

VARIETY STORE.

A Special Advertorial Section Celebrating...

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

BY **Carmen Siering** • PHOTOGRAPHY BY **Richardson Studio**

It has been said many times that Bloomington is a great place to raise a family. It also happens to be a great place to grow a family business.

Many of Bloomington's best known and most successful enterprises are family affairs. A great many are second-generation companies, but many are also newer businesses, begun by entrepreneurial couples.

In this special advertorial section, 20 companies are featured, each story highlighting the role family has played in the success of the business. The nature of the enterprises varies greatly, but what all those interviewed for the stories share is a passion for the work they do and a profound love of family.

Bill C. Brown Associates
Carpets Plus Color Tile
Closets, Too!

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Tonya's Touch

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FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Bill C. Brown and Ron Remak.

Bill C. Brown Associates

Bill C. Brown, Founder and Ron Remak, President/Owner

It's easy to see that Bill C. Brown Associates is a family business. Started by Mr. Brown in 1958, this second-generation agency is now led by son-in-law Ron Remak. But it's more than blood ties that have kept things running smoothly for more than half a century. "Bill C. (as so many fondly call him) started things off right, with the agents and the staff being a family," Remak says. Among the 16 agents and 13 staff members, there are several who have been with the agency 20, 30, even 50 years. "If you build that family relationship and build a team, everyone wins, especially our valued clients," Remak says.

As a sophomore at Indiana University, Mr. Brown started selling life insurance. He found he enjoyed it, so when he graduated, he opened his own agency. "I didn't know any better," he says with a laugh. In 1979, when Remak graduated from IU, "The job market was phenomenal, and I was fortunate to have a lot of opportunities," he says. "My girlfriend, Mr. Brown's daughter, was two years younger, but I wasn't going

to stay in Bloomington. When her father said come talk to him about the insurance business, I didn't really think too much about it." However, at the interview, something impressed him. "I remember him saying, 'If you want to work hard and want to help people, you should go into the insurance business.'" Remak started working as an agent for Bill C. Brown Associates in September 1979. And by May 1980, his girlfriend, Carol, was his wife.

Now he and Carol have three children — Andrew, Lara (Bower), and Parker — and five granddaughters. Remak worked as an agent for 17 years; 18 years ago he purchased the agency from his father-in-law. The two say they are the best of friends, something they couldn't have predicted at that interview 35 years ago. At 81, Mr. Brown is no longer involved with the business, "But they treat me like I am," he says. "That's because they have so much respect for what he built and who he is," Remak says. "He started something special." Mr. Brown counters: "And you took it to new heights."

Tim Ellis REALTORS and Auctioneers, Inc.

Tim Ellis and Beth Ellis, REALTORS

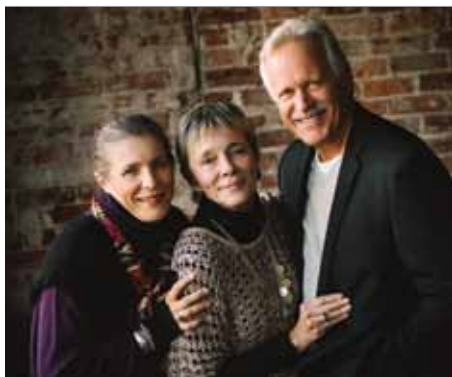
Tim Ellis Realtors was established in 1964, and its founder has no interest in retiring. "As long as I'm able, I'm going to keep working," says Tim Ellis, 77. Tim's wife, Dorothy, manages the office and books, and their daughter, Beth, joined the company in 2001. Tim says he was a little surprised when their youngest child showed an interest in the family business, but Beth was ready to make a career change and saw the perfect opportunity. "On Father's Day 2001, Dad was saying how busy he was at work," she recalls. "And I responded by saying I'd quit my job, go to real estate school, and we'd have a family business. I did and here we are!"

Tim specializes in commercial properties and real estate auctions; Beth dedicates herself to residential clients. Their 63 years of combined experience in the business have all been spent in Bloomington, which means they have a wealth of knowledge about the community, the neighborhoods, and the nuances of living in a college town. It also means they take pride in giving back to Bloomington, evidenced by their commitment to many civic and charitable organizations. "I think we all need to give back in some way," Tim says. "And I'm very proud of the way our family supports and celebrates our community."

(l-r) Beth and Tim Ellis.



FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Amie McCarty, Mary McCarty, and David Mann.

Mann Plumbing, Inc. and MPI Solar

David Mann, Mary McCarty, and Amie McCarty

For David Mann, running his plumbing and solar heating businesses goes beyond a way to make a living. “We solve problems for our customers,” says Mann, who co-owns Mann Plumbing, Inc. and MPI Solar with his wife, Mary McCarty, his “sounding board.”

