

IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

CEO

Of Influence

2017



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John V. Evans Jr. has been banking on banking for more than 40 years. But before he decided on the career in which he would be instrumental in making D.L. Evans bank “the largest community bank in Idaho,” he had considered living the life of a cowboy.



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Steve Woodworth makes thrift store shopping a win/win/win situation, but wants you to know Idaho Youth Ranch is much more than thrift stores. Much, much, MUCH more.

Note FROM THE EDITOR

Since 2011, the *Idaho Business Review* has recognized 39 leaders across the state through our CEO of Influence program. This year adds 10 more to the list bringing that total to just shy of 50.

These men and women have been – and still are – influential through their leadership, their accomplishments, their community service and their vision. They have helped shape our business landscape, our economy; they have added immeasurably to our overall joie de vivre, our community goodwill; they have created great opportunity and are paving the way for even greater milestones to come.

You will surely want to find out all about this year's honorees – and I invite you to do so. In the meantime, please allow me to give a brief introduction.

You may know that John V. Evans Jr. has led the D.L. Evans Bank team to a record \$1.3 billion in assets spread out over 29 branches. What you might not know is that he came to banking not as a first choice, but as “the right choice,” after having a heart-to-heart with his father.

CWI's leader and cheerleader, Bert Glandon, says the burgeoning community college broke all the rules – and “every record there was” in its phenomenal success story. With a predicted upswing to a 33,000-student enrollment in the next couple of years, Glandon, a former disc jockey, couldn't be happier.

As a child, Camp Rainbow Gold's Elizabeth Lizberg rode in the Goodyear Blimp. Today, she rides herd on a non-profit that includes a loyal volunteer base because “it grabs your heart and you stay forever.”

George Mulhern became the guiding light for Cradlepoint after the end of his first career and even a brief retirement. But before all of that, he tinkered

with the notion of becoming a tennis pro. Beth Oppenheimer is a passionate advocate for early childhood education – but admittedly, she herself was “not a good student.” Read how the “late bloomer” turned that around to leading her team in getting an award from the White House.

Before finding his groove in health-care, Rodney Reider contemplated being a professional football player, an archaeologist, a pastor or a doctor. He says a leader's job is to support team members, give them what they need to do their job, then “get out of the way and let 'em run. And they'll make incredible things happen.”

Matt Rissell's first job was selling red chili peppers. Today he runs TSheets, a company that has grown 681.6 percent since 2012. “It's amazing to be a part of it,” he says.

Jerry Whitehead grew up milking cows on his grandparents' ranch in Thatcher, Idaho. Today, he leads Western Trailers. “We're probably the most diversified semi-trailer manufacturing company in North America,” he says.

Marya Woods played the viola in orchestra and has a shuffleboard set up in the office – but as leader and company co-founder of Apex, which provides factory automation services, she doesn't play around.

As a kid, Steve Woodworth helped his dad build a swimming pool in the family's backyard. Today, he guides Idaho Youth Ranch, an organization that is much more than thrift stores – it helps troubled kids find their way and get back on track.

Now that you've made their acquaintance, read their stories.

And, please, join me in applauding them.



Jeanne Huff
Idaho Business Review

A message from our Presenting Sponsor

At Perkins Coie, giving back to the community is central to our firm culture. It is in that spirit that we are proud to serve as a presenting sponsor for IBR's "CEO of Influence." These individuals have made their marks not only in their enterprises, but also in their surrounding communities. Their actions have improved our lives.

With more than 1,000 attorneys in 19 offices across the U.S. and Asia, Perkins Coie represents thousands of companies across all industries and stages of growth. In 2017, we celebrate 20 years of serving many of Idaho's great companies from our Boise office. Our experienced team, supported by our national and international capabilities, service a full range of needs for enterprises doing business in Idaho. We actively support leaders through participation in organizations such as the Boise Valley Economic Partnership, Idaho Technology Council, Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce, City Club of Idaho, and Hackfort, among others. Our attorneys and staff regularly share their skills and resources to help those in need. We also support many charitable organizations such as Opera Idaho, Friends of Zoo Boise, and the Idaho Environmental Forum.

Perkins Coie is honored to recognize the leaders who have shaped Idaho's business and community landscapes. Congratulations to the 2017 "CEO of Influence" honorees!



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IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW





How did we get that shot?

It was a big “ask.” Monumental, even.

To get 10 CEOs all together on the same day, at the same time for a group photo – you might as well say it is a near impossible feat. It is one of those moments I compare to “herding cats” only, quite possibly, even more unlikely.

In fact, only in the first three years – 2011, 2012 and 2013 – have we been able to assemble all CEOs of Influence for a group photo.

In 2014 and 2015 we were able to “stitch” everyone in via the wonder of Photoshop.

Last year, although we gave it the good old college try, we could not even come

close to a day that worked for all.

That brings us to this year. And it looked like, even with 10 CEOs, the most ever honored, that just maybe, fingers crossed, we could get everybody on the same page. Literally.

Photographer Pete Grady and I, after consulting the great oracle Google for sunshine, hatched a one-day, one-time plan. Miraculously, RSVPs started coming until all 10 were in!

And so, even with one driving from Burley and another on the mend – not to mention threatening skies above – it was “game on.”

Pete and I were high-fiving.

But leave it to good old John Steinbeck

to know that “the best laid plans” can go awry. At the last minute, I took the phone call: Matt Rissell could not make it – a fire had erupted that only he, the CEO, could put out.

Sigh.

But no worries, it all worked out. Rissell, good sport that he is, went later and had his photo taken in the exact spot where he would have been in the group photo. And, thanks to Photoshop – and our talented graphic designer Bradley Redmond, once again we have a cover that includes all of the year’s honorees.

— Jeanne Huff, editor





BANKING BOSS

John V. Evans Jr. has been banking on banking for more than 40 years. But before he decided on the career in which he would be instrumental in making D.L. Evans bank “the largest community bank in Idaho,” he had considered living the life of a cowboy.

By Jeanne Huff

Idaho Business Review

John V. Evans Jr. grew up in an idyllic environment. He lived on a working farm and ranch. Sure, he had his chores to do – but he also had his beloved black and white Pinto horse, Apache.

“It was a really smart horse,” Evans Jr. says. “I trained it to rear up and so as we were driving cattle down the highway, I’d put on a little show.” Apache could perform the same trick as the horse on The Lone Ranger television show, he says. “I taught my horse how to do that so it would really make a great picture for those tourists as we were driving cattle down the road.”

Evans Jr. loved that life so much, he thought: “that’s what I wanted to be, when I grew up, to be a farmer-rancher.

“My dad said, ‘Are you crazy? Being a farmer-rancher, you can’t make any money.’ He said: ‘Why don’t you be a banker? You have a good personality, John, and you might be able to be successful at that.’”

BANKERS HOURS

Evans Jr. took his father’s advice. He got his bachelor of science degree in finance at the University of Idaho and started on the path of his lifelong banking career. He began in executive officer management training at Idaho First National Bank in 1974, then worked as a loan officer there before coming on board at D.L. Evans Bank in 1979. Evans Jr. recalls a prophetic moment during his management training when he was asked: What would you like to do in 10 years?

“And I said: ‘I’d like to be CEO of the bank.’ I worked into that position. That was an early goal of mine,” he says.

He started as branch manager at D.L.

Evans at a time when the bank had total assets of about \$7 million. Evans Jr. was promoted to CEO in 1986 and soon after was able to convince a prized hire to join him.

“My claim to fame is I hired my dad,” he says. “My dad was governor for 10 years. He ran for United States Senate, was defeated by Steve Symms, and so he was looking for a job – and I hired him! I hired ‘The Guv,’ and we worked together for 25 years.”

It was a win/win move. “My dad has been an inspiration and he’s been a mentor,” Evans Jr. says. “All you gotta do is work under a workaholic for a while and you learn to work.”

It wasn’t his only experience working competitively, he says. “I always said, ‘Well, I’m going to stay at work longer than my manager because I’m going to show that I can work harder than they can. And I did that.’ But he had one mentor who would have “all-nighters. He would work all night long on loans, and I said, I’m not going to do that, that’s a little bit too much,” he says, laughing.

PROUD ACHIEVEMENTS

Evans Jr. is proud of where the bank is today. Since 1986, he has grown it from \$25 million in assets to over \$1.3 billion, from \$17 million in loans to \$835 million, from \$23 million in deposits to \$1.1 billion, has increased equity capital from \$1.6 million to \$96.5 million, and has seen it blossom from two branches to 29 and from about 30 employees to 370.

“When I started it was the smallest bank in the state – and today it’s the largest community bank located in Idaho, headquartered in Idaho. So, that’s been a great achievement for me,” he says.

In addition, Evans Jr. is proud to have

led the charge to form an employee stock ownership plan. “Today the employees, through the ESOP, own over 15 percent of the company for a total ESOP value in excess of \$17 million,” he says. “Because of the ESOP many employees have been able to retire with a substantial retirement account that they would not have had without (it).”

And not only is that good for the bank employees, but also for business.

“Historically, it has been proven that ESOP companies outperform other companies, due to the employee ownership,” he says. “The success of D.L. Evans Bank is dependent upon our employees, who should be rewarded for their dedication and commitment to the bank.

“Forming the ESOP was one of best decisions that was made for our company and has had a dramatic, successful impact on the success of the bank, and its employees and their families.”

Evans Jr. says another highlight was when he served as chairman of the 12th District of the Community Depository Institutions Advisory Council.

“I met with the Federal Reserve’s Janet Yellen, was able to meet with Ben Bernanke,” he says. “And that was a very great experience. I’ve got a lot of respect for the Federal Reserve. They do an excellent job trying to manage the interest rates and keep us going and I think they’ve done a fantastic job.”

Even topping all of that, says Evans Jr., is his pride in family. “I’d say raising my three boys, that’s got to be my biggest achievement. I have three boys. One son who lives here in Boise, one lives in Twin Falls, and one lives in Pocatello. All three of them are at the bank. They’re doing a fantastic job. They’re hard workers.”



GOOD ADVICE

As Evans Jr. brought his three sons into the family banking business, he made sure they knew it from the ground up. “I started all my boys at the lowest level and they worked up from there,” he says. “To be the best banker you’ve got to know it all.”

Evans remembers when his oldest son began working at the bank in Burley.

“My oldest boy, we call him J.V., John the third, I had him out sweeping the parking lot and it was a dirt parking lot so you could sweep all day long and not get very far,” he says. “And well, one day J.V. goes: ‘Dad, am I always just gonna have to sweep the parking lot?’ I said, oh, no – now, it’s time for you to be a teller,” he says with a laugh.

Setting goals and “working hard” are two simple yet highly effective professional strategies, he says. “And that’s what I advise everyone to do. Set your goals, enjoy what you’re doing, find something you’re good at, and go for it. And work hard. Work hard is really important. If you don’t work hard, if you

just work an 8-to-5 job, you’re not going to reach the top of the ladder. You’ve got to spend more time and effort, than the competition in order to be successful.

“If you want to be good or great, you have to practice, and you have to work harder than everybody else. And that’s always been my philosophy.”

Evans Jr. also says it’s important to treat others – customers, co-workers, everyone – the right way. “You always treat people like you want to be treated,” he says. “And that’s what we say: treat peo-

ple with respect and honor and you’ll be successful – and they’ll come back.

