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Publisher’s Note:

This publication is an advertising supplement to the Business Courier in cooperation with the Goering Center, an affiliate of the University of Cincinnati’s Carl H. Lindner College of Business.

Established in 1989, the Goering Center is the country’s largest university-based educational resource for family and private businesses.

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Honoree photographs by: Ross Van Pelt
Connection is the Key to Surviving and Thriving in Challenging Times

We honor our founder John Goering, who passed earlier this year, and his legacy by living out his mission to nurture and educate family & private businesses to drive a vibrant economy.

Goering Center for Family & Private Business

2021 Family & Private Business Awards

Connection is the Key to Surviving and Thriving in Challenging Times

After a brief respite, challenging times are upon us again. For many, maintaining community and staying supportive have become declarations and statements of intent as we navigate uncharted waters.

And that’s what the Goering Center Family & Private Business Awards are celebrating this year: the new and interesting ways that family and private businesses have innovated to maintain vital connections with employees, vendors, stakeholders, customers and clients, partners, family members, and the community at large.

Here’s a sampling of great lessons we can take from our honorees, whose focus on connection allowed them to flourish in a difficult time:

• Abstract Displays, Inc. found adversity a fertile ground for growth, making improvements and changes that they had discussed for months and years. The result is the launch of an award-winning virtual platform for clients, customers, and prospects to connect.

• Barnes Dennig found that virtual events generated new business with larger audiences in expanded geographic markets. Innovative new content ideas generated new business with larger audiences.

• Car-Part.com started a virtual monthly “Water Cooler” to help prevent feelings of isolation, relieve stress, and provide an informal way for employees to stay connected and for new employees to have the chance to meet their co-workers.

• Designs Direct Creative Group invested in software and tools that allowed customers to digitally tour their showrooms and review new products. They met with their largest suppliers and manufacturing partners to ensure they had the cashflow to maintain appropriate staffing levels.

• Dooley Social Studio determined which of the family businesses they support were most at-risk from the pandemic and worked with them to develop plans for communicating authentically via social media.

• GMi Companies started making Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) when its traditional business dropped by 50%, enabling other businesses to reopen their doors to the public and employers to bring their employees safely back to their offices. They had their best year yet.

• JBM Packaging partnered with their customers, purchasing supplies and equipment that enabled their “essential worker” team to work safely in person.

• Necco leveraged technology to ensure staff, clients, and the foster parents they serve had the right tools to access the educational, behavioral, and physical healthcare resources they needed. Thanks to their rule-changing advocacy, foster parents and staff could take part in teletherapy, virtual home visits, and virtual training for the first time.

• Sweets & Meats BBQ grew their customer base by taking their food trucks out to Cincinnati area neighborhoods. They offered online ordering and curbside pick-up, kept their carry-out open, partnered with Kroger to sell packaged meats and sides in their neighborhood store, and launched boxed meals.

• VonLehman CPA & Advisory Firm found that virtual tools opened doors to new ways of doing business. By designing an approach around those they serve, the firm gained a greater understanding of their clients’ needs and impacted their bottom line.

Inspiring, right? There’s insight here from which we can all benefit. I salute the leaders of these businesses for their thoughtful vision and creativity in maintaining the connections they already had and growing new connections during such challenging times.

I hope you’ll join me in congratulating all our Family & Private Business Award honorees, including Jack Brendamour of Junk King, our 2021 Rising Leader, who personally knows the value of contingency planning; and Michael Miller of LCNB National Bank, our 2021 Volunteer of the Year, who has been a judge for the awards for ten years and demonstrates the value of giving back through community service at the Goering Center.

On behalf of the entire Goering Center team – including our many volunteers and community partners – we wish that your year ends on a strong note – and that you arrive in 2022 healthy, happy and whole!

Until we connect again.

Carol Butler,
Goering Center President

Congratulations to our 2021 Family & Private Business Honorees

Abstract Displays, Inc.
Carla Eng, CEO
Michael Eng, COO

Barnes Dennig
Jay Rammes, Managing Director

Car-Part.com
Jeff Schroder, CEO
Jeff Dietrich, CFO

Designs Direct Creative Group
Mitchell Heidrich, Partner

Dooley Social Studio
Matthew Dooley, Partner & CEO
Keri Stephens, Partner & COO

GMi Companies
G. Mark Leasure, CEO

JBM Packaging
Marcus Sheanshang, President & CEO

Necco
Beau Necco, Founder & CEO

Sweets & Meats BBQ
Kristen Bailey, CEO

VonLehman CPA & Advisory Firm
Brian Malthouse, President
Adam Davey, Shareholder

2021 RISING LEADER
Jack Brendamour
Co-Owner & CEO, Junk King

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR
Michael Miller
Executive Vice President & Chief Wealth Officer, LCNB National Bank
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Judging for the Goering Center Family and Private Business Awards is always a challenging and interesting experience. This year was no exception: great applications, interesting stories, and difficult decisions.

As the COVID pandemic remains at the forefront of our worlds, and the traditional live awards gala event was once again not to be, the Center, as they did last year, selected the top ten nominated companies regardless of size or status as a Family or Private Business. And again, the questions pertained to the pandemic:

- How Connections with employees, vendors, stakeholders, customers/clients, partners, family members, community, or core business values were maintained;
- The Lessons learned from maintaining connection and/or overcoming connection challenges;
- What implementation of New Strategies, processes, practices, or infrastructure ensued.

It was interesting to see how companies responded to the pandemic’s social-distancing requirements, not only to maintain and enhance current employee and customer connections, but also to benefit the community as a whole. Some true “out-of-the-box” thinking led to great efforts towards meeting the challenges of the pandemic and positively impacting the lives of those in the community. The stories presented to us confirmed once again why our applicants are among the best companies that our region has to offer in the Family and Private Business Community.

As we were only choosing ten award winners from the many applications, it proved to be an incredibly tough challenge. We believe that our choices reflect the very best of the Family and Private Business Community. Interestingly, the top ten companies were split evenly between family and private businesses. For the top thirty-one companies, which included 21 additional businesses that we could not go without highlighting, the split was fifteen to sixteen.

Many thanks from the judges to the Goering Center for a challenging yet rewarding experience. While we could only pick ten companies to receive our award, we are reminded once again how many true winners there are in our Family and Private Business Community.

