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MARKETEER

THE MARKETEER — BUFFALO, NY
GENERAL SALES MANAGER Michael Harris; ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER Doug Bradley; REGIONAL SALES MANAGER Mary Minnow; ASSISTANT EDITORS Jackie Ross, Steve Garcia, Sara and Michelle Collins, Bob Amica, Mark Kennedy, Kate Daniels; SALES ASSISTANT Kate Sullivan

CHART PUBLISHING
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CREATIVE DIRECTOR Justin Mather; GRAPHIC DESIGNER Scott East; PRODUCTION MANAGER Rick Perri
EDITOR Charles Griffin; PHOTOGRAPHY Robert Motta; PRINTER Kelly Brier

Marketplace competition, business competition, increasing demand from government all point to the need for greater efficiency in the way businesses market themselves. The individuals, companies and organizations featured in The Buffalo Marketeer Connection have made a valued contribution to this publication. However, no representation is made about the quality of services or the performance of the experts of the individuals, companies or organizations performing such services.



BRINGING FURNITURE HOME

Ashley leads local markets by striking the right mix of selection, service and price

BY DAVE TURNER

Selling furniture today is much different than it was in the not-too-distant past. Today's consumers are more fashion conscious, knowledgeable and value driven than ever before. What's more, they desire a family shopping experience versus just a place to buy furniture. In western and central New York, Ashley Furniture has found the right mix of product, service and price to meet the needs of these consumers. In other words, business is booming.

THE DEFINING DIFFERENCE

"We believe our business relationship with our manufacturer, Ashley Furniture Industries, is the defining difference," says Tom Kane, a managing partner for Ashley Furniture HomeStore locations in Olean, Orchard Park, Amherst and Elmira. "Their manufacturing facilities are fast, efficient, modern and technologically superior. Their transportation system is state-of-the-art featuring more than 1,400 tractor-trailers for the best service in the industry. This, combined with the most innovative supply chain management system, means that we, the retailing partner, are able to offer customers beautiful furniture and great service — quickly and affordably."

Wellsville Carpet Town Inc. was founded in Wellsville, NY, in 1967. It operates four Ashley Furniture HomeStore sites that are independently owned, as are 95 percent of Ashley HomeStores nationwide. It has announced plans to open additional locations in the Rochester market beginning with a Henrietta store in November and a second new store in early 2007. This fall, the retailer will open a new 75,000-square-foot distribution center in Batavia. "This will service both the Buffalo and Rochester markets, plus allows us future expansion support," Kane says.

THE BRAND-PRICE ADVANTAGE

Helping fuel the expansion is the fact that Ashley is the number-one-selling furniture brand in the world. It has been the fastest growing furniture retailer in the United States three years running. Besides the value of brand recognition, the manufacturer's line is available through local Ashley HomeStores at Ashley Direct prices.

While the Internet has made the competitive landscape more difficult for some brick-and-mortar retailers, Ashley Furniture HomeStores are benefiting in cyberspace, too. "The Internet shopper is an individual who wants to be informed about his or her upcoming purchase and is doing comparison shopping from home," Kane says. "They are usually seeking the very best value they can get for their money."

After shoppers have found their dream furniture online at AshleyHomeStores.com, they can come into the store and experience for themselves the quality and unbeatable pricing.



"Because we are an Ashley Furniture HomeStore, we sell at Ashley Direct prices," says Kane. "These can be 25 to 40 percent lower in price than comparable items, so we're a natural choice. Then they come in because furniture is a personal item. Most consumers like to touch and feel a personal purchase before committing to buying."

Regardless of whether the first point of contact is online or person-to-person, Ashley customers report that they enjoy their experience with the retailer and come back for more.

Lancaster resident Brian Will and his wife redecorated nearly two years ago. "(Ashley) had exactly what we wanted," Will says. "The price was right, the service was excellent. They took absolutely wonderful care of us, and we've gone back and bought many other items."

Barbara Fertel of Orchard Park chose a bedroom set that came for the price of just a bed at a competitor. "We did have a good experience," Fertel says. "And they seemed very genuine."

Cheektowaga resident Kathy Fialkowski had shopped around a good bit, but Ashley won her over for the first time last year. "They had what I liked and the prices I liked," Fialkowski says. "When I walked in, I wasn't hounded, I wasn't disregarded. I just went back. They were extremely helpful, extremely nice, and that had a play in it, too."



QUICK STATS

NAME

Ashley Furniture HomeStore

YEARS IN BUSINESS

Since 1967

EMPLOYEES

200+

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Simply to focus each day at exceeding our customers' expectations by providing the very best value-driven products through the very best customer-driven selling and service experience possible

WHAT'S NEW

The new 75,000-square-foot distribution center opening this fall in Batavia

WHAT'S AHEAD

Entering the Rochester market beginning with a Henrietta store in November and a second new store in early 2007

LOCATIONS

1429 Olean-Portville Rd.
Olean, NY 14788
(716)373-3300

3405 Amelia Dr.
Route 219 & Milestrip Exit
Orchard Park, NY 14127
(716)539-5220

575 Alberta Dr.
Wegman's Plaza
Amherst, NY 14226
(716)831-9700

CONTACT

Corporate offices
Ashley Furniture HomeStore
1429 Olean/Portville Rd.
Weston Mills, NY 14788
(716)373-3300
www.ashleyhomestores.com

What's hot in today's furniture and accessories markets? Good question.

"Where to start?" asks Tim Quinn, a managing partner with Ashley Furniture HomeStores in western and central New York.

TV AGE

With the proliferation of home improvement and interior design shows on cable and satellite television, styles and designs are as vast and varied as the programs themselves — and change in the click of a channel. That keeps people like Quinn, who are on the go.

"To provide our customers with the latest in current trends, performance fabrics and furniture styles, we have more than 40 percent of the running 40,000 SKUs in our product line being redesigned," Quinn says.

Design shows have also brought accessorizing to the top of consumers' minds.

"So on average, we have more than \$500,000 in ready-to-purchase, one-of-a-kind accessories on display," he says. "This includes area rugs, lamps, wall art, trees, greenery, glass table wear, collectibles and bedding ensembles, plus many unique design elements for every room of the home."

