

# Visions



# Delivered

A supplement to

**THE DAILY RECORD**

2009

**university of  
baltimore**  
ENTREPRENEURIAL  
OPPORTUNITY CENTER

# growth

Joshua Marshall  
Marshall Financial Services

"The EOC coaching program has mentored me from the early stages when finding clients was my biggest problem. With the help of my coaches, I have developed the processes and structure to expand my client list the right way - without sacrificing service."

**MARSHALL FINANCIAL SERVICES**



# action

Patrick Hurley  
Handyjamm, LLC

"The coaches help me refine my ideas and processes so my business advances the right way. Their dedication and experience has helped catapult The Original Handyjamm® from proposal to production."



# innovation

Karyn Taylor Okelo  
Sovereignty KŌ Collections

"The EOC coaches challenge me to be on the cutting-edge and embrace creativity. They are a great sounding board for my ideas and help me identify how to keep SKO Collections unique from the competition."

sovereignty **KŌ** collections



# emerging ventures

To get involved  
in EOC coaching  
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# 2009 University of Baltimore Distinguished Entrepreneur Awards “Visions Delivered”



**Joseph A. Cooper**  
**Alex Cooper Auctioneers, Inc.**  
 2009 University of Baltimore  
 Distinguished Entrepreneur



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Essential school information: student demographics, faculty statistics and instructional facilities



# A Message From the Dean

The University of Baltimore's Distinguished Entrepreneur Awards is a premier annual event at the Merrick School of Business and reflects the entrepreneurial spirit we put



Darlene Brannigan Smith, Ph.D.

forth in all that we do as Baltimore's business school. On this particular evening, we recognize business leaders who have not only achieved success in their professional endeavors but whose efforts empower others, especially our students. The accomplishments of our awardees and the stories that accompany their achievements are inspiring for faculty and students alike. We congratulate our 2009 honorees and thank them for giving all of us something wonderful to celebrate.

This year we have continued our drive to incorporate the entrepreneur into our teaching and learning activities. In November 2008, we celebrated the formal

opening of our Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center, and most recently began construction on the Edward Attman and Mildred Cohen Attman Enterprise Hatchery for students and alumni with pre-revenue ventures. In addition to our bricks-and-mortar activities, we have put in place new entrepreneurship curricula and experienced remarkable growth of the EOC's community outreach through its speaker series and entrepreneurship master classes. Area companies have tapped into our innovative business consulting internship program, which provides UB students with practical opportunities and real-world experience while helping us to build even stronger ties to the business community. The business coaching program benefits a number of student and alumni ventures by giving them the tools they need to advance their businesses.

With more than 80 years of tradition, the Merrick School of Business continues to be a recognized leader in business and management education, producing graduates who make lifelong contributions to society — regionally and globally. Our commitment to quality is evident by our longstanding

AACSB-International accreditation, the hallmark of business school accreditation. Our learning path at both the undergraduate and graduate levels is challenging and collaborative, and it is delivered in an environment that encourages personal and professional empowerment as it prepares students for lifelong success. Our students benefit from our flexible learning options; we are the only AACSB-Internationally accredited business school in Maryland to provide students the option of online classes. Currently, 2,000 business students are enrolled in seven degree programs, each uniquely designed to prepare them for rewarding career opportunities and professional advancement.

At UB, our foundational belief in quality education and practical application is built into everything that we do. In turn, we honor those who have taken these ideals and exemplified them in the worlds of business, enterprise and service. Thank you for sharing our outlook and for being part of our special event and our future.

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Darlene Brannigan Smith, Ph.D.  
Dean, Merrick School of Business  
B.S. '78, MBA '80

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## 2008-2009 Entrepreneurship Advisory Board

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*Dean – Merrick School of Business*

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\*\* Immediate Past Chair

# Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center – Vision for Change

In the face of economic turmoil and adversity, America's entrepreneurs remain undaunted. While headlines about corporate scandal and unemployment swirl, America's entrepreneurs have endured high gas prices and credit line freezes with resilience, stimulating job creation, new technologies and services as well as growth opportunities for women- and minority-owned businesses.

The Merrick School of Business, realizing the social and economic importance of entrepreneurship and small business to Baltimore's health and future, created the Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center (EOC) as a counterpart to its existing programs, enhancing its rich history of producing entrepreneurs. Just last November, the EOC, now in its fourth year of operation, opened the doors of its new center headquarters located on the first floor of the William H. Thumel Sr. Business Center.

The Center continues to expand on its mission of providing courage for the building of ventures that work by coaching, counseling and supporting innovative ventures in Baltimore. The EOC, currently working with more than 40 organizations from both the for-profit and social enterprise worlds, provides hands-on coaching and mentoring to entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs, helping companies avoid pit falls, survive and grow. These organizations employ more than 200 individuals locally and are currently producing taxable incomes of more than \$4 million.

In 2008 the EOC also launched the University of Baltimore's Family Business Community, a new focus area dedicated to providing unique resources and support to an overlooked segment of Baltimore's business make-up. The Center's innovative Business Consulting Services continues to provide technical business assistance to emerging enterprises and small businesses in the area. Elite students across disciplines work as consultants for area entrepreneurs and small business owners, helping them optimize their business models and succeed. Students receive an unparalleled hands-on

business experience and a stipend while emerging businesses receive first-rate business expertise at a fraction of the normal market price.

In addition to these programs the EOC hosts several year-round speaker series specific to for-profit and social venture business communities. During the 2008-2009 Program Year the EOC hosted 11 events for more than 1,000 area professionals in addition to other student-focused events. The Center also supports several ongoing executive roundtables in leadership development and social enterprise management.

We are very proud to announce that construction on a new EOC facility, the Edward Attman and Mildred Cohen Attman Enterprise Hatchery, is nearing completion and will be open to entrepreneurs in Summer 2009. The Hatchery facility is a

unique business resource for emerging entrepreneurs in the pre-revenue opportunity analysis phase. The Edward Attman and Mildred Cohen Attman Enterprise Hatchery serves as a perfect complement to existing EOC incubation facilities, which support a large crop of virtual clients and on-site entrepreneurs.

Recognizing the ever-growing role entrepreneurship plays both as a social and economic anchor in Baltimore's revitalization, the Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center provides courage for the building of ventures that work, and in doing so helps the entrepreneur transform dreams into Visions Delivered.

For more information about how you can get involved with entrepreneurship at UB, please email [opportunity@ubalt.edu](mailto:opportunity@ubalt.edu) or visit, [www.ubalt.edu/opportunity](http://www.ubalt.edu/opportunity).