Best wishes for many years of continued success.

Mike Miller
Barbara Fant
Rex Wetherill
Clark Schaefer Hackett Congratulates Family and Private Business Award Recipients!

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As president and publisher of the Business Courier, I’m drawn every day to conversations with local business leaders, and those talks often turn to the tools that have helped them build successful companies and prepare for future growth. Early on in my role, I wondered where these busy executives – particularly at smaller, family-run firms – were turning for important resources like CEO roundtables, industry partnerships or next-generation succession plans.

It didn’t take me long to figure out that here in Greater Cincinnati we are fortunate to have one place that connects all these tools and more: the Goering Center for Family and Private Business, affiliated with the University of Cincinnati’s Carl H. Lindner College of Business. From the stories we run each fall about the Center’s Family and Private Business Awards, I quickly learned how great an impact this institution has had on so many companies in the Tri-State. Later, when I was asked to serve on the Board of Advisors at the Center, I truly discovered the magnitude of its reach. I worked on committees with family business owners who were not only members of the Center, but true advocates. At the heart of the Goering Center is an incredible team that provides the spirit and electricity behind the programs. These volunteers readily share the secrets of running a great business with all the other members. Watching them in action is an inspiration.

John Goering, the founder and namesake of the Center, passed away earlier this year. But I know he is looking down and smiling at the important institution he built – a place that has helped so many family and private businesses learn, grow, and succeed. I, for one, am thankful that John’s legacy is living on strongly and proudly with his team, members and volunteers.

We hope you enjoy reading the following stories about the honorees of the Goering Center’s 22nd Annual Family and Private Business Awards, which includes the 2021 Rising Leader and Volunteer of the Year. And if you haven’t already checked out one of the many programs offered at the Center, there’s no better time than now.
Fifth Third Bank Congratulates The Goering Center’s Family & Private Business Awards Honorees

Proud sponsor of the 22nd Annual Family & Private Business Awards

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Volunteer of the Year: Michael Miller of LCNB National Bank

Michael Miller understands the profound value of the Goering Center for Family and Private Business. A longtime volunteer, he has witnessed the impact of the Center on Greater Cincinnati family and private businesses time and time again.

Michael Miller, Executive Vice President & Chief Wealth Officer of LCNB National Bank in Lebanon, is the 2021 recipient of the Center’s Baldwin Award, which honors an outstanding volunteer. He has been involved with the Goering Center for more than fifteen years.

“Mike was an easy choice for this award. He exhibits all the fine qualities of a great volunteer and then some. In his role as head judge – he has gone above and beyond in demonstrating one of our 10 Best Practices – ‘Giving Back’ – by encouraging and supporting company and individual community service. He has put in countless hours assisting the Center in refining the award criteria – keeping a keen eye on the business environment and the differentiators of truly great businesses. He has spent an inordinate amount of time carefully reviewing applications for the Family & Private Business Awards – leading the selection committee through the process of determining each year’s honorees – resulting in terrific outcomes.”

Larry Grypp – former President of the Goering Center said - “Fairness, objectivity and confidentiality are paramount when evaluating and selecting award winners. Mike does not just exhibit those characteristics, but he perfected the selection process for the Goering Center’s annual award winners. I recall when we asked another judge to continue on the selection committee, he replied, ‘I will come back as long as Mike Miller chairs the committee.’ That comment tells the story of the outstanding volunteer that is Mike Miller.”

Miller initially became involved with the Center by giving business succession and estate planning presentations to the Center’s members. He has now served as a judge for the Family and Private Business Awards for ten years, and serves on the Goering Center’s Special Events committee.

“I like being involved in the Center because it’s a good quality organization with great people doing great work, and really making a difference in the family and private business community in Cincinnati and in the region. I’ve met a lot of great people from the very beginning – John Goering, Larry Grypp, Carol Butler to name a few – as well as awards judges and other members that make up this community,” shares Miller in his honoree video.

Mike believes the Goering Center is a great training ground for any family and private business, as it connects individuals with other businesses and provides opportunities for their teams to learn, thrive, and grow.

“When Carol called to tell me that I’d been named Volunteer of the Year, I was at a loss for words,” shared Miller. “And if you know me well, you know that’s pretty hard to do. Those that have been named Volunteer of the Year have done so much for the Center. I’m just really glad to be a part of that company.”

Michael Miller, Executive Vice President & Chief Wealth Officer, LCNB National Bank, is the 2021 recipient of the Baldwin Award, acknowledging exemplary commitment and voluntary service to the Goering Center.

ABOUT THE AWARD

We are proud and honored that the Goering Center is supported by over 200 professionals who volunteer their unique expertise, leadership, and perspective to the business community through our educational programs, our boards, and our committees.

To recognize their outstanding effort, each year we present one of our volunteers with the Keith Baldwin Volunteer Award. This award was created to honor the extraordinary commitment of one of our earliest and most dedicated volunteers, Keith Baldwin.

“Mike is a role model of ethics, values, trust and integrity,” Butler said. “We are so fortunate to have a volunteer like Mike who is a leader in our community, seeks to help others by sharing his knowledge and experience, and is a wonderful ambassador connecting others to the Goering Center. When I let him know that this award is not a pre-cursor to retirement as head judge, he assured me he would continue to serve as long as we want him to – we are delighted!”

Ross Votel
KOI Precast Concrete

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For more information, contact David Miller at 513-556-5648 or david.miller@uc.edu.

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President
Pioneer Vending

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HVAC Technologies

BRIAN ECKSTEIN
President
Eckstein Roofing

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When Their World Came to an Abrupt Stop, Abstract Displays Created a New One

Abstract Displays, Inc. is a creator and provider of 3D marketing environments for the trade show and event industry – building connections between their clients and their clients’ prospects is what they do. What’s more, they were doing this in the real world. That is until COVID-19 brought the trade show industry to a screeching halt.