PULLING THE LOOK TOGETHER

So the question for retailers isn't just what's hot, but what's new — and Quinn's job is to get it into the showroom fast. "Most customers know what they like, but pulling the look together is the hard part," he says. "That's why our showrooms are themed throughout with the latest design ideas in country, rustic, traditional, contemporary, you name it."

Ashley Furniture HomeStores display dozens of room settings to give customers clear visual references of what a motif would look like in their homes. "All display items are available for purchase, so in theory, a customer could purchase the entire display down to the wall color," says Dave Quinn, another managing partner for the retailer. "We don't sell paint but we know where to send customers to get that exact color. We also provide additional in-store design consultation tools such as a component-specific room planning to help customers design their interior spaces just the way they want."

Quinn says the hottest thing in today's furniture and accessories markets is a company that responds to an ever-changing array of styles and preferences.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY FOR ALL

BY SANDY JOHN

From technical assistance to financial incentives, NYSERDA programs help cut energy use throughout New York

In eight years of administering the New York Energy SmartSM, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) has awarded nearly \$900 million in funding designed to help reduce energy consumption and cut harmful emissions. In turn, thousands of businesses and residents have experienced substantial savings in energy bills, the air is cleaner than it might have been and the state's economy is stronger.

With that experience under its belt, NYSERDA will have \$875 million in funding available DURING the next five years to continue and expand its programs.

The System Benefits Charge, or SBC, that is levied on electricity transmitted and distributed by investor-owned utilities in New York funds NYSERDA's programs. The Public Service Commission (PSC) originally named NYSERDA administrator of SBC funds in 1998. The Commission extended the SBC for five years in 2001 and for another five years in 2006.

"The PSC obviously saw value in the programs we provide," says Peter Sigurdson, manager of

NYSERDA's regional office in Buffalo. With a range of programs that can help anyone from an Erie County homeowner to a large enterprise that uses millions of kilowatt hours of electricity annually, NYSERDA seeks to aid New Yorkers at a time when high energy costs are a concern for everyone.

Municipalities, schools, manufacturers and other enterprises recognize the economic benefits of cutting energy usage. Many turn to NYSERDA for help in figuring out what energy-efficiency steps they can take and for assistance in financing those upgrades. NYSERDA's most popular commercial programs — including the New York Energy SmartSM New Construction Program, Commercial/Industrial Performance Program, and Loan Fund — focus on helping businesses of all sizes find ways to save energy and to pay for those upgrades.

AVAILABLE HELP

A few case studies show the variety of organizations that benefit from NYSERDA's programs.

With 12 schools and more than 7,600 students enrolled in Erie County, the West Seneca Central School District wanted to upgrade energy efficiency in its buildings. An energy conservation audit recommended several moves, including retrofitting lighting fixtures, installing energy management systems, installing thermal glazing on windows and replacing boilers.

NYSERDA was able to provide nearly

\$200,000 in incentives through its New York Energy SmartSM Commercial and Industrial Performance Program to help the district afford the \$4 million project. Since implementing the upgrades, the district has been saving about \$135,000 annually in electricity charges and another \$95,000 a year in natural gas costs.

"The school board and district staff spend many untold hours searching for opportunities to operate a quality school system in the most cost-effective manner possible," says James K. Brotz, superintendent of schools. "The more than \$230,000 savings (in annual energy costs) will help us attain that objective."

Medina Memorial Health Care System in Orleans County serves three western New York counties with a population of more than 45,000. When the organization wanted to upgrade its facilities and implement new energy-efficiency measures, it applied for a New York Energy SmartSM loan through a participating lender. The loan program, administered by NYSERDA, provides a 4 percent interest rate buy-down. Over the 10-year life of the loan, the health care system will save more than \$118,000 in interest charges thanks to the lower rate.

With the subsidized loan, the hospital was able to install thermal-insulated windows, energy-efficient lighting fixtures, and improve its heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. Those improvements will result in an estimated \$4,400 annual savings on its energy bills.

Businesses also are realizing that it makes sense to design energy-efficiency into a new

facility. In the case of Frito-Lay, the company wanted its new 40,000-square-foot distribution center in Henrietta to be a high-performance building. In fact, the company wanted the building to be certified in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program of the Green Building Council.

Through the New York Energy SmartSM New Construction Program, Frito-Lay was able to get technical assistance to evaluate and verify the energy-efficiency measures its design team had proposed. NYSERDA's independent technical consultant found the high-performance technologies would cut the expected energy costs of the facility in half, compared to a similar building without such technology. In addition to providing \$185,000 in incentives to offset some of the costs of implementing the measures, NYSERDA was able to assist Frito-Lay in the LEED certification process.

FAR-REACHING IMPACT

NYSERDA's individual clients benefit from having a building that's more energy efficient and cheaper to run. But the benefits of NYSERDA's programs spread far beyond the businesses, homeowners and institutions that receive assistance from the agency. Through 2005, the impact of the agency's programs totaled about 1,700 million kilowatt hours of electricity saved per year, reducing demand by 1,000 megawatts. Or, in everyday terms, the programs are saving as much electricity as it takes to power nearly 250,000 residential homes.

And because NYSERDA's business model is to provide financial incentives that lower the implementation cost for its customers seeking energy-efficiency upgrades and to provide incentives and other assistance for the private sector to perform the work, it is estimated that more than 4,450 new jobs have been created statewide.

Reduced energy usage also translates into lower emissions of nitrogen oxide, sulfur and carbon dioxide, making the air cleaner and healthier.

"Our staff is extremely passionate about issues related to energy, the environment and the economy, which translates into beneficial partnerships with our customers and contractors," Sigurdson says. "NYSERDA places a high priority on measuring the performance of all our programs to ensure that the public benefit funds that we have been directed to administrate is done so as efficiently, effectively and openly as possible. Our openness, accountability and transparent process help us build and maintain credibility with our customers."

For more information regarding NYSERDA and the New York Energy SmartSM Program, visit www.nyserdera.org.