“You don’t want to treat people rudely or else you’re not going to get their business. That’s what we try and instill in all our officers and employees, treat people with respect and honor.”

MEETING CHALLENGES

While the early ‘80s were “very rough times,” Evans Jr. says that wasn’t the only rough spot. “Looking back, I believe that the most challenging time for myself,





as CEO, and for D.L. Evans Bank, was during the Great Recession, beginning in 2007 through 2010. Of course, 2008, that was the toughest year,” he says. “We never lost any money until 2009 and ’10, and we actually lost a little bit of money on both those years. One-hundred-twelve years in business and only losing money two of those years – that’s pretty remarkable.”

The bank was able to turn things around, in part, through its participation in the Small Business Lending Fund, he says. “Through the SBLF program, Main Street banks and small businesses worked together to help create jobs and promote economic growth in local communities across the nation.” As a participant, D.L. Evans was able to increase small business lending for loans secured by farmland; commercial and industrial loans; and loans secured by owner-occupied non-farm, nonresidential real estate.

“The bank paid particular attention to supporting minorities, women and veterans in small business,” Evans Jr. says.

The effort was a success. Participating in the SBLF “helped our bank survive and made us stronger than ever.”

EMBRACING CHANGE

Evans Jr. acknowledges that the way people do their banking is evolving. Bank customers used to visit their bank regularly. They knew the friendly faces there. These days, more and more, customers are conducting banking business remotely.

“Banking has really changed,” he says. “You just don’t have people walking in the doors anymore.”

He says in order to be successful, banks have to cater to those changes and provide services electronically, and D.L. Evans Bank does just that.

“The youth, they don’t like coming into banks, they like to do their banking through their device, by phone; that’s the future. Our banks have online banking programs so we’re competitive with everyone.”

HIS HAPPY PLACE

Evans Jr. says when he wants to relax he knows just where to go: the family

ranch at Dempsey Creek near Lava Hot Springs.

“I think that’s my favorite place in the world, Dempsey Creek. My dad built a nice cabin up there about 10 years ago and we have just enjoyed it, the family’s enjoyed that ranch,” he says. “We get up there as often as we can, every weekend we try to go to Dempsey Creek and enjoy the outdoors. There’s a nice little creek that runs through there so you can catch some small fish. Just getting out and getting some exercise, climbing to the top of the mountain, and enjoying the outdoors.”

And, he says, he’s traded in his horse for another mode of transportation.

“I like to go four-wheeling with my sons and grandsons and granddaughters,” he says. “We all have four-wheelers. It’s just so fun to go up in the mountains and do some four-wheeling. That’s really important, to have fun.”

“I tell people: work hard. Life is what you make of it. Go for the gusto and you’ll reach it.”



LEARNING LEADER

As president of the College of Western Idaho, Bert Glandon has had the opportunity to build a wildly successful community college from the ground up.

By Sharon Fisher

Special to Idaho Business Review

To Bert Glandon, president of the College of Western Idaho (CWI), the purpose of a community college is to create opportunity.

"It creates an opportunity for a whole gamut of students who thought they'd never go college," Glandon says. "When you create an opportunity you create hope and unleash the human potential for 20,000-plus people across the Treasure Valley. You can see those 'a ha' moments with students who didn't think there was hope, didn't think there were possibilities."

Glandon tells the story of one scholarship recipient, a young woman who not only never thought she'd go to college, but didn't think she'd graduate from high school. She explained to the CWI board, he says, how her father had been in prison since she was 2, her mother was an alcoholic, and she was taking care of her younger brother and sister. She never went to prom and never went to an athletic event. But the faculty in CWI's dental hygienist program took a personal interest in her and her success, and she completed the program.

"The greatest thing is not that I'm graduating Friday, but that I'll have a job on Monday, and my brother and sister won't need to live in the car," Glandon recalls her telling the board.

THE BIRTH OF THE WHAT-IF COLLEGE

Created by a voter initiative just 10 years ago, the College of Western Idaho, which serves Ada and Canyon counties and based in Nampa, is

the "what-if" college, Glandon says. Colleges with decades of tradition get caught in the trap of "we've always done it that way," he says. "We're so new, we don't know that we can't do it. Tell me what we can't do, and we'll figure out how to make it happen."

Boise State University (BSU) had originally been Boise Junior College, but as it pivoted to become a research university, it left an educational gap in the Treasure Valley. While Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC) – where Glandon served as president from 1993 to 2002 – educated people in the western side of the valley, it was based in, and funded by, the state of Oregon. "There were 2,800 students when I left and 70 percent of them were out of Idaho," he remembers, from cities such as Fruitland, Payette, Weiser and Caldwell. The Idaho presence in an Oregon school was "don't ask, don't tell," he says.

It was felt there was a market for a community college in the Treasure Valley. And, in 2007, a voter initiative agreed to create and fund the facility.

GROWING PAINS

"A startup college is like a startup business – lots of chaos," Glandon says. But he couldn't have predicted just how chaotic CWI would be. "We broke every record there was," he remembers. "Most community colleges start with 500 (students), and in five years they have 2,000. In 2009, we had 1,208 students. In the second semester we had 3,600 and in the third we had 4,900."

That success left the new staff and administration, who started with 100 acres and a single building donated by BSU, scrambling to find space to hold classes. Other educational institutions let CWI use their classrooms during the day and the college also took over a former Sam's Club, as well as leasing space.

Unlike other Idaho community colleges, CWI is a commuter college, and doesn't offer amenities like dorms and athletics. The College of Southern Idaho, which has been around for 50 years, and North Idaho College, which has been around for 85 years, both do. "It'll be years if we ever have housing or athletics due to budgetary issues," Glandon says. "We grew so fast, so quick that all of our money goes to academics."

ACCOLADES ALL AROUND

Among its academic activities, CWI offers speech and has a debate team, which has won its fifth national championship in seven years, and an honors society that received five-star status for the second year in a row. Glandon is proud of those achievements, let alone that they've come along in such a short amount of time. "I've been at schools that never got five-star status," he says.

That said, Glandon is quick to deny credit. "I don't see what I do as being influential," he protests. "I never wanted it to be a one-person show. I'm honored that someone would recognize me as someone who could build a team, because teams (are)



what makes it happen. I'm surrounded by high-quality people. Most of the people we've been able to recruit are Type A who love what they do and are committed to making it happen. It's a group effort."

For CWI to be successful it needs to be based on relationships, Glandon says. "If it weren't for relationships, we wouldn't be as successful as we are. I rely heavily on my team and relationships with my team." And that team includes everybody. "Janitors have a huge impact on students," he says. "Pretty much everyone on campus can make a difference."

COLLEAGUES CHIME IN

Glandon lets his team go to work and gets out of the way. "He is very willing to explore different ideas and different avenues about how to reach a certain goal," says CWI trustee Emily Walton. "He doesn't have his mind made up before we reach a solution on something.

He hires good people and listens to them, lets them do their job, and takes their advice on how to solve it."

CWI started out as a blank slate, recalls Mark Dunham, now chairman of the CWI board and one of its first trustees, who helped hire Glandon. "Our first board meeting, we did our oath of office and the chairman of the State Board said, 'good luck!'" he says. "We had nothing. We had that building, we had no personnel, we didn't even have a phone. The first step was to elect a president."

While the board hired Dennis Griffin, former executive director for Boise State University West Campus, he had told them he planned to retire soon, so the board instituted a nationwide search for his replacement. Those candidates were winnowed down to four finalists, who met with university constituencies, as well as the board itself.

"During that whole process, it was

very clear that Bert Glandon had the vision to take us to our next step," Dunham says. "That was probably one of the best decisions our board has ever made."

FROM PAST TO PRESENT

Glandon didn't always cut the imposing figure he has today. Developing pyloric stenosis at 5-days-old, he had trouble eating and digesting food, to the extent that by the time he was 16, he was 5-foot-11 and weighed just 67 pounds. But after two surgeries, he went up to 167 pounds in three months. It was life changing to the extent that he had to bring a doctor's note in to school because they didn't recognize him.

The experience left Glandon with a lifelong appreciation for being physically active. He immediately dove into all the sports he could play, and won a state championship in American Legion baseball. He's coached his wife,

Jane, and two sons in baseball, and now plays in sports like softball, tennis, and racquetball, the latter of which he has competed. “It was so great for me when I finally got healthy,” he says. “It was like being reborn.”

Glandon’s background is nothing if not eclectic. He put himself through college performing music, and for a while was a disk jockey who also sold radio time. After he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Western Washington University, he started working for the food service provider Saga Corp. He worked there for 13 years, meeting his wife in the process, and was finally offered his dream job with the company – but if he took the offer, he’d have to move to Los Angeles.

At the same time, Glandon got another offer: to start the restaurant equipment technology program for South Seattle Community College. “That flowed into writing a management

program for culinary arts,” he says. In its first two years, it was a huge success, raising \$7 million for the program.

But to progress in administration Glandon knew he’d need a doctorate, so he earned that at Brigham Young University. He moved to Clark College in Vancouver, Wash., as associate dean of instruction, rising to acting dean of faculty. He then joined TVCC as president, followed by Arapahoe Community College in Littleton, Colo., also as president.

COMING HOME, ROLLING UP SLEEVES AND GETTING TO WORK

Joining CWI meant Glandon not only got to start a college from scratch, but had the opportunity to move back to the Northwest and Boise, he says. In addition to CWI, he also serves as an advisory board member for the Saint Alphonsus Health System, St. Luke’s

Nampa community board, Rotary Club of Boise, the Idaho Technology Council, the Boise Valley Economic Partnership, and, by appointment of the governor, a member of the Idaho Workforce Development Council and is co-chair of the Educational Attainment Task Force.

“I always have a clean white shirt, a tie, and a jacket in the office just in case something happens – the Governor shows up or something,” Glandon says.

LOOKING AHEAD AND GROWING, AND GROWING

Where do CWI and Glandon go from here? The college, which has now achieved accreditation, floated a \$180 million bond in November 2016 for expansion, which failed to meet the two-thirds majority required to pass. Nationwide, there’s been an increasing philosophical belief that colleges should pay for themselves rather than



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Rodney Reider
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being funded by the state, Glandon explains.

But that hasn't put a crimp in the college's forward movement. CWI is partnering with local business to make sure it's producing students that businesses need. For example, it worked with Western States Cat to reduce its two-year diesel program to 13 months. "It was specifically driven by an industry saying, 'We could hire two to three times more people if you could put them out faster,'" Glandon says.

While some criticize businesses for depending on colleges rather than training their own workers, that's a function of the way business works today, Glandon says. "A senior in high school now is changing their career five to seven times," he explains. "It's totally different from the 1950s when you'd work for a company for 20 to 30 years. Millennials don't want to work for a company for more than three to five years." Companies need employ-



ees who can be productive right away rather than needing months or years of training first.

And, how to manage growth? CWI is predicting an enrollment of more than 33,000 in a couple of years. "The only way to handle that is online services," Glandon says. "Online is anywhere, and anyone can access us," he says, noting that about 90 percent of the registration process is now online. "Kids don't want to go to a 9 a.m. class. Why is the class schedule an impediment to

getting a degree? The schedule should be irrelevant." About a third of classes are online now, and he expects that figure to rise to 50 to 60 percent.