All of a sudden, this business whose entire existence was based on face-to-face interactions – those with their team members and their clients as well as those of their clients with their prospects – was confronted with the unthinkable: their entire business model no longer worked. “We could have buried our heads in the sand and closed up shop, but that’s not who we are as a company or as businesspeople,” stated Carla Eng, CEO of Abstract Displays. “We owed it to our team members and their families, to our clients, and to ourselves to do all we could to weather the storm.” Abstract Displays’ leadership chose to stay connected with a three-pronged approach. Their first priority was the safety and wellbeing of their staff as they transitioned to working from home. Abstract Displays’ leadership made sure that their employees were always well-informed and provided for. Next, they tackled the challenge of staying connected with their clients, who were themselves grappling with the loss of one of their most effective lead-generating opportunities. This is where Abstract Displays created a whole new world for their clients, and themselves, with their VidExpo Live solution, a completely reimagined, virtual yet interactive way for businesses to do their trade show without being at a trade show (https://videxpo.abstractdisplays.com). Finally, the team at Abstract Displays figured out how to continue to support their community when their community partners weren’t accepting volunteers. They took the volunteer work in-house, packaging socks and raising funds to help those less able to beat the challenges of COVID-19. “We learned, above all else, that adversity is fertile ground for growth,” says Carla, “and we leveraged our team, our connections and our relationships to create a ‘think tank’, which resulted in a brand-new offering and a real solution for our trade show clients” – for which Abstract Displays won an AMA (American Marketing Association) award for Best Customer Experience.

Carla Eng (CEO) and Michael Eng (COO) of Abstract Displays, Inc. and three of their co-workers

Carla Eng (CEO) of Abstract Displays and three of her co-workers

Abstract Displays, Inc.
CEO: Carla Eng
COO: Michael Eng
Address: 6465 Creek Road
Blue Ash, OH 45242
Phone: 513-985-9700
Website: www.abstractdisplays.com
About: Abstract Displays was founded by Carla and Michael Eng because they saw a need in the exhibit industry to provide a dependable resource for their clients’ face-to-face sales and marketing events. Backed by a talented team of industry experts, Abstract Displays is a global force in the trade show world. Their list of awards solidifies their presence as a leader in their industry, but also in the community.
The Value of Compassion and Communication in Times of Uncertainty

Recently named one of the “Best Places to Work in Kentucky,” Car-Part.com is an organization where a business family culture is valued and nurtured. When the pandemic began, the company was prepared and acted quickly to set its staff up with remote work. Determined to keep their employees connected and engaged, the company president held company-wide virtual meetings throughout 2020, reassuring their staff that Car-Part.com understood their challenges and encouraging them to bring any future personal or professional issues to their managers.

Car-Part.com understood the significant value of compassion and good communication to maintain connection with their workforce. “In times of uncertainty, we communicated what we did know and reassured employees we would promptly provide updates as information became available,” said Jeff Schroder, CEO. “We remained authentic and transparent. We communicated through several channels—email, virtual meetings, and a dedicated COVID-19 Wiki page—so employees had access to current, important information.”

The company conducted several internal surveys, asking employees what they needed, wanted, and valued in the workplace. The survey results helped their leadership team to develop unique strategies and goals to meet personal and business needs moving forward.

Like other companies, Car-Part.com could not hold their typical happy hour socials, holiday festivities, or wellness initiatives in 2020; in response, they started “Water Cooler,” a virtual monthly meeting in which employees were randomly divided into groups of five or six. Each group had a moderator and could discuss any topic—this initiative was created to help prevent the feeling of isolation, to relieve stress, and provide an informal way for employees to stay connected.

To ensure a smooth transition to remote work, Car-Part.com implemented a new phone system, which allowed their team to recruit remote employees locally and across the country. The company set up Zoom accounts for virtual onboarding and training, redefining their internal process. Many of their employees will continue to work remotely or on a hybrid plan; the Car-Part.com team is redesigning their workspaces to provide flex spaces for those who will not be in the office on a full-time basis. In addition to supporting their own employees, Car-Part.com provided matching funds to industry organizations, donated PPE to local agencies and employee family members, and gave existing customers a 10% discount and free upgrades for six months on many of their products. Understanding that many of their employees around the country knew struggling businesses within their local communities, Car-Part.com gifted each employee a VISA gift card to support these organizations. Throughout 2020, their team not only sought out opportunities to cultivate their company culture, but also to connect with and strengthen communities near and far.

From left: Roger Schroder (Vice President – Sales) and Jeff Dietrich (CFO) of Car-Part.com.

Car-Part.com
CEO: Jeff Schroder
CFO: Jeff Dietrich
Address: 1980 Highland Pike
Ft. Wright, KY 41017
Phone: 859-344-1925
Website: www.car-part.com
About: Headquartered in Ft. Wright, KY with 215 employees in 26 states, Car-Part.com went live in 1998 and is a leading provider of software and web solutions, providing auto recyclers with products that assist them in making their inventory available to potential buyers. The company embraces a culture of servant leadership, high ethical standards, and teamwork.

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Congratulations to all of this year’s winners!

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How Designs Direct Preserved Partnerships and Paved A New Path Forward

At the onset of the pandemic, Designs Direct Creative Group established three priorities: preserving their culture, supporting their customers, and maintaining their most important partnerships.

To preserve their culture, their team emphasized the need for open, honest, and consistent communication. The company appointed a group of experienced, influential individuals to disseminate critical information amongst their teams. This group evolved into the company’s Senior Leadership Team, absorbing a significant amount of responsibility from the owners and playing a leading role in setting the company’s strategy and priorities. As lines of communication solidified, Designs Direct was mindful to preserve time for team building and social interaction, introducing weekly challenges and virtual happy hours.

“We shared the good, the bad, and the uncertain with our teams, customers, and employees,” shared Mitchell Heidrich, Partner. “We believe this transparent approach empowered all parties to face the uncertainty with a realistic, productive mindset, and work together, to find answers to the unknown, and come up with solutions to the challenges we were facing.”

Through the turbulent months of the early pandemic, owners and senior team members were in constant contact with many customers—emphasizing that they were committed to supporting them. The Designs Direct team adopted a flexible approach that allowed for adjustments to existing orders, delivery dates, and payment terms. In addition, the team sent care packages, including items for customers’ home offices and gifts for their children, to help facilitate the transition to remote office life. Due to widespread travel restrictions, Designs Direct invested in software and tools that enabled customers to digitally tour their showrooms and review new products. Once restrictions began to ease in the Fall of 2020, they rented and staged large, local facilities to host visiting customers.

Maintaining strong connections with their vendors, suppliers, and partners was vital to the team—they held daily meetings and phone calls with their largest suppliers and manufacturing partners to ensure they had the cashflow to maintain appropriate staffing levels.