“Both of the businesses provide us with a sense of accomplishment,” he says. “We also want to be part of making the transition to cleaner energy production and usage.”

Mann started the plumbing business in 1992 in his garage. Now located at 1750 W. 17th St., it has 12 employees and expanded in 2008 to take advantage of the growing popularity of solar energy.

Another family member, Amie McCarty, Mary’s sister, who started to work for Mann in 2008, helped make that expansion possible. With the recession impacting construction and new plumbing work, Mann’s involvement in solar energy was sparked by a dealer’s call and Amie’s interest in that area. Amie, who had a sales background, says she realized providing solar energy was an environmentally smart step to take for the community. “I wanted to try to do something to make a difference.”

Mann says MPI Solar, which installs solar hot water systems, attic fans, and photovoltaic devices, makes up about half his business. The company has installed solar systems in homes, churches, businesses, and government buildings.

—Barb Berggoetz

Closets, Too!

Jim and Patricia Jeffries, Owners; J.P. Jeffries, President; Tina Cooper, Vice President



(l-r) Patricia and Jim Jeffries, J.P. Jeffries, and Tina Cooper.

Sometimes, without a plan, you end up in the best of all possible places. That seems to be what happened to Jim Jeffries, owner of Closets, Too! In the 1980s, Jim was an instrumental music teacher and his wife, Patricia, was running her own business, Patricia Jeffries Interiors. “There were times when her clients wanted some organization in their closets,” Jim says. “I was always good at that sort of thing, and after awhile it kind of took hold.” In 1987, they expanded the existing business, calling it Patricia Jeffries Interiors and Closets, Too! “After awhile, the closet business overshadowed the interior design business,” Jim says. In the 1990s, Patricia became involved in politics, serving two terms as Monroe County Treasurer, and Patricia Jeffries Interiors closed shop. That’s how the current family business came to be called simply Closets, Too!

The company designs and installs custom storage and organization systems for closets, pantries, and garages, as well as custom glass enclosures. Every job starts with a consultation with Jim, his son J.P., or daughter-in-law Tina Cooper. There was a time during the building boom of the early 2000s when Closets, Too! hired installers to

do some of the work. “What we found was, bigger isn’t necessarily better,” Jim says. “And we found we wanted to be directly involved with our customers and with the building and installation.” Jim says no one can care about a business or its customers the way the owners do. “We’ll give you the best service, every time,” Jim says.

Now it’s just Jim, J.P., and Tina. “They’ll be the owners someday,” he says with assurance. “I knew as I got older I was going to have to sell it or just close up shop. It’s a lot better if you have someone to carry on your family business.” Jim says he stays involved “just enough to make it feel like I’m doing something,” but it’s J.P. and Tina who are running things. “J.P. does all of the design work and Tina takes care of bookkeeping and customer service,” Jim says. “They’re doing a good job. And I know they’ll do a good job in the future.”

Jim says it’s funny how they all ended up working together in a family business. “We didn’t plan any of this. J.P. didn’t grow up planning to be here. I was a high school band director. But it’s something we both enjoy,” he says. “You can’t plan life. You just enjoy the ride.”

FAMILY BUSINESS

JB's Salvage

**Becky Robinson, Owner;
Bethany Robinson and
Kent Robinson, Managers**

In 1984, my dad, John “JB” Robinson, started JB’s Salvage. He poured his life savings, heart, and soul into that business. What started as a small scrap metal business grew beyond his dreams to become the largest scrap metal recycling business in Bloomington, paying customers for everything from aluminum cans and copper to cars, appliances, and all other sorts of metal for recycling. He was quite proud of the business he built by not taking short cuts, earning respect, and giving back to the community. Sadly, my dad’s life came to an untimely end in April 2013. A non-smoker, he died nine weeks after a diagnosis of lung cancer.

Anyone who knew my dad will tell you there was only one thing he was more proud of than his business and that was his family. His wife of 32 years, my mom Becky, was able to be a stay-at-home mom and raise my brother, Kent, and me. “JB worked six days a week to provide for our family,” my mom recalls. “This business meant so much to him.” While my dad ran the business alone for many years, we realize now that my mom knew more than she first thought, and often recalls discussions the two had about big-picture planning and decision-making.

My mom’s decision-making help came into play mainly when it involved me and Kent and the business. Kent spent a good



(above) Bethany, Kent, and Becky Robinson. (below) JB Robinson and his grandson, Will, in 2012. *Courtesy photo*

deal of time working at the salvage yard during school breaks and summers, learning the business from the ground up, but my dad had other plans for him — oval dirt racing. This passion ran deep and nothing made him more proud than watching Kent win races in stock cars and, eventually, Super Late Models. We spent countless weekends together traveling across the country following the sport we all loved. In 2013, there were big changes in Kent’s life as he immediately stepped up to work at the family business full time as soon as my dad’s diagnosis was clear.