Glandon says CWI could even end up transcending degrees altogether. "I hear business now saying, 'I need somebody with this skill set. I don't care if they have a degree,'" Glandon says. "I think our world is in change, right before our eyes, moving in front of us. To some people, it's paralyzing. To me, it's exhilarating – it's an adrenalin rush."

As far as Glandon's own future, he's looking forward to spending more time with his wife. He expects he'll probably retire in the next three to five years. On the other hand, "I've told her that for the past eight years," he admits.

And what about that young woman dental hygienist? "She's a taxpayer as opposed to being on welfare," Glandon says. "That's what a community college does in such a dynamic way."

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HAPPY CAMPER

As the executive director of Camp Rainbow Gold, Elizabeth Lizberg strives to make dreams come true for children who are fighting cancer, and their families.

By Stephanie Hansen

Special to Idaho Business Review

Whenever she's facing a challenge that scares her, Elizabeth Lizberg takes a special talisman with her: a rock in the shape of a turtle. Her "turtle rock" reminds her to face obstacles the way her campers do.

The rock holds special meaning to her because of a particular camper who never let anything get in his way, and who happened to love turtles. Lizberg recalls an outing to an ice rink where the camper, who had lost one leg to cancer, made up his mind to skate like the other kids instead of being pushed along in a cart. A group of hockey players nearby helped fashion a makeshift leg out of a hockey stick, duct tape, and part of an ice skate, and soon he was gliding over the ice on his own.

"He's my inspiration," she says. "He came off that ice and was like, 'I told you I could do it.'" The boy is no longer living, and Lizberg thinks of him every time she looks at her turtle rock. Her experience with him, and with countless other campers in her 10 years at Camp Rainbow Gold, has inspired her to fight just a little bit harder when things get tough.

"At camp, there is no 'I can't.' We just figure it out a different way," she says.

A SPECIAL PLACE

In many ways, Camp Rainbow Gold is like any other camp. The kids make crafts, sing songs, fish, and hike. But this camp is special because it's designed exclusively for kids battling cancer.

Organized in the 1980s as a program under the American Cancer Society, it began as an annual camp for children with cancer. Today, CRG runs five camps a year as well as year-round programs. The five annual camps include: a spring family camp, three camps for kids in the summer – sibling camp, teen camp, and youth camp – and a fall family retreat. Every camp is free, and the organization gets 50 to 60 campers at each of their sessions every year.

The campers get a chance to spend time with other kids who are facing the same obstacles they do, which gives them a support group that is hard to replicate in other ways. Many of the campers maintain those bonds from year to year.

CAREER

For Lizberg, working with people has always been her passion. While in high school, she worked as a waitress in the dining hall of a retirement home, which moved her along the path of service.

"Looking out in the dining hall as a teenager and seeing history there waiting for me to ask questions was exciting to me," she says. "I loved that people interaction from day one."

After she graduated from high school, she left for college in Washington. In Seattle, she ended up wandering into what she thought was an apartment building while looking for a place to live. The building turned out to be a retirement community owned by the same company she'd worked for in

Boise, and she got hired to work in the dining hall. There, she had her first managerial job as dining hall manager before moving into marketing and office management. Her next goal was to become an executive director, but, "God had other motives for me," she says.

While working at the facility, she met a coworker who became her husband. The marriage didn't last, but out of that relationship came her greatest joy – her daughter, Sophie. Lizberg had a high-risk pregnancy and moved back to Boise to be closer to her family, and Sophie was born 10 weeks early at little over 2 pounds. Lizberg spent months with Sophie in the neonatal intensive care unit at St. Luke's Children's Hospital.

Newly back in town, Lizberg told the nurses that she was looking for a job, and one of them mentioned a part-time secretary position open in the Children at Risk Evaluation Services unit. Lizberg got the job, then moved into a full-time role and ended up spending seven years working with child abuse victims as a multi-disciplinary team coordinator.

At St. Luke's, Lizberg was part of the team that helped organize the FACES of Hope Victim Center, a facility that brings together medical, legal and law enforcement services to serve victims of abuse.

It was rewarding, but with a young child at home, seven years engrossed in the heartbreaking world of child abuse was taking its toll, and Lizberg admits she was getting burned out. Her

brother, who had volunteered for years with Camp Rainbow Gold, told her about a staff position there and urged her to apply.

"I thank my brother all the time for that call," she says.

INDEPENDENCE

When Lizberg started her tenure at Camp Rainbow Gold, she was the only staff member, and the organization was still under the direction of the American Cancer Society. Then, in 2012, the ACS announced that they were discontinuing all of their camp services, and all of a sudden, Camp Rainbow Gold needed a new plan for the future.

Along with several long-term volunteers, Lizberg led the charge to turn Camp Rainbow Gold into its own non-profit entity. The process wasn't easy: it took a year to get everything in place, and they ran into several snags along the way. For instance, they applied for nonprofit status in the fall of 2013, smack dab in the middle of a federal government shutdown.

"Our 501(c)(3) application was sitting on a desk somewhere," she says. Once the government offices reopened, Lizberg says her team of volunteers made calls to anyone who'd listen.

It all ended well – Camp Rainbow Gold opened its doors as its own entity in January 2014.

While the transition was undoubtedly difficult, Lizberg says it was a blessing in the end, since they were now free to control their own vision, including buying their own land, managing their own branding, and deciding their own future.

"The opportunity that has come out of being independent has been amazing and it's opened a lot of doors," she says.

With that newfound freedom, Lizberg and her team have expanded their programs as much as possible. They've increased their annual camps from



two to five, increased their staff count to eight and opened a satellite office in Ketchum. Last fiscal year, they brought in more than \$1 million in donations, and they have given out \$700,000 in scholarship money in the 10 years since they began their scholarship program.

But there's still much to do, according to Lizberg. Three of their five camps are at maximum capacity, and they'd love to offer more resources to the children and their family members. In order to do so, however, they need to find their own land – a "forever home" – to ensure they have the medical resources and facilities they need to keep the camp going long after its current leaders are gone.

A FOREVER HOME

After reviewing 50 properties on paper, and visiting at least 20, Lizberg says she knew they'd found the right piece of land the moment she set foot on it.

"It was an actual magical moment," she says. "I'll never forget it, because when you're looking for something that feels right and you find it, it's very exciting."

Adding to the excitement was the fact that one of their biggest donors happened to own half of the property in Ketchum's East Fork and offered to donate it – a \$1.7 million value – to the camp. Lizberg is currently in the depths of the permitting process before purchasing the rest of the 275-acre property, which should take another six months or so. If all goes

well, they can begin the process of planning the camp's specialized facilities, or "putting visions and dreams onto paper," as Lizberg puts it.

"I can see it. I dream of it," she says. "Standing in this one spot onsite and seeing that first bus of campers come around the corner will be a very special day."

Among those dreams are seemingly small items like ground-level facilities and in-cabin bathrooms so campers don't need to wake up others to help them to the portable toilets outside or struggle with wheelchairs or crutches to get there. Running water and solid, accessible flooring for their art shack are also on the list. But one of the other main goals is to provide onsite activities like hiking and fishing, so they don't need to use busses to take campers off-site for those things the way they do now.

Once they've got their own facilities, they can also look at expanding the number of camp sessions and other programs they can offer. Among Lizberg's hopes is to eventually offer a couple's retreat, a mother's retreat, and additional services for siblings. She and her team are currently reaching out to other camps around the country to see how they support those populations, and Lizberg is excited to explore more possibilities to further establish the organization in the community at large.

"Knowing that Camp Rainbow Gold will be here long after those of us are here is a really good feeling," she says.

"OWN, LEARN, GROW"

There are two main hallmarks to Lizberg's leadership philosophy: building relationships and learning from mistakes.

When her staff members make the occasional, inevitable mistake, Lizberg encourages them to own the mistake, learn from it, and grow from the experience.

rience.

"I'm always saying, 'How are you going to learn and grow from that?' to the point where they make fun of me," she says.

"I expect mistakes," she says. "We're human. We're all going to do it, so why not embrace it?"

This outlook helps her staff members and volunteers feel empowered to try new things without being too afraid of making a bad decision. Lizberg's view is that she doesn't need to be the ultimate decision maker for everything, but hopes to inspire her staff to see the overall vision and make things happen.

To that end, finding the right people who will take a project and run with it is essential to the organization's success. For Lizberg, that means looking for people with passion, which is vital for making it through the struggles of nonprofit work.

"As impactful as all of this is, it is hard," she says. "We're all wearing more than

one hat; (so) I look for someone that is willing to jump in and never says, 'that's not my job.'"

For Lizberg, keeping her focus clear is crucial. She keeps a sticky note on her computer that says, "Why!" – with an exclamation point, not a question mark – to remind her of the kids for whom she works every day.

To those who see her in action, Lizberg is a powerhouse.

"Ms. Lizberg's endless energy and enthusiasm are contagious to those around her," says Jeremy C. Chou, a partner at Givens Pursley and current president of the camp's board of directors. "Throughout her career, Elizabeth has consistently given freely of her time and talents to causes that help our community. Simply put, she is amazing."

PERSONAL LIFE

Though she is incredibly busy, Lizberg makes a point to spend quality

time with her family. She is currently college-shopping with Sophie, and the two are working to check a few mother-daughter experiences off their list before Sophie heads to school. Recently, they took a trip to New York together and attended several Broadway shows.

Closer to home, Lizberg enjoys cooking, and is particularly fond of a peach jam recipe passed down for hundreds of years that ties her back to her Georgia roots.

But even in her personal life, Lizberg can't avoid serving others. She believes in performing small acts of service, like giving away an extra turkey at Thanksgiving or paying for a meal for the person behind her in a restaurant.

"I try to be one of those pay-it-forward people," she says. "I like being the one to put a smile on someone's face that day."

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MASTER OF THE PIVOT

With a black belt in taekwondo, and years of experience in the business and technology worlds, George Mulhern is adept at sparring – and pivoting

By Sharon Fisher

Special to Idaho Business Review

When Cradlepoint consolidated its six offices into a single space in the Boise Plaza, it represented more than just an office transaction. The building, one of Boise's first skyscrapers when it was completed in 1971, was originally the headquarters of Boise Cascade, the iconic timber and paper products company. Cradlepoint's move was deeply symbolic of how the tech industry in Idaho was replacing the traditional reliance on natural resources represented by Boise Cascade.

Cradlepoint Inc. CEO George Mulhern laughs. "It was nothing quite that planned, but I like the way you put that," he says.

Company Pivot

In the tech startup industry, there's a concept of "pivoting." A pivot is when a startup in a field or industry changes what it's making or the market it's making it for because the first direction isn't working out.

In 2011, Cradlepoint was pivoting. Founded in 2006, the company made little boxes that used the cellular system to provide Internet hotspots for consumers. You could go to a place without WiFi, but which got cell service, put down a little box, and everyone could get to the Internet.

But as cell phones with tethering became more common, Cradlepoint's market was dwindling. The company decided to pivot, to focus on making hardware and software for enterprises to communicate with cloud compa-

nies like Amazon Web Services using the cellular network.