Moving forward, Designs Direct will maintain a flexible and balanced approach, allowing employees to decide if remote, office, or hybrid work is best for them. To accommodate the diverse working conditions, they re-designed their corporate headquarters, incorporating flexible workspaces and rotational desks for remote and office workers to join together in collaboration.

“A supportive company culture, strong customer relationships, and exceptional partners are all helpful when times are good, but they become necessities in times of uncertainty. Making investments in these areas will always pay dividends, but none more so than when you need your team, customers, and partners the most.”

Mitchell Heidrich (Partner) of Designs Direct Creative Group

About Designs Direct Creative Group

Designs Direct Creative Group has been helping retailers grow home décor departments and sales since 2002. Headquartered in historic Main Strasse Village, Designs Direct develops merchandising programs, exclusive artwork, and custom home décor products for brick and mortar and online retailers. Designs Direct boasts one of the largest wholly owned libraries of artwork and imagery in the United States, adding more than 400 unique designs to their existing collection each week.

People are at the heart of what we do.

At its heart, a business is about people. A group of people coming together to create something bigger than themselves. To create a solution or a product or an experience in the service of other people. At Huntington, it’s our belief that running a business is about more than making money, it’s about making people’s lives better. So let’s roll up our sleeves and get to work, together.
Necco’s Superheroes Donned Their Capes and Made Magic for Welfare Kids During COVID

11,200 children and families depended on Necco to receive support during the height of the pandemic. Foster care and mental health counseling are essential services. The physical safety and well-being of Necco’s clients and staff had to be weighed alongside their clients’ critical needs. Even in a pandemic, children need foster families, family crises happen, and mental health support needs staff to be face-to-face in the home. This was all non-negotiable. Necco quickly stepped up, leveraging technology to ensure that all staff, clients, and foster parents had the right tools to access needed educational, behavioral, and physical healthcare from their kitchen table.

“The best time to prepare for a crisis is before it happens,” states Beau Necco, CEO. Years of strategic planning and investing in technology infrastructure allowed Necco to adapt to the pandemic’s restrictions much more easily. The staff rose to the occasion, rapidly seizing on virtual opportunities to express appreciation for the heroes that kept kids and families safe, supported, and loved. Birthdays, graduations, and adoptions were honored, and care packages containing necessary supplies were dropped off to the foster families (even precious toilet paper). They taught cooking classes, held drive-bys dressed up in costumes, and set up household scavenger hunts—all to remind the youth that they were there for them and with them. Most importantly, Necco understood the seriousness of the task at hand: keeping everyone physically and mentally safe.

As the world entered the holiday season, Necco’s rallying cry became “Christmas isn’t cancelled.” For kids who have experienced so many let-downs in their lives, Necco staff refused to add one more to the list. Virtual holiday parties ensued, and Santa delivered gifts. Communication among staff and with clients was rejuvenated.

Necco continued to work with governors’ offices, state child-welfare, and Medicaid leadership to implement new rules allowing kids and families access to teletherapy and virtual home visits, as well as allowing the virtual training of staff and foster parents for the first time. Perhaps most importantly, rural and poverty-stricken families, that many times did not have the same access to quality of healthcare or mental healthcare, were now able to access specialists from hundreds of miles away, in the convenience of their own homes. Necco’s service providers spent less time in their cars driving and more time helping families.

“The silver lining of the pandemic is it actually increased our social impact,” explains Beau Necco. “The freedom from outdated regulations that was achieved as a result of the pandemic allowed us to capitalize on proven technologies to benefit those we serve: we saved time, money, and most importantly reduced trauma to vulnerable children.”

Over the past 25 years, Necco facilitated over 10,000 adoptions and built more than 35,000 families through foster care, counseling, and residential treatment services. In Cincinnati, Necco is the largest provider of hard-to-place children. Because Necco believes every child needs a family.
When the Hungry Can’t Come to Sweets & Meats BBQ – Sweets & Meats BBQ Goes to the Hungry

The food service industry was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic in 2020, and Sweets & Meats BBQ was no exception. In the early days of the pandemic, when everything was shut down, Sweets & Meats’ carry-out remained open – but that would not be enough to survive. They began offering online ordering and curbside pick-up, partnered with Kroger to sell packaged meats and sides in the deli department in their neighborhood store, and began taking their food trucks out to Cincinnati area neighborhoods. They would hit four neighborhoods a day within a 30-mile radius of their restaurant for a period of 15 months, offering family packages and individual meals for pick up from their food truck and trailer. This additional service kept them in business and broadened their audience.

“By going into neighborhoods, we provided a convenient and safe option for customers who were following the stay-at-home orders and/or were under strict quarantine,” explains Kristen Bailey, CEO. “By setting up in the Anderson Kroger Bistro, we were meeting the needs of our customers who were not venturing out anywhere except to the grocery store and for essential supplies.”

The challenges to their business did not stop Sweets & Meats from supporting their hard-hit community as well. They partnered with La Soupe and the SEM Food Pantry, who aided them in distributing cooked meals to families at Sands Montessori, Mt. Washington Elementary, and the Mt. Washington Library.

During this time, Kristen and her partner also realized their potential as a small business: they learned to delegate more to their team, who in turn surpassed expectations, and they spent a lot of time working on the business operations and team development, closing through the winter when they realized their team needed a break. “Although difficult to close for 10 weeks, it was the very best decision we could’ve made in hindsight,” shares Anton Gaffney, Kristen’s partner and 2020 Goering Center Rising Leader. “We made sure our staff was still compensated while we were closed, and we retained 100% of our employees.”

Thanks to all the additional streams of revenue Sweets & Meats created during and because of the pandemic, their business broke even in 2020, despite a $400K loss in catering & event revenue due to cancellations and government restrictions in the second quarter. As for 2021, they are reaping the rewards of their 2020 efforts, with full bookings and exciting growth.

Kristen Bailey (CEO) of Sweets & Meats BBQ

CEO: Kristen Bailey
Address: 2249 Beechmont Ave.
Cincinnati, OH 45230
Phone: 513-888-4227
Website: www.sweetsandmeatsbbq.com
About: Sweets & Meats BBQ specializes in smoked meats, homemade sides and desserts. What started as a road-side pit-stop in the heart of the founders’ own neighborhood has grown into a carry-out restaurant located in Mt. Washington, a catering business and a food truck operation with two trucks.

