

Chamber Works

Make money without doing evil” and “work should be challenging and the challenge should be fun.” These two statements come from the Google Inc. Web site, but perfectly fit the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce’s mantra. The work of the chamber gets done while having a darn good time doing it. That’s why we refer to ourselves as “The Fun Chamber.” (See our Web site at www.fairfieldctchamber.com and look at the banner, at the very top of the home page.)

It’s interesting to see how circumstances in our lives create who we are today, our philosophy and our style. Because of jobs I’ve had in the past, where depression set in the instant I opened the office door, when I cringed if the fax machine started spitting out paper, when a call from the boss required me to hold the phone a foot from my ear, I decided to make it my mission, should I ever have the profound good luck to actually be the boss, that I would make the work environment pleasant, and even fun for the people I managed. People, I reasoned, should be treated like human beings; hire the best of the best, then give them the right to use their brains. And let people know when you appreciate their good work. Just say “thank you,” or “good job,” and seek their opinion when appropriate. On the other hand, if you are the boss, never let anyone push you around.



PATRICIA L. RITCHIE

Discourteousness and rudeness are not acceptable in our office. Even if it means we must bite our tongue when we are about to explode from frustration, when we really want to strangle someone and call them names, we don’t allow ourselves to lower our standards. We are, after all, adults. We work for the Chamber of Commerce, and as such, having the ability to zipper our mouth is a requirement of the job.

Other things learned from past experience include the misguided habit of a former boss’ great skill at micromanagement. Never stand over your employees, spying on their work, worrying about what they are doing or not doing. Don’t check their computers after they’ve left to see if they forwarded any jokes, e-mailed their girlfriend or did their Christmas shopping on company time. Don’t call them on their cell phones if they are not at their desk because you are suspicious they may be taking a nap in their car or partying on company time. (Honestly, some bosses actually do this.) If the work gets done correctly and on time, don’t sweat the small things. Hire the right person for the job, and keep an open-door policy. If an employee has a problem, he or she knows you are available to help or to answer any questions.

Demoralizing, annoying and unacceptable are words that describe some of my former jobs. Loud, abusive, paranoid, bullying, harassing, intimidating, stupid and scary are useful descriptions for some former bosses. (Gee, I hope no one ever refers to me in those terms.) I can remember one job in particular that I really liked, but my boss, a young guy who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, was so insufferable and intoxicated with power that I began to look for another job one week after he hired me. Not one to give up easily, I had to convince myself that whatever issue he was screaming about wasn’t my fault. Nevertheless, it would eat away at me, and I would lose sleep. My health and well-being were at issue, and so, eventually, I had to quit.

I hope I’ve learned from others what not to do. I hope that those who work for me consider it a privilege and not a chore. I hope they are having fun. I hope they are not losing sleep over anything I’ve said. I hope I’ve been a good manager. One of the very nicest things that anyone ever said to me happened the day I closed the mall I had managed for years and said goodbye to my staff. My administrative assistant, Sophia was her name, cried and gave me a hug and said: “You’re the best boss I’ve ever had. I want to thank you for your patience, but most of all, I want to thank you for making it all so much fun.” Wow! What could be better than that?

New members

Biagios Osteria, Biagio Barone, 88 Ryders Lane, Stratford 06614; Gail G. Smith, Bookkeeping Services, 1863 Jennings Road, Fairfield 06824; Law Offices of Paul M. Cramer LLC, Paul M. Cramer, Esq., 1100 Kings Highway East, Fairfield 06825; Nutriscience Innovations LLC, Martha Pallathra, 2450 Reservoir, Trumbull 06611; Miche Mache LLC, Michel Nischan, 201 Morehouse Highway, Fairfield 06825; Grasmere Inc., Jerome Kozera, 500 Grasmere Ave., Fairfield 06824; Café Lola, Henri Donneaux, 57 Unquowa Road, Fairfield 06824; Carter Consultants Ltd., Beth Carter, 30 Youngstown Road, Fairfield 06824; Allison Gruder, LMFT, 1597 Post Road, Fairfield 06824; TLC Laser Eye Centers, Kristy Healy, 75 Kings Highway Cutoff, Fairfield 06824; JP Fitness Inc., Jill A. Franke, 57 Middlebrook Drive, Fairfield 06824; Yoga-bilitation, Theodora Barenholtz, 325 Reef Road, Suite 209, Fairfield 06824; The Growth Coach, Joseph Hawley, 12 Taylor Lane, Westport 06880; Tip the Bottle LLC, Christopher Cantanesi, 88 Alberta St., Fairfield 06825.

Upcoming events

April 19-25: “Restaurant Week” April 23, 5:30-7 p.m.: Business After Hours, Audi of Fairfield, 435 Commerce Drive. \$10 member reserved, \$15 member walk-in, and \$40 general admission. Reservations required. Call 255-1011. April 29, 8 a.m.: Educational Breakfast Forum: Duane Cashin, motivational speaker. “How to stand out in these times.” \$10 per person. Reservations required. Call 255-1011. Patricia L. Ritchie is the president and chief executive officer of the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce.



Regina Madwed, the owner of Capitol PhotoInteractive, is proud of her sons, Jacob and Daniel, as they have launched their own photography business.