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# Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center 2008-2009

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Executive Director

**Stuart Silberg**  
Entrepreneur in Residence

**Ewan A. Simpson**  
Program Coordinator

**Kara McKinley Kunst**  
Project Coordinator

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E-mail: [opportunity@ubalt.edu](mailto:opportunity@ubalt.edu)  
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## Coaching:

- Supporting 41 entrepreneurs
- Total revenues of \$4 million
- Number of jobs created: 200+

## Business Consulting Services:

- Seven projects completed
- Over 2,000 hours billed to emerging enterprises

- \$200,000+ market value of services provided

## Partner Organizations:

- Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development
- U.S. Small Business Administration
- Maryland Technology Development Corporation
- Baltimore Development Corporation
- Emerging Technology Centers
- Greater Baltimore Technology Council
- National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship
- Entrepreneurial Studies Institute - Anne Arundel Community College
- Social Enterprise Alliance

## Student and Community Events:

- Seven speaker series events: 600 attendees
- Four social enterprise forums: 400 attendees
- 2 Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization events for more than 100 UB and area high school students

## Executive Roundtables:

- Emerging Leaders in Technology
- UB Family Business Community
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Founding member of Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Social Enterprise Alliance

## Entrepreneur Coaching Services

at the University of Baltimore



**Inquiry:** For early stage entrepreneurs that need assistance in articulating their creative idea for a venture.



**Analysis:** Where pre-revenue stage entrepreneurs fine tune their business models and assess market feasibility.



**Growth:** Advanced mentoring for post-launch businesses focusing on optimization and growth strategies.

To get involved email [opportunity@ubalt.edu](mailto:opportunity@ubalt.edu) or visit [www.ubalt.edu/eoccoaching](http://www.ubalt.edu/eoccoaching)



Pictured: First Office Vegas  
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## A vision, a concept, a reality...

It has been a privilege playing a role in this significant accomplishment.

**Congratulations, University of Baltimore Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center!**



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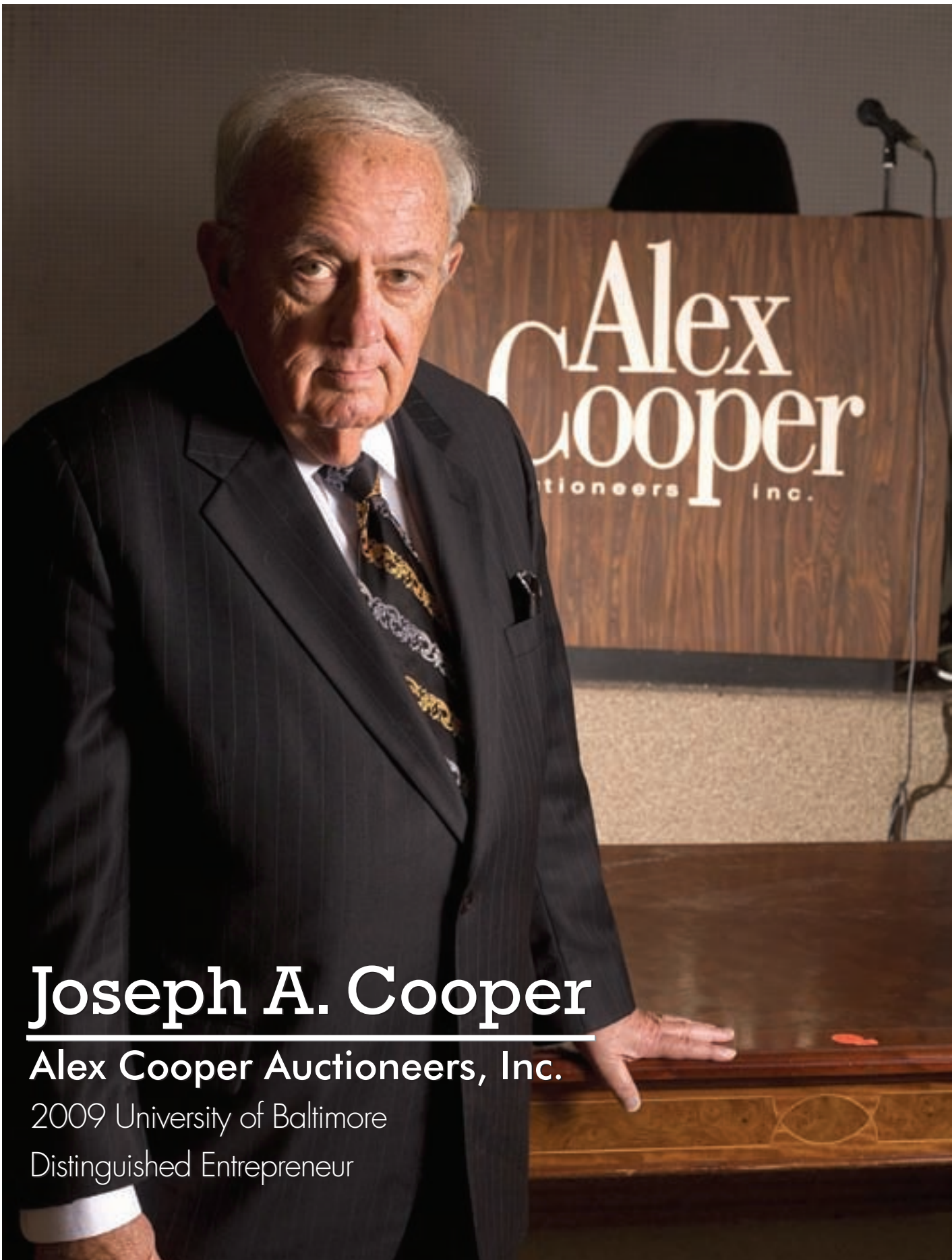


and all of the 2009 Distinguished Entrepreneur Honorees.



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# Joseph A. Cooper

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Alex Cooper Auctioneers, Inc.

2009 University of Baltimore

Distinguished Entrepreneur

**I**t was a custom in the early days of Alex Cooper Auctioneers to ring a bell to announce a pending auction sale. "Then we put it down to run the sale and some kid would run away with it. We lost so many bells. We don't do that any more," says Joseph Cooper.

That is just one of the changes made since Joseph assumed leadership of Alex Cooper Auctioneers, the business originally established in 1924 by Joseph's father and the company's namesake, Alex Cooper.

Joseph Cooper graduated from the University of Baltimore in 1955 with a B.S. degree in business. "I got a well-rounded business education there, particularly in some courses dealing with business law. In our type of business, courses like the ones taught at UB come in very handy, and they were really valuable to me," he says.

Since taking over the reins in 1971, the company has grown tenfold, from five employees to 51, with annual sales that top \$250 million. Similarly, Cooper has expanded the services provided; now serving a wide range of clients that includes law firms, banks, government agencies, nonprofits, as well as retail and real estate companies.

With a 34,000-square-foot auction gallery, "We do just about anything in the auction business," says Cooper. The company, based in Towson and Washington, D.C., prides itself on having four generations of experience in covering commercial, industrial and residential real estate as well as antiques, household furnishings, vehicles, office equipment and industrial machinery. In addition, Alex Cooper Oriental Rugs maintains one of the largest retail Oriental rug showrooms on the East Coast.

In today's challenging real estate environment, "We're busier than ever," Cooper says. However, he recognizes that the auction method, although effective and successful, is not for everyone or every property. So the company has formed a brokerage division for properties that are better served by conventional sales methods. It also has become the largest mortgage foreclosure auctioneers in Maryland and Washington, conducting more than 300 sales a week and providing a full range of advertising and auctioneering services to mortgage foreclosure attorneys at local and national firms.

Whatever the service, the Cooper firm emphasizes the personalized attention it provides to clients, tailoring its services to meet their needs and goals for selling quickly and achieving the highest sale price.

