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Search Now

Contact Newsletter Maps Media Life Sciences



Business Climate

Development Information

Site Selection

City Resources

Lifestyle &amp; Culture

## September 2011 Newsletter

Family-Owned in Blue Ash

Economic Development News

Blue Ash Businesses in the News

Featured Property

Upcoming Events

## Family-Owned in Blue Ash

It takes a special kind of family to open and grow a successful business. Blue Ash is home to many entrepreneurial families who serve the city's corporate community. This month, we feature three family-owned Blue Ash companies in the corporate delivery, product photography and document solutions industries. We also feature The Goering Center at the University of Cincinnati, a resource and support center for family-owned businesses in the Greater Cincinnati area.

### **The Goering Center at University of Cincinnati supports established family-owned businesses**

Established family-owned and privately held businesses for more than two decades have turned to The Goering Center at UC for fresh ideas and problem-solving.

The Goering Center is a membership-driven resource organization that promotes the health of family-owned businesses by helping them manage vital issues like succession planning, leadership development, governance, communications and strategic planning. The center has about 225 members that have been in business an average of 20 years.



The Greater Cincinnati economy is highly dependent on the typical business that comes to the center. "There are about 4,500 companies in the region that have at least five employees and \$1 million in top line sales. In addition, 70 percent of new jobs come from private and family-owned companies," says Center President Larry Grypp. "From that point of view, these businesses are critical for the economic development of the region."

Among the center's most popular programs are its breakfast and luncheon series that highlight relevant, regional business topics each year. The center's Leadership Development Institute and Next Generation Institute help companies protect their futures by identifying and developing leaders, and managing a handover to the next generation of owners.

The businesses that have participated in Goering Center programs read like a Who's Who of Cincinnati entrepreneurship, and include Graeter's Inc., Rumpke, Paul Hemmer Companies, LaRosa's and J.T.M. Food Group.

For more information or to become a member, [click here](#) to visit The Goering Center website.

### **Passed from father to brother and sister, Priority Dispatch strong after 38 years**



Dick Thomas started Priority Dispatch in 1973 as a small, local courier service. Today, under the leadership of brother and sister Jeffery Thomas and Julie Thomas, the company offers a host of delivery services 24/7/365, with 11 delivery centers in three states: Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan.

"My father started this company with two vehicles, and now we have 100 employees and a fleet of 850 vehicles," says Julie, the company's Vice President and a Blue Ash resident. Her brother is President and CEO and lives in Indian Hill.

Priority Dispatch moved from downtown to Blue Ash in the early 1990s and is located at 4665 Malsbary Rd., it recently was named a Goering Center Family Business Award Winner (25-74 Years in Business). The business won in part for its Priority 360 Delivery Management System, which through strategic planning allowed it to weather – and thrive – as technology changed the delivery and courier business.

"The award was humbling and a honor," Julie says. "Our strategy has changed and we are doing well."

Julie and Jeff are hands-on owners, running the day-to-day operations of the company. It's an increasingly rare second-generation company, and the family has had to face business and personal challenges including the death of their mother, and the restructuring of their initial business model that relied heavily on the financial services industry.

"Our entire business model changed. Today, about 55 percent of our business is in pharmaceuticals. We were ahead of the curve on that, and it really paid off," Julie says.

It took hard work, and a family-first attitude to keep the company strong.

"Your relationships have to be really strong. It has to be family first, business second," she says. "One of the biggest reasons family businesses don't make it to the second generation is that family members can't renegotiate relationships and can't work together anymore. We have worked really hard and have a great family."