This gave Cradlepoint four main categories of customers, says Mulhern (who uses bullet points even when he's speaking):

1. Companies that need Internet connectivity even if their own network is down, such as insurance companies working in storm areas or retailers who want to be able to take credit cards in a power failure;

2. Branch offices, for which Cradlepoint provides both wired and wireless networking;

3. Vehicles, such as police cars – "it's like a moving branch office, with a laptop, body cam, dash cams, and sensors that let you know when a shotgun's released; we put a router in the trunk with an antenna and create a WiFi hotspot" – and buses, like city buses in New York and school buses in the Coachella Valley that give kids Internet by parking one in their neighborhood;

4. Network-connected sensors and other devices, known as the Internet of Things (IoT), where Cradlepoint creates a "black cloud," invisible to other people on the Internet, to make the devices more secure.

The company also has its eye on several other emerging technologies, such as software-defined networking (SDN), which uses easily changeable software rather than hardware to provide networking functionality, and 5G, the next advance in cellular technology over 4G, which uses smaller radio frequency waves to be able to transmit much

more data at higher speeds, with lower costs and power consumption.

There's only one problem with 5G. "That millimeter wave is terrible in terms of penetrating buildings – it won't even penetrate glass," Mulhern explains. "That's where the opportunity for Cradlepoint comes in." Like an electrical transformer, a Cradlepoint device could take the 5G signal and convert it to something usable in a building.

That means Cradlepoint is now competing with bigger fish, like Cisco Systems. "There are a lot of accounts Cisco will never let you win," Mulhern says, like big financial institutions paying millions of dollars. But Cradlepoint's size helps it charge less, and its nimbleness helps it land smaller customers that feel trapped by big vendors. In one retail deal for 13,000 outlets, Cradlepoint made 35 changes in its firmware to accommodate the new customer. "We asked the partner, 'How many changes has Cisco made for you? None.' We're able to respond in ways the bigger guys can't."

Cradlepoint's pivot must be successful: In its most recent funding round earlier this year, investors including the venture capital company TCV gave it \$89 million.

Personal Pivot

Mulhern is not your flamboyant, larger-than-life CEO. He is visibly uncomfortable talking about himself, self-deprecating, and has a sense of humor as dry as an Idaho July. He has four children, two boys and two girls.



In addition to skiing and golfing, all of them have black belts in taekwondo, and he and his wife Karen are state sparring champions. “Sparring is excellent marriage counseling,” he says.

Becoming CEO of Cradlepoint was a pivot for Mulhern as well – and not his first one. Growing up in what was to become Silicon Valley, after a move from New Jersey, Mulhern attended San Jose State University on a tennis scholarship, majoring in business rather than computer science. “I was the kid who took apart the radios and never put them back together,” he says.

Mulhern intended to play tennis professionally, but it took only a short time on the circuit to realize that wasn’t practical. “It didn’t work out, so I had to get a real job,” he deadpans. That said, he still uses the words of Arthur Ashe, the first African-American to win a tennis title, as a role model: “Start where you are, use what you have, and do what you can.” That one quote has shaped my approach to business

more than any other learnings over the years.”

After a stint as the tennis pro in a country club, Mulhern went into sales with General Electric, but he wanted a path into the tech industry. He got an offer from Hewlett-Packard to become a channel manager, and moved to Boise in 1986, holding a variety of management positions, culminating as senior vice president of the LaserJet Global Business Unit.

In 2006, Mulhern retired from HP. He had set a goal early on that he was going to retire by 50, and he was ready for a change. “It had gotten to the point at HP that frankly it took such an enormous amount of effort to move the company in the smallest way,” he says. “It was time to move on.”

Pivot to CEO

While Mulhern hadn’t hit the stock option jackpot at HP, he had some money. “At senior management levels, the pay was good,” he says. “I don’t

live very extravagantly.” So he got involved with Highway 12 Ventures, a Boise-based early stage venture capital fund that provides the seed money startups need.

One of them was Cradlepoint. Highway 12 had invested in Cradlepoint in 2009 and 2010, and it was worried about its investment. “That transition from consumer to enterprise was a hard one to make,” Mulhern says. “The company was bleeding cash big-time. The feedback from the investors was ‘come in, and see if there’s a there, there – if not, we’ll button it up and see what we can get for it.’”

Mulhern agreed to become CEO. “When I got here, they had a fantastic engineering team, high-quality products, and trends were happening like IoT on the horizon and cellular becoming more acceptable,” he says. He decided there was a there, there.

“I had to take some time to figure out the business, who were the right people to carry the business forward,”

Mulhern says, eventually replacing half the management team. One of his first tasks was painful: Laying off 15 percent of the staff. “It’s a rough way to start,” he says. “Some investors wanted me to lay off more. I knew enough about technology to know, if you get behind the curve, you never get caught up.”

Settling in as Leader

Moving from printers to routers was a switch, but Mulhern had three years under his belt working with early-stage startups. “Given that we were trying to build a company of serious size and scale, the overlap between the things he did at HP and the things we were trying to do at Cradlepoint were obvious,” says Mark Solon, managing partner of Highway 12 and now managing partner of Techstars. “He’s had tremendous success scaling hardware businesses, he’s a tremendous leader, a great communicator, he inspires everybody around him, extremely thoughtful, doesn’t make rash decisions, thinks things through carefully, and (is) an excellent strategist. He’s everything you look for in a CEO.”

Mulhern sees three parts to his job: Opportunity, recognizing it and realizing it;

Risk management – both making sure the company is funded and financed, and, the trickier one, balancing its investment in current technology vs. where it needs to be in two to three years;

Talent – hiring the right people and filling skill gaps that crop up as the company evolves.

“If I were to go back and give myself advice, I’d say just jump into whatever job you can find, do the best job you can do, and learn as much as you can,” Mulhern says.

Employee Satisfaction

Its iconic location aside, Cradlepoint is not a company with splashy offices or amenities for its employees. Mulhern’s office features a couple of beat-



up leather armchairs that look like his wife evicted them from their house. Offices are the same type of Herman Miller cubicles that graced HP in the 1980s.

What makes tech employees, who could write their own ticket anywhere, flock to Cradlepoint? It’s not free food and Ping-Pong tables. “We’re working on really exciting technology for people who want to build a career,” Mulhern says. “IoT, 5G, SDN – from an engineer’s standpoint, that’s cool stuff to work on.” Ninety percent of the company’s engineering resources are in Boise, where, he notes, “we have to pay national salaries no matter what.” Every Cradlepoint employee has stock options. “You can’t go to your folks and say ‘everyone’s contribution matters, but we don’t want you to have a stake.’”

On a larger scale, “I’m old school – it really is, ‘do you have a direction people believe in, do they trust their leadership, do they feel like they’re making a contribution, do they enjoy the people they’re working with,’” Mulhern says. “If you have those things, it’s a pretty good fundamental base.”

Mulhern is also involved in Trailhead, Boise’s startup hub, supports Boise State University’s engineering programs and mentors employees in their own projects, even if that means losing them to startups. But otherwise, Cradlepoint doesn’t yet do much philanthropy. “I get three or four letters a week asking us to donate to this or that,” he says. “The best thing we can do is create jobs. If we start spreading those dollars out into other areas, that’s

fewer people we can hire.” The company, with a \$50 million payroll in Boise, expects to hire another 150 people this year. “That’s a lot of contribution to the community, and hopefully support for folks’ favorite charities.”

Looking Ahead

What’s next? The thing about investors giving you \$89 million is that they don’t do it as a charity. Generally, they want it back – preferably with a hefty premium on top. Typically, there are two ways to do that: Go public with an initial public offering (IPO), or be bought by another company.

In the short term, Cradlepoint intends to use the money to keep investing in its product, and possibly buy companies besides SDN developer Pertino, which it acquired in 2015. “I’m always on the lookout for things that could help us, but we don’t have anything in our sights right now,” Mulhern says. Having money on the balance sheet also gives Cradlepoint a stronger position with customers who want to make sure it will still be around in five years.

Beyond that? “Our goal is to build an IPO-candidate company,” Mulhern says. “Our current investor, TCV, has a three-to-five-year horizon they invest for. If it makes sense to do an IPO along the way, we’ll do that. If someone makes a great offer for the company and it was a good fit for the employees – that’s a board call.” Without the right cultural fit, acquisitions don’t work, he says, noting that several other Boise tech startups dwindled after they were bought by big companies like SAP and Microsoft.

And Mulhern himself? While he’d like to get more involved in the startup community, “This is the most fun I’ve had my entire career,” he says. “I love the company, I love the employees, I could do this for a long, long time. I’m signed up for the long haul.”



PASSIONATE ADVOCATE

Beth Oppenheimer believes in nurturing her team members and collaborating with others – and in doing so has become a powerful and passionate advocate for early childhood education throughout the state of Idaho.

By Chris Langrill

Special to Idaho Business Review

As the executive director of the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC), Beth Oppenheimer works to improve the quality and access of early childhood education programs.

But those who watch her tirelessly work for quality education opportunities in Idaho might be surprised to find out “a little-known secret that most people don’t know,” she says. “I wasn’t a good student.” But, “somewhere down the road, something clicked. Once I really got into school, oh, my gosh, I loved it. But that was later down the road.” She says her dad always called her “a late bloomer.”

“I became a great student. It just took me awhile,” Oppenheimer says. “So, it is interesting that here I am as an education advocate for all kids.”

A HELPING HAND

One thing that Oppenheimer has always had plenty of – and that has always guided her, especially in her role at Idaho’s AEYC: compassion.

“That was a value in our family,” she says, “being kind and helpful and accepting of others.”

Those values were part of Oppenheimer’s makeup at a young age.

“I was really shy when I was a little kid,” she says. “But I remember being drawn to the kids who probably needed a little more support. Looking back on that, as an adult, I think that was always sort of in my soul, if you will, to help people. I always wanted to help those kids who weren’t as fortunate as I was.

“I was brought up like that.”

LAND OF LINCOLN

Oppenheimer grew up in Springfield, Ill., and enjoyed playing sports.

“Basketball and golf were probably my two favorite sports,” she says. “I was a pretty good basketball player and golf was really my passion. ... I come from a golfing family.”

She started school in Southern Illinois University, but “college at the time wasn’t really my thing,” Oppenheimer says. She later moved to Montana and went back to college and received her bachelor’s degree in liberal arts from the University of Montana.

“That’s where I met my husband,” Oppenheimer says.

In 1998, the young couple made their way to Washington, D.C. It was there that she was exposed to the nonprofit world. She interned at the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. “That’s when I really figured out, this is what I want to do. I want to work for a nonprofit. I want to do something that benefits women and/or children.” Next, Oppenheimer was the manager of development and special events at Junior Achievement at the National Capitol Area.

A job opportunity for her husband Jonathan at the Idaho Conservation League drew the Oppenheimers to Moscow in 2002, where she worked as conference coordinator at the University of Idaho. A few years later they moved to Boise.

For seven years, Oppenheimer worked as the association director of Boise State University’s Student Union.

“That was a fun job,” she says. “But it was always my goal to get back to the nonprofit world.”

That opportunity came at the Idaho AEYC more than six years ago. They were looking for somebody who was passionate.

It was a perfect match. “I’ve been here ever since,” she says. “This is it. This is what I love to do. Being here at Idaho AEYC.”

AN AGENT FOR CHANGE

Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children is a state affiliate of the national organization. “First and foremost, we’re a professional membership organization for early childhood professionals,” Oppenheimer says. That means, child care providers, preschool teachers – anyone who works in the early childhood field. “We also work to improve the quality and access of early childhood programs, whether it’s child care, or preschool. And we do a lot of advocacy work.”