Cooper's advice for entrepreneurs who are launching a business today is to "know the community and get involved in it so people will come to know you." Anybody who starts a business "might as well make up their mind that they're going to have to do that in order to be successful," he says.

Cooper has followed his own advice and remains involved in his industry as president of the Auctioneers Association of Maryland and in the community as chair of Israel Bonds of Maryland and the campaign for the Associated Jewish Federation of Baltimore. He has been an

officer and board member of Sinai Hospital for 25 years. He also is a former head of development and current officer for LifeBridge Health. "I feel that over the years I have become known in the community and have given back to it

philanthropically," he says.

The third and fourth generations of the Cooper family who are involved in the business include his sons, a grandson, nephew, a grandnephew and "some grandnieces,"

**In our type of business, courses like the ones taught at UB come in very handy, and they were really valuable to me.**

Joseph Cooper says. Matthew Cooper, Joseph's grandson, will soon be the firm's principal broker. "Fortunately, I have bright grandchildren," Cooper says proudly.

— Alan Dessoff

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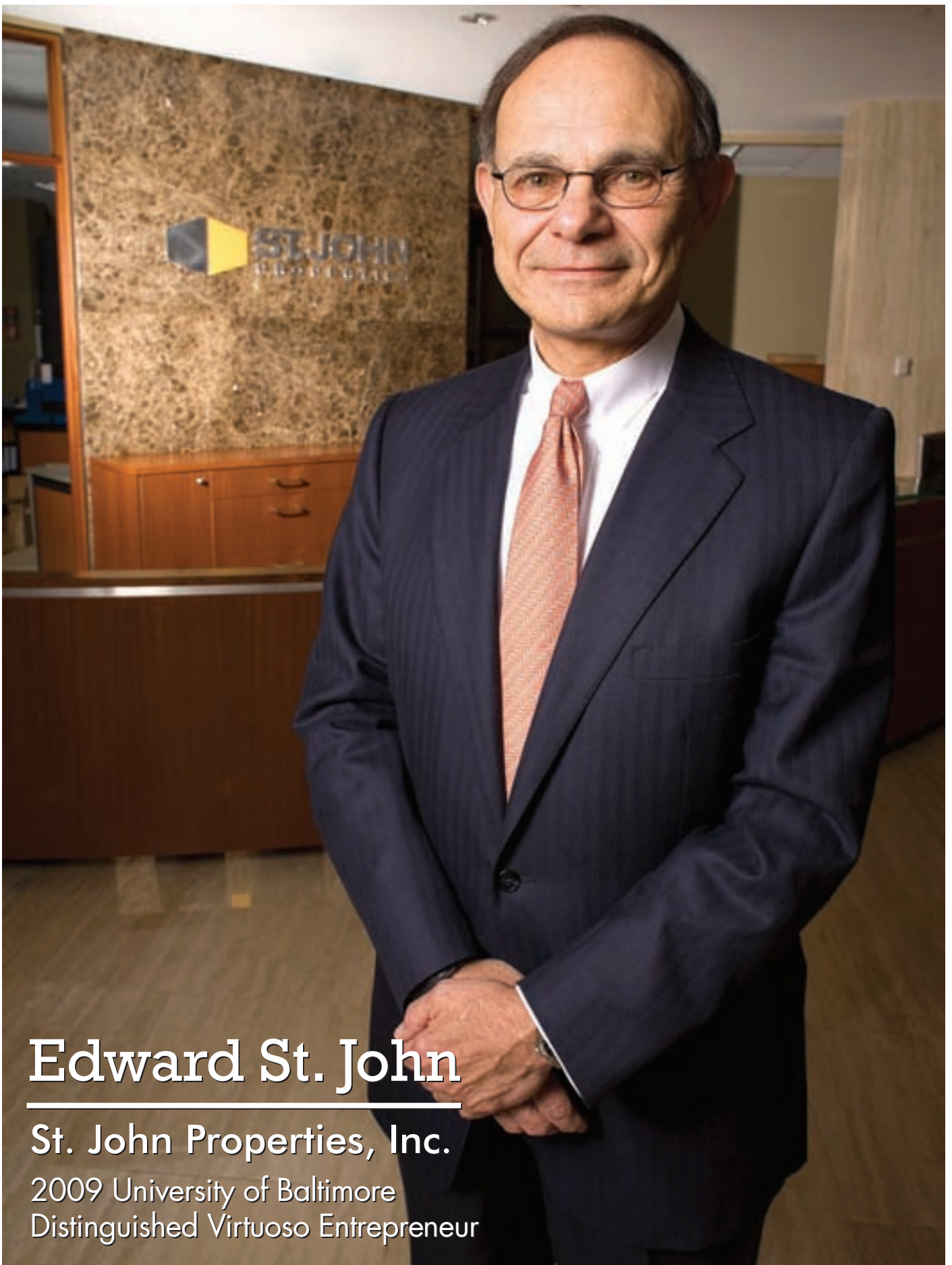
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# Edward St. John

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St. John Properties, Inc.

2009 University of Baltimore  
Distinguished Virtuoso Entrepreneur

RICH DENNISON

**W**hen Edward St. John's father died having built 50,000 square feet of buildings, it became Ed's job to help his mother manage the properties as well as several other small family businesses. Ed managed to find a way to do all this while he finished high school and college, graduating with an electrical engineering degree from the University of Maryland.

In the mid-1960s, St. John recalls, "I began to wonder if you could build buildings and lease them, as my father did, and make a business out of it as opposed to just having some investments in real estate." But he was an engineer, not a builder. He met Leroy Merritt, who was a home builder at the time, and they became partners. "We each put up a little money and started building, and one thing led to another," St. John says. They built 500,000 square feet over four years before reaching a friendly agreement to go in different directions and establish their own businesses.

St. John started his company in 1971 with three employees and a big vision. Today, St. John Properties has 130 employees with more than 50 business parks across seven Maryland counties and over 14 million square feet of office, research and development/flex, industrial and retail space throughout Maryland. The company also has locations in Virginia, Louisiana, Colorado and Wisconsin. It serves business space requirements of more than 1,700 tenants and has real estate investments conservatively valued at \$1.3 billion.

St. John believes his most significant contribution to the real estate industry was creating the R&D/flex type of property. "It used to be that you had either office buildings or bulk warehouse buildings with truck docks. They weren't the prettiest things in the world," he says. "One day a tenant came to me and said he spends more time in his office than at home, and he asked me why don't I build something that looks good but still has the truck docks?"

So St. John went to an architect and they came up with an attractive brick design that looked like an office building in front with the truck docks in back "and everybody started copying us," St. John says. That first business park became the template for about 40 St. John business campuses that followed around the Baltimore area, says Gerard Wit, senior vice president/marketing for St. John Properties.

"We figure that 17,000 people work in St. John's buildings every day in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties and Ed and his partnerships are probably the second or third largest taxpayers in those counties," Wit says. St. John currently has 138 business partners; many have been partners and

friends for more than 40 years.

