

## MARKETPLACE

## Franco management team to buy firm

Ross Roy Communications of Bloomfield Hills has reached agreement to sell Anthony M. Franco Inc., a Detroit-based public relations firm, to a group of four of the firm's senior officers. The sale is effective Dec. 31.

"The Franco management team approached us about purchasing the firm," said Peter R. Mills, chairman and chief executive officer of Ross Roy. "With Tony Franco having announced last June that he is retiring from day-to-day leadership of the firm, we felt that the best way to continue the success of the agency was to place it in the hands of its longtime managers and have Tony on hand as chairman to help with the transition and continuity of the business."

This move also helps Ross Roy toward its goal of focusing more resources on core businesses.

Collectively, the new ownership group has more than 30 years of experience with the firm. Each of the four principals will be an equal partner in the company.

■ Stephen F. Friedman of Oak Park, president of The Covideo Co., who joined the firm as a vice president in 1984 and who established the Covideo unit for corporate video production and executive communications training in 1987.

■ Daniel F. Ponder of Northville, chief financial officer, who has headed the Franco organization's financial and administrative operations since

1985 and has played a key role in the firm's acquisitions as well as its collaborative efforts with Ross Roy.

■ Charles C. Ragains of Bloomfield Hills, chief operating officer, who joined the firm as a vice president in 1986 and who has led the day-to-day client service activities of the public relations account staff since being named COO in 1991.

■ George N. Sepetya of Farmington Hills, president of The Comark Group, a graphics design firm he founded independently in 1964 and which was acquired in 1988 by the Franco organization to serve its clients and other organizations.

Under the new structure, Ragains will be president of the core public relations counsel-

ing firm. Ponder becomes general manager for the total operation. Friedman and Sepetya remain presidents of their respective units. Each partner will be involved in the management of the entire firm.

Anthony M. Franco will serve as chairman of the firm through 1994. He founded the firm in 1964. In addition to the four owners and Franco, the firm's board of directors will include Chris A. Lawson, executive vice president and chief financial officer of Ross Roy.

The Franco firm becomes one of the 20 largest independent public relations firms in the United States (in terms of fee revenue) and remains the largest in Michigan. It is a full-service public relations agency.



Stephen F. Friedman



Daniel F. Ponder



Charles C. Ragains



George N. Sepetya

received a Top New Center award and a cost efficiency award. The center opened in April 1992.

Kurt Seifert, owner of the Ferndale MAACO, 10669 Northend, received the company's Master Award for the most effective use of the company's tools and systems.

For the fourth consecutive year, the center also achieved sales of \$1 million, placing it among the top 10 percent in the chain.

■ **WRINKLE-FREE**  
Wonder Press, a liquid wrinkle remover for clothing, will reach retail stores in January. Until now, the non-aerosol spray was available only as an amenity in hotels, at travel agencies and on cruises.

The four-ounce spray will sell for \$4 in department and luggage stores and drug chains. The spray works on most fabrics, including cotton, wool, rayon and polyester, according to Farmington Hills-based 21st Century Products, the local distributor.

For information, call (810) 569-4146.

### ■ BOTTOMS UP

Since November 1992, Troy-based Kmart Corp. has donated more than \$725,000 worth of disposable diapers to non-profit groups nationwide.

The diaper donation program started after an employee suggested that open diaper packages be given to charities. Store associates collect diapers from open packages on shelves, repackaging them and contact qualified non-profit charities for pick-up.

"Kmart's commitment to children and families, coupled with our associates' concerns, led us to develop the program," said Gary Ruffing, a Kmart divisional vice president.

### ■ TOP AWARD

Danace Potos, Sr., senior prototype technician at Johnson Controls automotive systems, Plymouth, received the Chairman's Award for Excellence in customer satisfaction for coming up with a faster, less expensive way to develop automotive seating prototypes.

Instead of making the seat's back panel with steel, he suggested using a vacuum-formed plastic panel — just as effective, but 95 percent lower in cost. Using the new material also reduces production time from 16 weeks to two weeks.

### ■ SUPPLIER CONSOLIDATES

Newly formed COMCORP Technologies, Inc., Warren, is the umbrella company for BRECOM Corp., DeCouper Industries and three newly acquired automotive suppliers from Eltec Corp. COMCORP runs four manufacturing facilities in southeast Michigan, including Plymouth Stamping, Inc., Plymouth; and Rich Powder Coat, Inc., Canton Township.

COMCORP manufactures pedal assemblies, door hardware and hinges, brackets, hood latches, body hardware assemblies and accelerator systems for major automakers.

### ■ EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Four employees of Allstate Insurance Co. in Troy have earned

the Level III Team Excellence Award, the highest form of employee recognition.

Honorees are Paul Regula of Rochester Hills, claims analyst; and Pam Tyndall of Birmingham, quality development coordinator; Dave Ruba, claims manager, and Mark Rose, program coordinator, both of Sterling Heights.

### ■ COMPUTER KNOW-HOW

Oakland University's School of Business Administration has established an instructional program to keep Ameritech computer professionals on the cutting edge of information systems technology.

The program, in cooperation with Ameritech Services, is directed by Tom Lauer and Al Lederer of the School of Business Administration's Decision and Information Sciences Department.

There are 20 Ameritech employees participating in the program at Ameritech facilities in Oak Park. The employees range from 7 to 20 years of service.

They're taking courses over three semesters that cover topics in systems analysis, systems design and the programming of an information system.

The OU courses incorporate use of integrated CASE (Computer Aided Systems Engineering) tools and other state-of-the-art technology. Ameritech Services has partnerships with universities in Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois and Indiana to provide the same kind of educational experience for its employees.

Several factors made the Oakland program appealing to Ameritech. For example, OU has a long-standing program in information systems. And it currently requires more information systems education in its MBA program than any other MBA program in the United States, Lauer and Lederer say.

OU's information systems faculty was ranked first in Michigan and 40th in the nation in information systems research productivity, according to a recently published survey.

### ■ WALSH SUCCESS

In a recent report of performance data from the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy on the 1992 CPA Exams, the statistics included a comparison of candidates with advanced degrees from various schools around the country.

Walsh College students with advanced degrees who took the May, 1992 CPA Exam, ranked first in the nation on the business law section. Ohio State University and University of Texas-Austin ranked second and third.

Walsh is based in Troy.

On the November 1992 CPA Exam, the advanced degree students ranked second nationally on the Accounting Theory section behind the University of Washington. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee was third.

Last May, four Walsh students were awarded the Sellis Award for scoring among the top 100 in the nation on the November 1992 Exam.

Walsh College was founded in 1922 as Walsh Institute specializing in accounting education.

Today, the nearly 4,000 students are enrolled in bachelor degree completion programs in accounting, computer information systems, finance, general business, marketing and management and Master of Science degree programs in finance, management, professional accounting and taxation. Walsh has campuses in Troy, Novi, Port Huron and at the University Center in Clinton Township.

### ■ INCREASE PRODUCTION

AlliedSignal Automotive, Southfield, will expand production of anti-lock braking systems offered on the new Dodge/Plymouth Neon and Ford Mondeo.

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