Oppenheimer describes her work as a three-pronged mission. “Our work touches three important sectors of our community – teachers, parents and children. We support those who care for, and work with, our youngest children by providing training and resources to help them learn and grow their knowledge in early childhood development,” she says. “We support parents by helping them find high-quality child care and early education programs so they can work. And finally, children who are engaged in high quality early education programs have more opportunities to thrive than if they did not.”

Through her leadership and vision Oppenheimer is making strides in all three areas. “I believe we are touching



lives and making our communities strong,” she says.

At Idaho AEYC, which employs 25 people, Oppenheimer has built her team by hiring others with a passion for early childhood education. And, she is a firm believer in collaboration. “I believe in the old saying, ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together,’” she says. “This is so true for the non-profit sector.”

That spirit has helped her and the organization notch a number of successes, including:

Idaho STARS is a collaborative project between Idaho AEYC and the University of Idaho. Its purpose is to improve the quality of child care by providing professional development, training and resources to those who care for and work with young children.

The Ready! For Kindergarten program is a workshop that helps parents work with their children to prepare them for school through play-based learning.

The Let’s Move Boise Child Care Program, through a variety of partner-

ships, secured funding and developed training for child-care providers in Boise. Idaho AEYC earned an award from the White House because of the work done through this program.

Along the way, Oppenheimer says Idaho AEYC has become the go-to voice for anything related to child care and early childhood education in Idaho. “The work that we do is helping thousands of children across Idaho, and those who are working with children,” she says. “And the early childhood workforce profession is a pretty tough industry.” A lot of child care workers work 10 to 12 hours a day, Oppenheimer says, and the pay scale is minimal: “the average salary is about \$9.77 an hour,” she says. It’s a little bit of a thankless job.” Oppenheimer says the Idaho AEYC helps those who work in those professions “to be the best they can.” And her efforts have gained high praise.

In recommending Oppenheimer for this award, Katrice Walters, Idaho AEYC’s fiscal manager, writes: “Even though Idaho AEYC has been an organi-

zation for over 30 years, very few people had ever heard of it or knew its purpose. Beth has changed that. She has given this organization a voice and worked tirelessly to make it heard.”

Teresa Wood-Adams, executive director of the Child Development Branch of the Treasure Valley Family YMCA, heartily agrees. “I continue to be amazed by the variety of opportunities that Beth and the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children are offered,” she says. “That is because of Beth’s leadership and her commitment to improving quality child care in Idaho for all children and families.” Molly Lentz, vice president and manager for community relations at Wells Fargo, Idaho Region, writes: “Beth’s leadership knows no bounds; she is a leader amongst leaders and is at the pinnacle of excellence.”

AN UPHILL BATTLE

Oppenheimer says she has met challenges along with her successes.

“Idaho is one of six states that does not invest state dollars in preschool,”

she says. “So we’re working really hard to move that dial in Idaho.” That investment promises a big pay-out, she says. “More children would have opportunities for high-quality early learning so they’re better prepared for school and through life.”

Does it frustrate her that Idaho is dragging its heels on the issue?

“I think that’s an understatement,” she says, with a laugh. “It’s the lack of understanding about why child education is so important, and the lack of connecting the dots that is so frustrating. We put a ton of money into K through 12, and I commend the governor and the Legislature for really making education a priority, I really do,” she says. “But that missing piece is the early childhood piece. And, at the end of the day, we’re still going to have half of our kids entering kindergarten without the skills and knowledge they need to be successful.”

“So, it’s all about connecting those dots.” It all boils down to understanding how critically important early education is, she says. “If we would just realize (that) if we could put some dollars into early childhood education – because that is when the brain is developing the fastest – if we could invest in those early years, we’re going to see a return on our investment.

“We’re making it harder than it needs to be.”

KEEP ON KEEPING ON

Oppenheimer’s passion about her job and its mission, and her determination to keep fighting what she strongly believes is the good fight, is innate to her being. She says it was an attitude instilled in her by a very important role model in her life.

“My dad used to always say, ‘Do something. Just do something. Don’t sit around and do nothing, even if it’s wrong. Do something, and figure it out. If you do it, and it doesn’t work out, try it again. Or do something different. Just do something.’”

Those words have always rung true to Oppenheimer. And Jonathan has watched his wife live by them for years, even more so since she has been in her role at Idaho AEYC.

“It really put her in a position of



leadership that she’s been able to really excel at and do great things,” he says. “She’s helped to raise the issues of early childhood education, and she’s been one of the most powerful voices on that (issue) the state has seen in years, if not decades.”

Jonathan says since he and his wife both work as advocates at nonprofits they have a better understanding of the ups and downs in their work lives.

“We are each other’s No. 1 cheerleaders and sounding boards,” he says. “Certainly, I wouldn’t be able to do the work I do without her support, and I think she’d probably say the same.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

The Oppenheims have two daughters. Maddie, 15, attends East Junior High, while 9-year-old Annabelle goes to Liberty Elementary.

“I think we have been good role models for the kids,” Oppenheimer says. “They are growing up and experiencing us being engaged. My 15-year-old daughter won’t hesitate to go phone-banking or to go knock on doors and canvas for a candidate or issue. She helped a lot with the latest school bond initiative. She was

right there with us.”

Even though the issues they deal with on a daily basis are serious ones, that doesn’t mean it’s all work and no play. The family enjoys spending time outdoors, and this summer Oppenheimer will play golf with her mom as a partner in a women’s league at Warm Springs Golf Course. And, if things do get her feeling a bit down, Oppenheimer says, she’s got one family member she can rely upon to cheer her up no matter what. “My husband makes me laugh,” she says. “Clever, funny people make me laugh, and he’s one of them. He still, to this day, makes me laugh.”

And, don’t be surprised if you run into the Oppenheims at the next charity event you attend.

“Honestly, what we do for fun is just engage in the community,” Oppenheimer says. “That’s fun. A lot of our date nights are, ‘Oh, we have an event to go to, or a fundraiser to go to.’ Our lines are blurred when it comes to fun, work, engagement and all of that. It all sort of falls into one pot.

“But we choose to do that, and I wouldn’t want it any other way.”



HEALTHCARE HEAD HONCHO

He didn't become a pro football player, as he once dreamed, but some of those early injuries on the field likely contributed to Rodney Reider's segue into becoming a leader in healthcare.

By Jeanne Huff

Idaho Business Review

Rodney Reider was drawn to the healthcare profession, in large part, because of his – and his four athletic brothers' – numerous trips to the ER. “The five boys, we spent so much time in the ER,” he says. And, even as a young boy, he noted and valued the health professionals he encountered.

“I got to know the nurses, and actually the nurses convinced me to go into healthcare,” Reider says. “Because they were so kind and patient. And they really went out of their way to make sure that I or my brothers were taken care of, but also that the family was taken care of.”

GROWING UP AND GETTING ON THE RIGHT PATH

Reider grew up in Redlands, Calif. He and his four brothers were active in a variety of sports. “In high school I wanted to be the first five-sport letterman that had ever been at that high school so I tried to be in five sports,” he says. He added track that year, “so I played baseball, basketball, football, track – and I wrestled one year, too.” Reider says as a result, he racked up a number of injuries. “I’ve had, I think, four surgeries on the right knee, three on the left; I’ve had both my shoulders operated on ... I’ve supported health care,” he quips with a smile.

When he was in high school, Reider student-taught at a Catholic school. It was another life moment that pushed him toward his journey.

“It really affected me for a calling, that there’s something bigger than yourself that you can really go out there and make a difference in the world,” he says.

He attended the University of Redlands in order to spend some time with his grandmother on his mother’s side, another influential person who helped guide him on his path.

“My grandmother lived (in Redlands) and I was very close to her,” Reider says. “I called her ‘Nanny.’” It was not only a way for him to bond with his grandmother, she helped on his spiritual journey.

“(That time with her) really influenced me in terms of the Lord. She was a person who had a lot of faith and really impacted me in my life and my walk of faith.”

It was the perfect blend for Reider – healthcare and faith.

“Catholic healthcare is being a healing ministry of Jesus but also being a transformative presence in the community,” he says.

Reider worked in a number of hospital systems and medical centers before coming to Boise – and Saint Alphonsus – in 2010, serving first as chief operating officer and president, and, since 2015, as president and CEO.

“Who could ask for a better calling than to work in healthcare, helping people at the most difficult times of their life – or celebrating, too, when they have a baby or get healed,” Reider says.

AN UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL LEADER

Reider believes in being a “collaborative leader.” And, “I thrive on empowering those around me to be their best, because when they perform at their potential, the patients and families that we serve are the ones that benefit.

“I think that’s what leadership is – so much of it is looking at: how do you take the gifts and skills and talents that God has given somebody and match that with the needs of an organization, inspire, give them the tools – and really let ‘em go.”

Reider makes it a point to shake hands with each and every one he encounters when he walks down the hall to a meeting or to lunch. “To be able to walk around and interact with the people who are providing the care, or providing the support for those who are providing the care, it’s actually energizing for me and it’s inspiring,” he says. “To see them at their best, to see them interacting with patients and each other and really doing good work – great work, not just good work. And, I think as a leader, my job is to be interacting with them, to support them, to tell them I care.”

Reider also says it is imperative to provide support when it is needed, “to see what obstacles they have that we need to knock down so they can do their job much better,” he says. “To see them at their best, to be a source of energy for them, or an inspiration, to continually look at how we can improve the care, to see if there’s ways that we can provide them with an environment that makes them prosper or use their gifts even more.

“The job of leader is to really find out what’s going on, figure out what the people need and find ways to support them. And then, get out of the way and let ‘em run. And they’ll make incredible things happen.”

Carolyn Holly, vice president of marketing, communications, public relations



and community engagement at Saint Alphonsus, writes of his commitment in a letter of recommendation. “With a team of over 5,000 colleagues, Rodney diligently makes time for rounds at all hours to get to know those who work with him. Even during the night shift, Rodney can be found on the sixth floor at midnight shaking hands and asking questions about how people like their work and what they want to do in the future.”

HONORS, FAMILY AND FUN

Reider has been lauded with a number of awards and serves on a dozen boards throughout the community, including the Boise Chamber of Commerce, the College of Business and Economics, the Boise State Foundation and the College of Osteopathic Medicine at Boise State University, and Bishop Kelly to name a few. In addition, Reider is most proud of his service as honorary commander of the 124th Medical Wing of Idaho National Guard, “a major honor” that he holds dear. In a letter recommending him for this award, Tim Dunnagan, dean of the College of Health Sciences at Boise State

University, writes that Reider is well deserving of his accolades and points to the affect it has made in his own life and in the community.

“Because of his influence, I am in a better position to help make our society a better place to live in,” writes Dunnagan.

Reider is married and has two teenage daughters, 18 and 15. He reads a lot “not only about healthcare, but other industries so I can learn about what they’re doing and I can apply that to what we are providing to the community,” he says. He also enjoys reading classic literature and philosophy such as Homer, Montagne, Hagel and Augustine. “I’m kind of a nerd that way,” he says, suddenly recalling a self-prescribed assignment from his youth.

“When I was deciding what to do (with my life) I remember reading “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” when I was 11 years old. Is that nerdy or what,” he says with a laugh.