St. John suggests that entrepreneurs interested in starting a business like his try to partner with a company like his or get the kind of assistance that the University of Baltimore can provide. "When starting your own company, you make a lot of mistakes. There isn't an exact formula for what to do to succeed," he says. "UB's Entrepreneurial Opportunity Center is a tremendous resource, teaching what not to do in order to be successful. It has a proven program of producing entrepreneurs and business leaders. I know, because a number of the senior executives at St. John Properties are UB alums."

Meanwhile, St. John Properties has implemented its own three-year training program for young professionals who want to pursue a career in development. They

work in each major area of the company before going out on their own. "That's the

best way to do it, the easiest, painless way. We call it the Ph.D. in development," St. John says. He also urges beginners in the business to "get an experienced partner to guide you through all the minefields of development today."

As his company continued to grow, so did his commitment to "give back" to the communities in which it had a presence. In 1988, St. John established the Edward St. John Foundation, which has

given more than \$42 million to area charities.

St. John also is active in community organizations as a director of the Maryland Science Center, the Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore, the Johns Hopkins University Real Estate Institute, the BWI Business Partnership, the Baltimore County Planning Board and the Anne Arundel County Economic Development Corporation.

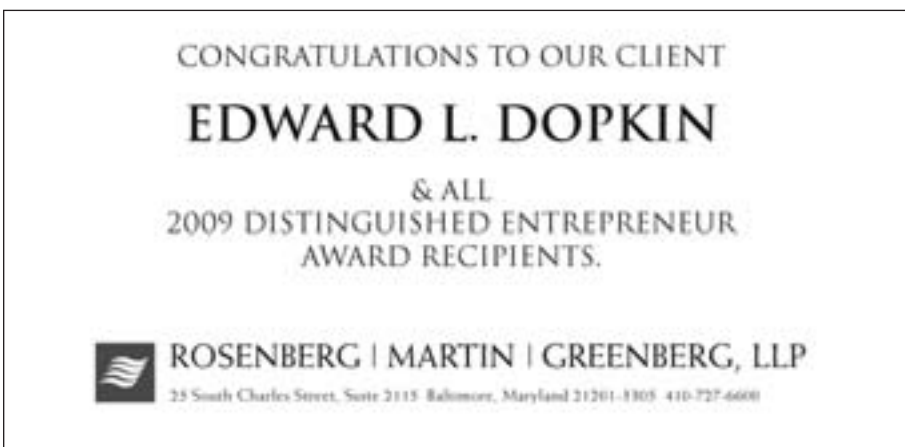
— Alan Dessoff

UB ... has a proven program of producing entrepreneurs and business leaders. I know because a number of senior executives at St. John Properties are UB alums.




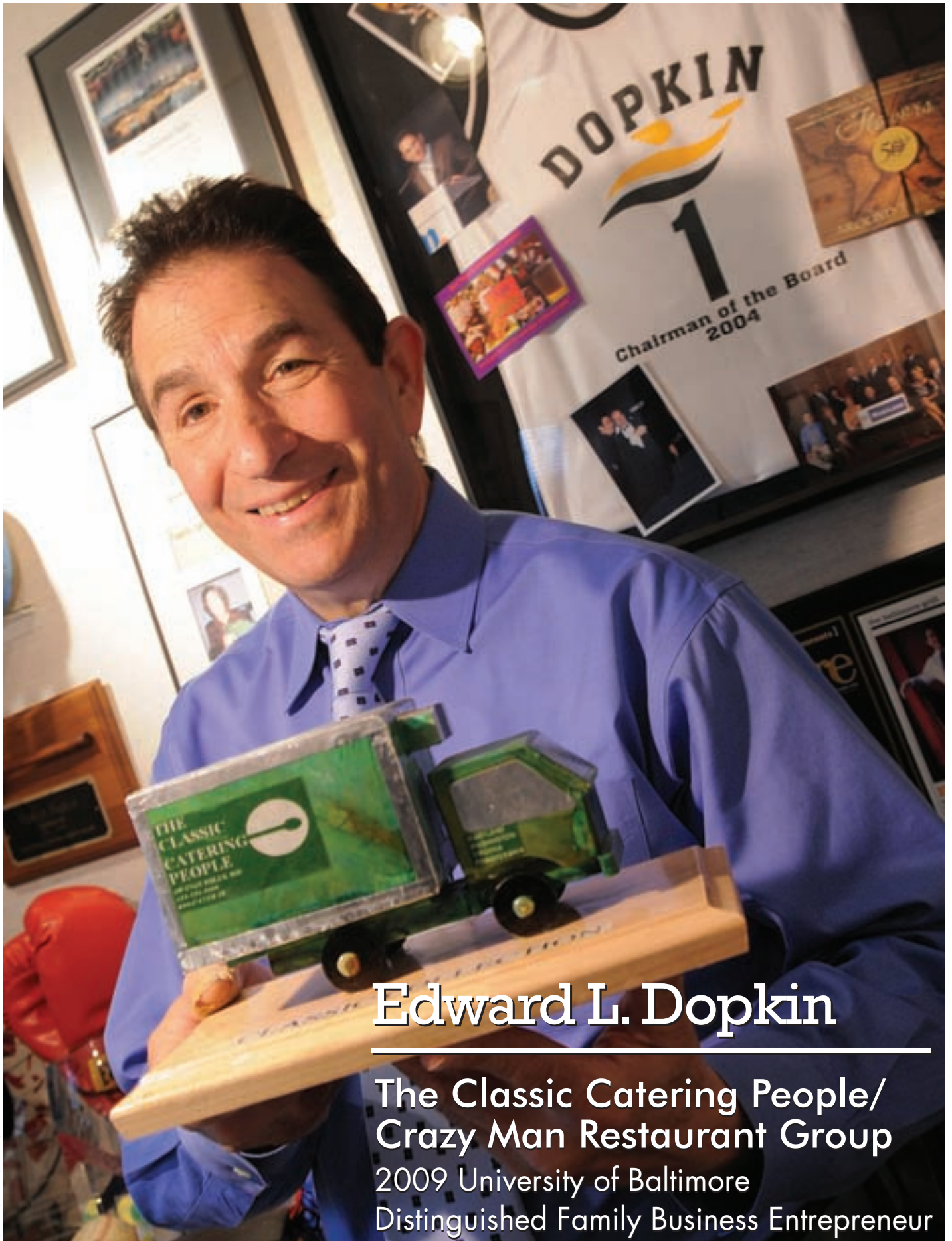
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## Edward L. Dopkin

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The Classic Catering People/  
Crazy Man Restaurant Group  
2009 University of Baltimore  
Distinguished Family Business Entrepreneur

Miss Shirley's, S'ghetti Eddie's, Loco Hombre and Alonso's would seem to have nothing in common other than being popular Baltimore restaurants. The common ingredient that links each of these successful establishments, though, is Eddie Dopkin.

He runs the business of each of these distinctive dining places as head of Crazy Man Restaurants. He's also a partner and vice president of finance of The Classic Catering People — one of the largest catering firms along the East Coast.

Classic has 90 full-time and 250-300 part-time employees, while Crazy Man Restaurant Group has 40 full-time and 100 part-time.

The diversity of fare is no mistake among Dopkin's restaurants.