QUICK STATS

NAME

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority

BUSINESS FOCUS

Using innovation and technology to increase energy efficiency, improve the State's economy and ease environmental problems

YEARS IN OPERATION

31

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

227

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Dedicated staff; innovative, flexible programs; and strong partnerships with customers and contractors

WHAT'S AHEAD

The agency will continue to concentrate on its core programs and hopes to enhance financial incentives for low- and moderate-income homeowners to control energy costs

ADDRESS

Main Office in Albany, NY. District Offices are located in Buffalo and New York City.

LOCAL ADDRESS

617 Main St.
Buffalo, NY 14203
(866)NYSERDA or (716)842-1522
www.nyserdera.org

HOMEOWNERS CAN RECEIVE HELP, TOO

The Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Program is designed to help consumers improve the energy efficiency of their homes. This hugely popular program has completed more than 11,500 jobs to date.

NYSERDA has created a network of independent home improvement contractors who are accredited by the Building Performance Institute. These contractors will perform a comprehensive home assessment to determine what

steps consumers can take to improve their home's energy efficiency, safety and health. The assessment takes two to three hours and looks at everything from insulation to appliances. The test results fill nine pages.

Once homeowners select the energy-efficiency steps they want to take, contractors can offer reduced-rate financing, thanks to NYSERDA. Residents who meet income requirements may be eligible for additional financial help through the Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®

Program, which has provided nearly \$17 million in assistance to 4,500 homeowners.

The payback for energy efficiency can be amazing. Many residential customers who participate in the program report the improvements cut their energy bills by up to 40 percent, so they'll recoup the cost of the upgrades in just a few years.

For information on the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Program, visit www.getenergysmart.org

Patty, caregiver



Left to right: Fany, caregiver; Eselyn, client



HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Assisting Angels helps seniors stay in their homes

BY MARGO PIERCE

Taking care of the basic necessities of everyday life such as laundry, preparing meals or remembering to take medication can often become hard for older people. When faced with this situation, many seniors and their families assume their options are limited to moving into an assisted living facility, nursing home or “imposing” on the lives of family members. The dual fears of being a burden on the younger generation and depleting savings makes leaving home seem like the only choice. Assisting Angels is pleased to debunk that myth.

The goal of this senior home care company is to provide thoughtful, customized non-medical care that's affordable. Assisting Angels accomplishes that goal by getting to know their

clients' needs and matching them up with a caregiver and/or services that will help them lead happy, healthy lives in familiar surroundings.

“We specialize in allowing people to stay within their homes,” says Todd Putzig, director of services for Assisting Angels. “We provide what an assisted living facility would in the comfort and convenience of one's own home. People don't have to leave home, where they have all their memories, in order to be properly cared for.”

Making the decision to invite someone unfamiliar into your home is a big decision. While this person can become a trusted companion and friend, it takes a lot of work to find the right person with the right experience. Because this is so crucial, Assisting Angels carefully selects caregivers for each one of their clients.

The selection process begins with one-on-one conversations between the Angels staff and the client, concerned family members, social workers and medical care providers. After identifying preferences and needs, the information is used to evaluate the caregivers from an exclusive pre-selected pool, all of whom have undergone comprehensive reviews — criminal background checks, references from

appropriate sources, employment history — and are bonded and insured. Several candidates are chosen for the client to interview. The client, not Assisting Angels, chooses the caregiver he or she is most comfortable with.

A customized plan of services is then developed to meet the needs of the client. A mix of meal preparation, domestic duties such as light housekeeping, making beds, laundry, appointment scheduling and reminders, recreational activities and transportation are just some of the tasks the caregivers perform. Dementia and Alzheimer's care are also available for 24-hour assistance or only a few hours a day to give a family caregiver a break.

“Whether it's six hours a week or 168 hours a week, we can ensure people's comfort and safety in their own homes,” Putzig says.

He says he understands how important being happy is for the physical health and mental well being of seniors. To be at ease and comfortable in the privacy of their own homes is why he insists the client's needs come first. That way, the in-home care experience can be supportive and nurturing for as long as that care is needed.

“We want to keep these people in their own homes as long as possible because they'll do the best in familiar surroundings,” he says.

FOR MORE INFO

Assisting Angels: Senior Home Care
Buffalo Corporate Office: (716)741-1330
Rochester: (585)329-4476

Senior Care Service Affiliations:

Network on Aging in Buffalo, NY
Greater Rochester Area Partnership for the Elderly (GRAPE)
Member of The Better Business Bureau



Let to right: Kowalczewski, Gubern, Wisniewski, business development representative; Hlavu, district manager; Terry Hlavu, district manager

FOR MORE INFO

Laidlaw
45 Anderson Road
Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225
(716)897-5798
www.laidlawcharterny.com



Gene Kowalczewski, vice president of operations

CHARTERED TRAVEL

Laidlaw takes you to the action BY BARBARA BELLESI

Once upon a time, a yellow school bus was synonymous with boisterous children on their way to and from school. This is still true for the most part, but these days, the Laidlaw fleet of vehicles throughout Buffalo and Rochester is honking its horns to a much different tune: chartered trips for adult passengers.

Laidlaw International is a holding company for a number of the largest school and public transportation providers throughout North America. This includes Greyhound and Laidlaw Education Services, purveyor of the bright yellow vehicles in question. Its operations in upper New York State alone, particularly the Buffalo and Rochester area, comprise 25 locations and 2,500 vehicles.

Although Laidlaw has been dedicated to the school transportation market for years, it recently began to explore ways to expand its clientele. Over the past year and-a-half, Laidlaw has promoted the yellow school bus to a new after-hours job by chartering it to groups at night and on weekends. It's an idea that has proven to be quite cost effective, giving groups an economic alternative when booking their transportation.

"Folks have a choice, like when they fly," says Gene Kowalczewski, vice president of operations for the northeast region. Travelers can always opt for "first class" travel, such as a limo or a plush-seated bus with individual televisions, but for those who can do without the entertainment and the mini-bar, the yellow

school bus does just fine.

