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SUNDAY CEOs ■ Michael Collins, Rusty Harling and Gerald Flowers



OMAR ORNELAS THE DESERT SUN

The Works Floor and Wall owners (from left) Michael Collins, Gerald Flowers and Rusty Harling have moved their business to a new, bigger location in Palm Springs with the help of a \$322,000 loan, awarded through the Small Business Administration's Recovery Act program.

Partners offer The Works in floor, wall coverings

BY DENISE GOOLSBY
The Desert Sun

The Works Floor and Wall, a floor- and wall-covering business, moved from Cathedral City to Palm Springs in September — with a little help from the federal government's economic stimulus program.

A \$322,000 loan, awarded through the Small Business Administration's Recovery Act program, enabled the owners, longtime valley residents Michael Collins, Rusty Harling and Gerald Flowers, to move their business into a 15,000-square-foot building — nearly double the size of its previous location.

The new digs give the business — bursting at the seams in its old building — plenty of room to grow.

Can you tell me a little bit about the history of your business?

Michael: We've all been in the flooring business for quite a few years. Rusty and myself, we're third-generation. I'm third-generation in floor covering. He's third-generation in construction. Jerry has been working with us since 1981.

My dad is the one who started the business. He moved here in 1963. He taught me floor covering and then Jerry went in to work with us in 1981 and, not too long after that, Rusty joined the ranks in '88.

We just worked together independently on various jobs and then in 2003 we decided to pool all of our resources and incorporate and that's where The Works Floor and Wall came from.

We moved from Cathedral City because we were in the (city's) redevelopment area and they are going to use that piece of property for the new fire station training facility. So we were able to negotiate a deal with them and that's what led us to this piece of property.

Jerry: The only reason we picked this piece of property versus anywhere else is because it had what we needed.

Michael: It's got the right land size and it's got the right building size. We were busting at the seams in the other building anyway. The business has just continuously grown since we opened it.

How have you maintained consistent growth? What's the secret to your success?

Michael: We've always been focused on the commercial and the custom and the referral-based business. The new home business and the production business was never our thing. That allowed us to grow at a nice consistent basis, just a nice steady growth and we've grown every year since, including this year.

Jerry: It's also our versatility that allows us to grow because we do everything in the flooring trade.

How much has your business grown this year?

Michael: We've seen almost a 20 percent growth. We've added about 15 or 20 employees.

How many employees do you have?

Michael: We average about 65 depending on the season.

What's your typical job?

(Laughter.)

Michael: We have nothing typical. We'll do the smallest job; there really is no job too small but at the same time...

Rusty: We just finished our first \$10 million project.

Michael: The Annenberg Pavilion (The Walter and Leonore Annenberg Pavilion at Eisenhower Medical Center) was the largest concrete pour in (the Coachella Valley at the time).

Rusty: And we just did a \$200 repair.

Michael: Like Jerry said, we do every flooring there is, whether it's a custom wood flooring to an epoxy terrazzo

Please see CEO, D3

ASKSCORE

Insurance a must for home businesses

EDITOR'S NOTE: SCORE, a nonprofit group that partners with the U.S. Small Business Administration, has a Palm Desert office whose volunteers will answer questions every Sunday in The Desert Sun's Business Plus section. Volunteers have varied business backgrounds, but will provide free expert advice to small businesses that need help.

Operating a small business from home can free entrepreneurs from the costs of leasing space and commuting. But too many of them may shortchange themselves when it comes to buying insurance.

A recent survey commissioned by the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America (IIABA) found that nearly 60 percent of the nation's 11 million home-based businesses do not have insurance coverage.

Of those entrepreneurs, nearly 40 percent thought they were already protected by some other type of coverage, while almost 30 percent said their businesses are too small to insure.

Madelyn Flannagan, IIABA's vice president of education and research, explains that home-based business owners are at risk for significant financial losses associated with theft, accidental damage, natural disasters, vehicle accidents, and liability if an

employee suffers an injury while on the job or a business guest is hurt while visiting the home-based business.

"Homeowners' insurance normally does not provide protection in these situations," she said. "Investing in protection can provide security and peace of mind as a business grows and produces more income."

To protect home-based businesses, IIABA offers the following tips:

■ **Check your homeowners' policy.** Homeowners' insurance was never meant to cover business exposures. Coverage for certain business items is limited, and homeowners' coverage provides no liability insurance for home-based businesses.

Additionally, a homeowner's policy affords no business interruption coverage in the event that a loss causes a home-based business to cease operations. However, a home-based business owner may be able to obtain an endorsement to add these coverages to an existing homeowners' policy.

■ **Check business insurance policy options.** There are several options for home-based businesses including incidental business endorsement, a business owner's package policy, or an in-home business owner's policy. Flannagan said that while levels of coverage and premiums depend on the risk associated

Do you have a question?

If you have questions about how to start up, expand or help your small business, ask SCORE.

Send your questions to Desert Sun Senior Editor/News James Meier at james.meier@thedesertsun.com.

Your questions will be forwarded to the folks at SCORE, who will answer as many as possible. Not all of the questions and answers will appear in the newspaper. The office can be reached at (760) 773-6507.