"We have been very fortunate that, via the reputation of The Classic Catering People, we have had the ability to develop new concepts," Dopkin said. The 57-year-old businessman said he is proud that his clients can enjoy his food "at a formal party," or simply grab "coffee and a pastry before boarding the train at Penn Station, or an Alonso's burger with friends after the movies."

Even as new food businesses are added, Dopkin always includes his own family in the mix. In fact, Dopkin's restaurant roots go deep.

His father and mother started the family's first restaurant, The Beef Inn, in 1969.

Forty years later, Dopkin helped merge his family's Catering People with another family catering firm, Classic Catering, to create what is now The Classic Catering People, based in Owings Mills.

His sister Harriet Dopkin, the first classically trained chef in the family, and his cousin Larry Frank, are both partners now in the family catering business. Classic Catering People is the exclusive caterer for The Ravens training facilities. It also runs the cafés at the Walters Art Gallery and the Greystone Golf Course.

Dopkin's son David, a former Baltimore County teacher, helps him with the restaurants, especially the five that are in a two-block area of Roland Park.

Dopkin has a long history of working with administrators of the University of Baltimore on events and has been tapped by the school for his business prowess. He speaks regularly to University of Baltimore students about entrepreneurship and business and has helped students with interviews.

He secured his formal education at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he studied marketing and accounting. During his college years, he also worked full time in the family restaurant business. He is a few classes short of earning a degree and said he plans to complete the degree soon.

Dopkin said he tries to keep his businesses ahead of the competition in terms of technology. Classic Catering People was one of the first catering groups to have a Web site, he said. A third generation of its Web site was recently introduced and he connects his business with Google and social networks like Facebook.

"We spend a lot of hours navigating relationships to make sure we become a household word," Dopkin said. He takes it to the point of wanting the OnStar button available on some cars to recommend his restaurants when asked where to eat in and around Baltimore.

"These are not normal times and small-business owners may need to make a quick new business model," he said. "It's a time to renegotiate contracts and re-evaluate major purchases to see if there is a midway point with the vendor on something that may not be as big or as fast."

Dopkin also is very involved with the Restaurant Association of Maryland and promot-

ing the industry before state legislators. Recently, he helped lobby for continued tax credits for the film industry when studios make movies in Maryland. The spinoff business from a movie in town is great, he said. In addition to restaurant traffic, the catering business often supplies movie crews with their meals.

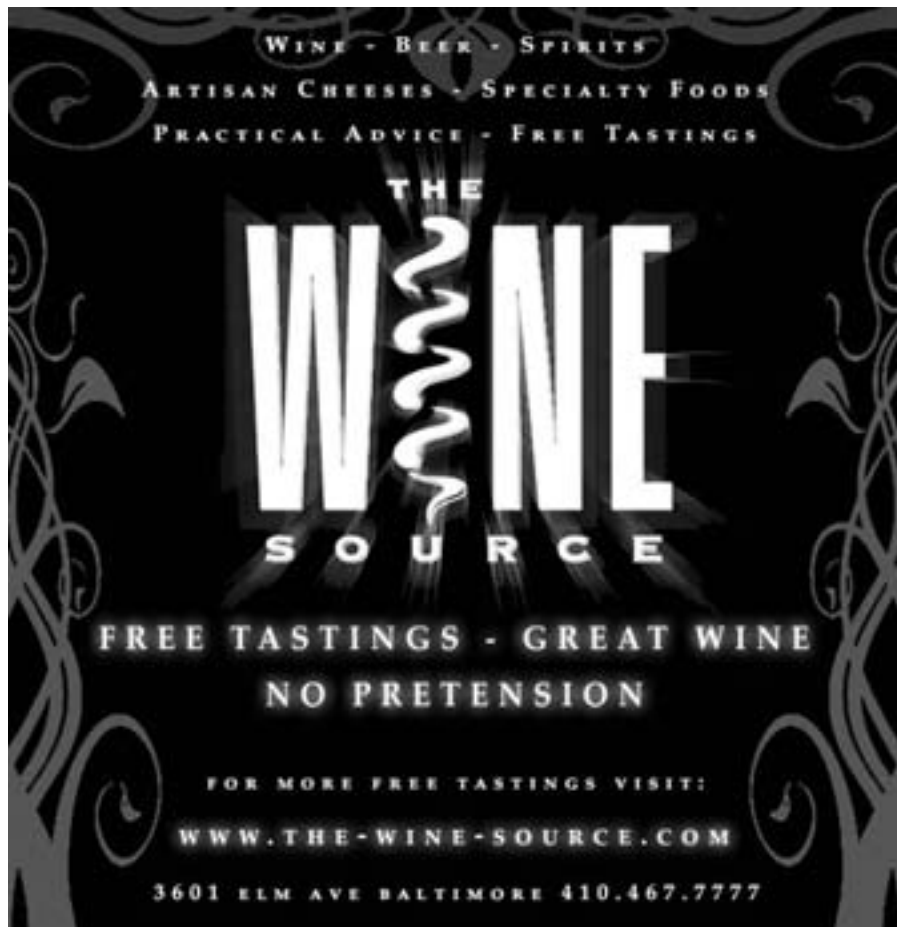
The current economic times are a challenge, but Dopkin's businesses have not had to lay off employees. But they are cautious, he said. "We are looking at the business more carefully than ever before and operating more frugally," he said. The businesses

are improving their purchasing and scheduling, he said.

"We're looking at what we can do without that a customer would never notice," Dopkin said. "We're looking at things weekly when previously it used to be monthly or quarterly."

—Liz Skinner

We spend a lot of hours navigating relationships to make sure we become a household word.





# Hollis Thomases

---

WebAdvantage.net

2009 University of Baltimore

Distinguished Business Innovation Entrepreneur

RICH DENNISON

**W**hen companies began transferring their businesses to the Internet more than a decade ago, Hollis Thomases recognized they would need unique marketing assistance that was not available through traditional marketing agencies. With a vision for the future and the determination to succeed, she created WebAdvantage.net in 1998. While the business model has evolved since then, Thomases' Havre de Grace-based firm continues to set a new pace not just in Baltimore but across the online advertising industry.

The company specializes in planning and executing online marketing strategies with services that include search engine advertising and optimization, social network marketing and more. With all of these services, WebAdvantage.net works to empower firms to understand and eventually maintain their own Web presence and reputation.

In the beginning, WebAdvantage.net was challenged by corporate confusion and resistance to Internet mar-

keting. "We realized early on that just because a company builds a Web site, it doesn't mean they [customers] will come," Thomases says. "Nobody had a clue what Web marketing was," she says. Having weathered the dot-com bust by operating "lean and mean," the landscape started to change. By the end of 2003, companies knew they needed help with online marketing and started to seek out firms like WebAdvantage.net to assist with new advertising needs, such as ad banners, e-mail advertising or search engine marketing.