At that time I was already working at JB’s Salvage, having started here in the summer of 2011. I never intended to work with my dad, but after the birth of my son, Will, in 2010, I desired a job with more flexibility than teaching kindergarten could offer. I had earned my master’s degree in school leadership and enjoyed the management portion of the program; working in the family business seemed like the answer. My dad was very private, and protective of his business, so he was a little hesitant about me working here. It took my mom to talk him into it. She told him there’s nothing like family,

and it would be the best thing for him and for the business to have me there. It took two months for him to tell me he liked having me around, and nearly six months to admit to my mom that she had been right. Looking back, I’m so glad I came to work here when I did and that I had time with my dad to learn his thought process behind this complex business.

When my dad started this business 30 years ago, he never dreamed it would blossom into the thriving, well-respected staple of the community it is today. He also wouldn’t have believed that his children would be running it. “We have great employees and the day-to-day things are in place. JB did that, and we’re reaping the benefits,” my mom reminds us, adding that she’s proud of Kent and me for stepping up to run the business. “I know their dad would be proud of them, too,” she says. Our lives changed in April 2013, there’s no doubt about that. Now we work diligently to run JB’s Salvage with the integrity and hard work that it was built upon. Our dad poured his heart and soul into this business. Now it’s our turn to do the same.

—Bethany Robinson

FAMILY BUSINESS

The Green Nursery

Abby and Scott Noroozi

Scott and Abby Noroozi complement each other. That's good for a married couple who works together every day running their natural baby boutique, The Green Nursery, now located in Fountain Square Mall.

"Scott and I are really different personalities," says Abby. "He's good at certain things, and I'm good at other things. We balance each other out."

Scott, 36, handles systems administration, the website (thegreennursery.com), advertising, and finances. Abby, 37, finds their eco-friendly and natural baby products, works closely with staff to create in-store displays, plans store events, and handles community networking.

After being located at a couple other local sites, they wanted a different spot for their 8-year-old store, with more foot traffic and less retail space. They moved in mid-November to 101 W. Kirkwood, Suite 107. The grand opening of the 700-square-foot store will be January 10.

"We're trying to cater to more gifts and toys in our retail space, while continuing to have a good selection of cloth diapers and baby carriers, too," says Abby. Their 1,500-square-foot warehouse on North Fairview Street houses more products, which customers can peruse through an in-store kiosk.

Already, the couple's son, Avery, and daughter, Lily, are eager to help. Avery, 9, wants to know when he can take over the website, and Lily, 6, has her eye on designing window displays.

"I would love for them to be involved when they're older," says Abby. —*Barb Berggoetz*



(l-r) Scott and Abby Noroozi.



(l-r) Ted and Diann Lock.

Sycamore Farm Bloomington

Ted and Diann Lock, Owners

Watching her parents run a family restaurant, Diann Lock didn't understand how they could be together 24/7. "They must have enjoyed it, but as a child it amazed me," she says. She has a better understanding now. Diann and her husband, Ted, are the owners of Sycamore Farm Bloomington where they host weddings and other events in the barns and on the grounds of their country home. "We work together, and it is such a joy," Diann says.

Ted, 67, is a doctor of veterinary medicine specializing in large animal reproduction. Diann, 65, was an elementary teacher and for 20 years led group tours all over the world. "The wedding business was never on our radar," Diann says. After having many parties and two family weddings at their home, their caterer suggested they consider hosting weddings on the property. "We didn't know farm weddings would be so popular," Diann says. They are. Open from May to October, in 2014 there were at least two weddings each weekend in four of those six months. Diann and Ted do most of the work; Diann's brother, Jack May, is the event manager. "People absolutely love him," Diann says.

Once the decision was made, the winter of 2011-12 saw a frenzy of activity. "Ted

repurposed the barns and landscaped the paddocks," Diann says. "The first challenge was cleaning out 40 years of tack, dirt, and dust." With the help of their daughter Mary's husband, Jason Higdon, the renovations began. "We left the original stall fronts, lined the walls with Indiana poplar acquired from a dear friend, and added creative lighting and black iron chandeliers," Diann says. "No two weddings are alike. Brides come up with their own unique ideas, which makes each wedding special." Guests are invited to stroll the property and enjoy the country setting. "Benches are spaced around the grounds, with café lights strung to the tree line," Diann says. "We have horses and two miniature donkeys, who enjoy the attention of wedding guests petting them and taking photographs."

The Locks plan to continue hosting weddings into the foreseeable future. "As we get older, we'll just hire more help," Diann says. Right now, they're having a lot of fun and enjoying one another's company. "It's nice to have this time together," Diann says. "Especially as you get older, you want to spend lots of time together." They've been married 45 years, but Ted says, "Starting this has brought us even closer."

FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Joyce and Michael Porvaznik.
Photo by Shannon Zahnle

Red Rabbit Inn

Joyce and Michael Porvaznik, Owners

When Joyce and Michael Porvaznik opened the Red Rabbit Inn in Unionville seven years ago, they didn't have any long-term plans. "When we started we thought we would do it for at least 10 years, but now I can't imagine ever stopping," Joyce says. "Now I think we'll be here as long as we can physically do it. There are just no bad parts about it."

Joyce is the one running the inn most days. Michael is a physician with a family practice in Bloomington. Still, he has his role to play. "Mike's real assignment is to deliver breakfast on the weekends," Joyce says. "I take my breakfasts seriously; everything is from scratch. But I don't want to have to look presentable after I've been cooking, so Mike gets to make the deliveries." She's pretty proud of him for that, going on to say she doesn't think there are many doctors who get up at 6 a.m. on the weekend to catch up on charts and then drive back home to deliver breakfast.

Michael is pretty proud of her, too, it seems. "He's got another self-appointed job," Joyce says with a laugh. "He gives my cards out to everybody. He's my biggest promoter. And he always calls the Red Rabbit Inn 'Indiana's premier bed and breakfast.'"

Nick's English Hut

Susan Bright and Gregg Rago, Owners

At Nick's English Hut, family ties of all sorts are strong.

"It's always been a family business and it always will be," foresees Gregg "Rags" Rago. He and his wife, Susan Bright, have been owners of this popular 88-year-old Bloomington restaurant and bar since 2005.

The family-operated tradition began with original owner, Greek immigrant Nick Hrisomalos, was carried on by former owner Dick Barnes, and continues today. The late Barnes, says Rago, who began working at Nick's at age 19, treated him like a son.

"I see ourselves as caretakers for the Hrisomolos' and the Barnes' families," says Rago. "I'm very proud to be the owner."

He calls his wife the "financial wizard" of the business. He oversees almost 100 employees, who he says are like his own children. The couple works hard to maintain Nick's iconic look, offer a varied menu with local beef, pork, and vegetables, and provide the family-friendly atmosphere Barnes wanted.

Rago is honored, too, when Indiana University alumni celebrate a return to Bloomington with food and drink at Nick's, as proud parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles of future IU graduates.

"We want people to feel like they're at home here," he says. "And we want to ensure Nick's remains a family-owned business." —*Barb Berggoetz*

(l-r) Gregg Rago and Susan Bright.



(l-r) Rich, Margaret, and Robert Raake.

Räke Cabinet and Surface Solutions

Rich Raake, President

Rich Raake, president of Laminated Tops/ Räke Cabinet and Surface Solutions is used to explaining the company name. "It's the original German spelling of our family name, and we thought the umlaut would make it memorable," he says. And Raake says Laminated Tops doesn't begin to describe all they do. "As we evolved and began to offer so much more than laminated countertops, the name was holding us back," he explains. "Räke Cabinet and Surface Solutions is the showroom for our premium kitchen and bath products."

Rich's parents, Robert and Margaret, were in the landscaping business before buying Laminated Tops in 1997. "Dad was president, I was vice president, mom was secretary/treasurer," Rich says. In 2013, when his parents started thinking about retirement, Rich stepped up as president. "They take long winters off, but they still own the property, and they still have an interest in what's going on."

Rich and his wife, Myra, have three sons — Tate, Grant, and Zackary. He hopes one of the boys will take an interest in the business one day. "But if they don't, that's okay. They can go their own way," he says. "I plan to keep on with it. If you think about it, the Raakes have been in small business in Monroe County for almost 35 years."

FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Kathy Schick and Nicholas Toth.

Stone Age Institute Nicholas Toth and Kathy Schick, Co-Directors

As co-directors of the Stone Age Institute, a nonprofit, independent research center dedicated to the study of human origins and technological development, Nicholas Toth and Kathy Schick have a lot on their plates. “There’s the research, the teaching, the science outreach, the fundraising, the music,” Schick says. “They’re all interrelated and interlinked. It keeps things interesting and exciting.” And yes, she did say music.

The two met on an archeological dig in Ohio in 1976, the same year they both started graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. The next year they got married and spent their honeymoon conducting research in Kenya. “We essentially spent half of the first two years of our marriage in a tent,” Schick says, adding that the running joke is their secret to a happy marriage is you can’t slam a tent door after an argument.

Toth and Schick are both professors at Indiana University, where they continue to work with students and conduct research. They say that since they met they had a goal of developing a world-class facility for Paleolithic archeological research. In 2003, that goal was realized with the opening of the Stone Age Institute. “Most of our research is done abroad, so this is our base of operations for grant writing, publications, and fundraising,” Toth says. “And we allow groups to use the space. It provides a way of doing some science outreach.” The institute has welcomed the IU Board of Trustees, the Cook Group, and the YMCA Board, among others, to use the facility free of charge.

