

BUSINESS

MARILYN FITCHETT, EDITOR
953-2102

SUBURBAN BUSINESS LEADERS

Maro Schwartz of Birmingham has been promoted to vice president/marketing at the Handlemans Company in Troy. He will be responsible for the corporate marketing activities of the music, video, book and computer software product lines.



Schwartz

Andy Thomsen has been named senior vice president and on-line editor at Unique Film & Video in Farmington Hills. He has assumed the duties of on-line video editor and creative and technical consulting. Also at Unique Film & Video, Helga V. Abela has joined the firm as sales representative, a newly created position.



Thomsen

Charles A. Esser, CPA, and partner at Nemes Allen & Co., a Bingham Farms-based Certified Public Accounting firm recently earned accreditation as a certified business appraiser by the Institute of Business Appraisers, Inc.



Abela

To submit materials to this column, please send a brief biographical summary along with a black-and-white photo, if possible, to: Business Editor, Observer & Eccentric, Livonia, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. There is no charge.



Esser

Investing in the family plan

The family approach of the Schwartz brokerage/investment firm in Bloomfield Hills seems to be winning the trust and confidence of its clients.

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Gregory J. Schwartz, owner of a brokerage/investment firm in Bloomfield Hills that carries his name, is proud of his accomplishments since starting the business in 1976.

The firm has 1,000 active clients, most with a minimum net worth of \$200,000 to \$300,000, he said.

About 25 percent of his business involves mutual funds and annuities, 25 percent real estate syndicates, 20 percent stocks and bonds, 20 percent company mergers and acquisitions and 10 percent miscellaneous investments.

"We make more than \$1 million a year in commissions — that's in the ballpark," Schwartz said.

But perhaps even more satisfying — and certainly more unexpected — is that all five of Schwartz's sons have followed or plan to follow in his footsteps.

Greg Jr., 29, a registered representative, Walter, 23, a registered representative, and Joe, 26, a certified pub-



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

lic accountant, work with their father full time.

Peter, 18, who plans to start college next year and major in finance, is

helping with clerical tasks around the office.

Ed, 24, who recently completed an investment banking program, is studying for securities examinations and will start on a master's degree in business administration this fall. He, too, figures to put in some part-time hours at Schwartz & Co. this summer.

A family affair

"I wish I could say I had this grand design where I had it all figured out, but I can't," their dad said. "It was pure luck."

"My son, Greg, who worked on Wall Street, wanted to get married and come home and work in the business with me five, six years ago. I felt, 'My God, what if he doesn't like it? What if he's no good? What if I don't like it?'"

As it turned out, the patriarch founder said, it worked and worked well.

"Greg's the one that said, 'Let's get Walter in the business,'" Gregory continued. "He was an over-the-counter trader in New York City. I didn't know it, but Greg had been negotiating with Walter to come, and he's been here three, four years."

"Walter is the best manager of the group," Gregory said. "He's a great coach. He knows how to handle people, and he's the one that said to me, 'Let's get Joe in here.'"

"Joe is a CPA and tax guy. I had my doubts about what good that would be in an investment firm, but his tax experience fit like a glove. I just wasn't smart enough to see it — a lot of investment decisions center

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Brothers' advice bytes

Investment advisers are paid to give advice. While specific direction must be tailored to specific circumstances, members of the Schwartz family offer the following generic points to ponder.

■ "Have a long-term plan. Don't trade or speculate." — Gregory J. Schwartz.
■ "Make sure as an investor you determine what your objective is. Often, they haven't gone through

a thought process and asked, 'What is my goal?'" — Joe Schwartz.

■ "For a young person, take a fixed dollar amount and put it away in good times and bad for long-term investing." — Walter Schwartz.

■ "Don't worry about short-term fluctuations. Invest with a long-term perspective." — Greg Schwartz Jr.

Who needs background in business? Not the women of the Plungers Club

BY R.J. KING
STAFF WRITER

Wall Street and the prospect of riding the next blue-chip stock from the ground floor up isn't so far away for a group of savvy female investors who meet every month to review stocks and bonds over coffee and tea.

"We bought Wal-Mart stock 'way back when, and now the value of our investment has increased over 1,000 percent," said Mary Jane Snow, one of the original members of the Women of the Plungers Investment Club, which was founded 12 years ago in Bloomfield Hills.

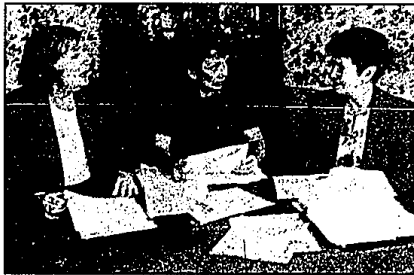
"Some of our members put in \$20 a month, others invest up to \$200. We have 12 different stocks in various numbers of shares with a total value of around \$130,000. I've learned quite a bit since I joined. It also came in very handy when I became a widow and had to manage my own money."

Another stock winner the group profited from — AFLAC (American Family Life Assurance Co.) — increased in value by 421 percent since an initial investment a decade ago, said Snow.

AT&T, McDonald's Corp. and Emerson Electric have been in the group's winner circle as well. Bonded by their membership in the American Association of University Women, a national group of females holding four-year college degrees, the 15 members of the Plungers Investment Club live in Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township or West Bloomfield.

"We started out together in AAUW by studying under the topic of Money Talk. One of our members happened to be familiar with investment clubs, so we just went from there," said Joyce Manby, assistant financial officer for the Plungers Investment Club, and a West Bloomfield resident.

Said Snow: "We were all non-working, and we had very little background in business. In fact, we had quite different majors: political science, education, chemistry, I mean, no, we were not business-women. And we made some



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Money women: The original women of the Plungers Investment Club: Irene Siehert (left), Mary Jane Snow and Joyce Manby.

"mistakes along the way." Not too many, apparently.

Meeting on weekdays from 9 a.m. to noon, Snow said the group was timid at first, with each member investing \$20 a month on average. Today, though, members are more willing to plunk down three-figure amounts based on group research or a strong hunch.

"I know some of the husbands have their own investment clubs, and once in a while we'll compare notes, but we do pretty well on our own," said Snow. "We have a waiting list right now (for new members), and we have our own portfolios that we manage outside the club as well."

"But it's not all fun and games. Each of us watch the markets very carefully, and we rely heavily on our own research, whether it be from the Wall Street Journal, money magazines or periodicals. We also belong to a national investment association which evaluates individual stocks."

Typically each member of the group takes a turn hosting a meeting, said Manby, though the club will gather at an area restaurant to celebrate a landmark

event, for instance, most recently when the portfolio reached \$100,000.

The next portfolio milestone is the \$150,000 plateau, said Manby. Meanwhile, the allure of investment clubs — apart from education and camaraderie — stems from bypassing traditional brokerage fees, which can reach as high as \$45 for a single share of stock.

"You can go into a Sears store and buy any retail item at face value, but when you go to buy a single share of Sears stock you have to pay a large brokerage fee," said Barry Murphy, director of marketing for the National Association of Investors Corp. in Royal Oak, of which the Plungers are a member.

"We have over 10,000 investment clubs in our membership who represent over 170,000 people. We also have 40,000 individual investors. All of our members avoid brokerage fees by buying their first share of stock through us (for a \$5 fee). After that, deal directly with the relevant corporation."

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