As the Web has started to attract big dollars previously earmarked for traditional marketing budgets, WebAdvantage.net has grown right along with it and currently generates sales of more than \$4 million and employs a staff of 12. As for more growth, Thomases intends to limit expansion to remain "lean and mean" and ensure long-term viability regardless of economic cycles. "We operate as a boutique shop within the industry," Thomases explains. Though the firm

may be small in size, their client list includes such giants as Nokia USA, The Johns Hopkins University, Endo Pharmaceuticals, the Baltimore Area Convention & Visitors Association and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

A frequent speaker at trade and business events, Thomases has been a keynote speaker for the American Marketing Association, Search Engine Strategies and the University of Baltimore's Entrepreneurship Speaker Series, where she helps business owners and entrepreneurship students at UB understand the challenges of running a business and the role that online marketing can play in its potential success.

Last year, Thomases was recognized as an "Enterprising Woman of the Year" by Enterprising Woman magazine, and in 2007 she was the Maryland Small Business Administration's "Small Business Person of the Year."

Thomases lately has built a reputation as an expert in the emerging field of social media, and counsels companies in developing optimal strategies for engaging clients with new technologies like Twitter and Facebook. She advises companies to plan on doing much of the work with social media for themselves. "We help clients get their social media footing," Thomases says.

—Liz Skinner

**We realized early on that just because a company builds a Web site, it doesn't mean they [customers] will come.**

**Supporting Innovation in Maryland.**

The Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) is an independent entity established by the General Assembly to be Maryland's leading source of funding for seed capital and entrepreneurial business assistance for technology transfer and development programs.

TEDCO was ranked #1 in the nation by *Entrepreneur* magazine as the most active investor in seed-stage companies for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

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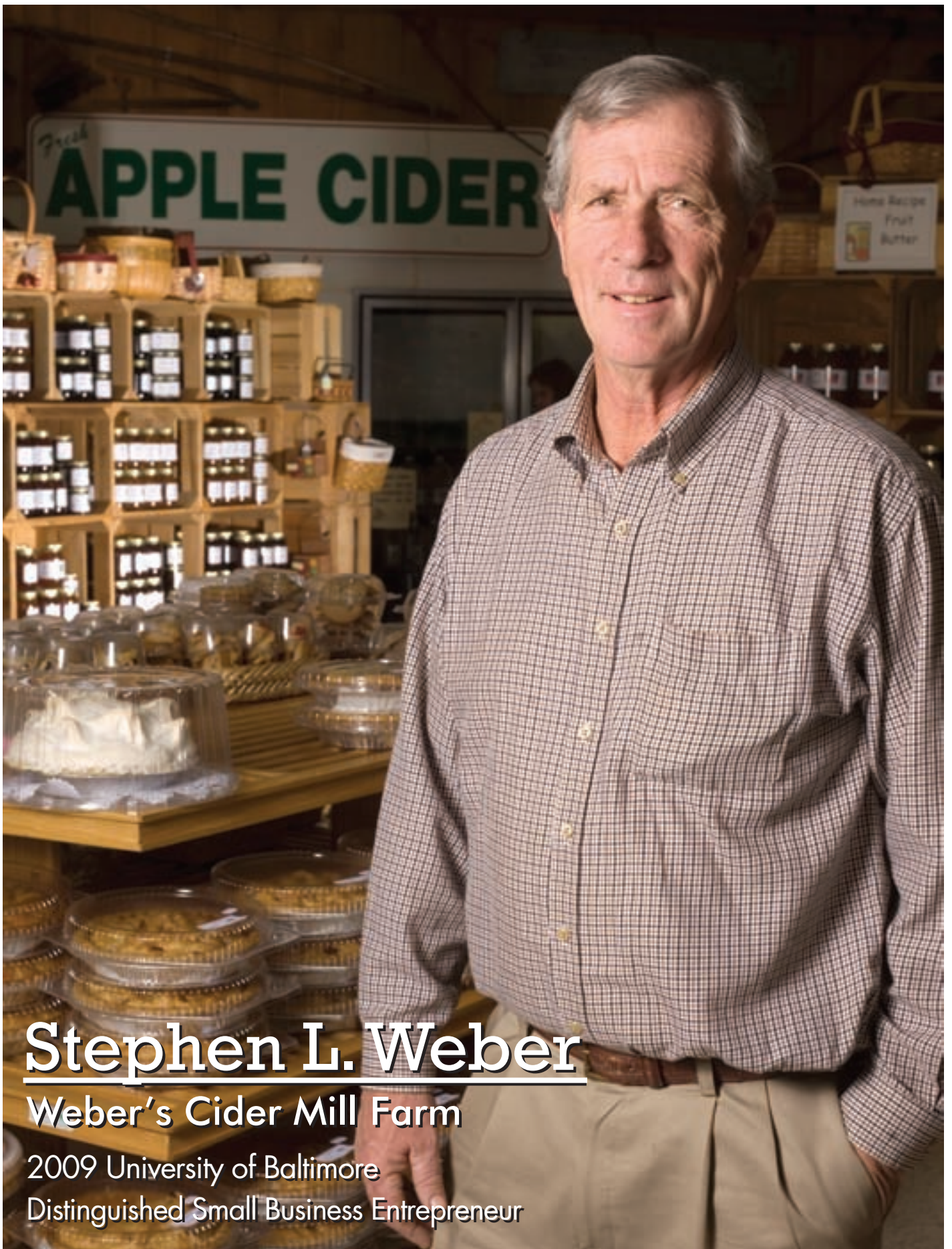
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# Stephen L. Weber

Weber's Cider Mill Farm

2009 University of Baltimore  
Distinguished Small Business Entrepreneur

RICH DENNISON

**L**ike many children of farm families, Steve Weber, B.S. '71, did not expect to return to work on the farm — known as Weber's Cider Mill Farm — after he completed his degree in business management at the University of Baltimore.

"When my grandfather started farming in 1908, we were a typical small fruit and vegetable farm just five miles from the city line," says Weber. "However, in the 1960s and 1970s, development around the farm was increasing, and the school board took a significant portion of our land." This event was one of the factors that led to Weber's decision to return to the business.

"We decided to move most of the farming operation elsewhere, but we did keep some of our original land and buildings, as well as our home."

Today at his home-farm, Weber has some 800 apple trees, greenhouses with bedding plants and flowers for sale. The retail market offers corn, tomatoes, cantaloupe, watermelon and squash, along with strawberries, raspberries, peaches, blackberries, plums and other items.

"We are always trying new crops," he says. "I built a bakery on the premises and, while we use some frozen products, we do a lot of scratch baking. Our signature item is a peach cake that has become a real winner."

Weber's Farm benefits from a very loyal customer base. "We have people who came here as kids who now come with their grandchildren. We do some advertising on cable and in the newspapers, but not a lot. Most of our business is a result of word-of-mouth. It's amazing to me ... we have people driving from Washington, D.C., just to be here."

He adds that farming is a seasonal business and typically he and his wife have six people on staff full time. Nonetheless, at the peak season — July through November — he will have as many as 80 on the payroll.

Weber also notes that the few weeks before Halloween make up the second largest merchandising period in the United States. "For 10 months of the year, we are a medium-sized roadside market," says Weber. "But during the five weeks before Halloween, we are a destination." To take advantage of that, Weber's Farm has a lot of "agritainment" events, which include hay rides, classes in which visitors make their own scarecrows, Halloween decorations and entertainment, and of course, pumpkins and cider. Weber freely acknowledges that this change has been huge.

