and Emotional Strength
To improve the quality of life in cancer survivors, Dr. Matthew Wiggins, a UW-Eau Claire professor of kinesiology, provides a community outreach program that supports individuals physically, emotionally and socially through exercise, with students trained as cancer fitness specialists. The Cancer Recovery and Fitness program is a collaboration between the Marquette Clinic Cancer Care Survivorship Program and the UW-Eau Claire kinesiology department. Dr. Wiggins will discuss how the program serves the community and enhances students' learning.
Wed., April 25, Noon-1 p.m.
Fanny Hill Restaurant
3918 Crescent Ave., Eau Claire
Luncheon buffet, no reservations. Open to the public; reservations requested. Cost of \$10 includes presentation. Fanny Hill Restaurant, beverage tax included. Make reservations by contacting the UW-Eau Claire Alumni Association at 715-838-3266 or alumni@uwec.edu.

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