

## Alfred University presents awards to four Rochester-area family business

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ROCHESTER Alfred University presented its annual Galanis Awards for Excellence in Family Business to four successful Rochester-area firms at a luncheon Wednesday, May 23, in Rochester. Awards were given in three categories: large business, to Mercury Aircraft Inc. of Hammondsport; mid-size business, to Isaac Heating and Air Conditioning Inc. of Rochester; and small business, to Arbor Hill Winery of Naples. A fourth award, the Galanis Prize for Excellence, was presented to the Sentry Group of Rochester. Richard Brush, chairman emeritus of the company, accepted the award and delivered the keynote address. The Galanis Awards were established in 1999 with a \$250,000 gift from Terry Sr. and the late Marian Galanis of Lancaster, New York. Their family firm, Sealing Devices, Inc., has continually been recognized as one of the Top 100 Privately Held Businesses in Western New York. Terry Galanis Sr. is a 1940 graduate of Alfred University and founder of Sealing Devices. His son, Terry Jr., is the company's current president and a member of the Alfred University Board of Trustees. Sentry Group is a third-generation family business. Founded in 1930 by James D. Brush Sr., the company today is a leading manufacturer worldwide of fireproof safes and storage devices. Richard Brush told the gathering at the Galanis Awards ceremony of the important role family firms play in today's economy. "Family businesses are a major part of our society," he said. "They are today, and always have been." Brush spoke of the characteristics that typically mark family business entrepreneurs: ingenuity, hard work and commitment, and dedication to working through difficult times to reach business success. James Brush Sr. and his brother-in-law, Willard Punnett, exhibited those traits when they started Sentry Group in Rochester seven decades ago. Punnett came up with the idea of a safe that could be produced rapidly; James Brush and his wife and Punnett's wife put up the \$12,000 needed to get the business started. "They knew a niche that was empty," he said. "He (Punnett) had a great idea and my father had some money." Sentry Group started business during the Depression. Progress was slow and at times it seemed the venture would fail. Punnett left the company and for two years it was run only by Richard Brush Sr. and his wife Edna. But business soon began to grow steadily and Sentry Group has flourished over the last half-century. The company today has 520 employees with manufacturing facilities in the United States and China. Two of Richard Brush Jr.'s children, Douglas Brush (president and CEO) and James Brush (executive vice president, sales and marketing) lead Sentry Group. James Jr. and Richard Brush's younger brother, Robert Brush, is vice president of Western Operations, based in California. Brush gives credit to the perseverance his parents showed in the early stages of the business. "My dad was the only employee, and my mother would answer the phone and help him out in any way she could," he said. "We owe them a great debt of gratitude." He also credited the current employees and management for the company's continued success. "The enthusiasm and effort they demonstrate is tremendous. None of this can happen without the employees and the family," Joseph "Bud" Meade III, president of Mercury Aircraft, accepted the Galanis Award on behalf of his company. Mercury Aircraft is a fourth generation family business. A pioneer in the U.S. aircraft industry, it was founded in 1920 by Joseph F. Meade, then a chief engineer for Glenn Curtiss, as a manufacturer of spare parts for the Curtiss Jenny airplane. The firm moved from Long Island to Hammondsport, where it designed and manufactured its own line of airplanes in the 1930s. During World War II, Mercury Aircraft assisted the war effort by manufacturing parts and assemblies for a variety of aircraft. After the war, Mercury focused its manufacturing efforts to non-aircraft, peacetime uses, with product lines including school bus and truck bodies and baby strollers. In 1948, Mercury began manufacturing components for IBM and continues to do so today. The company main focus now is in metals fabrication and the manufacture of products assembled with plastic, metal and electronic components. The firm employs 1,100 people, including three generations of the Meade family: Joseph F. Meade Jr., chairman of the board; Joseph F. Meade III, president; and Joseph F. Meade IV, a business major and senior-to-be at Alfred University who works at Mercury Aircraft during the summer and holidays. "We're in our third generation at Alfred University and our fourth at Mercury Aircraft," said Meade. He and his father Joseph Meade Jr. are both graduates of AU. Meade said Mercury Aircraft has grown over the last 81 years due to the dedication generations of his family has shown to the company's wellbeing. That dedication, he said, is often what sets family firms apart from other enterprises. "The family has always held the same values. We've always put money back into the business to purchase assets and promote growth," he said. "Those values are absolutely prevalent in family businesses. We're concerned first and foremost with keeping the family business growing." Meade said family businesses show a commitment to their employees, which translates to loyalty from workers and dedication to the welfare of the business. "They're not employees as much as they are family, and they feel the same way," he said. "Half

our people have 15 years or more service. That shows the commitment of our workers." James Isaac, chief executive officer of Isaac Heating and Air Conditioning, expressed his appreciation for receiving the Galanis Award. He spoke of the hard work his father George Isaac, who founded the company in 1945, showed during the firm's infancy. "He started out in the family garage," Isaac said. "Early on, the business had every reason to fail. They made it on guts and stamina." Arbor Hill Winery is the youngest of the award winners, founded in 1987 by John Brahm and his wife Katharine. Arbor Hill has grown from a home-based business with a modest product line into a 10-employee manufacturer of several wines and wine-related products distributed in 21 states. A second generation, daughter Sherry, is retail store manager. John Brahm said growth has been slow but steady, as is the case with many family businesses in their early years. Terry Galanis Sr. congratulated the award winners and acknowledged the efforts of previous generations to create a foundation for long-term success. "I know what it took," said Galanis, who founded Sealing Devices in the garage at his Alden, NY, home in 1963. "The whole family had to chip in." Galanis said he and his son, Terry Jr., decided to initiate the Galanis Awards for Excellence in Family Business because they believed it is important to honor the hard work and dedication exhibited by family firms over several generations. "If there's anything we can do to promote family business, we'll do what we can," he said. Dr. Charles Edmondson, president of Alfred University, thanked the Galanis family for their contribution, which he said has helped strengthen the family business initiative at the University. AU is home to the Center for Family Business and Entrepreneurial Leadership. Established in 1994, Center has grown into one of the preeminent institutions focusing on family business and entrepreneurship. The Center maintains a focus on academics, networking and outreach, conferences and seminars and research. The University also has two endowed chairs in family business and has incorporated family business into the College of Business curriculum.