"I think the entertainment aspect of

farming, which did not exist 30 years ago, has been largely because people now have more leisure time, especially two-income families," he notes.

"And we offer wholesome activities for all ages."

Another change, Weber reports, is that in the past five years there has been an enormous increase of consuming more local food. "People are starting to look at where their food actually comes from," he says. "And there is a tremendous interest in heirloom-seed fruits and vegetables."

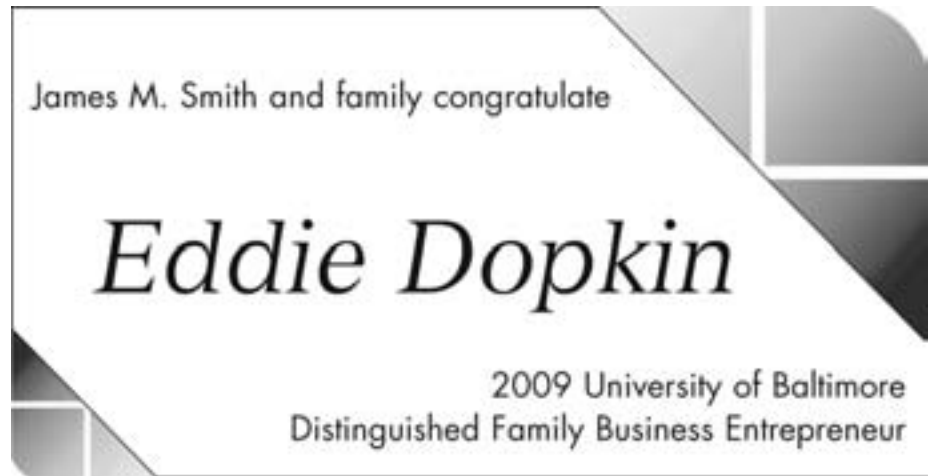
In spite of the fact that Weber and his wife, Jo-Ann, did not set out to come back to the farm, they have no regrets. If anything, they run a business that is thriving, with an extremely loyal customer base that they can pass

on to their children and grandchildren. Looking back, Weber notes, "My UB business degree has benefited me greatly, and I use it all the time. I learned direct marketing, as well as the importance of a value-added product at UB. But I also learned about bookkeeping, regulatory compliances issues and employee management, among other things.

"Farming today — and this goes for all farms — is more about business than it is about growing, and farmers spend increasingly more time on the business end," says Weber.

— Mary Medland

Farming today — and this goes for all farms — is more about business than it is about growing, and farmers spend increasingly more time on the business end.





# Creative Alliance at The Patterson - Margaret Footner

2009 University of Baltimore  
Distinguished Social Entrepreneur

MAXIMILIAN FRANZ

MARGARET FOOTNER, LEFT, AND KRISTEN ANCHOR

Since its founding in 1995, the Creative Alliance has grown to become an essential resource to Baltimore artists by providing education, networking, gallery and performance space, and even equipment rental.

The roots of The Alliance begin with Margaret Footner's Fells Point café, called Margaret's Café, and the adjacent Halycon Gallery. Though not an artist by training, Footner embraced the art community. "I just love art, and believe it should be part of everyday life," she says. The gallery was run by Megan Hamilton, who had a background in promotion, and Dan Schiavone, an artist.

Together, the three started a nonprofit first known as the Fells Point Creative Alliance. "We thought about, what does Baltimore need and what do Baltimore artists need?" says Footner, now the Alliance's executive director. The organization has grown steadily, and in 2003, it re-opened the former Patterson Theatre as a multi-purpose arts center.

"Our concept from the get-go had been to be an arts organization for all kinds of artists," explains Footner. That includes filmmakers, who approached the Alliance saying they were in need of a place to network, show films and perhaps most importantly, rent equipment, she says. In 2007, Footner heard about The Social Enterprise program at the University of Baltimore and "went to investigate."

She liked what she saw, and encouraged Kristen Anchor, who had recently joined the organization to head up a new venture to be called Creative Alliance MovieMakers (or CAmM) to enroll. The plan was that CAmM would provide support and equipment rental for area filmmakers. "It seemed that it would be really helpful for us," says Footner.

The situation is a win-win, as area filmmakers are now able to access professional equipment and instruction at reasonable prices and at the same time, CAmM generates revenue that goes back to supporting the Creative Alliance and all of its programs. Footner says the process of creating a supply of equipment for rental proved "intimidating." The help provided by the Social Enterprise program at the University of Baltimore was invaluable.

"We got what we hoped we would get from it, and more," explains Anchor. "It really enabled us to take it from an idea to the implementation." Through the Social

Enterprise program, Anchor was able to develop a business plan that was thoroughly vetted and fine-tuned. "I think it was really grounding to take what we instinctually thought was a good idea and develop a plan of execution," Footner says.

Anchor agrees, "It helped us not only do it, but do it right and start on the right foot."

One huge benefit was coming up with a viable pricing structure for workshops, trainings and equipment rentals. "For nonprofits, if a core service or program can pay for itself, that's significant," notes Footner. She adds that grants, donations and fundraising are still necessary, since CAmM is trying to keep rates low and build volume.

The class also introduced Anchor to other movers and shakers in the world of Baltimore nonprofits, who often bounce ideas off each other in one of the many

events that the UB Social Enterprise program hosts. These workshops and roundtables allow social enterprise directors and staff to interact, discuss strategies, develop best practices, and share knowl-

edge and resources. Anchor and Footner have both been active participants in these activities.

Anchor, who notes that she does not come from a business background, says she was teamed with UB student consultants who

"explained things we didn't understand." She also says Footner, who was a business owner, "has a very entrepreneurial spirit herself, which transfers to the culture here." Footner adds: "The UB program continues to be a support network for Kristen, CAmM and the Alliance."

— Karen Nitkin

I think it was really grounding to take what we instinctually thought was a good idea and develop a plan of execution.



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# Karyn Taylor-Okelo

Sovereignty KŌ Collections

2009 University of Baltimore  
Distinguished Student Entrepreneur

RICH DENNISON

**K**aryn Taylor-Okelo knows from her own experience that stylish shoes in large sizes are hard to find. That's why, in the fall of 2007, she launched Sovereignty KO Collections, an e-commerce business selling women's shoes sizes 9 through 15.

At the same time, she's putting the finishing touches on her M.B.A. from the University of Baltimore, with a concentration in entrepreneurship. "It's been a busy year," she notes.

Before starting her business, Taylor-Okelo worked for high-tech firms and remembers struggling to find stylish footwear for work that accommodated her size 12 feet. "You want a certain image, but often a footwear choice really dictates the rest of your style," she explains.

She did a little research, and soon learned the astonishing fact that 24 million women in the United States alone wear shoes in sizes 9 and up. Yet this population has been woefully neglected by shoe designers.

SKO Collections is filling that hole in the market, and doing it with passion and verve. The home page of [www.sko-collections.com](http://www.sko-collections.com) says: "The company's name is a metaphor for having no boundaries — in style and elegance, in dedication to providing fashionable products to the masses of customers that have been intentionally and routinely ignored."