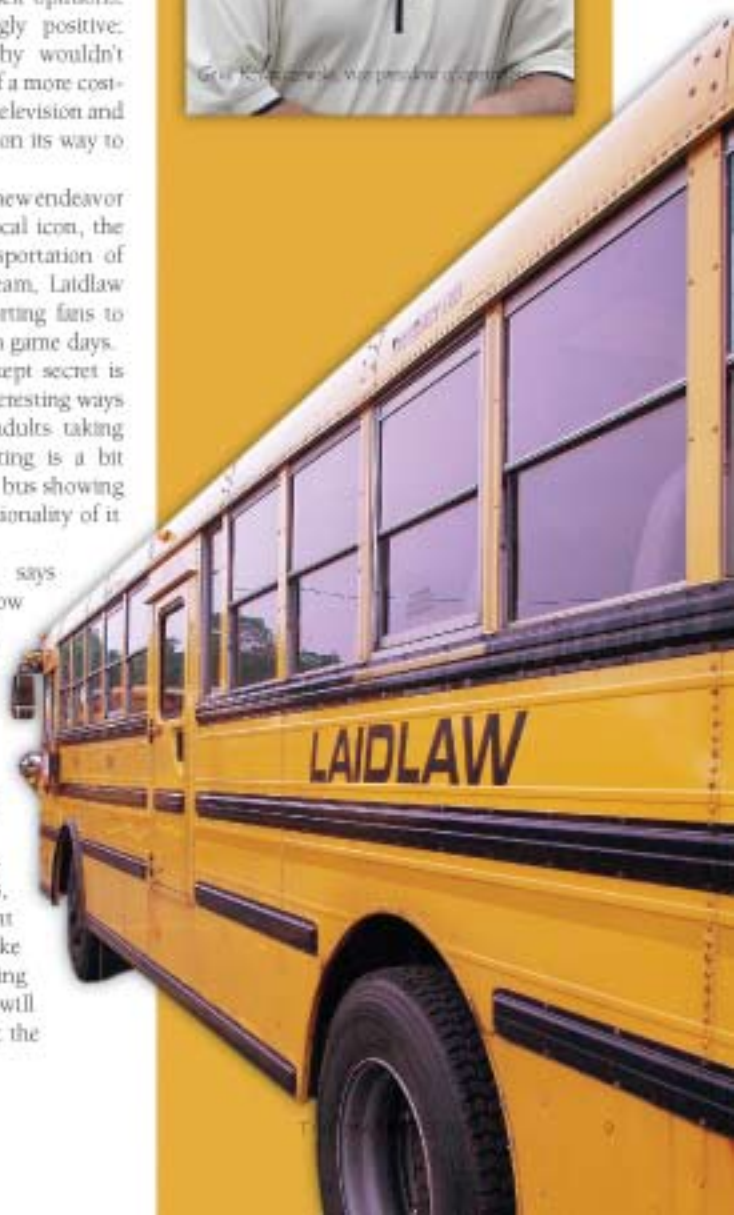
When testing the waters with its idea to expand the charter service, Laidlaw went to its regular customers and asked for their opinions. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive: With the rising cost of gas, why wouldn't travelers want to avail themselves of a more cost-effective option? After a successful television and radio campaign, Laidlaw was well on its way to carving out a new niche.

Laidlaw's biggest windfall in this new endeavor came when it partnered with a local icon, the Buffalo Bills. As the official transportation of the beloved hometown football team, Laidlaw school buses can be seen transporting fans to and from Ralph Wilson stadium on game days.

What was once Buffalo's best kept secret is now becoming one of the more interesting ways to travel. Granted, the idea of adults taking a Laidlaw vehicle to a wine tasting is a bit disconcerting, as is a yellow school bus showing up at a wedding. But the sheer rationality of it is undeniable.

"The light bulb goes on," says Kowalczewski, referring to the now frequent realization that chartered transportation can indeed be affordable. While school buses may not be the ideal vehicles for a cross-country expedition, they are perfect for group trips whose destination is only a short trip away.

Laidlaw hopes that the memories a ride in a school bus elicits, along with it being a cost-efficient mode of transportation, will make travelers think again when chartering transportation — especially if it will allow them to make funny faces at the other vehicles.





CHOOSING QUALITY CARE

ECMC has become Western New York's hospital of choice



Image is everything. At least, that's what the leaders of Erie County Medical Center discovered after reviewing the results of a community survey. Although ECMC has had a reputation in the medical community for highly qualified healthcare professionals providing quality outcomes for their patients, many people in the community considered the hospital to be primarily a trauma center that catered to lower income patients.

"It's true that we're the only Level 1 trauma center in Western New York and we proudly serve many Medicaid patients, but patients from all walks of life choose our exceptional medical care and realize we offer so much more," says ECMC Senior Vice President of Marketing and Planning Tom Quatroche, Ph.D. "If we were going to grow market share, we had to change the perception in the entire community that we were not the hospital of last resort."

Quatroche says he understands the misconstrued perception all too well. Years before starting work at ECMC, his father-in-law visited the hospital for treatment after suffering a brain hemorrhage. "I had the very same perceptions as so many others," he says, "but once I actually stepped inside, I saw that the hospital was clean and the medical staff was compassionate and top-notch. It was the best hospital care we had ever experienced."

To educate and inform people in Western New York about the hospital's quality of care and new direction, ECMC developed an intense marketing campaign featuring new CEO Michael Young. "Our research showed that once people experienced first-hand our facilities, care and staff, their perception of ECMC shifted dramatically," Quatroche says. "So, we decided to use television to show the inside of the institution, including the latest

technology and renovated patient floors and waiting rooms. Who better to talk about the changes than the organization's new leader?"

As a 25-year veteran healthcare administrator and CEO, Young has a wealth of experience dealing with clinical operations, as well as developing external relations with both corporate and government entities. He has set the goal of achieving financial independence from Erie County by 2008, and challenges all ECMC personnel to make a difference in the lives of patients through quality care and customer service. It didn't take long for people to connect with the hospital's new message.

"Focus Groups told us that commercials demonstrated that our CEO is knowledgeable and believable," says Quatroche, who adds that the campaign's core message highlighted the medical center's commitment to quality care. Since kicking off the image campaign two years ago, hospital leaders have seen remarkable results.