Proud to celebrate

Congratulations to All of the Goering Center Award Finalists.

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At the start of the pandemic, Barnes Dennig was among the first to move to remote working. Thanks to proactive investments in technology over the years, the firm was able to make the switch virtually overnight, and at the height of their busiest season, without compromising work quality or client service.

The firm was committed to maintaining existing connections and to forging new ones throughout the pandemic. To stay connected with clients and provide vital information about relief legislation and its impact, Barnes Dennig formed a COVID-19 Advisory Team, with a stated focus on providing assistance rather than monetizing the effort. The Advisory Team immediately began producing a steady stream of content and communications: more than 100 blog posts, nine webinars that were attended/viewed by over 1,100 people, and a series of “Quick Tests,” designed to help users determine their eligibility and best approach to PPP loans, loan forgiveness, and the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). To date, the Advisory Team has helped more than 400 organizations with more than $65 million in PPP loans and loan forgiveness – without a single loan being denied forgiveness or any changes to Barnes Dennig’s PPP loan forgiveness calculations.

Though the need for pandemic-related legislation will eventually fade, the “Quick Test” format gave Barnes Dennig the platform to provide clients with greater insight on a wider range of topics, complete with the convenience of an easy-to-complete online form. Their team has developed new Quick Tests for several of their consulting practices and plans to expand in the future. This new functionality has resulted in new business and expanded services with existing clients.

“We can’t predict the future, but we will continue to look ahead, evaluate trends, and invest strategically in technology, to ensure we’re staying ahead of the curve,” said Jay Rammes, Managing Director. For more than two decades, Barnes Dennig has hosted regular, in-person events for clients and friends of the firm. The disappearance of this traditional approach to business caused concern, but the firm not only quickly pivoted to virtual events, they dramatically increased the frequency and range of topics, with a special focus on COVID-19 relief legislation and its impact. As in-person programming returns, the firm looks to continue hosting virtual and hybrid events to expand their reach and connect with the community through a variety of platforms. With the shift to virtual, Barnes Dennig also recognized the value of an integrated approach, where practice leaders consider all markets and work with localized teams to grow their business. The approach is already showing promise for increased client satisfaction and further business growth in multiple markets. The pandemic was not going to dampen their support of the community, either. Barnes Dennig conducted their most successful ArtsWave and United Way campaigns to-date, and, in honor of their annual October Outreach Day, the firm closed its doors and safely sent their employees out into the community for a day of service – volunteering at The Brighton Center, The Literacy Network of Greater Cincinnati, and Redwood School and Rehabilitation Center. “Our fears about not being together, the potential impact on productivity, and whether technology could replace long-standing traditional ways of working subsided as we all embraced the new normal,” Rammes said.
Attention to Detail, Adaptability, and Commitment to Follow-through Stand VonLehman in Good Stead

VonLehman is passionate about giving back to the community. In partnership with the state of Kentucky’s "Go Green" campaign for solidarity during the pandemic, VonLehman had their building lit up green with "We are in this together" spotlighted. They also created their first ever "VL Cares Walk Day," which raised over $4,000 for various local nonprofits in the Greater Cincinnati and Indianapolis markets. Recognizing the tireless efforts of frontline and essential workers, as well as the challenges faced by local restaurants, VonLehman delivered local carry-out food to those who were fighting the COVID fight during the worst of the pandemic.

The virtual world exposed VonLehman to a whole new way of doing business: from events to internal communications, client meetings, and work/life flexibility, they can provide the same or better level of quality and service to their clients, while increasing the overall wellbeing of their employees and positively impacting their bottom line. "Quarantine taught us that 'in-person' not only isn't the only way, but sometimes isn't even the best way," says Brian Malthouse. "We now have a greater understanding of the needs of the clients we serve, the partners we work with, and the employees we train and nurture."

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From left: Brian Malthouse (CEO) and Adam Davey (Shareholder) of VonLehman CPA & Advisory Firm
How A Pandemic Pivot Is Shaping the Future of GMi

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, GMi Companies did not make Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). When their traditional business dropped by 50%, their company quickly developed new families of products that would enable other businesses to reopen their doors to the public and allow employers to bring employees safely back to the office.

GMi team members across their Lebanon and Greenfield facilities worked together to develop new products and place them on the market. With determination and ingenuity, they created two versions of a Sneeze Guard – in record time and using existing materials. After hearing more about their customers’ needs, they built an entire line of PPE, selling thousands of products and leading to GMi’s best year in history.

Pivoting to these new products saved us. Employees were happy we were not closing or reducing headcount,” shared G. Mark Leasure, CEO. “Customers wanted PPE and products to provide space division. We had answers. It felt like we were answering the country’s call.”

Continuing operations, with some employees in the office and many team members working remotely, created a range of challenges – challenges the GMi team was determined to meet. For those on-site, all-employee meetings were held each week in the middle of the production floor; each meeting was an opportunity to share stories and information about CDC guidelines, company protocols, and the significant impact that their own PPE products would have within their business community.

To keep employees connected and informed, GMi hosted a Pandemic WebEx and Healthworks Q&A – empowering their staff with relevant information and providing platforms for sharing their stories.

“Early on, we recognized clear, transparent communication would be the primary way to help our team feel more secure, provide a sense of normalcy, improve morale, and send the message that we were all in this together”, shared Leasure. The GMi team adopted a variety of communication methods: town hall Q&As, small huddles, newsletters, digital rollouts of new procedures, webinars, and facility modifications to enable collaboration. Leaning into automation, investing in technology, and developing new products transformed GMi into a better, stronger company. Cross-training was essential to build and ship out their new products – especially to complete orders that were ten times larger than any in their company’s history. In 2020, their team recorded record sales, profitability, hiring, product development, production, and shipping; planned, broke ground, and have nearly completed an additional 40% building expansion; and transitioned ownership from Gen 1 to Gen 2 – all while keeping their team safe.

“When we look back, the business results will not be what matter the most. It is the confidence we built and connections we made with our employees, sales partners, and customers. Our conduct, performance, rapid product development, and resulting reputation will provide value for years to come.”