"The real key to the inventory is that it's very fashionable, nice, colorful items, classically designed," she said. "It is for the career woman." She is also designing her own line of shoes, which she plans to sell on the site.

Taylor-Okelo, who has lived in Los Angeles and England, says she had been mulling the idea of starting a large-sized shoe company for some time but needed the expertise that an M.B.A. from University of Baltimore provided. "I wanted the artistic part but I wanted to top it off with the business knowledge," she says.

She likes the University of Baltimore because of the "attentiveness of the professors.

"A lot of the alumni are around and still involved with the school," she continues. "You know you have a team of people really vying for your success."

The Entrepreneurial Opportunity

Center and the mentoring services they provide have been invaluable to the growth of SKO Collections. One of Karyn's coaches, Stuart Silberg, "was great as far as steering me in the right direction of appropriately pricing my inventory and setting realistic expectations for financial projections," she explains. The EOC has also helped Karyn connect with legal resources and even a personal advisor.

Taylor-Okelo also reports her progress to the entire coaching committee quarterly. "For me, it was helpful having that team, that voice of confidence, because when

For me, it was helpful having that team ... when you're an entrepreneur it's a very lonely place. You raise your level of expectations for yourself when you know you have people to answer to.

you're an entrepreneur, it's a very lonely place. You raise your level of expectations for yourself when you know you have people to answer to."

In her quest for larger, stylish shoes, Taylor-Okelo has traveled to trade shows and talked to shoe company representatives, urging them to make larger sizes. "I hope to be one of the vanguards in the industry," she says.

She has certainly created a strong foothold in this emerging market.

— Karen Nitkin

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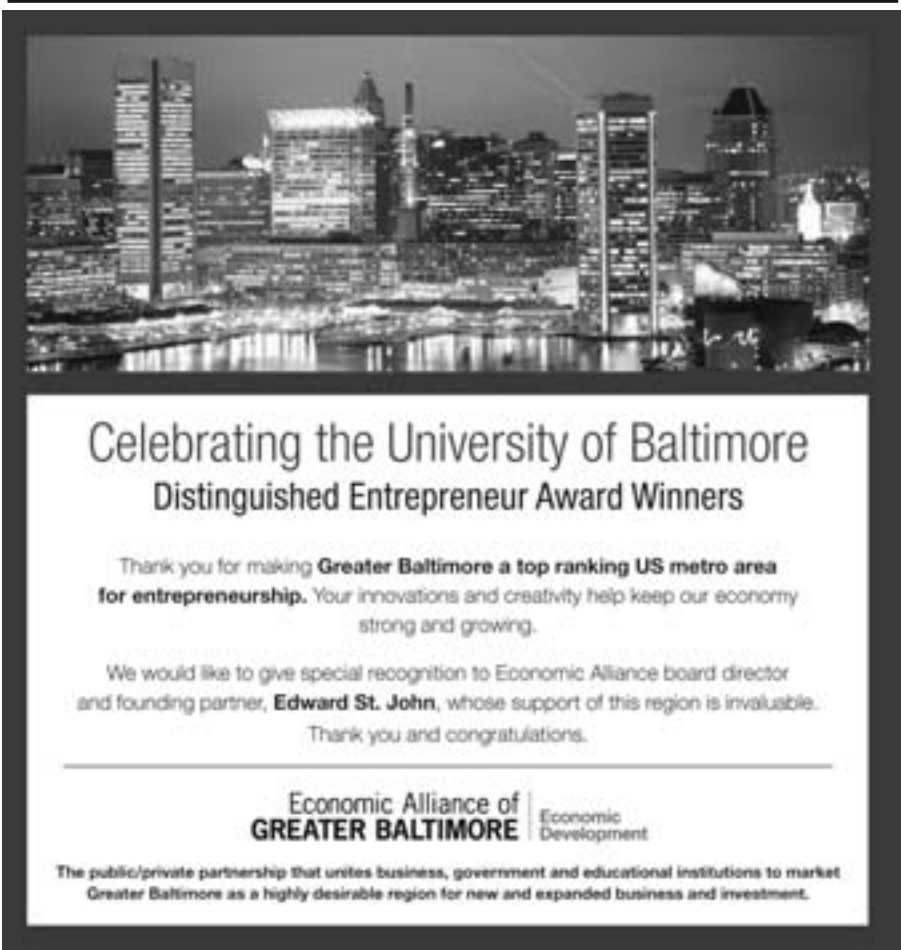
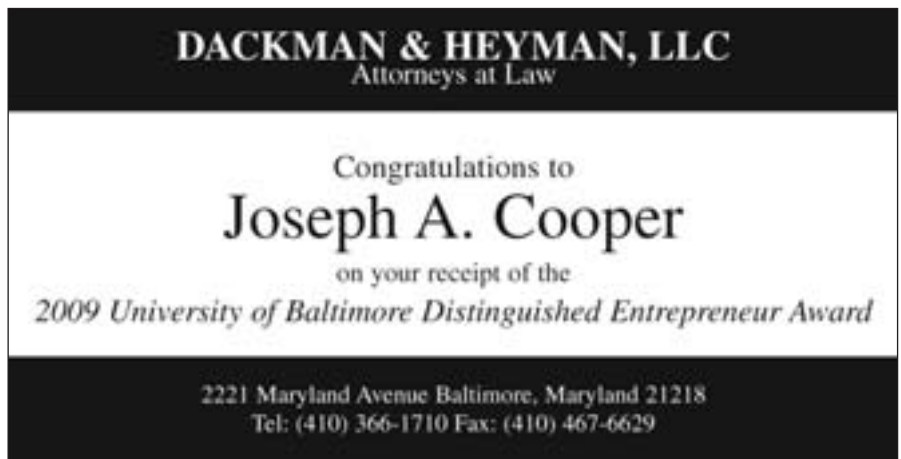
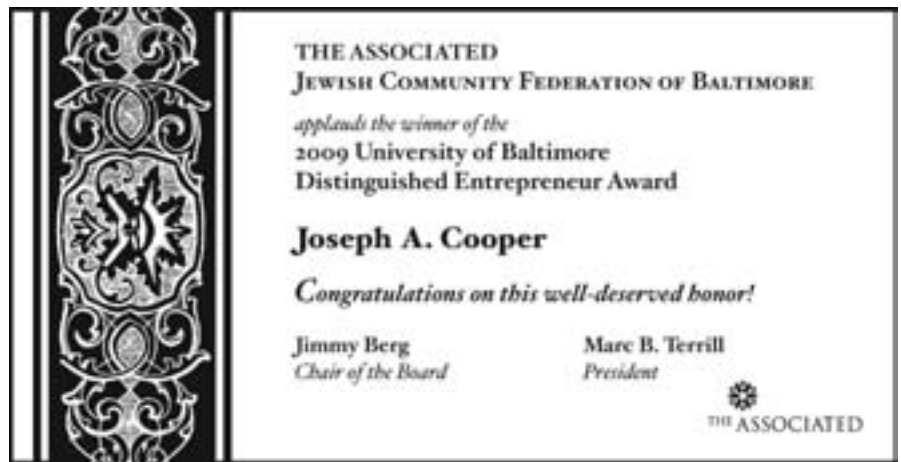


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