Erie County Medical Center is the fastest growing hospital system in Western New York and, on average, serves more patients per day than any other hospital in the area. It also is the University of Buffalo's largest teaching Hospital. Everyone associated with the hospital is committed to it continuing as a leader in quality care and quality outcomes. A recent industry survey asked members of the community which hospital closing would upset them the most. Sixty-eight percent named Erie County Medical Center.

"Research also showed that our advertising is more recognizable than that of any other hospital in the area," Quatroche says. "There have been many days when we do not have an empty hospital bed. Nurses actually stop me in the hall and say 'Stop marketing, the hospital is full!'"

FOR MORE INFO

Erie County Medical Center
462 Grider St.
Buffalo, N.Y. 14215
(716)898-3000
www.ecmc.edu

*Sausage & Meat
Products*



Quality Since 1880

www.zweigles.com

651 Plymouth Ave. North
Rochester, NY 14608
585-546-1740

Time Warner Cable is focused on enhancing the entertainment and communication needs of families and businesses

BY JACK MCGEE



Left to right: Barbara Peelle, vice president business services; Dave DeWitt, director business data; Scott Elliot, vice president engineering; Corinne Cipriani, director of high-speed technology; Gordon Harp, division president; Thomas Hayward, vice president customer operations; Peter Pitt, vice president. In back: Steve Johnson, vice president marketing and advertising.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

In 1949, entrepreneurs using simple antennas and Army-surplus coaxial cable created the country's first cable television system and revolutionized the way Americans watched television. More than 50 years later, Time Warner Cable owns and manages some of the most advanced cable systems in the United States offering cutting edge digital technology along with a range of home entertainment and information choices for the entire family.

"We believe the quality of our offering comes from the fact that everyone, from our local employees to our corporate executives, shares a fundamental challenge with our customers: how to keep pace with a changing world and still find time for what's important," says President and CEO Glenn A. Britt.

While life doesn't depend on Internet access or having 350 channels of cable programming, for many people in today's digital-wired world, it sometimes feels that way. Time Warner Cable gets that, and focuses its approach on product offerings and customer service.

"Our customers are basically families," says Gordon Harp, division president. "I believe our job is to provide the best in overall entertainment and communication to them — to make sure the service we provide, and that they pay for, is there when they need it. We work hard to make sure those services have tremendous value to all members of the family."

Time Warner Cable's evolving product offerings include cable television, high-speed online Internet service and digital phone service. The company's cable service passes more than 27 million U.S. homes, and serves 14.4 million customers in 33 states. The number of digital video customers is expanding rapidly and reached 5.8 million in June 2006. Harp says he believes this growth reflects service popularity combined with Time Warner Cable's overall commitment to technology and customer service.

TECHNOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Time Warner Cable has a history of leadership in technological innovation through the use of fiber optics to improve and expand its cable products and services. In 1994, Time Warner Cable became the first cable company to be honored with an Emmy Award, winning the Engineering Award for Outstanding Achievement in Technological Development. The award recognized the company's pioneering work using fiber optics to transmit broadband signals, a development that helped enable the convergence of the cable television, computer and telephone industries.

"I think Time Warner Cable is a recognized leader in technology and innovation," Harp says. "We've been out front on pushing out products and services throughout the history of the cable business. We first launched HBO back in 1978, and we were one of the first to embrace high speed Internet delivered through a cable modem."

PLUGGED INTO THE COMMUNITY

Time Warner Cable places a high priority on good corporate citizenship and public service. The company's main focus is to provide free educational support to those communities where it does business. Through initiatives such as Cable in the Classroom and Cable's High Speed Education Connection, Time Warner Cable uses its network to deliver cable programming and technology, including high speed online access, at no cost to schools. Time Warner's Literacy initiative, Time to Read, is the nation's largest corporate-sponsored volunteer program of its kind; and Time Warner Cable employees account for the greatest number of participants among the company's business units.

For more information about the company's community-based programs visit www.timewarnercable.com/wny.



In 2001, Time Warner Cable completed a \$5 billion nationwide system upgrade to create a hybrid fiber coaxial cable network. As a result, the company can enhance the quality of cable's picture and sound and introduce new services, including digital cable, video on demand (VOD), high definition television (HDTV), high speed online access via cable modem, and digital telephony.

"Video on demand is basically an enhanced pay per view that lets you stop, pause, rerun and watch it again within 24 hours," Harp says. "It's a very convenient product for people who want to watch a movie and sometimes have to stop in the middle and restart it."

The company also worked as part of a coalition of founding groups to standardize current high speed Internet format and technology. Time Warner Cable currently leads the industry in deploying video on demand and subscription-based VOD services, bringing the service to all 28 of its operating divisions.

"We're also providing a new, enhanced converter box with HD features so you can record movies at your house with HD format and watch them any time you want to," Harp says. "It's a way of making sure you don't miss your favorite TV show. You can time shift the things you watch so you can record it and watch it later when it's more convenient."

CONNECTING TO BUSINESS

Time Warner Cable offers its customers multiple Internet Service Providers (ISPs) including Road Runner, AOL, EarthLink, Big Net and several regional ISPs, with plans to add others in the future. Road Runner, the company's own Internet access service, was established in 1996. Time Warner Cable also offers businesses and telecommuters Road Runner Business



QUICK STATS

COMPANY NAME

Time Warner Cable

TYPE OF BUSINESS

Cable TV, Internet and telephone services

EMPLOYEES

46,000

YEARS IN BUSINESS

16

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Dedicated employees who strive to provide a high level of customer service plus innovative products and technology

WHAT'S AHEAD

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LOCATION

789 Indian Church Rd.
West Seneca, NY 14224

CONTACT

(715)558-8649
www.timewarnercable.com/wny

Class. In total, Time Warner Cable provides high-speed broadband services to 4.1 million residential customers and a growing number of businesses.

"When they launched Road Runner in many of our cable divisions, many people said 'It's a great residential service but how do I get it into my business?' Harp says. "So we've created a business-class product that brings high speed Internet service to small businesses that are on the way to becoming large businesses and provides them with their data communication needs."

