

Future's bright for new Hills business

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Pretty much every business did well in the year 2000, says businessman Michael Vaughn.

In the trying times of 2002, starting a new company is a bold move.

But for Vaughn, president of University Business Interiors based in Farmington Hills, it was the right thing to do.

He and former Detroit Pistons Vinnie Johnson, chairman of the company, partnered to take over University Business Interiors earlier this year.

It is one of about five companies the former professional athlete owns.

"He and I are partners," Vaughn said of Johnson.

"He's passionate about business," Vaughn said. "He can see it as a way to bring growth to a community."

Johnson also owns Pistons Automotive in Detroit's Empowerment Zone, Vaughn said.

"He's very smart in how he scopes out a business opportunity," Vaughn added.

The best time to get into business is the down time, said



Michael Vaughn is optimistic about his new business, University Furniture, despite difficult economic times.

Vaughn.

"That's when you learn how to get customers and if you make money (in a difficult economy) you know you'll survive and thrive," he said.

Vaughn had management experience for another office furniture firm and he and Johnson agreed to buy the company from University Moving based in the same building off Commerce Drive in Farmington Hills.

He said what makes the company appealing to customers is nearly all of its services are in house, that includes designers for space planning and the products and installation, including carpeting.

"For the most part everybody works for us," he said.

That means University Business Interiors has accountability to the customer, he said.

Vaughn said the company is

optimistic about seeing a 20-25 percent growth in revenues this fiscal year.

"We're the only dealership (for office furniture) in town hiring," he said.

University Business Interiors clients include Delphi, Kelly Services and Cranes Communications.

Vaughn is also an associate minister at Metropolitan Community Tabernacle on Detroit's east side.

"For me, being in the ministry keeps me grounded," he said. "I understand the demands of an average person."

The future for the Hills company is bright, with the short-term goal of \$20-30 million in sales and in time, \$90-100 million, Vaughn said.

Call University Business Interiors at (248) 426-0100.

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Benefit lights up more lives than ever

Fifteen years and still growing strong.

That's the message of the Angela Hospice "Light Up A Life" benefit, which drew a larger-than-ever crowd to Laurel Manor Friday.

"We started out 15 years ago with a lunch at Roma Hall and we've come a long way, baby," said Sister Mary Giovanni, president and CEO of the Livonia hospice, during the event.

Another change is that the event will no longer feature a fashion show. Sister Giovanni instead had this suggestion for attendees at the semi-formal event: "Look at what the celebrities are wearing and we'll find out what stores they bought their clothes at."

Nearly 600 people joined the dinner/silent auction/live auction. "That's a record for us," Sister Giovanni said.

Although she had no results of how much was raised for

Angela Hospice to continue providing its end-of-life care programs, Sister Giovanni said the committee's goal of \$100,000 was exceeded — meaning more people would be served. "It just helps offset what Medicare and other insurance doesn't cover."

The live auction featured celebrity auctioneers like Joanne Purtan of WXYZ-Channel 7, Lila Lazarus of WDIV-Channel 4, emcee Paul Gross of WDIV and others.

One of the larger auction items was a Detroit Red Wings suite at Joe Louis Arena for 20 people, plus parking passes.

The final bid was \$3,750. One of the more humorous and lively auctions was handled by Lila Lazarus, who pushed bids for a behind-the-scenes reporter for a day tour of Channel 4.

Don't worry, Lazarus said, "They don't have to have a colonoscopy on TV." (She was

referring to one of her past news segments.) Later, she drew laughter by adding, "OK, they can have a colonoscopy on Channel 4." The winning bid — pushed to coordinate with her employer — was \$1,004.

Sister Giovanni offered special thanks to longtime volunteer Carolyn DiComo and Georgia Scappaticci, co-chairs of the event.

She also noted the numerous sponsors, topped by gold benefactors — HUMMER, G.M.C. and The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers; and diamond sponsors — Allied Printing, Ford Motor Company, Hour Magazine, Lear Corp., and Volkswagen of America.

Staff and volunteer hospice caregivers also were credited.

"Thank you for all the work that you do that enables us to carry on," Sister Giovanni said.

By Dave Varga

Botsford Commons ladies love fun, too

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Everyone knows the Boys of Botsford and their annual charity calendar.

Now the girls of the Botsford Commons retirement community in Farmington Hills are doing it for themselves, too.

Residents Carolee Waddell and Arnette Carter, spurred on by community activities director Bonnie Berzins, are putting together their first Red Hat Society group.

A luncheon is planned for the ladies-only club at the Commons Monday.

If enough interest is generated and enough red hats are seen, it could be a regular activity, said Berzins.

The Red Hat Society is known around the world for ladies past the age of 50 who enjoy sharing each other's company. Sue Ellen Cooper of Fullerton, Calif. founded the group, based on a popular

poem entitled "Warning" by Jenny Joseph.

The main objective? Fun. There is already a life-size doll wearing a red hat near the entrance to the Commons' community dining room.

A note on it invites all the "girls" of Botsford to attend.

And as required by the society's bylaws, each woman will be required to wear a red hat, but red scarves will do as well.

"I do think it's going to be fun," said Waddell. "This is our luncheon."

Berzins said Thursday about 20 women had already signed up.

If the group proves popular, they may even go on outings, Berzins said.

The boys of Botsford "have their own thing going," she added with a chuckle.

"We'll see what the ladies want to do."

According to the www.red-hatsociety.com Web site, the

groups are a place for women after the age of 50 from all walks of life.

"We believe silliness is the comedy relief of life, and, since we are all in it together, we might as well join red-gloved hands and go for the gusto together," states the site's motto.

It continues: "Underneath the frivolity, we share a bond of affection, forged by common life experiences and a genuine enthusiasm for wherever life takes us next."

The "Warning" poem by Jenny Joseph that spurred the club several years ago begins:

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple

With a red hat which doesn't go and doesn't suit me.

And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves and satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.

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