

Alfred University honors five family businesses

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BUFFALO, NY Alfred University honored five Western New York firms at a banquet ceremony Wednesday afternoon at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Buffalo. Calamar, Finger Lakes Technologies Group, Irish Companies, Manitoba Corp., and Schmitt's Audi Volkswagen were recognized as recipients of the 2010 Galanis Awards for Excellence in Family Business. The awards, now in their 11th year, are made possible by a gift to Alfred University from the families of Terry Galanis Sr. and Terry Galanis Jr. Galanis Sr. is a 1940 graduate of Alfred University and founder of Sealing Devices, Inc., of Lancaster. Galanis Jr. is the president of Sealing Devices and a member of the AU Board of Trustees. Winners of Galanis Awards, presented since 2000, are judged on a number of criteria that the Galanises and Alfred University consider hallmarks of successful family enterprises: commitment to employees and the local community; innovation and foresight; and growth and stability. Sealing Devices was founded in 1963 by Terry Galanis Sr. in the Buffalo suburb of Alden. The company, which manufactures and distributes o-rings, gaskets and seals, has enjoyed tremendous growth over the years and is now located in a state-of-the-art facility in nearby Lancaster. Founded in 1990 in Wheatfield, NY, by current chairman and CEO Kenneth M. Franasiak and his grandfather, Stanley Brzezinski. Calamar is a full-service real estate development and general contracting firm, with divisions in construction development, property and facilities management, asset management, leasing, and finance and investment. Four generations of the family have worked for the firm and currently there are members of three generations at Calamar. The company was started in 1990 in the suburban Niagara Falls community of Wheatfield, NY, with one employee and today it is the largest real estate development company in Niagara County, employing more than 200 people at offices in Wheatfield; Omaha, NE; Woburn, MA; and also in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, and Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The firm's primary clientele are municipal customers throughout New York, New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Franasiak paid tribute to his business partners and employees. "This is a family award. All our staff and partners are truly family," he said. "We have a lot of fun. I get to come to work every day with some of the best and brightest in our industry." Calamar supports several charitable agencies in the Greater Buffalo area, including The Niagara Area Foundation, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, People Inc. Foundation, Leadership Niagara, SBA Advisory Board, and The United Way. Finger Lakes Technologies Group was founded in 1995 and is a leading Western New York provider of services in voice, data, video and Internet technologies. The company's history dates back to the early 1920s, when the Griswold family acquired the Ontario Telephone Company (originally Phelps Mutual Telephone Company) in 1920 and the Trumansburg Telephone Company in 1926. The family continues to operate the Trumansburg Telephone Company (serving Trumansburg, Interlaken and Ovid, NY) and Ontario Telephone Company (serving Phelps and Clifton Springs, NY). Five generations of the Griswold family have been involved in the firm over the last 90 years. Current company president Paul Griswold is a fourth-generation member of the firm; his father, John Griswold, is past vice president and currently serves as vice chairman and treasurer of the board; and his uncle, Robert Griswold, is a past president who now serves as chairman of the board. Paul's wife, Julie, and two children, Brendan and Ashley, are active with the company. Paul Griswold's aunt, Susan VerStreate, also serves on the company board. Griswold spoke of how his company has had to adapt over the years to compete with larger telecommunications companies, and how it has thrived, particularly in rural communities in Western New York. "When I started at the company, there were 48 independent telephone companies; today there are 15," he said, explaining that innovative initiatives, like running fiber optic to small communities, has made his firm successful over the years. "We've been around a long time. I'm very proud we've had five generations involved in our company." Finger Lakes Technologies Group employs 80 people at four locations and is involved in numerous area charitable endeavors, including the American Cancer Society, and also supports several local festivals, school activities and other fundraising events. Irish Companies date to 1932, when Ralph Nathan Irish founded the RN? Irish Coal Company. His son, Robert Irish, started Irish Welding Supply, Irish Propane Corporation and Irish Carbonic in the 1950s and '60s. Today, the companies are a leading supplier and distributor of industrial gases, welding supplies and machines, beverage dispensing equipment (Irish Welding Supply & Carbonic Corp.) and are a distributor of bulk and residential propane (Irish Propane Corp.). The firm is a third-generation family business. Founder Nathan Irish's son, Robert, and his wife Marcia, were the second generation to run the business and today, four of Robert and Marcia Irish's daughters work at the firm. Laurie Irish Jones is CEO; Pamela Irish is COO; Victoria Wasson is CFO; and Holly Irish is CIO. Marcia Irish remains active as chairperson of the board. Members of the fourth generation work summers and vacations at the company warehouse