Time Warner Cable business-class service is available now in Buffalo, and Harp says that Time Warner will be introducing several additional business-class services over the next few months, including static IPs, VPN managed services, dedicated Internet access and Metro Ethernet solutions, vanity e-mail and security services.

"When Time Warner Cable provides those services, the local businesses will have strong network support and dedicated customer service people," Harp says. "We have more levels of services that will benefit local businesses. We think it will be another opportunity for us to expand the market and grow the business."

Time Warner Cable's advanced technological offering notwithstanding, Harp says he believes the company's continuing success comes down to something less technical: the human element and dedication to service.

"We're a company that really works hard for the customer," he says. "Both behind the scenes and out front, we continue to push to improve overall customer service, as well as how reliable our technology platform is. We will continue to push new products that enhance a family's overall entertainment and communication needs and basically add value to their lifestyle."

Jule Gavrilis-Zerlin, vice president



A COMPANY WITH EXCELLENT TASTE

BY GAIL SNYDER

Zweigle's quality sausage and meat products since 1880

When is a hot dog not just a hot dog? Many hot dog fans might say, "When it's a Zweigle's."

Fan may be too small a word for some hot dog lovers; devotee may be a more appropriate description. Especially in the Northeast and Midwest, hot dogs are regional products that inspire fierce loyalty to local brands, says Jim Vacanti, sales manager for Zweigle's Incorporated, one of the oldest hot dog and sausage manufacturers in America.

In an age of corporate mergers, Zweigle's has thrived for 126 years as a family-owned enterprise. From the company's beginning in 1880 as a Rochester, N.Y., sausage shop run by C. Wilhelm Zweigle and his wife Josephine, the company today remains a fifth-generation family business steeped in a tradition of community service. "The community is really very important to this company," Vacanti says.

Zweigle's is the official hot dog of the Buffalo Bills, Buffalo Sabers and the Myrtle Beach Pelicans baseball team. The

company is a corporate partner with the Buffalo Bisons and many Rochester sports teams, including the Rochester American Hockey Team, RedWings baseball and Night Hawks Lacrosse. Zweigle's works with the United Way and the American Red Cross, and supports myriad local school benefits, the Rochester Philharmonic, Buffalo State University, the University of Buffalo, Rochester Institute of Technology, and the University of Rochester, among others.

As Zweigle's supports the community, the community supports Zweigle's via a hunger for its products. That community is rapidly expanding, partly because of word of mouth. "We ship our products to people who have

'They are wonderful people, generous to the community and to their employees.'

moved from this region," Vacanti says. "Their neighbors then try our products and order from us."

People around the country have acquired a taste for such Old World products as salami, liver sausage, deli cold cuts and one of the company's most beloved products — the White Hot, a delicious white hot dog that contains no nitrates and combines veal, pork, beef and an assortment of spices. In fact, some celebrities buy regularly from Zweigle's online. Celine Dion orders from Las Vegas and Burt Reynolds has been a loyal customer for years.

Though Old World quality is a mainstay of Zweigle's meats, they are produced with state-of-the-art technology. The original plant is still operating, but its capacity recently doubled to 35,000 square feet, thanks to a new 15,000-square-foot addition. "Our process includes 99.9 percent clean air filtration systems, so that we know the product is hearty and safe for consumption," Vacanti says. "That's a big thing for us."

It appears to be a big thing for consumers as well. Zweigle's has new customers in Washington, D.C., Virginia, the Carolinas and New England. Its high-end products can be found in Shaw's, A&P, Grand Union, and Wegmans Food Markets, one of the leading grocery chains in America.

"They are wonderful people, generous to the community and to their employees," Vacanti says of management. As for the product, it almost sells itself. "Once people try it, they usually come back," he says.

FOR MORE INFO

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www.zweigles.com
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Left to right: Tom Naples, vice president, CFO;
Ron Raccuia, president, CEO

WHO'S HELPING YOU SAVE TIME AND MONEY ON YOUR OFFICE SUPPLY ORDERS?

THERE'S ONLY ONE RIGHT ANSWER.
IT'S INTEGRITY DISTRIBUTION

BY KIRSTEN AMLEY ORR

Any big-box retailer can sell your business the paper, pens, ink cartridges and other necessities of day-to-day operations. But will that big-box retailer tailor its delivery routes around your schedule? Show up at your office as many times as it takes to help you design or reconfigure your space?

Not likely. That's why Buffalo's own Integrity Distribution experienced double-digit growth during its first few years in business — a feat it looks likely to repeat in the near future.

"When we opened in 1993, market studies showed Buffalo as an opportunity market for office supplies," says Ron Raccuia, president of Integrity Distribution. "The national players were here, but they ignored the customer we tailored ourselves to fit — the small-to-medium-sized business. This customer has unique needs that were being overlooked by the large retailers, but which we knew we could meet as a business-to-business distributor of office supplies and furniture."

Chief among those needs: competitive pricing on all items, not just a few. "It's standard practice to cut prices on a small selection of items to attract customers," Raccuia says. "Our practice, however, is to provide extremely aggressive pricing on a wide range of products. That's important to our customer, so it will always be a priority for us."

In order to offer those competitive prices, Integrity Distribution continually seeks to cut costs. The company is aided in this by the location of its downtown office, which provides lower overhead costs, quick access to all major roads for more efficient operations and faster delivery times.

One area that Integrity Distribution never cuts, however, is customer service. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

"We understand that most of our customers don't have purchasing departments or shipping and receiving personnel," Raccuia says. "The

person who orders office supplies also is taking care of many other responsibilities. As a result, we handle a lot of the detail work that often goes along with placing orders and have streamlined the process to make it simple for our customers. They know that we save them not only money but also operating time and, as a result, they're extremely loyal."

Integrity Distribution also develops a relationship with customers that goes far beyond sales. "We don't subcontract our delivery, for example," Raccuia says. "Many of our customers have seen the same driver for years, and there's a great rapport on both sides. "Our full service office furniture division is another way that we stretch the relationship with our customers by offering more than they expect. We'll handle space planning, decorating and furniture installation at no charge, which certainly sets us apart from our competition."