Include your city of business and a contact phone number with your questions.

with each business, "a comprehensive commercial policy can cost a home-based business as little as \$250 a year."

■ **Protect yourself.** If a home-based business is a full-time occupation, business owners must consider protections such as life, health and disability insurance, and workers' compensation. "An independent insurance agent can help identify risk areas and provide guidance for finding the appropriate coverage to protect you, your family, and your business," Flannagan said.

More information on insurance for home-based businesses is available at www.independentagents.com or www.TrustedChoice.com.

Windows 7 gets launch party in Palm Springs

Southwest Networks demonstrates upgrade to Microsoft programs

BY DENISE GOOLSBY
The Desert Sun

Southwest Networks, a provider of information technology support services for school districts, local governments and small businesses in the Coachella Valley, celebrated the launch of Windows 7.

Valley business people streamed into the North Palm Springs business' open house-type event Friday to check out demonstrations of the new Microsoft Windows 7 and Microsoft Office 2010 and to check out other technological items on display, including phone and security systems.

"It's what Windows Vista should have been," Matt Disher, vice president of sales for Southwest Networks, said of the much-maligned previous-generation Microsoft operating system.

"It's clean, it's smartened up."

Ryan Vance, a representative of Hewlett-Packard, discussed and demonstrated the features of Windows 7 Professional, an operating system designed for small businesses.

He demonstrated that the boot-up time for Windows 7 is about 45 seconds faster than that of Vista.

Other performance improvements include fewer interruptions and prompts, an instant-search function

that lets you search on your computer the same way you search the Internet, and a "Pin" feature that lets you keep programs and files handy by pinning them to the task bar or Jump Lists.

Southwest Networks, doing business in the desert for the past 13 years — with a staff of 15 employees — hosted the event to help familiarize its clients with some of the latest business-solution technology.

The company is also a Hewlett-Packard warranty service center.

"Anything HP, we can get it repaired under warranty," Disher said.

Nick Werner, information technology manager for the city of Indian Wells, was among the attendees. Southwest Networks provides the city network assistance and equipment, including HP servers, HP work stations and phone systems.

"It's great having a local company and local expertise" providing supportive services to the city, Werner said.

Werner said it's a comfort knowing that if he's out of the area and a system goes down, there's someone nearby who can step in and help.

"People that have knowledge about the infrastructure and the experience to provide a backup," Werner said.

ALL ABOUT BUSINESS

Hot rental deals have many calling movers

The interesting thing about economic downturns is that some businesses see it as a time to expand and take advantage of new trends.

It seems like we receive every week a notification of an existing business moving to a new location. Commercial space across the desert is leasing for less these days.

Such was the case for **Gloria Franz**, a Certified Financial Planner™ with **Franz Tatum Wealth Management NPC**.

She successfully hunted down a great price for more office space at **Pointe Monterey Development**. And, in June, she welcomed a new partner, **Nila Tatum**. Their client list has expanded as a result.

Franz has been in the financial planning industry for 17 years and an independent adviser for the past three. She previously worked for **Smith Barney**.

Tatum, a financial executive, has 27 years of experience. She started with **E.F. Hutton & Co.** and later worked with **Smith Barney** and **Merrill Lynch**.

Franz said they're trying to encourage their clients to take advantage of opportunities in today's market, too.

"I don't think we're going to have a repeat of the '90s," she said of the go-go times investors long for now. "There's great opportunity to invest now."

Please see BUSINESS, D3



monica torline & debra gruszecki

Branching out

Let's go from financial planning to flapjacks: We found out **José Sahagun** is expanding his business, too.

The Palms Café opened its doors in Palm Desert five years ago. About three weeks ago, a second location started serving its breakfast and lunch fare in Rancho Mirage.

Sahagun was considering opening a second location because of the few breakfast options available to neighborhoods in Rancho Mirage. When presented with a great leasing deal, he couldn't resist.

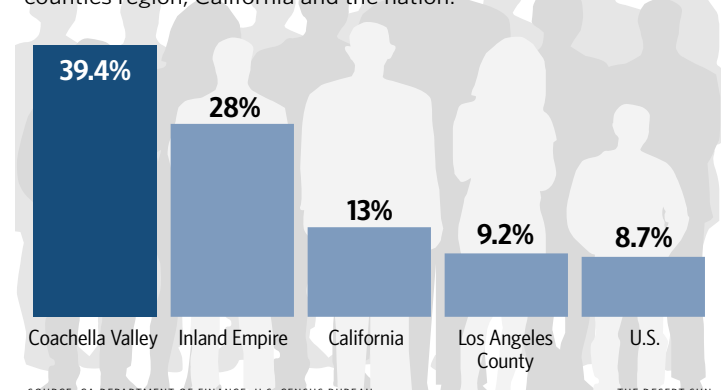
In addition to popular items already on the menu — fresh blueberry, banana nut and chocolate chip pancakes, made-from-scratch biscuits, hearty sandwiches and chili — the Rancho Mirage location is serving beer and wine.

Please see BUSINESS, D3

BUSINESSFACT

Desert population growth

The Coachella Valley's population grew 34.9 percent from 2000-2009, much faster than the Riverside-San Bernardino counties region, California and the nation.



SOURCE: CA DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

THE DESERT SUN