and the firm is currently creating a succession plan for the next generation of Irish family members. Pam Irish spoke of how she and her sisters were taught the importance of the family business at an early age. It left an impression that helped them continue the firm's success once they took over. "We grew up in a household where the family business was discussed nightly over dinner," she said. "The business they helped grow paid them back exponentially. How lucky are we to wake up each day and come to work with the people we love." She thanked the Galanis family and AU for "having the foresight" to recognize family businesses "and the important role they play" in the region's economy. Irish employs 65 in Buffalo and eight at its Rochester location. The firm actively supports the American Red Cross, the University of Buffalo CEL Advisory Board, Journey's End Refugees Services Board, and the Luminina Hope Chest Board. Manitoba Corporation was founded as S. Shine and Sons in 1916 in Buffalo by Solomon Shine, a European immigrant who walked through the city with a pushcart, collecting recyclable items. After World War II, the business focused on metal materials and today is a non-ferrous scrap metal recycler with a focus on copper scrap. The firm ships approximately 36 million pounds of scrap annually. Manitoba is a fourth-generation firm. Richard Shine, grandson of the founder, is the company CEO. Fourth-generation family members Brian Shine and Adam Shine serve as president and sales manager, respectively. Richard's father, Nathan Shine, son of the company founder, was a second-generation member of the family business. The firm, with headquarters in Lancaster, NY, and another location in St. Louis, MO, employs approximately 60 people. Manitoba has grown and expanded over the years. In addition to opening its St. Louis location in 1981, the firm also recently started an electronics recycling company, SunnKing Associates, as well as Lancaster Recycling and Sales, a retail recycling company. Brian Shine said his company has had to adapt over the years to remain competitive in an ever-changing recyclables industry. "You have to be creative in order to develop and grow," he said, referring to his company starting Sunning Associates, which gave Manitoba a new market. He thanked the Galanis, saying family exemplifies the characteristics of a successful family firm. "I am pleased to accept this honor, and what an honor it is. The Galanis family lives the values on which these awards are based. We will strive to meet the bar that has been set so high by the Galanis family." Manitoba supports several area and civic charitable organizations, including the Lancaster YMCA, Lancaster Opera House, Special Olympics, Ride for Roswell, Stephanie Spielman Fund, and the Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department. Schmitt's Audi Volkswagen was founded in 1921 by Herman O. Schmitt under the name Schmitt's Garage. The company began as a dealer of Chrysler automobiles, dedicated to the sale, service and repair of vehicles in the Buffalo area. Today, Schmitt's is a leading dealer in Western New York of Audi and Volkswagen vehicles, with its sales, service and collision repair operations headquartered in Bowmansville, NY. Schmitt's Audi Volkswagen is a fourth generation family firm, with some members of the third and fourth generations actively involved in company operations. Jerome Schmitt Jr., John Schmitt, and Timothy Schmitt (third generation) and Thomas Schmitt (fourth generation) are officers and managers with the firm. Tim Schmitt said his firm is "a unique example in the automobile industry" in that it has remained a family-run enterprise through four generations. He credited his grandfather, founder Herman O. Schmitt, for the hard work he put in starting the business, which "slowly but surely earned an honest reputation and grew to prosperity." The company employs 41 people today. Schmitt's Audi Volkswagen supports several charitable not-for-profit organizations in the area. Nearly 60 family firms have received Galanis Awards since 2000. Galanis Sr. said he has always enjoyed meeting with the winners prior to the awards banquet. "I've had more fun calling on these companies because they're so unique. We look for one basic quality (in the award winners) and I think the word is 'class.' These businesses have it," he said. He added that it is important to recognize family firms for their contributions to the Western New York region. "It's family enterprise, small businesses, that are keeping our economy going."