Favorite movies include Captain America and Gladiator, although “I love to watch The Hallmark Channel with my daughters,” he adds.

And since childhood he’s been a huge Green Bay Packers fan.

“I got caught up in the Packers,” he says. “Which was wonderful because later on I got to spend time with Bart Starr... I also got to meet Brett Favre, too, and Donald Driver and a bunch of those guys.”

Reider says because of his allegiance to them, it was “difficult to leave the Packers” when he decided to move to Boise and Saint Alphonsus. “But I still have season tickets – and I’m an owner, too. I can go to any of the meetings or anything I want.

“But I’d rather be in Boise.”

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Reider says he is committed to Saint Alphonsus being on the cutting edge in the latest technologies for patient care, customer service, and operational efficiency. Robotic surgery, advanced electronic medical records systems, research and development through clinical trials, pioneering payment and risk models, establishing continuums of care, exploring new areas for growth in facilities and services, and clinical

advancements across Saint Alphonsus “have improved our ability to compete by providing the most innovative care at the best cost,” Reider says.

But not at the cost of leaving out those who need help the most.

“The underserved in our state also deserve the same high-quality healthcare, which is why we have been providing mobile mammography services to rural communities, home visits to the elderly and impaired, and nearly \$40 million in charity care and other community benefits in 2015 alone,” he says. “Our obligation to provide innovative services and maintain viability is hand-in-hand with our obligation to serve the needs of the underserved.

“My ultimate vision for the organization is similar to the vision that the Sisters of the Holy Cross had in founding Saint Alphonsus over 100 years ago: to provide a transforming healing presence within the communities we serve.”



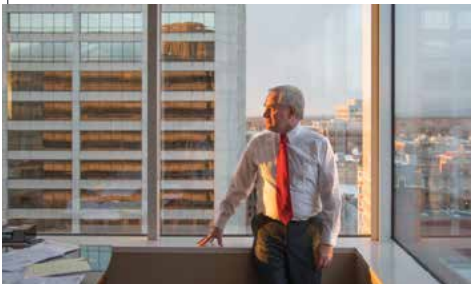
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IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

It only takes a few minutes after sitting down with Matt Rissell to see why he's been successful with everything he touches – he's driven, imaginative and passionate about everything he does.

By Chris Langrill

Special to Idaho Business Review

Matt Rissell is a driven, imaginative businessman. There are any number of ways to illustrate that, but perhaps the best way is to start at the beginning – with a bushel of chili peppers.

“My very first job was when I was in the seventh grade, when I went to the farmer’s market with my mom,” Rissell says. “I looked at a bushel of great big red chili peppers. It was like 99 cents for a bushel.”

He bought \$10 worth.

“And I threw them over my back and sold them door-to-door and made like \$400,” he recalls with a laugh. “Without really knowing it, I was always kind of a little entrepreneur.”

Rissell is no longer selling chili peppers. Instead, he’s the CEO of TSheets, an Eagle-based enterprise that helps companies electronically track time.

He says TSheets has grown at a 100 percent rate the past four years, and by the end of this year he hopes to have 250 employees working at the company. As of November 2016, TSheets had grown 681.6 percent since 2012. It now serves more than 20,000 businesses in over 100 countries.

What has been the key to all this success?

“What I really believe is that there is no key to success, that there is no one thing that will create something amazing,” Rissell says. “It is the sum of all the little decisions you make on a daily basis that creates something amazing.”

COLORADO ROOTS

Rissell grew up in Grand Junction, Colo. His mother was a third-grade

teacher and his dad was a clinical psychologist.

“We loved the outdoors,” he says. “So we did camping, fishing, hunting, skiing. All of those.”

In 1999, Rissell earned a bachelor’s degree in management and finance from Colorado Mesa University.

“I found out in college that I enjoyed starting things,” he says.

He did a bit of roaming, both geographically and professionally.

He was briefly a youth pastor. And, he also did a stint as a server at a Texas Roadhouse in Seattle.

In June of 2000 he wound up in Boise and started working at Verizon Wireless.

“I wasn’t a great salesman, but I just outworked everybody,” Rissell says of his time as a major account manager. “I became the No. 1 salesman in the nation for Verizon – out of Boise, Idaho.”

But after four years, his time with Verizon had run its course.

“They made some pretty big corporate changes, so I decided to leave and start a franchise,” Rissell says. “I started all the Cartridge Worlds here in town.”

He had about 35 employees at three Cartridge World locations, and he decided to try to come up with a better way to track their time.

It became a pivotal decision in his life.

“Never intending for it to become a product, let alone a company, I had my buddy build a time-tracking system,” he says. “And my bookkeeper, after she ran the first payroll, she said ‘Matt this is amazing. Can you sell it?’

“And I ended up with TSheets.”

EVOLVING AS A LEADER

TSheets was not an instant success.

The company went through a few failed launches before finally taking off in 2010.

Rissell says his role and management style changed as the company changed.

“The CEO that was required when we had 11 employees was completely different than when we had 43 employees, and that was completely different than when we had 120 employees,” he says. “At the end of this year, I think we will have 250 employees, and that’s going to require a different CEO.”

And Rissell says he made it a point to evaluate his personal performance through every stage of failure and growth.

“I often have to look at myself in the mirror and ask myself if I’m the right CEO for this company,” he says. “And if I’m not, am I willing to put in the work and learn and become the CEO that we need at that point? It’s something I do often.”

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Stacy Ennis, a creative consultant and writer based in Eagle, met Rissell by chance in 2011. She became fascinated by the company story and has been keeping tabs on its progress ever since.

“We sat next to each other on a flight,” Ennis says. “TSheets was a growing company, but it certainly wasn’t anything like it is today. I heard all about TSheets and I became a customer right after that.”

Ennis has watched TSheets grow.

“I feel like I’m pretty unbiased,” she says. “So, to see it in a little bit of a removed way has been kind of cool.”

The more she learns about TSheets – and Rissell – the bigger fan she becomes. She’s gotten to know “a ton of people



over there,” she says, adding that she checks in every couple of months on her new TSheets friends “and some of the projects they’re working on.” Ennis says the work culture is one of deep respect for the boss, with nary a word of criticism. “And when people there talk about Matt, everyone admires him and appreciates him,” she says.

Rissell is proud that TSheets has been named one of the Best Places to Work in Idaho. And the culture is definitely one all its own.

It hits you when you walk in the door. One of the first things you may notice – and perhaps raise an eyebrow about – is a can of Pabst Blue Ribbon on most of the employees’ desks. Not to worry, it’s there for a good reason. As the company website states, “**The PBR** is not just a cold beverage.” It also represents the company’s values:

- Technology** – Customers love.
- Healthy** – Work really hard. Play really hard.
- Excellence** – Require it from yourself and your teammates.
- Players** – Attract and develop the best.

Be First – Innovate and win.
Relentless – Passionate about our customers’ & our company’s success.

WALKING THE WALK

Ennis says she has seen some of the company values firsthand.

She was sitting and talking with a few of her friends in the breakroom. And then 4 o’clock hit. A swarm of people came in, played some Ping-Pong for about 20 minutes, and then they all went back to work. “It was really interesting,” she says.

Rissell credits the philosophy that his father instilled in him from a young age in helping him, and the company, to be successful.

“I adopted a belief system that my dad gave me: You cannot surround yourself with enough smart people,” Rissell says.

Ennis believes that Rissell has not only surrounded himself with smart people at this company, he has also empowered them.

“People there ... get to do things that they’re so excited about,” Ennis says. “He really encourages people to work on

things that are interesting and people really get to craft projects that connect to their interests.

“It’s not just him, of course, but he’s played a really big part in helping the leaders he’s growing at the company be great leaders.”

Ennis says that seeing all of that happening is one of the reasons she makes regular visits to TSheets.

“You walk in and people are happy,” she says. “They’re smiling, and they’re working really hard and they’re engaged in their jobs. It’s pretty infectious, too. Every time I go in there, I feel really happy. It’s really one of the most unique cultures I have ever seen.”

Not surprisingly, Ennis is who nominated Rissell to be recognized as a CEO of Influence.

“Getting to meet this guy on a plane five or six years ago, and then seeing what he’s grown and how he has run it in a really incredible way, he definitely deserves some recognition for that,” she says.

FAMILY MAN

In addition to his work life, Rissell

also has an active home life. “I have a wife and three very active kids,” Rissell says. “My daughter, the oldest is in swimming and soccer. And my two boys are in football, wrestling and soccer. And we all ski during the wintertime. So it’s really busy.”

Rissell admits it can all be a bit of a juggling act. But he makes sure to keep his priorities in mind.

“What I like to communicate with my team is that you have crystal moments and you have rubber moments in your life,” he says. “Rubber moments are: Can you miss one or two games out of your son’s baseball season and have it be OK? Absolutely. But would you want to miss their orientation at college or when they get engaged? Those are the big moments. They’re crystal, and once you’ve lost them they’re broken.

“And so my wife and I are always very careful to protect those crystal moments with our kids. Come hell or high water, you have to make those moments a priority. And my kids know that.”

Rissell’s love of the outdoors began when he was growing up in Colorado. He’s passing that tradition on to his children in Idaho.

“I still love the outdoors,” he says. “That’s one of the reasons we built TSheets in Eagle, Idaho. I ski in the wintertime. I steelhead fish in the late winter. I turkey hunt in the spring, then we salmon fish in June. And then I’m an archery hunter when it comes to September. There’s something to do every season, and I’ve involved my kids in every aspect of it. In fact, my 11-year-old daughter just harvested her first deer this last year, and it was a really big moment. Who says girls don’t hunt?”

CENTER OF THE EARTH

And, as it turns out, that love of Eagle and all the opportunities that surround it made it a great place for a company headquarters.

“The true influence that TSheets has is the result of 190 of the best people on planet Earth that work here,” Rissell says.



“This team is absolutely amazing, and what they are creating from Eagle, Idaho, reaching employees and users in 112 countries across the world – it’s unbelievable what they’re doing. And very few people know what this team is creating, and it’s amazing to be a part of it.

“And to be able to do it from Eagle, Idaho, blows my mind.”



Vistage congratulates **Dr. Bert Glandon, Steve Woodworth, Matt Rissell and Marya Woods** and the other 2017 CEO of Influence Award Winners.

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ROAD WISE, NOT WEARY

Jerry Whitehead is the president and CEO of Western Trailers, a company that helps other companies move their stuff around in over-the-road trailers, to the tune of producing more than 1,000 trailers a year.

by Stephanie Schaerr Hansen

Special to Idaho Business Review

In his five decades at Western Trailer, Jerry Whitehead has seen it all. From the days when he helped repair trailers by hand as a new high-school graduate to today, when high-tech precision machinery helps produce more than 1,000 trailers a year, Whitehead has been there every step of the way.

But while much has changed since he joined the company, his humble leadership style and dedication to innovation haven't. In those 50 years, he has nimbly navigated many challenges facing his industry over the years to usher in a bright future.

EARLY LIFE

Whitehead was born in Soda Springs and grew up in the tiny town of Thatcher in southeastern Idaho, where his grandparents raised him on their cattle ranch and taught him life lessons that he still follows today.

Like other ranch kids, he woke up early every morning to attend to the many chores required in ranching life. Once, he and his cousin comprised a scheme to take turns doing all the chores, so that they'd alternate having one week of hard work and one week off. But the first day of his first week "off," his grandfather woke him up just as early as usual.