Contributed photo/ Regina Madwed

Like father, like sons

Local photography biz taken to the next generation

By Alison Walkley
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Last month, Regina Madwed of Fairfield’s Capitol PhotoInteractive at 1300 Post Road happily reported that her 16-year-old twin sons, Jacob and Daniel, have taken their parents’ business to the “next generation” by launching Capitol Photo & Sons.

Madwed’s late husband, Steven, founded Capitol Photo more than 30 years ago, according to a news release.

“What began as a professional photography studio has grown to become Capitol PhotoInteractive – a full service interactive photography and design studio offering the latest in corporate and family photography, graphic design and Web site development,” Madwed explains, having started working for the company in 1992 herself as a studio manager; upon her husband’s death, she became the principle photographer.

As Capitol Photo’s Web site, www.capitolphotointeractive.com, explains, “Capitol PhotoInteractive was one of the first studios in Fairfield to use digital photography. The digital process allows customers to review their photographs immediately after the portrait is taken, and Regina’s expertise with Photoshop enables her to work with the customer to retouch the photograph and help them look the way they want to.”

Now the Madwed children have taken their parents’ torch and run with it themselves.

“Offering instant event photo favors for events ranging from birthday parties to corporate galas, Jacob and Daniel pride themselves on making every event ‘un-photo-gettable,’” Madwed writes.

“Capitol Photo & Sons is also a great way for Jacob and Daniel to learn how to own and operate a business. From marketing to managing staff to pricing event packages, they handle it all – and they are even managing to pay Mom back for the start-up costs.”

Jacob and Daniel reported in an e-mail last week, “One day we were in the car on the way home from school when our mother asked us if we would like to start

“As I watch Jacob and Daniel grow up, learn to become skilled photographers and successful businessmen, I can’t help but think of Steven—what a wonderful tribute to his memory.”

REGINA MADWED
OWNER, CAPITOL PHOTOINTERACTIVE

our own business. A client came in that day and asked our mom if she could hire us to do photo favors at her child’s bat mitzvah. Our mom said that we would not be interested in doing that. In that car ride home, we decided to launch Capitol Photo & Sons. We were so excited that later that week we went to town hall and registered the business in our name making it official.”

Making it a reality was another story, especially considering that the boys are still in school. The boys explained, “We wake up for school at 6 in the morning and get home at 6:30 at night, this does not include after school activities. School is a major part of our daily routine, but it does not get in the way of us doing our job and running our business.”

Nonetheless, the Madwed sons, who are sophomores at Westchester Hebrew High in Mamaroneck, N. Y., have had to learn the power of balance “between our long day at school and work.”

They call it “a challenge,” but enjoy it. “We always set aside time to take inventory, think of other ways to expand our business, and ways to keep up our customer satisfaction.”

While their business is run out of the same building as their mother’s, Daniel said, “We are a separate entity. We are Capitol Photo & Sons LLC, we do our own jobs, we hire our own people, and we do all our own designing. Our mother is our secretary and is not on the pay roll.”

So far the business is thriving, even in a faltering economy. Daniel said, “We

market ourselves everywhere and we give an excellent product with excellent customer satisfaction at an excellent price. We already have people booking us a year from now and we have many double bookings.”

It may just be Jacob, however, who continues on with Capitol Photo & Sons after college since Daniel aims to become a lawyer. College will present a new bounty of challenges with balancing work, though, since both brothers aim to continue working throughout. Speaking of Jacob, Daniel wrote, “He is always thinking of different ideas for the business and possibly when he grows up he might expand it into a franchise. We will definitely take this business with us to college and continue it there. We are already thinking about the next generation for managing the business here in Fairfield County.”

That being the case, the Madweds are looking to the Northeast for their higher learning. “Jacob wants to get a business degree and his goal is to get into the Wharton School of Business,” Daniel reported. He, on the other hand, “would like to go to an Ivy League school, preferably one with a great law graduate school.”

Their mother adds, “As I watch Jacob and Daniel grow up, learn to become skilled photographers and successful businessmen, I can’t help but think of Steven – what a wonderful tribute to his memory.”

For more information, visit www.capitolphotoandsons.com or call 255-4002.

Get help finding a job in tough economic times April 18

Mackey & Guasco Staffing Associates LLC, a Fairfield County employment agency, will host its first in a series of seminars to help job seekers land a job in this economic downturn. The event will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 18 at the Greenwich Library. Attendees will have a chance to meet with the agency’s founders, Maureen Mackey and Luisa ‘Lu’ Guasco, who will evaluate résumés and share their knowledge that spans more than 20 years in the recruiting field. In addition, 45 minutes will be set aside for those in attendance to network with other professionals.

Mackey and Guasco will talk about what today’s employers are really looking for and what you have to do to “make the cut.” “You will walk away with a new found attitude towards your job search,” said Mackey. “Believe it or not companies are hiring and it just takes a little more effort on your part to land that perfect job.”

“Promoting your brand could be as simple as volunteering for a community project or blogging,” said Guasco. “You could also write a column for a trade journal or create a Web site. The idea is to build credibility.”

Check in is at 1:45 p.m. The cost is \$25. Registration and payment accepted on line at: www.mackeyandguasco.com.