GMi Companies

CEO: G. Mark Leasure
Address: 999 Henkle Drive
Lebanon, OH 45036
Phone: 513-932-3445
Website: gmicompanies.com
About: Founded in 1976 by George and Mary Alice Leasure, GMi is a family-owned manufacturer with a purpose in service; service to their customers, employees, and community. They are a family of brands – Ghent, Waddell, and VividBoard – that provide blended solutions in visual communication products, space division, and display solutions to corporate, education, government, and healthcare markets. GMi provides a variety of products, assembled by hand and made in the USA, to inspire communication, collaboration, and learning.
As an Essential Business, JBM Makes All Forms of Communication Essential

As an essential business, JBM's production team members continued to work onsite throughout the pandemic's various restrictions. However, many of their professional staff transitioned to remote work. As a result, JBM’s leadership had to figure out how to maintain connections between remote and onsite workers, remote and remote workers, as well as between units, with customers and suppliers, and between its leadership and all 200 or so of its workers wherever they happened to be. JBM's core values served them well at this time – Collaboration, Grit, Growth Mindset, Innovation, Ownership, and Passion for a Better World – leading to all kinds of amazing results:

• JBM implemented a OneCall system as an efficient means of communicating with all team members both via text and e-mail
• JBM's owner and CEO, Marcus Sheanshang, recorded a weekly video every Friday to provide updates, highlight successes, and give encouragement
• The company deployed video conferencing solutions to employee home offices, so everyone could participate in group discussions and meetings using full video – and they plan to keep these video conferencing solutions deployed for internal meetings going forward
• Team members shared pictures on a company chat board of their families spending quality time together
• One group met outside of work and made sunshine generosity bags filled with goodies, candy, and encouraging notes, then distributed them to front-line workers, mail carriers, firefighters, and police officers in the community, thanking them for their service and bravery
• One unit, which had a team member contract COVID-19, created a “Covid care kit” chock full of games, hobbies, drinks, food, movies, and reading material that were tailored to the employee’s interests
• Team members organized a food drive to donate Thanksgiving Feasts-in-a-box. Team members organized the effort, donated food, assembled the boxes, and dropped off the donations, which resulted in enough food to feed 300 people in the greater Cincinnati area
• One unit held “virtual happy hours” and a “virtual holiday party” where drinks and goodies were sent out to team members in advance
• Finally, JBM regularly provided free lunch on-site as a way to support both team members and the community – researching locally-owned restaurants and delis in their immediate area and rotating patronage to those small businesses each week to give them their business.

All of these tactics helped to deepen relationships, strengthen team culture, provide relief for individual team members, and support the community during a stressful year.

Marcus Sheanshang (President & CEO) of JBM Packaging

JBM Packaging

President & CEO: Marcus Sheanshang
Address: 2850 Henkle Drive
Lebanon, OH 45036
Phone: 800-933-8497
Website: www.jbmpackaging.com
About: Most people don’t realize how much technology, testing and innovation is involved in creating the perfect envelope or package. JBM has an Innovation Team dedicated to customer-focused product advancements. And each team member has a voice in their collaborative process – whether it’s an idea for a new product innovation, waste elimination, improved manufacturing process, or a more effective way of completing projects. With more than 35 years in the print and packaging industry, JBM creates a broad range of unique packaging that adds value to their customers’ products.
Building and Strengthening Community Through Social Media

When the pandemic hit, Matthew Dooley witnessed many of his clients suffer – Dooley Social Studio quickly took action, mapping out those who were most at-risk and working with them to develop a plan of attack. Frequent, authentic communication with each client was key. Clients pulled closer to the studio, not only because of their existing relationships, but also because of the importance of communicating via social media during a time of social distancing.

During one of their most uncertain stretches, Dooley found MACKEY, their accountant, to be a vital connection. MACKEY helped with scenario and cash flow planning as well as securing multiple financial backstops, including PPP, EIDL, and an LOC. The financial discipline and forward-looking approach carried them through the rest of 2020 and was instrumental in Dooley having the best year in the company’s history.

At the start of the pandemic, Dooley decided to share what they knew best to help local businesses survive, offering complimentary online events and social media workshops to their community. Their team covered a variety of tactics and content – from LinkedIn Best Practices to Instagram Stories to Facebook advertisements – impacting hundreds of people by sharing their expertise during a time when companies were seeking to strengthen their digital presence and connections with their audiences.

After a year-long hiatus, Dooley brought back “Social Media Show & Tell” in December 2020. To match the feeling of in-person events, the team created a “day-of-event” package – filled with cozy items, including custom socks, coffee, and a scented candle – and hand-delivered them to all local attendees. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Fast forward to 2021: job candidates often note that these virtual events brought them closer to Dooley because of the goodwill and awareness the company generated.

To keep their growing team connected, Dooley starts each meeting with gratitude. "Before diving into tasks or client updates, we start with what we're grateful for," shared Matthew Dooley, Partner & CEO. "It not only kicks off the meeting on a positive note, but it also brings us together. Even when apart, we can witness what's going on in each other's lives." Building camaraderie with the team was a priority for Dooley – whether it was hosting a virtual happy hour, or designing and shipping a team poster to their employees to tie them together, while they were working in different locations.

"As a result of all this, I've experienced joy and connection with others that I don't think would have necessarily happened otherwise. So, as we transition to this 'new normal' and return to some of our old routines, I'm hopeful that new habits will stick and that the world will be an even better place to grow a business."

Dooley Social Studio

Partner & CEO: Matthew Dooley
Partner & COO: Keri Stephens
Address: 2872 Wasson Road
Cincinnati, OH 45209
Phone: 513-315-2785
Website: www.dooleysocial.studio

About: Founded in 2012, Dooley is a full-service social media studio that helps their clients get attention by being thoughtful about how they give it. The company dives deep into the customer or employee experience to craft stories that connect. From strategic consulting and original content creation to media buying and community management, Dooley takes what clients already do well and brings it online so that more people know about it.

Matthew Dooley (Partner & CEO) and Keri Stephens (Partner & COO) of Dooley Social Studio

The Leadership Development Institute™ helped me to better understand how to reach my potential to be the best leader for my team, and what I needed to work on to help us all succeed.”