"He rooted me out of bed and said there's still plenty of work to do," he recalls with a smile.

Whitehead has always carried that dedication to hard work with him, and it's benefitted him in life and in business. He's also maintained a humility that his grandmother instilled in him at a young age. She despised arrogance, he says, and

she encouraged him to stay humble no matter what.

Whitehead says he has always been interested in transportation. Growing up on the ranch, the family's old truck was their lifeline. They depended on it to bring everything in and out, and he recognized from an early age how much of Idaho's industry depends on trucking.

After high school, he came to Boise to get to know his father, who had started a company with a business partner called Cornia & Whitehead, which would eventually become Western Trailer. Whitehead refers to his first job at the company as a "flunky" position, one in which he was responsible for doing anything that needed to be done, and everything that no one else wanted to do. At the time, the company was located in an old fire station, and each trailer was built or repaired entirely by hand.

In 1963, Whitehead joined the Air National Guard for six years, where he learned more than just how to repair airframes.

"That was an experience in discipline and an experience in training," he says. "It's always impressed me how they can take a bunch of kids and maintain the most expensive fleet in the world."

The principles he learned during his stint in the service would serve him well in both his leadership and his technical skills. In 1979, Whitehead bought out the other investors in the company, becoming responsible for its direction.

DIVERSIFICATION

With its first all-aluminum cattle trailer in 1969, Western Trailer started its trail of innovation, which helped the company survive several bumps in the

road in the coming years. After a cattle market crash in the 1970s, the company shifted its focus from cattle to grain hopper trailers. Those were extremely popular in the Midwest until the United States imposed a grain embargo on the Soviet Union in the 1980s, thus drying up the demand.

"That almost put us out of business and that was a valuable lesson," Whitehead says. "It started us down the road of diversification."

Whitehead and his team weathered that storm and others to come by developing various product offerings to ensure that there was always a demand for their products. Today, the company continues to develop custom solutions for a variety of industries, including agriculture, lumber, and solid waste. Depending on the technology, Whitehead's trailers retail anywhere from \$35,000 to \$180,000 apiece.

"We're one of the most diversified in America," Whitehead says. "Sometimes that's a blessing, and sometimes that's a curse."

Along with their expanding product line, the company's facilities have grown as well. From its humble beginnings in the fire station, Western Trailer now occupies over 200,000 square feet of manufacturing space at the company's Boise headquarters, and also operates satellite locations in Oregon and Washington. The employee base now tops 400 people.

The company's technology has changed quite a bit, as well.

"We used to draw things on a legal pad or a napkin and kind of design-build," Whitehead says. "Today everything is computer-controlled



machinery. Every little detail has to be drawn and detailed so you can turn it into machine code and make the parts.”

LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

During the workday, it’s rare to find Whitehead in his office. He spends most of the day wandering the production floor, speaking directly with his employees and overseeing operations himself. This hands-on approach has served him well, to the point where he says he can spot anything that needs to be changed just by looking at it.

“I look at products and if things aren’t right they jump out at ya,” he says. “If they’re right everything is good.”

But though he is a daily presence on the production floor, Whitehead isn’t one to micromanage his employees. He believes in giving his leadership team the leeway to manage their own departments as they see fit.

“I basically give people something to do and then get out of the way and let them do it,” he says. Though it may seem simple, it’s clear that he may be on to something – his managers and supervisors have an average length of service of over 18 years.

Whitehead has also learned not to make snap decisions when an import-

ant issue arises. He abides by what he calls his “24-hour rule,” which stipulates that he never takes any action on an issue until he’s thought it over for 24 hours.

As a whole, the company is focused on “Lean manufacturing,” a philosophy that encourages constant optimization and improvement. Every year, Whitehead and his team look over their product line to see what improvements they could make in the new model year to make sure they stay on top of their game.

“Nothing lasts forever,” Whitehead says.

SECRETS TO SUCCESS

Whitehead credits much of his success to being in the right place at the right time, and to the people who gave him a chance early on.

“I’ve had a lot of mentors and a lot of good luck,” he says.

He had early believers in Morrison-Knudsen, the Boise-based engineering firm that happened to have an aircraft hangar next to Whitehead’s old firehouse shop, and the wood-product company Boise Cascade. Whitehead says those companies would always give Western Trailer a chance to work with them any-

time they had a transportation project over the years, and those relationships were instrumental in helping the company grow.

In addition, a chance encounter brought Whitehead their longest-term customer. Whitehead boarded a plane one Friday evening and asked to sit next to a man he’d never met before. The two men chatted the whole flight, and the man told Whitehead to call on Monday to talk to his trucking company. That man turned out to be J.R. Simplot, and the J.R. Simplot agriculture company is still a sizable customer of Western Trailer to this day.

But luck and goodwill can take someone only so far, and Whitehead’s willingness to learn about different industries in order to deliver unique products is a key element to his success as well.

Whitehead recalls an experience when he was trying to break in to the timber industry. He followed a wood chip truck into a facility in Oregon and asked to speak with the owner. The older gentleman, who’d been in the industry for years, gruffly asked him what a “tater picker from Idaho” could possibly tell him about hauling wood chips. Whitehead thought just a few seconds and replied, “Well, I hear you’re the top chip hauler in Oregon; I’m here to learn.” He says that frank and open gesture was the start of a great relationship.

“Sometimes that’s what you gotta do,” he says.

PUBLIC SERVICE

Whitehead’s experience meeting so many divergent industries’ transportation needs gives him a unique perspective on the transportation industry in Idaho, which he’s put to good use in his service on the Idaho Transportation Board. He’s served on the board since 2009, and was appointed chairman in 2012 by Governor Butch Otter. He and the six other members of the board oversee the state’s transportation department, deciding to fund projects they feel will most benefit the state.

Whitehead is passionate about mak-

ing Idaho's transportation systems as efficient as possible, and he says many people in the state don't realize how dependent most of the biggest industries in the state are on trucking, from potatoes to lumber. Since many of the main railroads don't stop in Idaho, he says it's up to the trucking industry to get most items in and out of the state, much like his grandparents' old ranch truck, but on a larger scale.

"It's all about efficient transportation to keep this state in business," he says.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

After 50 years in the industry, Whitehead foresees that the biggest challenge to come, to both his company and the industry as a whole, is the transfer of power to the next generation. Many of his most seasoned workers are approaching retirement age, and it's vital to backfill their positions with new blood. As the manufacturing industry takes a backseat to flashier high-tech fields, he recognizes that he needs to find ways to both attract top talent and



train younger workers.

"Somehow we have to make manufacturing a little more glamorous and make kids want to be interested in

manufacturing and not being computer programmers," he says.

DOWNTIME

Whitehead and his wife, Shannon, live just over the ridge from Boise, where cellphone reception doesn't always reach, which is exactly how they like it. They have four children and eight grandchildren, ranging from a few weeks to 21 years old.

Ever the Idaho man, Whitehead spends much of his downtime outside. He loves to hunt and fish, and brings his family to Priest Lake in the summers. When they want to get even farther away from the city, they visit their cabin near Atlanta, Idaho.

While he spends most of his day thinking about high-tech transportation solutions, Whitehead enjoys participating in low-tech transportation methods, too. He bought a horse as soon as he could afford to keep one in Boise, and has ridden ever since. These days, he rides an Appaloosa named Spook – "he was born on Halloween."

Jerry, from everyone here at Western Trailers, congratulations on this wonderful honor!

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Congratulations to all the CEO'S of Influence



CHIEF ENGINEER

While she didn't become a brain surgeon, Marya Woods has been the operational leader at Apex Manufacturing Solutions, confidently stitching together the company's success story.

By Jeanne Huff

Idaho Business Review

Ask Marya Woods, who has a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, who she would like to have dinner with, living or dead, and she has an answer ready: Marie Curie. But it may not be for the reason you think. While Woods found Curie interesting when she studied her in school, "a couple of years ago, I found out that her real name was Marya Skłodowska. She's actually Russian and married a French man, so henceforth, she was known as Marie Curie ... and I never meet anyone with my name, so that would be awesome."

GROWING UP

When she was a little girl, however, a career in chemical engineering was not in the picture. "For a long time, I really wanted to be a hairdresser," Woods says. "My parents weren't too excited about that. And then at some point, I thought for sure I wanted to be a brain surgeon."

Not surprisingly, Woods was good in math – "I loved it" – and her second favorite thing was playing the viola in the symphony and orchestra.

It wasn't until an aptitude test in high school listed chemical engineering as a good choice that her future path got on track. "It's a great fit – I love it," Woods says.

FROM THERE TO HERE

Woods and Lonnie Purvis, her Apex co-founder and now husband, came up with the idea for the company after a shared and disheartening work experience. She was bored and he was overworked – and both were "disgrun-

tled" – so, "we decided to try it on our own."

"We had to think of a name, came up with our business plan," Woods says. Their first offices were their homes and coffee shops. They hadn't planned on hiring any employees for the first three years, but clients came a-knocking and that plan was amended to three months.

"We hired our first employee and rented an office ... we were lucky we had a couple of clients that kept us busy when we first opened our doors. We've just kind of grown organically since then."

The company found a niche and settled in. "We provide factory automation services, which is the software layer that is in-between the people and the machines inside of a factory," Woods explains. "So, that's everything from the plant floor device control to the graphical interface on the machine where they may go: start and stop, or: select recipe. We also provide hooks into their ERP (enterprise resource planning) system and can help with performance, quality and other initiatives – truly, it's the software layer that we work in."

TEAMING FOR SUCCESS

Woods has built the company with intention. "My personal goal at Apex is to make it a great place to work through continuous improvement," she says. "Part of the inspiration for starting Apex was that we wanted a place to work where the individual was valued over profits." Some of the company initiatives that support that vision include: unlimited time off (quality

of work is measured over clocked-in hours); doing fun stuff at work (problem-solving engineers need stress busters); required training to promote growth and learning (80 hours annually on technical, and soft skills and professional development); and a "vibrant" working environment. Apex is located on the Boise Greenbelt, the company has a corporate membership with Boise GreenBike, and the office has two walking stations and provides stand-up desks.

In addition, the office has installed a lounge and shuffleboard, and at 3:30 p.m. every Friday – "we actually call it 'beer-thirty,'" Woods says with a laugh – "we grab a beverage and we come over here and play some shuffleboard, and we sit on the couch and give each other a hard time and, yeah, it's been really nice."

Woods is proud of the fact "we did not lay off a single person during the previous downturn. Since our workforce is highly trained and has special technical skills, we opted to keep everyone employed and ride out the slowdown." By investing in infrastructure and implementing best practices, Woods hopes to stave off any future downturns. "In the event that we are light on work, we will focus on internal improvements so that we are stronger on the other side of the slowdown."

SUPPORTING FUTURE ENGINEERS

Woods – and Apex – support STEM education. Both time and money is donated to programs at Boise State University and University of Idaho.

"We typically select our donations



to go towards parts of the programs supporting students working as a team to flex their engineering muscles,” Woods says. “For BSU, we donated to the FIRST Robotics competition team that BSU hosts that is made up of all girls. For U of I, we donated to the WERC fund that promotes student engineering teams competing internationally to solve real-world environmental issues.” Woods also speaks to the freshmen and senior chemical engineering classes at U of I “about what I did with my engineering degree.