The Stone Age Institute also does science outreach into the community. “It’s a way of letting people know what we do here,” Schick says. “We talk about human origins and the evolution of crafts and technologies. It has a broad interest for a lot of people.” One of their largest outreach projects is

“From the Big Bang to the World Wide Web” (bigbangtowww.org), an online resource that explains the origins of the universe, human evolution, and technological development.

And then there is the music. “We started it to help make science more approachable and fun to a broad spectrum of people,” Schick says. She and Toth write the music and lyrics; all of the songs are about evolution, with titles such as “Ancestral Faces” and “98 Percent Chimpanzee.” The songs are recorded by The Stone Age Institute Band, which is made up of scientists and world-class musicians. Grammy Award winner Carrie Newcomer is the band’s lead vocalist. Seymour Duncan plays lead guitar. They’ve jammed with Booker T Jones, Todd Rundgren, and Kenny Aronoff. “It’s a fun outlet for us, and it gets people interested in what we’re doing out here,” Toth says. “And there’s a method to our madness. A lot of the financial support for our research comes from the music world.”

Other support comes from a surprisingly diverse group of people. When the late CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite did a four-part television documentary series on human evolution, Toth and Schick served as consultants. Cronkite later joined the institute’s advisory board. Other board members include Bill Kaman of Ovation Guitars and Kaman Avionics, author Jean Auel, and composer Gordon Getty.

Toth and Schick say they have two major missions. The first is to continue their research into the coevolution of biology and technology. “There’s no parallel development like it in the natural world,” says Toth. The second is to promote science education. “Only 50 percent of people understand their evolutionary origins,” Toth says. “So we’re really committed to doing more science outreach and spreading the word about human origins and development and how we got where we are today.”

For more information or for free downloads of music from The Stone Age Institute Band, visit stoneageinstitute.org.

FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Tim Winger and Eric Stolberg.

WS Property Group Tim Winger and Eric Stolberg

They were an unlikely match, Eric Stolberg and Tim Winger. But their business and personal bond formed quickly and has lasted successfully for decades.

Stolberg grew up overseas, graduated from Indiana University with a business degree, and became a real estate broker and developer. Winger, raised in southern Indiana, followed his father Henry Winger's footsteps into home construction and became a skilled carpenter and home builder.

When they began working together on housing projects in the mid-1970s in separate companies, they found in each other a business complement and a strong family-like relationship.

"Tim is not my biological father, but in every way, shape, and form he is a father figure to me," says Stolberg, 66, whose father died when he was 18.

Winger, 81, says he recognized early on the qualities he admired in his future partner at WS Property Group.

"It's integrity and trust," says Winger. "You can tell those things quickly. It was almost instantly I knew I liked working with Eric."

In 1987, they formed Winger/Stolberg Group, now called WS Property Group. Since then, they have developed some

of Bloomington's finest residential communities, including Quail Ridge Condominiums and Windermere Woods. Now well-known for developing, leasing and managing its own portfolio of commercial properties, the company also offers professional real estate services to all property owners.

Their two sons are in the business, too. Stolberg's son, Aaron, is Chief Development Officer over multi-

family dwellings for WS Property Group. Winger's son, Tom, is President of Winger Construction, a multi-family home contractor.

As they've built their business, the elder Stolberg and Winger say they've shared many laughs and had great fun, while learning from each other.

"He's a mentor I need and want to talk to about deals," says Stolberg, WS Property Group President. "I need to get his insight."

He also says Winger taught him to strive for top quality. "What I learned from Tim was to do it right."

For Winger, now Board Chairman, he says Stolberg "made a businessman of me. I gained an awful lot from him."

Both share a love of the development business and crafting the big deals, despite its stressfulness. "We both thrive on that. There's that little addiction to risk," says Stolberg. And they both share the same goals. "We always have had long-term vision," says Stolberg. "We want to create value for ourselves, our partners, and investors."

To them, their work is a creative process they hope will make a lasting and positive impact on the community.

"You build projects that will last 50 to 60 years in the community," says Stolberg. "Let's leave footprints that we're proud of."

—Barb Berggoetz

Spectrum Studio/ Gallery 406

Kendall Reeves, Photographer and Stephanie Reeves, Graphic Designer

Photographer Kendall Reeves started Spectrum Studio in 1989, so it's easy to imagine that after 25 years he's settled into a familiar workaday routine. Not so. "I started the studio just doing photography, but as digital came along, things evolved," he says. That meant adding large format printing, laminating, and mounting. And in 2007, it meant bringing on a business partner — his wife, Stephanie, a graphic artist. "I was helping him with clients along the way, and it just made sense to join the business," Stephanie says. Now they run a full-service advertising studio, with the capability of handling jobs, start to finish, in-house. "Everything is done by the two of us," Kendall says.