Aaron Hansen, Hansen Scaffolding

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For more information, contact David Miller at 513-556-5648.
“Stepping in and stepping up” is what comes to mind when hearing Jack Brendamour’s story. The 2021 Goering Center Family and Private Business Awards Rising Leader stepped in and stepped up as a leader long before COVID-19 happened. On July 13th, 2018, Pete McCreary, the owner and CEO of Junk King, passed away suddenly, leaving the 2015 Sharonville Chamber “Small Business of the Year” and multi-year “Most Outstanding Franchise” without its founder and much beloved leader. Jack stepped in to help Pete’s widow, Judy McCreary, run the business, and eventually became a co-owner himself.

Junk King provides professional junk removal services to households and businesses. But there is so much more to their story. Junk King Cincinnati has a mentorship-centered culture based on integrity and the greater good first, and the idea of helping others declutter responsibly.

Less than two years later, the pandemic hit. “Jack has been faced with many challenges and has been able to continue to grow the business from both a profitability and a philanthropic/recycling standpoint,” shares Cody Campbell, Junk King Cincinnati’s General Manager, and one of the people who nominated Jack for the award. “Jack and his team quadrupled business and added two new branches in Kentucky, while keeping thousands of tons of junk out of the landfill and giving back to over 50 nonprofits on a regular basis.”

There are many reasons why Jack has excelled in his new role as Junk King Co-Owner and CEO: his focus on maintaining the business’ culture based on Faith, Honesty, and Respect, his passion for the business’ contributions to the environment and the community, his willingness to seek input and support from his peers, and to intentionally work on the business versus in it. “Jack’s Performance Management and Leadership Development plans are based on positivity, communication, and SMART goal setting,” explains Julie Heil, Executive Administrative Assistant at Junk King Cincinnati. “He sees his team as individuals and challenges all to rise above our education and background to try new things; expand our roles and develop as people and employees.” Contingency planning is also a key priority for Jack: all management staff and employees are cross-trained and stand ready to go where they are needed at any time. “We are a family, and all are invested in the future of Junk King,” continues Julie, “and Jack exemplifies his own mottos of ‘do something kind for someone today’ and ‘do the next right thing.’”

Jack Brendamour, Co-Owner and CEO, Junk King, is the 2021 recipient of the Larry Grypp Rising Leader Award.

ABOUT THE AWARD

One of a leader’s key responsibilities is to identify and develop future leaders. The Goering Center demonstrates its commitment to the region’s future generation of leaders by bestowing the Larry Grypp Rising Leader Award. Named for past president Larry Grypp in acknowledgement of his leadership accomplishments, this award is given to one Rising Leader, nominated by their member company, for demonstrating success at advancing one of the Goering Center’s 10 Best Practices of Successful Family and Private Businesses.

Jack Brendamour was nominated for the following Best Business Practices: for Business Growth by Cody Campbell and for Giving Back by Julie Heil.
Goering Center for Family & Private Business

HONORABLE MENTIONS

2021 Family & Private Business Awards Finalists, we could not go without mentioning

ASSISTING HANDS HOME CARE
Greg Kling, President and Owner
8160 Corporate Park Dr, Ste 125, Cincinnati, OH 45242
assistinghands.com/9iohio/cincinnati | 513-718-2338
Assisting Hands Home Care provides non-medical home care to seniors throughout Greater Cincinnati. The caregivers, led by nurses, provide care from a few hours a day to 24/7, 365. Founded in 2013, following an experience the owners had caring for their mother, Assisting Hands is dedicated to providing an exceptional home care experience for their clients. From meal preparation and laundry to caring for those who are bedbound or suffering from dementia, Assisting Hands is there to relieve the stress of caring for a family member.

BROWN BEAR BAKERY
Blair Forshnell, Owner and Pastry Chef
116 E. 13th St, Cincinnati, OH 45202
www.brownbearbakery.com | 513-975-2142
Brown Bear Bakery began in the winter of 2012 with a small folding table and a collection of pastries. After years of Cincinnati City News, markets, pop-ups, and wholesale to local shops, the Brown Bear Bakery shop opened in Cincinnati’s historic Over-The-Rhine neighborhood. Their pastries are made from scratch, baked each morning, and influenced by the seasons. They specialize in thoughtful, creatively paired pastries and desserts, featuring a variety of sweet and savory options and offer coffee and tea to complement them.

CAMARGO INSURANCE
Joy Mueller, President
615 Elinore Pl Suite 310, Cincinnati, OH 45202
camargoinsurance.com | 513-561-5311
Camargo Insurance is a property and casualty insurance agency, supplying business, home, auto, and life insurance services. Camargo believes that insurance is power, helping individuals live their best lives by enabling them to make powerful decisions that transcend fear of loss. Their mission is to provide clear, complete insurance coverage from professional agents that care. They believe everyone should live without fear of the unknown. Their work extends beyond insurance and includes giving back to the community through continued support of organizations that align with their core values.

CARESTAR, INC.
Pamela E. Zipperer-Davis, President
5556 Cheviot Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45247
carestar.com | 513-618-8300
Carestar, Inc. provides superior client-centered Case Management Services and Software Systems that allow individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities to live at home in their own community. CareStar has experienced significant growth since 1986, but their mission has remained the same: Improving Communities by Improving Lives. By assisting in providing home and community-based services for people who are chronically ill or disabled, CareStar helps improve their quality of life and the quality of the community. Each day, the company embodies their core values of integrity, innovation, respect, fairness, and service.

CITY WIDE FACILITY SOLUTIONS
Brent Degenhardt, President
2169 Chamber Center Drive, Ft Mitchell, KY 41017
citywidecincinnati.com | 859-331-6500
City Wide Facility Solutions is a family-owned janitorial and facility maintenance company, providing professional and reliable cleaning services in the southwest Ohio region. They offer more than twenty different maintenance solutions, covering all of their customers’ needs—from the roof to the curb. One point of contact manages all their services, relieving their customers of that responsibility. City Wide Facility Solutions has proudly served area businesses and supported their community since 2003.

CRESCENT
Chris Taylor, Founder and CEO
9817 Crescent Park Drive, West Chester, OH 45069
www.crescentpark.com | 513-759-7000
Crescent is a fifth-generation family-owned business headquartered in Cincinnati, with operations in Ohio, Tennessee, Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. Firmly rooted in Cincinnati, Crescent has a national Contract Packaging and Parts Fulfillment footprint and a vision to be a premier service provider for Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) companies in the food, confectionery, nutrition, household, and health and beauty industries. Crescent is a community-focused, growing up their people so they in turn can help key customers strengthen their competitive advantage.

