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Invotec Uses Innovation and Technology to Beat Recession

The words engineer and wordsmith do not usually occur in the same sentence - unless you are referring to Invotec Engineering on Industry Lane in the South Tech Business Park.

Seventeen years ago, John Hanna and Daryl Greywitt, two young engineer co-workers, decided the time was right to strike out on their own. They did the groundwork to start the company, then synthesized variations of innovation and technology and the name emerged – Invotec Engineering, Inc.

Invotec started in a 1,500 sq. ft. office in Centerville. In 2000, following an interim move to Kettering, Invotec settled in to a 12,000 sq. ft. building, constructed to their specifications.

As with many Springboro businesses, a major draw was 'location, location, location.' "We drove around Springboro. We found the city was easy to deal with, and business-friendly. We've had a good relationship with the city ever since," says John, Invotec's President and CEO.

"In July 2005, we more than doubled the size of the original building. We fully utilize the space and own two acres next door, so we have space for another expansion." Construction of the Austin Pike, Interstate 75 interchange is another positive. Customer access will be easier and current and future employees from north of the city will have easier access as well.



The company did some downsizing ahead of the dramatic economic downturn and currently has 45 full time employees, primarily engineers, designers, and toolmakers.

A beefed up marketing effort has broadened its customer base and reaped an influx of new and repeat clients in the last six months. "Our strategy is to increase our customer base in selected markets. We work all over the country. Once we get to the right people at the right companies, we make the sale." Existing clients help bring in new ones and word of mouth, 'organic growth,' follows.

Invotec creates "custom designed assembly and test systems" for clients that can be designed and manufactured to the client's specs, or Invotec talent can produce a "comprehensive proposal for concept, design, manufacture testing, installation and service," according to the company website, www.invotec.com.

Companies in the medical, consumer product and automotive subsystem fields and others with "highly complex assembly, test and inspection processes," are Invotec's primary client bases.

For more information, call 937-886-3232, or log on to the company's website.

Heather's Becoming the 'In' Place in Boro

Christmas In Springboro crowds and a new cappuccino machine tested Heather Sukola's competitive spirit and her patience at the November opening of Heather's Coffee and Café.

"The cappuccino machine had just arrived. We didn't have time to train and we were flooded with customers," she laughs. Fast-forward six months and the café, at 505 S. Main St., is a popular 'in' place for an eclectic mix of patrons.

Heather and her husband, John, bought the stately older house in July. Remodeling included installing a complete kitchen, electrical and plumbing upgrades to ensure they met local codes, plus furnishings. John has been associated with Marriott for many years and works in Blue Ash.

The cafe evolved from conversations between Heather and a close friend, Nicole Karimi. "It exploded from there." The concept was a small coffee house. "Then we added food to the idea. In order to serve wine, we had to obtain a full liquor license, so we added wine and beer."

With her catering background, Heather had an inside track on suppliers specializing in quality products. The menu offers gourmet sandwiches on an assortment of breads. Soup, salads, and dessert round out the offerings.

As the name implies, unique coffee and tea blends, frappes and smoothies are a staple. Wine tastings proved popular in the winter. "During the spring and summer, we'll offer wine flights and resume tastings in the fall. We have unique beer and wine offerings you won't find all over. I like the diamonds in the rough and we have a good selection of good value wines." She has stocked the café with wines in the under \$20 range and there is no cork charge.

Heather's already has a stream of 'regulars.' Business people stop by in the early morning; lunch is a mix of



diners, and women dominate most of the tables in the small café in the afternoons.

Youth groups meet regularly, and an upstairs conference room has become a popular meeting room for businesses and a job-networking group uses the room on a regular basis. Word of mouth also has seen bookings for private parties increase dramatically. The café can accommodate up to 40 guests.

The café has four part-time employees; all "sports moms," as are Heather and Nicole. Many customers also are involved with school sports. In fact, Heathers changed its Saturday opening time from 8 a.m. to 7 a.m. to accommodate parents who want to stop in before ball games.

Spring and summer hours are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday; 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Thursday and Friday. Light appetizers are available during evening hours. An outside patio may be used some evenings to offer "brats, beer and burgers" events.

The café's website is at www.heatherscoffeeandcafe.com. For more information, call 937-550-9511.

Tamarack Swim Club Offers Summer Memberships

Tamarack Swim Club, located at the corner of Clearcreek-Franklin Road and Tamarack Trail in Springboro, has been the spot for family-friendly summer fun for families, couples and singles in Springboro and surrounding communities for over 40 years!

They feature a kid-friendly, heated 25-meter pool with diving board, fenced toddler pool and play area, covered picnic tables, snack bar, and playground. Lifeguards are fully certified, and the club has a perfect health and safety record for over 20 years. Private and small group swim lessons are also available.



Club memberships are open to the entire community and are priced as follows: \$385 for families, \$295 for couples, and \$195 for singles. Add a babysitter pass to your family membership for just \$75. A 14-day Staycation pass is available for just \$66 – an affordable summer vacation without leaving home. For more information, please visit the Tamarack Swim Club website at

www.tamarackswimclub.com or contact membership coordinator Mary Sillies at 937-885-3581 or by email at msillies@woh.rr.com. The club is open daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day.



Farmers Bank Grows After 'Planting' Itself Here

The Farmers State Bank at 65 W. Central Ave. prides itself on its personal customer service. It is a place where 'Everybody knows your name.'

That suits Assistant Vice President and local manager Kent Monnin just fine. The Versailles native brought his many years of banking and financial services experience and 'small town' qualities to the local branch, which recently celebrated its first anniversary in Springboro.