The idea of life settling into a predictable routine makes the two of them laugh. In April 2013, after 10 years of marriage, their son Kaden was born. "He's our first child and he's changed our lives," Stephanie says. "We were used to just the two of us and our work. Now we have to figure out our work and home balance." But when you run a small business, sometimes those things aren't so easy to separate out. "Our business and our family life are intertwined," Kendall says.

(l-r) Stephanie, Kaden, and Kendall Reeves.



FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Leticia and Jose Salazar. Photo by Darryl Smith

La Torre Restaurant

Jose and Leticia Salazar, Owners

For more than 18 years, Jose and Leticia Salazar and their family have been serving authentic Mexican food at Bloomington's east-side La Torre Restaurant. Some recipes date back almost four generations and some have been modified, with the Salazars adding their own "twist" to old family favorites.

Salazar and his wife, born in Mexico, were looking for a place to settle and start a restaurant in America. From the time Salazar was young, growing up in Chicago and helping in his father's restaurant, he dreamed of having a restaurant of his own. In 1996, after a very long search, the couple found Bloomington.

"We wanted to raise a family in a college town," says Salazar. "We immediately fell in love with Bloomington."

Since La Torre opened in 1996, both sons, Carlos and Cesar, and daughter, Leticia, have worked there, as well as his wife. Carlos, a CPA in California, still handles La Torre's finances. Cesar now lives and works in Greenwood.

Daughter Leticia has stayed and become general manager, handling hiring, payroll, training, and more.

"I have an enormous attachment to this place," says Leticia, 31, also a Realtor. "I've spent more than half my life here."

Salazar is glad he's been able to watch his children grow up at the restaurant, develop a loyal clientele, and make his dream a family affair. "It's been very rewarding," says Salazar. —*Barb Berggoetz*

Richardson Studio

Jeff and Michelle Richardson, Photographers

When clients come in for a photo shoot at Richardson Studio, they aren't just getting their picture taken. "We create art that boosts people's self esteem," says Jeff Richardson, who owns the studio with his wife, Michelle. "We have a way of helping people feel good about themselves, of seeing how beautiful they are," he says. That comes from years of experience working in the portrait business. Jeff has never done anything else.

Jeff's father was a studio photographer in Seymour. "At the age of 13, my dad snuck me into a college class on darkroom management so I could run his darkroom for him," Jeff says. In 1995, after high school, Jeff attended photography trade school and started taking portraits along with developing film. "Really, this is all I've ever done, except one roofing job that didn't last long," Jeff says.

He and Michelle were married in 1996. She joined him at his dad's studio, first just getting things organized. "She was the one who cleaned off the front desk, swept up, made it all look nice," Jeff says with pride. "I could spend hours telling you all she did, all she does. I talk a lot, but Michelle gets it done." She was soon taking portraits of newborns and toddlers.

The two opened Richardson Studio in 2007. "We were both 30 years old and ready to do something different, something fresh and urban," Michelle says. While they both handle weddings and family portraits, each specializes when it comes to working with individuals. Michelle works with newborns and children, "The ones you have to distract and play with," she says. Jeff works with adults and does a lot of senior portraits. "I love working with teenagers," he says.

"They're hybrids, one part kid and one part blossoming adult." Michelle and Jeff have two teenagers of their own — Andrea, 17, and William, 14. In January 2013, they added daughter Reese to the family.

Richardson Studio moved to a new space in the Wicks Building on the downtown Square on June 1, 2014. With two decades in the business, they say making sure their clients have a great experience — as well as great portraits — is what's most important to them. "I try to treat people how I like to be treated," Michelle says. "I want them to have a great experience working with us, from that first phone call to set up their appointment to the moment they pick up their finished portraits."

(l-r) Reese, William, Jeff, Andrea, and Michelle Richardson.



FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Brittany Hash, Brian Beall, Mindy Taylor, Whitney Gates, Kathy Baker, and Barb Hash.

Gates Insurance/Gates Inc. Realtors and Developers

Whitney Gates, President

Gates Insurance and Gates Inc., located in Seminary Square (next to Kroger downtown), is as local and family owned and operated as a business can be. In 1961, Jerry Gates graduated from Indiana University and began working in residential real estate sales and insurance. By 1966, he had founded Gates Insurance Inc. Now his son, Whitney Gates, is president of the company. "When I was a kid, our office was on North Walnut, and I remember going in with my dad on Saturday mornings. We'd go to Southern Sporting Goods, I'd get a doughnut and a glass of milk, and then we'd go to work," Whitney remembers. "So I've really been working here all my life."