During its first five years in business, Integrity Distribution grew roughly 25 percent annually. For several years, Inc. Magazine included the company in its list of the Top 100 Fastest Growing Inner City Businesses in the United States.

"Now that we've matured as a company, I see us entering another large growth pattern like that again for the next few years," Raccuia says. "The systems we have in place are now refined enough to make Internet-based ordering feasible and simple. It's an incredible time-saver, which is making it an increasingly popular tool. With our service and pricing expectations established, our next phase of growth will come as we extend the reach of this technology into more businesses."

That's good news for any local business looking for ways to save money, manpower and time — and it proves that it isn't what kind of pen or paper you select, but where you purchase it, that matters.

FOR MORE INFO

Integrity Distribution
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www.integrityofficesupply.net

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GOOD SPORTS

BY LAURIE L. DOVE

Cupolo Sports, a four-generation fixture in the local landscape

For 87 years, Cupolo Sports has been a popular destination for sports enthusiasts. Unlike nearly every other store of its kind, however, Cupolo Sports is — and always has been — family owned.

For Jay Cupolo, whose grandfather Joe founded the business in 1919, running the family store is a labor of love. "It's my turn, down the generation line, to work every minute the store's open — just like my father did," Cupolo says. His sons are already on board the venture: Joseph, 23, and Ben, 19, are learning every detail of what it takes to run Cupolo Sports, which has become a fixture in the local landscape that makes up the Canadian side of Niagara Falls.

While the town around it has changed — most notably an explosion in tourist trade that prompted two casinos and a variety of resort-type developments — many things at Cupolo Sports have stayed the same. "We've spent 87 years at this location, and we sell every type of sporting goods there is," Cupolo says. "To meet our increasing demands for space, we've made the building bigger as we've grown."

Cupolo Sports' successful growth can largely be attributed to two priorities: first-name-basis customer service and a unique product mix.

"There are not a lot of sporting goods stores that carry the product mix that we do," Cupolo says. "It's a whole different shopping experience when you come into our store, as opposed to walking into a big box store or a sports specialty store."

Cupolo Sports offers an impressive array of equipment, including skis, snowboards and bicycles. In addition, Cupolo Sports stocks a variety of hockey, baseball, soccer, golf and tennis equipment, as well as gear for bowling and water sports of all kinds. It can take the average customer several visits to see Cupolo Sports' entire 7,000-square-foot retail showroom. And, Cupolo says, each customer will have the store's 22 employees waiting in the wings to help.

"When you walk in the store, there's always a member of the family here," Cupolo says. "We know our customers by name and we share our lives with them; they even knew when my grandson was born. More than anything, our customers are getting a more personal touch than they're used to. We care about our customers, and our employees are experts: Every single sports item you could possibly need or want — our staff knows it."

With the great service and varied selection Cupolo Sports offers, one might expect to pay more for the store's items, but that is certainly not the case. "Our pricing is more than competitive," Cupolo says. "We're not costing people more to shop here."

By offering an unconditional guarantee on big-ticket items, as well as seasonal ski or snowboard rentals, Cupolo Sports helps make sports more affordable. "We're doing our best to make it more accessible to everyone," says Cupolo, adding that he still meets a few customers who have been served by his grandfather and his father. "That's the benefit of a family owned business."



FOR MORE INFO

Cupolo Sports
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www.cupolosports.com

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Niagara County's only hospice organization provides positive, uplifting support and end-of-life care in the home. Now they want to do more

BY CAROLYN ERICKSON

It isn't something you want to think about right now. Honestly, you hope it never tops your to-do list. Ever.

But someday you might find it there, right at the top. And that will be a day when you are extremely glad that someone has been thinking about it.

That someone is Niagara Hospice. They think about it because for some, that day has come, and Niagara Hospice is helping them in their time of need.

The primary goal of hospice is to provide comfort and dignity during a person's final days. Professional services, pain-management and medical equipment and supplies enable most hospice recipients to remain in their own homes, to experience quality of life in a comfortable, familiar environment surrounded by their own things, their pets, and their family and friends.

Hospice supports not only the patients, but also caregivers and family members. Since 1988, Niagara Hospice has served more than 7,000 patients and their families with physical, emotional, and spiritual support, as well as bereavement counseling. Ninety-five employees and countless volunteers make these services available to anyone with a need.

"There's no doubt it takes special people to do this job," says Patricia Degan, Niagara Hospice director of marketing and public relations. "But it's very rewarding, knowing you are making a difference in the patients' and families' lives. That can't be said about every job."

Letters and donations from thankful family members attest to the fact that the nonprofit organization has done well in meeting the need in Niagara County. Yet, staff members were keenly aware of one need that wasn't being met.

"Not all patients have a suitable environment for in-home care," Degan says. "They may not have handicapped-accessible homes, or do not have access to round-the-clock caregivers." The only alternative for these patients has been institutional care. There was no place else to go.

In May 2005, Niagara Hospice announced plans to build Niagara Hospice House, a 24,000-square-foot residential center in Lockport that would meet the need of that population.

"Hospice House will provide many families a home-like alternative to institutional care at end-of-life," says John Lomeo, president and CEO of The Hospice and Palliative Care Group. The new building will house eight suites in a residential wing, and 10 suites in a short-term medical monitoring wing. Construction has begun on property adjacent to the Niagara Hospice administrative building on Sunset Drive.

The residential center was modeled after successful facilities in other cities, such as Avalon, Mich., and Akron, Ohio. Members of the development team who toured similar facilities asked about what has worked and what could be done differently. The resulting plans improve on an already good idea.

Round-the-clock visiting by family members will not only be allowed, but is encouraged — and



John L. Lomeo, President and CEO



QUALITY OF LIFE

Jack Beatty knew he was dying. He and his family enlisted the help of Niagara Hospice to help him receive support and care so he could live every minute to the fullest during his final days.

Jack was a yachting enthusiast. With the help of Niagara Hospice and family members, Jack raced the "Cheez Z Breeze" in a Regatta organized by Niagara Hospice at Youngstown Yacht Club and had the time of his life — only a few days before the end of his life.

The event, now called the Jack Beatty Hospice Memorial Regatta, is in its seventh year. It vividly demonstrates the meaning of the Niagara Hospice philosophy of encouraging and providing "quality of life" at the end of life.