DORAN MANUFACTURING
Jeff Stegman, CEO
2851 Massachusetts Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45225
doranmf.com | 866-816-7233
Doran Manufacturing was founded in 1953 by two engineers who created custom electrical connection devices. Over the past 67 years, Doran has become a global leader and provider of safety and maintenance monitoring technologies. They provide world-class products for school buses, trucks, trailers, and off-road equipment around the world. Through proper work/life balance, they empower employees to actively contribute and grow by investing in their careers, while serving their customers and community.

HR ELEMENTS
Tina Taylor, President
50 West Rivercenter Blvd, Covington, KY 41011
hr-elements.com | 513-310-6591
HR Elements offers outsourced human resources services to businesses, in the form of dedicated on-site or remote guidance. They work across the employee life cycle, supporting all facets of human resources, including hiring, employee performance, development, and ongoing training. Their SHRM certified advisors can help with full-time HR services or offer an extra hand with an HR project. Servicing Cincinnati, Dayton, Northern Kentucky, Lexington, and Indianapolis markets, HR Elements has the HR solution for companies of all sizes.

HELICOM WEALTH ADVISORS
Michael Hengelholt, Founder and President
6116 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45247
hcwealthadvisors.com | 513-598-5120
HCM Wealth Advisors is an independent, fee-only fiduciary financial planning firm, focused on helping clients realize their ideal retirement. They understand that their clients have worked hard to achieve financial independence, and want to ensure that their savings will go the distance during retirement. Financial independence in retirement doesn’t just happen—it requires planning, commitment, and a great team. HCM works closely with their clients to educate them on the tax, investment, and financial consequences of the various distribution options, and their experience allows them to design and implement strategies that protect financial independence, even during unpredictable life and world events.

HELUM SEO
Timothy Warren, President and CEO
11311 Cornell Park Drive, Ste 125, Cincinnati, OH 45242
helum-seo.com | 513-583-3065
Helum SEO is a data-driven digital marketing agency rooted in engineering. They provide high-quality search engine optimization data analysis and the empowerment of their clients. Their technical engineers analyze data and produce top-quality recommendations, which their account managers use to strategically guide clients towards success. Founded in 2017, Helum was recognized as a Fast 55 Finalist by the Cincinnati Business Courier in 2021. With plans to expand and hire 120 employees over the next three years, Helum SEO’s vision is to be the largest SEO company in the United States, providing transparency to the industry.

HRG
Tina Taylor, President
50 West Rivercenter Blvd, Covington, KY 41011
hr-elements.com | 513-310-6591
HRG offers outsourced human resources services to businesses, in the form of dedicated on-site or remote guidance. They work across the employee life cycle, supporting all facets of human resources, including hiring, employee performance, development, and ongoing training. Their SHRM certified advisors can help with full-time HR services or offer an extra hand with an HR project. Servicing Cincinnati, Dayton, Northern Kentucky, Lexington, and Indianapolis markets, HRG has the HR solution for companies of all sizes.

KPG CREATIVE
Bob Kelly, President and Executive Producer
5155 Financial Way, Ste 4, Mason, OH 45040
kpgcreative.com | 513-403-6755
KPG Creative is a full-service video, event, and online/virtual engagement production company. Their job is to take the burden of production and creative off their clients’ shoulders, and maximize impact on their audiences, while delivering a solid ROI to their bottom line. Since 2002, KPG Creative has been growing with leading businesses nation-wide to tell their stories to diverse audiences. Their experience spans a wide range of industries: manufacturing, technology, product distribution, finance and insurance, medical, consumer goods, food, education, start-ups, non-profits, and agricultural. Each business has a story to tell and an audience to engage – KPG Creative can help.
LEAD TRIBUNE MEDIA GROUP
Steve Wanamaker, CEO and Founder
7723 Tyler’s Place Blvd, #144, West Chester, OH 45069
www.cdnomagazine.tech | 513-371-5501
Lead Tribune Media Group (LTMG) started in 2010 with a mission to serve the Greater Cincinnati community. In April 2020, LTMG launched CDO Magazine, a global publication born out of the MIT CDOOQ Symposium. Their vision is to be the world’s leading media company in the field of data, analytics, and C-level connectivity. LTMG’s mission is to build a stronger sense of community by focusing on the positive impacts of business and philanthropic leadership. Their products and services include Venue Magazine, a Cincinnati-based lifestyle publication, and ComPark & CDO Magazine, which is host to global and regional conferences and awards events. LTMG has also launched two cybersecurity high school training programs – Lakota and Cincinnati – to prepare youth by providing training that meets the demands of the job market.

PROSOURCE
Brad Cates, CEO and President
4720 Glendale Milford Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45242
www.totalprosource.com | 513-769-0606
Prosource has been a trusted technology partner since 1985, helping businesses of all sizes optimize processes, reduce costs, and enhance their bottom lines – all with an unmatched customer experience. Prosource offers managed IT services, cybersecurity, enterprise content management, office equipment, production print, and managed print services. They deliver powerful, secure solutions to help organizations leverage technology for strategic advantage, and offer personal service and support while leading the way in business technology in the region. They are driven by the purpose to make an impact every day for their customers, communities, and team.

TAYLOR LOGISTICS, INC.
Rex Taylor, President
9756 International Dr, Cincinnati, OH 45246
www.taylorlogistics.com | 513-771-1850
Taylor Logistics, Inc. is a third-party logistics provider that offers customized supply chain solutions, time-sensitive scalability, and industry-leading technology. They provide eCommerce, D2C fulfillment, transportation, supply chain management, freight brokerage, packaging, kitting, and more. Taylor is built upon a rich 171-year history that has stood the test of time, from the strict government regulations of the 1850s to our current global pandemic. They wouldn’t be where they are today if it weren’t for their ability to be agile, solutions-seeking, and innovation-driven, meeting their customers’ needs as they grow and change.

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Goering Center for Family & Private Business
2021 Family & Private Business Awards

SAVE THE DATE:
September 13, 2022
Join us in-person next year at the Hard Rock Casino to celebrate our 23rd Annual Family and Private Business Awards!
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To learn more, call David Miller, Goering Center Membership Director, at 513-556-5648.