Growing up in Bloomington, Whitney was active in the Boys and Girls Club. "Back then, that's where you went to play sports," he says. "These days, the Boys and Girls Club is more of an after-school program that provides kids a place to study, to work on computers, and to join various clubs. It's a great place for them to learn and to stay safe." Whitney served on the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bloomington board for six years and was its president for three. He's been a member of the Bloomington North Rotary Club for 22 years, and is an avid IU supporter and fan.

Whitney worked at Gates Inc. while he was in high school and college. After graduating from IU, he served as a naval

officer for four years. He returned to Bloomington in 1992 and joined the family business with a focus on commercial development. "We were developing Whitehall Crossing, Franklin Business Park, and Curry Industrial Park all at the same time," Whitney says. "Whitehall Crossing is the crown jewel of our holdings. If you look at the growth of the west side, you can see it was good for Bloomington."

From the start, Gates Insurance has had a reputation for providing a wide range of insurance services for both personal and commercial needs. The team of professional agents and customer service representatives are knowledgeable and experienced in helping clients with needs associated with risk assessment and protection. "We're an independent agency, so we don't have to use a particular company," Whitney says. "We provide tailored coverage for our clients, so they get the best insurance plan and cost saving strategies."

Whitney says Gates Insurance and Gates Inc. are always working to find additional ways to better serve their clients and Bloomington. "I'm proud to be a part of this community," he says. "I grew up here and I plan to stay here. So whether it's our real estate developments or our insurance agency, we're here to help the community in whatever way we can."

Shredding and Storage Unlimited

Dan and Chrissy Gornall, Owners

Dan and Chrissy Gornall, owners of Shredding and Storage Unlimited, have been in business together their entire married life. Chrissy was just 19 and Dan 22 when they bought a campground on contract. That was the start of a series of business ventures, each one building on the success of the other. They had a model to follow. In the 1970s, Chrissy's parents, Gary and Diane Eubanks, opened the first self-storage complex in the area, at the same South Walnut location where Shredding and Storage Unlimited is today. It was Gary who suggested the Gornalls explore the document management business. "That naturally led to our mobile shredding company, and that led to the recycling company," Chrissy says.

They have a lot of family working in their family business. Chrissy's mom, Diane, is their business partner and their oldest son, Josh, recently joined the company. Josh has an M.B.A. and was working for Eby Brown. "We stole him away from the corporate world," Dan says. "And he just brings the next level of knowledge to the business."

They spend most of their days together, but that's what they've always done. "We've worked together, side by side, every day for 27 years," Dan says. "I can't imagine doing it any other way. And I wouldn't want to."

(l-r) Diane Eubanks and Josh, Chrissy, and Dan Gornall.



FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) Jeff, Tonya, Griffin, and Michael Stogdill.

Tonya's Touch

Tonya and Jeff Stogdill, Owners

Tonya's Touch is a family-owned business that owes its very start to family. "We wanted to send our kids to Christian school, and we didn't have the income," says Tonya Stogdill, who owns the company with her husband, Jeff. The two had left high school and married at age 16 and didn't have a lot of job choices. "But we knew how to clean, and there weren't a lot of start-up costs." That was back in 1989. Twenty-five years later, the business is thriving, with 15 employees, nearly all trusted family and friends. "We don't have a lot of turnover," Tonya says. "Our employees have been with us for years." All three of their children — Michael, Brandy, and Beth — have worked in the business, but it's Michael they see taking Tonya's Touch into the future. "He's a musician, but this is his income," Tonya says.

They say it was tough getting married so young, but are rightfully proud of what they've accomplished. All three kids went to college. Tonya earned her GED and has taken business classes at Ivy Tech. They have seven beautiful grandchildren. And while Jeff says he wouldn't recommend the same path to most people, he says he knows what's most important after all these years: "We still love each other."

Topo's 403

Stephanie Topoligus, Managing and Creative Director

While Topo's 403 is a great Greek restaurant, it means more than that, says Managing and Creative Director Stephanie Topoligus. It's a way of honoring family history and following long-held dreams. The restored 1870s townhouse on Walnut north of the downtown Square has been in the family since her grandfather opened his medical practice there in 1947. Her father, Dr. Jim Topoligus, practiced medicine there until moving his offices in the mid-1990s. When the building was empty, it opened up an opportunity "Topo" had been waiting for.

"The business began because of my dad," Topoligus says. "It was his sentimental dream to revive the days of his mother's family's restaurant." That restaurant was The Gables, and the Poolitsan family ran it from 1932 to 1979. "My dad was born in 1943, so he kind of grew up there," she says. "It was a fabled IU institution, a Greek-American soda fountain. And my dad really wanted to recreate the family-run feeling of The Gables."