"People sometimes think that choosing hospice is giving up hope," says Patricia Degan, Niagara Hospice director of marketing and public relations. "But it isn't. It's getting help, so that every moment of a patient's life can be lived to the fullest."

accommodated in the plans. Each suite will include a private bath with shower, sitting area, sofa bed for overnight visitors and a private patio.

Every effort is being made to provide a home-like atmosphere. One way hospice staff will personalize a patient's living space is by choosing from a collection of photographs commissioned by Niagara Hospice to decorate patient suites. The framed and matted artwork will feature meaningful local scenery and landmarks familiar to the patient, like the Lockport Locks, Erie Canal, Niagara Falls and Wilson Harbor. The collection will also include historical photographs of the area that will strike a chord with many of the older residents.

Two family gathering rooms plus kitchen facilities will give families a place to prepare a meal together or celebrate a birthday. Patients and family members will be able to take a walk through the Hospice Memorial Garden, visit the chapel or warm themselves in front of a fireplace.

It will all add up to quality of life, dignity and comfort for hospice patients who might otherwise have to die in an impersonal, sterile environment.

"Although Hospice will always be primarily a home-based program," Lomeo says, "Niagara Hospice House will provide new options for people who have compromised living arrangements or insufficient caregiver support."

The project relies heavily on the Wings of Serenity fund-raising campaign to raise \$3 million of the \$4.5 million dollars required to build it. Board members themselves donated the first \$100,000 dollars, and Niagara Hospice employees, who also have long recognized the need, pledged \$200,000 over a five-year period.

"It's a real sign of how important the need is when the employees of an organization are willing to donate toward it," says Anthony Battaglia, director of development for Niagara Hospice. Other significant contributions were made by the Grigg Lewis Foundation, the John R. Otshei Foundation, and the Joy Family Foundation, as well as by local businesses and other members of the community.

Still, the campaign is \$800,000 away from its goal. "We have completed the 'quiet' phase of our fund-raising campaign," Degan says. Now the organization is looking for community support to help build Niagara Hospice House.

"Niagara Hospice House will bring comfort to so many patients and families," Degan says. "Contributing to that is really a way to make a difference."

Naming opportunities are still available at the new facility, and community members also can make pledges to the campaign to be paid over five years.

Contact Battaglia at (716) 439-4417 to learn more and be part of something significant to families throughout Niagara County.



QUICK STATS

COMPANY NAME
Niagara Hospice Inc.

TYPE OF BUSINESS
End-of-life care and support for individuals and families faced with terminal illnesses.

EMPLOYEES
95

YEARS IN BUSINESS
18

RECOGNITION/AWARDS
Accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Healthcare, Inc.; Pharmacy Practice Residency Program — the only nationally accredited residency based in a hospice; Excellence in Pharmacotherapy Outcomes Award, by excellereX Institute

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
Family Support/Respite, Bereavement Counseling, Superteen Volunteers program, and other opportunities

WHAT'S AHEAD
Completion of Niagara Hospice House, an 18-suite residence designed to provide hospice care for those without a suitable in-home care environment

HOW TO HELP
Make a contribution to the "Wings of Serenity" campaign to benefit Niagara Hospice House. Contact Director of Development Anthony Battaglia, at (716) 439-4417.

LOCATION
4675 Sunset Dr.
Lockport, NY 14094

CONTACT
(716)439-4417
www.niagarahospice.org



WHERE WOULD YOU RATHER BE? BY NICK PENA

From sports parties to wedding receptions, Pearl Street Grill & Brewery has something for everybody

Do you like sports? Do you like beer? Do you enjoy meeting new people and going to unique events? Then you'll love Pearl Street Grill & Brewery, which is renowned throughout the region for its fabulous banquets and intense game viewing experiences.

Pearl Street is centrally located in Buffalo's historic downtown district, near plenty of parking and thruway exits and across from the Arena and Dunn Tire Park. They strive to be Western New York's premier location for great food, great beer, great company and great times.

Their circa 1858 building with four floors encompassing more than 44,000 square feet (plus decks) is known for easily accommodating huge crowds and major parties and events.

As it continues its quest to become the most unique and noteworthy restaurant in the region, Pearl Street is constantly growing and evolving. Over the past two years, it has completed more than \$1 million in renovations. By the upcoming

spring (hopefully Mardi Gras), its magnificent New Orleans style wrap-around patios will be totally completed and will connect seamlessly with the 8,300 square feet of stacked lake front decks. This will offer their guests spectacular cityscapes and Lake Erie Sunsets unparalleled in the region.

Pearl Street has played host to noteworthy events, ranging from company parties, rehearsal dinners, business meetings, social gatherings, corporate events, trade shows and weddings. Spacious banquet facilities tied to the patios and excellent catering services have made Pearl Street a premier event and wedding venue. In fact, Pearl Street will host, at present count, 61 weddings this year alone. The formal dining rooms allow for beautiful and elegant ceremonies in a wonderfully historic atmosphere.

But what the Pearl is really known for are its awesome sports parties. Over the past 10 years, The Pearl has become Buffalo's premier location to celebrate before, during (sellouts) and after sporting events. With pre and post game parties for all local sporting events, it's common to see huge numbers of Sabres, Bills, Bisons and Bandits fans, players, coaches and cheerleaders completely filling the bars, dining rooms and patios, cheering for their favorite teams. On big

days, they roll out their huge buffet to make sure that all the fans get plenty to eat and make it to the event on time. To accommodate even more viewing parties, Pearl Street has recently added seven new plasma TVs and will soon offer private VIP Viewing parties for sold out Hockey games.

Pearl Street is proud of its in house crafted one-of-a-kind beers. With eight of their signature beers on tap and several award-winning entrees to choose from, Pearl Street offers a selection that is sure to please.

So, on your next night out, be part of the fun and come on down to Pearl Street Grill & Brewery, which is close to everything, but far from ordinary. The real questions are where would you rather be than right here, right now and where are you going to hold your next event?

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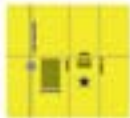
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