

BUILDING & BUSINESS

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BUILDING & BUSINESS' SUBURBAN STARS

Suburban Stars highlights promotions, transfers, hirings and other key personnel moves within the suburban business community. To submit materials, please send a brief biographical summary along with a black-and-white photo, if possible, to: Suburban Stars, Business, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is 313-691-7273.

Michael P. McGee of Livonia, an attorney in the Detroit office of the law firm of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, has been named by Crain's Detroit Business to its "40 Under 40" list for 1993. His principal practice area is municipal finance law. He also is a Livonia city councilman.



McGee

Shelley Darmetko has been named marketing director of the Oakland Mall, Troy. She joins the mall with five years of retail shopping center marketing experience, including Wonderland Mall in Livonia.



Darmetko

William J. Wickett of Garden City was named assistant director of public relations for the Detroit Pistons. He will be managing editor of Pistons Insider magazine and will assist with media relations. He previously was assistant information director for the University of Michigan.



Wickett

Cynthia M. Bates has been named corporate sales director for Jacobson's Store. She is responsible for overseeing the specialty retailer's year-round gift-giving program established to meet the needs of corporate and individual clients.



Bates

See STARS, 3F



STAFF PHOTOS BY DAN DEAN

CEO speaks: Robert J. Eaton drew a large and attentive suburban audience to hear his views on major issues facing the auto industry. Listeners interviewed later said they liked what he said.

Suburbanites echo auto exec's views



The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and health care costs are major issues currently facing the domestic auto industry. A key executive at one of the Big Three presented his insights at an afternoon forum in Rochester Hills.

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Robert J. Eaton, chairman and chief executive officer of Chrysler Corp., served up his view of key issues facing the auto industry during the eighth annual business forum at Oakland University. Afterwards, the Bloomfield Hills resident received good reviews from suburban executives, academics and

students who apparently liked what they had digested.

"I was very pleased with what he said about NAFTA," said E.J. Hartmann, president of Ziebart International in Troy.

"He expressed the same thoughts I've had for U.S. industries to export to Mexico. We have a dealer in Mex-

See SUBURBANITES, 2F



In a nutshell: "The industry has some major challenges ahead of it. Most of them are directly related to the economic challenges facing the entire country," Robert Eaton said.

In control

Keep home organized by clearing the clutter

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Call them clutter busters.

Companies such as the Closet Factory, headquartered in Farmington Hills, and Closet Interiors in Troy offer homeowners the opportunity to live the maxim, a place for everything and everything in its place.

"We purchased a new house that had a long closet and poles," said Rob Boesky of Farmington Hills. "There was good space in there. We needed some creative design so all our stuff would fit."

Jeff Kaplan of The Closet Factory responded to the challenge.

"He designed a closet that included some drawers, some jewelry shelves," Boesky said. "He put in some shoe racks, double, triple hanging rods, belt racks, tie racks. They did a really nice job."

Karyn Bookmeier of Livonia said she and her husband, Brian, grew tired of dealing with the constant mess of a bedroom closet and a linen/medicine closet outside a bathroom.

"Everything was on the floor under clothes," she said. "We couldn't find anything."

Built-in shelving and baskets installed by the Closet Factory proved to be the solution.

"They met with us, asked what we needed, what we were looking for," Bookmeier said. "They made up a couple of designs. They weren't pushy. They played along with a lot of stuff we already had in there."

"I should have taken before and after pictures. It's been installed about two months now and still looks like the day they were put in," she said.

Closet Interior, an independent operation, and the Closet Factory, a franchise, both build to specification in their warehouses.

"We do all of our own manufacturing, all of the designing," said Angelika Fightmaster, owner/designer for Closet Interiors in business since 1986. "There's no in-between. We have control over everything."

The average closet remodeling costs just under \$1,000, she added.

"Jewelry drawers are popular items and baskets are popular, one for dirty laundry and one for dry cleaning," Fightmaster said.

Several elements determine price, said Mark B. Ponski, president of Closet Factory, which has in business for two years.

"Price depends on size, obviously, the materials you use. We can go from particle board to

melamine (plastic laminate)," he said. "It depends on the options you use. Some like doors, baskets, drawers."

"We charge by the number of components, rods, shelves and compartments. The customer has a lot of flexibility over cost. It can get very elaborate."

Some customers spend as little as \$200, others several thousand dollars, Ponski said, but the average job prices out at \$1,200 to \$1,500.

"Everything is adjustable," he said. "Shelving is on pins so you can always change it."

"It's kind of contagious," Fightmaster said. "As customers go through my book, they say, 'I didn't know you could do this or that.'"

Neither the Closet Factory nor Closet Interiors do rough carpentry work. They basically fine-tune what's already there and work within and around an existing structure.

Closet Interiors utilizes wall-support anchoring similar to cupboards, the Closet Factory floor-based systems. Both also are expanding into office organizing and even garages.

Ponski said he's designed a baby's changing table in a closet. Fightmaster has included an extra door and kitty litter box in a laundry enclosure.

Most customers are remodelers. However, some residential builders are looking for more elaborate closet organizing systems.

"They're a good selling feature for builders," said Ron Jones, an estimator for Beck Building. "By the time you take the materials you buy, labor to install and paint and take those costs out and apply them to the Closet Factory, it probably nets out \$200 for eight closets."

Fightmaster said she's also worked with residential builders.



In order: Custom-designed closet systems, compartments, shelves and hanging rods can go a long way toward bringing order from chaos.

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