Topoligus says owning the building and having the dream made it all come together. "If he didn't own the building, we wouldn't have opened Topo's," she says. "The building needed to be restored, and we felt it needed to house something special." At the time, Topoligus lived in Austin, Texas, with her son, James (now 6). "My career

had been in art museums, creating special events," she says. "Much of my work was planning party menus and museum café concepts, so all along I was sort of in the restaurant business." Once her father got serious about opening a restaurant in the space, Topoligus saw a good reason to come back to Bloomington. "My dad had always had this dream and was trying to make it happen," she says. "So I decided if he was really going to do it, then I would do it for him, and keep the new business in the family."

The restaurant reflects a love of family. Little James loves to greet guests. "He thinks everyone is there to see him," Topoligus says with a laugh. And her family has dinner there at least four nights a week. "Mom doesn't have to cook, Dad holds court with the regulars, and my sisters bring their friends," she says. Topoligus says she hopes everyone feels like family at Topo's 403. "The idea behind it is love for family and hospitality and history," she says. "We see everyone as our guests, not customers. I think that was the feel of The Gables. I know that's what my dad remembers and what he wanted to revive."

(l-r) Stephanie and Jim "Topo" Topoligus.
Photo by Shannon Zahnle



FAMILY BUSINESS



(l-r) MaryAnn and Mark Dougherty.

Carpets Plus

MaryAnn and Mark Dougherty

There's biological family. And then there's work family.

Mark and MaryAnn Dougherty are grateful to have both. Co-owners of Carpets Plus Color Tile, the couple has been running their own floor covering business in Bloomington since 1994.

Over the years, they've employed some of their adult children and their children's spouses. Of their 15 employees now, six are family members, including Mark and MaryAnn.

"The part of them who aren't biological family, though, are our work family," says MaryAnn, company president. "We care for all of them."

As their business grew, the couple has gone through a lot of changes, ups and downs, and moved to several locations in Bloomington. When they first opened 20 years ago as Hoosier Floor Covering, they were in a 12-foot-by-12-foot office in a warehouse building. In 2001, they joined Carpets Plus Color Tile, a national floor covering buying group.

Now, they lease 18,000 square feet of show room, office, and warehouse space at

1180 S. Liberty Dr. on the west side. In 2007, they also opened an east-side store at 901 S. College Mall Rd.

"It's an ever-evolving and changing business," says Mark, company director who oversees finances. "But our strong family base gives our business that solid foundation."

The four family members who work for them hold key positions. Son Kerry McEvilly manages the east-side store. Daughter-in-law Diane McEvilly, married to Kerry's twin brother, is the business' office manager and head bookkeeper. Daughter Kim Madison, the company's secretary-treasurer, works three days a week in the office. And Trevor Mullis, married to daughter Kara, heads the commercial department. Other family members have worked there, too.

Hiring family members, though, wasn't always in the plans with the Doughertys. MaryAnn had eight children and the couple had another child together.

"I was never going to employ family because I was told that was the worst thing you could do," she admits. But she adds that she soon changed her mind when she realized what a valuable addition they make to the business and how enjoyable it is to be a family business.

One of the most important qualities in employees, MaryAnn adds, is honesty.



(front row, l-r) Owners Mark and MaryAnn Dougherty with their work family, (second row, l-r) Kate Doyle, Jon Hunt, Kerry McEvilly, Diane McEvilly, (third row, l-r) Claude Darnell, Jeff Mezger, Cody Burgess, Ash Holmes, (fourth row, l-r) Sheldon Beasley, Mark Breedlove, Trevor Mullis, and (back row) Rich Holmes. Photo by Lynae Sowinski

"I wanted honesty and people I could totally trust," she says. "Good workers who are committed to their jobs and like their jobs are critical. Having the family involved and our 'work family' is the best situation."

They carry a full line of quality tile, carpet, hardwood, laminate, vinyl, and area rugs laid out in a showroom that's easy to navigate. Over time, the strong vendor relationships they have developed allow them to offer a large selection of products that are cutting edge and keep up with design trends.

To get to this point, they had to weather some growing pains. After their biggest years in 2006–08, the recession hit and business slacked because of the slumping housing market. They had to cut expenses and lay off a few people, including son Kerry, although he later started managing the east-side store. Also, their former Martinsville store was flooded in the 2008 storms, and they lost all inventory.

But they were able to weather the down times and come out strong. "This is a location that suits us perfectly," says Mark about their Liberty Drive store.

They never doubted their decision to open their own business, after years of working for other stores and employers.

"When you work in the floor covering business, it's almost like it gets into your blood," says MaryAnn.

The couple says their business now is strong and well distributed between commercial, residential, and builder clients. Family members and other faithful staff, including longtime store manager Mark Breedlove, keep it operating smoothly.

When they decide to retire, says MaryAnn, the business probably will remain in the family. —*Barb Bergoetz*