“Supporting STEM education is something that I am passionate about.”

SUCCESSES

“We have experienced amazing revenue growth over the last several years,” Woods says. Since 2005, when the company was started, revenue has grown from \$0 to \$7 million, and charted a whopping 76 percent year-over-year spurt from 2015 to 2016.

Woods attributes it all to her now 23-strong team.

“I think the success at Apex comes from us creating a cohesive team of people who really are passionate about doing the right thing for our customers,” she says. “One of our core values is sustainability, and to me, that doesn’t mean do you recycle your paper after

you use it from the printer, to me that means when you’re designing a solution that gets installed at the customer’s site, is it scalable, is it going to last? Then the long-term, can they build on it? When you’re working with vendors, are you building a long-term relationship that’s built on trust so that we can continue to build on our successes? Just really using that long-term success over a short-term win mentality in everything that we do.”

COMMUNITY REACH AND CLOSE TO HOME

In addition to supporting STEM students, Apex supports the community in projects such as Create Common Good. “The whole office went out to their garden site and we spent half a day working out there,” Woods says. “The majority of it was moving dirt and manure, which wasn’t that glamorous, but we also took all of their wheelbarrows and some of our mechanically-inclined guys went to Home Depot and got some parts and fixed all their wheelbarrows so they were working better.”

Woods and her husband share a blended family including five kids, ages 9, 11, 15, 17 and 26. Woods recently became a grandmother – her husband’s oldest daughter recently had a baby –



“so that’s pretty exciting!”

Woods says she often puts her decisions through a what-if process. “The two things that kind of guide my decisions are: how would I feel if that action that I’m going to do were to happen to me? And then, how would I feel if I had to tell my kids about it later? When I think about those two things, it definitely helps guide me.”

When it comes to any leisure time she may have, Woods enjoys whole foods cooking and making things from scratch. Lately, she’s been going through phases “making sour-dough bread one week and right now I’ve got Kombucha going on the counter.” One of her most favorite activities is unwinding with the younger children.

“After dinner and before bedtime, I sit down with the younger kids and we do reading. I really enjoy that because we’re all having our own adventure but we’re all sitting in the same room ... so yeah, I guess that would be a good place for me.”



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RANCH HAND EXTRAORDINAIRE

Steve Woodworth makes thrift store shopping a win/win/win situation, but wants you to know Idaho Youth Ranch is much more than thrift stores. Much, much, MUCH more.

By Jeanne Huff

Idaho Business Review

By his own accounting, Steve Woodworth was “kind of a shy kid.” He grew up in the Denver suburb of Lakewood, Colo. and was raised by his dad, an architect who worked out of his home office, and his stay-at-home mom. His mom, along with her sister, ran a consignment shop and small restaurant called The Deacon’s Bench, situated in the famous Red Rocks area. “They would serve one lunch entrée,” Woodworth recalls. “So, anyway, I grew up with good food,” he says with a laugh.

Woodworth also fondly remembers a childhood project. His dad, along with he and his two brothers, built a swimming pool in the family’s backyard. “We dug it by hand,” he says.

Looking back, Woodworth recalls that there was a significant chapter in his growing up years.

When he was about 17, he says he “had a lot of anger.” He ended up attending a “stress camp” on a sort of dare by one of the camp counselors. He didn’t know it then, and it didn’t happen overnight, but that experience was life changing.

“We climbed Pike’s Peak, which is a 14,000-foot peak, with full backpacks. And that was a great challenge for all of us,” Woodworth says. After a few more challenges, drills, and problem-solving exercises, the counselors gave him the feedback of a lifetime. “They talked to me about my sarcasm,” he says. “We had sort of those deep conversations that I really needed at that time of my life.



And then they said, ‘You know, we think that you have the ability to be a leader.’ I think that experience really kind of paved the way to do what I’m doing now.”

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Idaho Youth Ranch was founded by a Methodist minister – Rev. James Crowe – and his wife, Ruby Carey Crowe. Crowe was worried about what he saw as an increase in wayward youth. He wanted to create a home and school for them so they could receive “an orientation of the whole self – physical, emotional, social and spiritual to achieve a well-balanced personality and character.” In 1953, Idaho Youth Ranch was incorporated as a nonprofit. It was a working ranch and the wayward youth – at that time, all male – helped with crops and livestock.

GROWING AND CHANGING

The IYR has gone through several iterations from then until now. During the 1970s, the state of Idaho, overwhelmed with juvenile court numbers, asked the IYR for help. And so, for a number of years, the organization shifted focus to youth rehabilitation services for kids placed by the state. “From the early ‘70s until 2008, we were the state’s largest contract service provider,” Woodworth says. Contract services became the largest source of revenue and most IYR clients were referred by state agencies.

Also, starting in the early 1980s, IYR began its thrift store business and foundation. So, when IYR and the state decided to part ways in 2009, the organization had to do a bit of a shuffle. “We began implementing a plan to revise our funding model from one heavily reliant on state contracts to a



model that primarily relies on donor support,” Woodworth says. It was risky – the organization was cutting away from what had been its main life line for decades to patch together a support system that had to come from thrift shop revenue and donors. But IYR saw a huge benefit from the separation. “Most importantly, we were able to shift our services from the back end of the system and begin providing prevention and early intervention services for at-risk children,” sans any interference or control from the state, says Woodworth.

IYR TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE

Woodworth has been at IYR since 1995, moving from director of operations to executive vice president and COO to president and CEO. Since 2015, Woodworth has served solely as the organization’s CEO.

And today, IYR is thriving. It is able to help children, youth and their fami-

lies before they are in crisis. “An Idaho parent or guardian can now receive help for their child ... when they most need it and when it can do the most good,” Woodworth says. The original ranch was in Rupert, but recently IYR purchased a 258-acre property located in the Middleton area. The new Idaho Youth Ranch Hands of Promise campus will provide residential and outpatient therapy for IYR clients and will collaborate with organizations such as 4-H, FFA, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, Ride for Joy, YMCA and more “to create a new and unique environment to involve thousands of kids in positive youth development activities and experiences – including equine therapy,” Woodworth says.

KUDOS

Woodworth has received a number of awards over the years, including being named Northwest Nazarene University’s 2017 Alumnus of the Year. In addition,

a slew of local luminaries sent words of praise for Woodworth’s nomination for this award.

“Many of the recent successes that the Idaho Youth Ranch has experienced would not be possible without the leadership and expertise of Steve Woodworth,” writes City of Boise Mayor Dave Bieter.

President and COO of Idaho Youth Ranch, Rick Alis J.D., says, among other attributes, Woodworth has great integrity. “Borrowing from the television commercial, this characteristic is ‘priceless.’”

President and CEO of Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce Bill Connors, also a 2012 CEO of Influence, writes: “I can’t think of another CEO who has more influence in the nonprofit sector than Steve.”

And Jim Everett, 2011 CEO of Influence and now swim coach at the College of Idaho and former CEO at Treasure Valley Family YMCA, writes that he has witnessed Woodworth’s con-



tributions and has been “inspired by the work done at Hays Shelter Home and Youth Works.

“Lives are saved at Idaho Youth Ranch.”

ABOUT THOSE THRIFT STORES

Over its 64-year history, IYR has helped more than 31,500 families. The services it offers include: emergency shelter, residential care, individual and group counseling, animal-assisted therapy and equine therapy, job readiness training, alternative education, adoption services, family counseling, and a 24-hour emergency help line for runaway, homeless, or in-crisis kids.

Through the years, the organization has adopted a number of revenue-generating practices, including donations, contracting with the state of Idaho, fundraising, and, of course, thrift store sales.

And, while Woodworth is the first to say that IYR is much more than its iconic thrift stores, he is also the first

to point out what those stores do for the organization and beyond. For instance, as the organization sharpened its focus on them, the contribution from the thrift stores grew from \$7.7 million in 2006 to \$17 million in 2016. The IYR employs more than 400 Idahoans, many at its 29 thrift stores. And many of those thrift store employees learned important skills at IYR’s YOUTHWORKS! program, which provides job training.

“I think we have 10 of our graduates from YOUTHWORKS! who are now employees in our stores,” Woodworth says. “For a lot of these kids who didn’t have much confidence, it’s a great place for them to really start their career. They’re learning the kinds of skills that will help them no matter where they go.”

In addition, Woodworth says IYR has endowed scholarship programs. “I think we have nine kids we’re helping out now with college. So, that’s a great thing about being around awhile, right? You can build this.”

RELAXING AND GETTING AWAY

Woodworth studies music theory and enjoys listening to music by classic rock artists “maybe kids today don’t even know them, right?” – such as Eric Clapton, The Beatles, Gordon Lightfoot and James Taylor.

“I started learning to play guitar about six years ago,” he says. “My teacher says he likes the old guys because while we don’t get it as fast, we practice more,” he laughs. “I’m not an accomplished guitar player but ...”

To get away from it all, Woodworth enjoys spending time with his family at a custom-made retreat.

“My dad helped me learn how to use a hammer and a saw and so my wife and I, in the ‘80s we built our own cabin in Idaho City,” he says. “Passing my electrical inspection was as big a milestone for me as getting my master’s degree. I felt better when I passed that electrical inspection than I did when I passed my comprehensive exams.”

Contributors



PETE GRADY
Photographer

Pete Grady started his career in photography 35 years ago working in the Los Angeles nightclub, theatre and movie industries photographing established and aspiring actresses, actors and comics including Gallagher, Steve Martin and Pat Paulsen. He is published in regional and specialty magazines and newspapers and serves corporate clients as well.



STEPHANIE HANSEN
Writer

Stephanie Schaerr Hansen is a graduate of Brigham Young University's print journalism program. She has been published nationally in Newsweek and in local and regional publications, including *The Weekly News Journal* in Burley and *Where* magazine in Washington, DC. Now based in Denver, Stephanie spends her free time exploring the Rockies.



CHRIS LANGRILL
Writer

Chris Langrill is a longtime Idahoan and a Boise-based freelance writer. He worked at the *Idaho Statesman* for more than 20 years, most of which was as a member of the Sports department. As a reporter, his primary beat was pro sports (Boise Hawks, Idaho Stampede, Idaho Steelheads) but he also covered several Boise Open golf tournaments, the Race to Robie Creek, Ironman, Twilight Criterium and Idaho Stampede and Caldwell Night rodeos. He has won Idaho Press Club awards for feature writing, sports writing and headline writing. Langrill enjoys spending time with his wife, Chereen, and their two dogs, Lulu and Murphy.



SHARON FISHER
Writer

Sharon Fisher is a Kuna-based writer and principal consultant for Gem State Community Development. Her corporate clients include the Economist Intelligence Unit, Greenough, Oracle, Cisco, HP, Laserfiche, and Exact. Locally, in addition to the Idaho Business Review, her work has appeared in Idaho, Boise, Eagle, 2C, *Boise Weekly*, *This is Kuna*, and the *Kuna-Melba News*. She has served as an intern with the Idaho Legislature's Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee. Currently, she sits on the Ada County Historic Preservation Council. She holds a bachelor of science in computer science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a master of public administration, a graduate certificate in geographical information analysis, and a graduate certificate in community and regional planning from Boise State University. Her most recent book is *Images of America: Kuna* by Arcadia Publishing. She likes explaining things and going to meetings.

IDAHO BUSINESS REVIEW

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