Conservative values have governed Farmers State since its beginnings as a chartered state bank in 1919. The Springboro location is its first new branch in 10 years. Other offices are in New Madison, New Paris, and two Greenville locations.

"We wanted to expand in a growing market and after we came across this building, which had been a bank, we researched the market and the board made the decision," says Kent.

The branch exceeded its first-year goals despite having to 'start from scratch,' in attracting new customers. The bank joined the chamber, sponsors the high school basketball scoreboard, and donates to local charities. Kent is a hands-on, visible presence in the community. Living in Springboro places him not just 'over the store,' as it were, but closer to his two adult children who live in Cincinnati.

Farmers State offers the bells and whistles banking customers have come to expect, such as free bill paying, on-line access and services, Certificates of Deposit and a portfolio of consumer and commercial loans.

Its web site, www.myfsbdirect.com, notes that Farmers' 'New Perspective' on banking "does not contain government bailouts, sub-prime lending or risky investments with depositors' money."

In addition, while the bank "holds conservative views and employs prudent lending practices," Kent works one-on-one with customers who need financial advice, whether it's about accounts, investments, a loan, financial difficulties, or other issues. "We pride ourselves on knowing everyone's name. No one is just a number when they bank here."

The Springboro branch is open Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Friday until 6 p.m. and Saturday until noon. A drive-up window opens at 8 a.m. each day. For more information, call Kent at 937-748-8211, or stop by the office.



Entrepreneurs Pedal Their Wares

Years ago merchants were said to 'pedal their wares.' Today, Dave Bordewisch and Jim Dennedy, co-owners of the 1919 Bike Shop, literally pedal their wares as avid bicyclists, and business owners. It seems fitting that the shop on South Main Street's operates from the 1919 building that once housed school buses.

Opened just three months ago, it's rapidly becoming what they had hoped it would be – a growing community of biking enthusiasts and biking hopefuls. Already participated in the Springboro Business Expo, they have also joined the Chamber of Commerce, and encourage rider-organized bicycle rides and spinning classes on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.

"Business has been strong so far. We know that the bike repair business is our foundation and we're building on that. Service is often what brings people into the shop and builds visibility and loyalty. When you offer good service and repair you get to interact with all segments of cyclists," says Dave.

Starting a retail business during a recession may be chancy, but Dave and Jim did their homework, believe they have laid a solid foundation and don't stint on putting in the long hours a small start-up demands. Before they took the leap, they created a business plan and knew they would have a competitive position in the region. "We studied the demographics and population and did our research," says Dave. The completion of the Austin Road Interchange will only enhance our location," he adds.

The 1919 Building became available when a Christian Teen Center closed. The prime location and its suitability for their purposes drove the decision to open the doors.

Dave has worked in the industry for almost 20 years and has an in-depth knowledge of cycling. They have one full-time employee, Dan Campbell, and two part-time employees. Jim and Dan both race bikes. Jim manages the Ghisallo Cycling Team and Dan is a category one racer who rides with an Arkansas-based team.

The shop is well stocked with bikes starting at \$200, bike accessories, apparel, footware and more. The coffee bar area includes big screen televisions and free wi-fi.

While bike repairs are the 'foundation,' the shop also offers sales, inspections, tune-ups, new cables, wheel truing and pro bike builds.

Bike Shop 1919 is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Wednesday, Friday and Saturday until 6 p.m. For more information, call 937-550-9530. The website is www.bikeshop1919.com or become a fan on Facebook.



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City Thanks the Business Community

Springboro officials thanked members of the business community and updated them on local projects during the City's 6th Business Appreciation Breakfast held Thursday, April 22, at Heatherwoode Golf Club.

Despite the still-recovering economy, City Manager Chris Thompson offered more positive than negative news. A key announcement was that the Austin Road Interchange is scheduled to open in June, almost five months ahead of schedule. "The project will be one everyone here in Warren County and Southwest Ohio can be proud of," she said.

Part of the \$48 million project includes a Continuous Flow Intersection, CFI, at the intersection of Ohio 741 and Miamisburg- Springboro Pike/Austin Road. CFIs have been built in about eight U.S. cities in the last decade. As the name implies, in a CFI, "the left turn leg feeds a special CFI leg, which in turn empties into the cross street near the main signalized intersection," according to ABMB Engineering, a specialist in CFIs.

As with roundabouts, navigating a CFI can be challenge initially. The City Manager said the interstate ramps will not open until the CFI is functioning well. Dayton Power and Light will be responsible for traffic signals and she said the City is working with the utility to ensure motorists' safety in the event of a power failure. Montgomery County will be responsible for snow removal. More information on CFIs is

available at www.abmb.com, or to view an animated video visit the Ohio Department of Transportation website at www.dot.state.oh.us/districts/d07/projects.

Work on another area of congestion in the City, the ramps to Interstate 75 on Ohio 73, West Central Ave., will be completed in August. The area becomes a bottleneck at noon and early evening. The original plans included only overpass repair, but Springboro and Franklin officials collaborated with the state to add lanes to the expressway ramps.

Another major city project - road improvements on E. Mill Street, will be completed by the end of the year. This project will create a safer roadway and will encourage additional pedestrian access to the historic downtown.

Chamber of Commerce President Jim Helton, told business owners that chamber membership continues to increase, despite the recession. The 10th annual Business Expo in March reached a record attendance. He said the working relationship enjoyed by the chamber, city, schools, and township, "embodies what makes Springboro different from other communities and a special place."

He also announced that the Anne Stremanos, the chamber's Executive Director for 10 years, would retire in August. Her efforts have created the success the chamber enjoys today. She was instrumental in creating the expo and other projects that have benefited both businesses and the city.