

# Family Business Center Stage

The College of Business  
Austin Family Business Program  
presents the winners of the



# 2016 AFBP Advisory Council

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# About the Awards

The **Excellence in Family Business Awards** program, presented yearly by Oregon State's Austin Family Business Program, was created in 1988 to applaud the accomplishments and contributions of family businesses for their innovation, entrepreneurship, commitment and heart.

Any family business is eligible regardless of size or longevity. A family business is broadly defined as having multiple family members or generations involved in the management or strategic direction, or working in the company with the intent of helping the business remain in the family.

One category winner and one or two runners-up are selected for the following awards:

1. **Business Renewal:** Ensuring the family business will be vital for generations to come.
2. **Generational Development:** Building connection to the young adults and children in the family and prepares them for future leadership roles in the family and, possibly, in the business.
3. **Family Harmony:** Developing and sharing a common vision, building trust, and creating personal relationships across all family members, even those who do not work in the business.

Applications are rated by a panel of judges as well as an automated scoring process. The highest scoring applicants in each category are required to make a 20-minute presentation to the judges. The selection of the winner in each award category is based on the presentations. All family business entrants receive scoring feedback on their application.



2016 Excellence in Family Business Awards judges (left to right): John Hasbrook, OSU College of Business; Mary Sutherland Crouse, David H. Sutherland & Co. Inc.; Scott Pillsbury, Rose City Label Company; Steve Roe, Roe Motors; and Mayor Denny Doyle, City of Beaverton.

## Program

**Wednesday, Nov. 2**  
**Portland Hilton and Executive Tower**

**Reception** – 4 p.m.  
Sponsored by KeyBank

**Awards Presentations** – 5:30 p.m.  
Welcome – Domonic Biggi, Emcee  
Recognition – Sherri Noxel  
Director, Austin Family Business Program,  
A.E. Coleman Chair in Family Business  
and L. W. “Bill” Lane Professor in Family  
Business Management

### FAMILY HARMONY

Sponsored by Strategic Group NW  
Finalist – C and D Landscape Co.  
Finalist – Jag Forms  
Winner – The Charlton Kennels & Farm

### GENERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sponsored by D A Davidson  
Finalist – C & R Remodeling  
Winner – Benchmade Knife Company, Inc.

### STUDENT AWARD

Recipient – Nicholas Strebin

### BUSINESS RENEWAL

Sponsored by Exvere Inc.  
Finalist – Pride Disposal Company  
Finalist – The Cronin Company  
Winner – GK Machine, Inc.

### DEAN'S FAMILY BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

Recipient – Bill Stoller  
Presented by Mitzi Montoya  
Sara Hart Kimball Dean, College of Business

**Special Remarks** – Bill Stoller  
Express Services, Inc.  
Express Employment Professionals  
Xenium  
Stoller Family Estate

**Closing Remarks** – Sherri Noxel

# GK Machine, Inc.



Scott Grossen, JoAnn Agee, Derrick Grossen, Gary Grossen and Debbie Grossen

## How does Gary Grossen not only renew his 40-year-old manufacturing company, GK Machine of Donald, but grow it at the dizzying rate of 30 percent a year?

“I go out and find a problem in an industry and bring it back and we find a solution,” he says matter-of-factly. “You’ve always got to invent another piece of equipment to fill in that blank. If you’re not continually growing, you’ll dissolve or disappear.”

GK celebrated its 40th anniversary this year by being a primary sponsor of the Oregon State Fair, a status befitting its station as a longtime pillar of the state’s agricultural community.

Gary and his now-retired younger brother Keith – the K in GK – grew up on a dairy outside Woodburn, a town of about 24,000 in northern Marion County. While still a student at

Woodburn High School, Gary started repairing farm and nursery equipment. After graduating, he became a journeyman machinist, doing that job by night and repairing equipment during the day, eventually taking on Keith as a partner.

As they worked on tractors, balers, combines and the like, Gary and Keith noticed the various pieces of equipment would break down in a regular and consistent manner, and thus they sought an opportunity: design and build more-reliable machines.

Four decades later, GK maintains an anything-is-possible mentality that fuels its work in everything from fabrication to machining to sand blasting, from operating a retail store to manufacturing and repairing hydraulic units, wind turbine bearing pullers, sprayers, rail cars and pretty much anything else you could think of.

“We can build anything,” Gary says. “We’re not afraid of anything. We can tackle locomotives and sod cutters and we can also repair a little wagon a kid brings in, no job is too small or too

big for our imagination. There's not such a word as can't, not in my vocabulary."

A business that began in the barn on his family's farm now features 177,000 square feet of fastidiously clean and organized manufacturing floor space spread over 11 acres. Gary's wife, Jeanna, is in charge of accounts receivable and has been with the company since its inception; the Grossens' son Derrick (electrical and program designer), daughter JoAnn Agee (vice president of finance, human resources and purchasing), nephew Scott (mechanical engineer), cousin Jerry (facility maintenance) and



Gary Grossen and JoAnn Agee

Jerry's wife Debbie (human resources) are also among the 190 employees.

"It's all a team," Gary says. "Everybody has strengths and weaknesses, and everybody has an interest in a different part of the company".

"Without employees, you don't have anything. Our employees get very involved in getting the job done, and we build a nice clean environment and a nice atmosphere for them. They turn into family; we get very close."

Adds Scott: "Some of the employees are people we've known all our lives. Some places I've worked there's been a separation between the people who work on the floor and the people who work in the office. We don't have that here. Some of my favorite co-workers are the ones who are on the floor, taking it personally."

The employee count grows 15 percent per year.

"We build buildings and we outgrow them before we even put the walls up," Gary says. "It's continuous improvement all the time."

One of those improvements is GK's development of the proprietary Leadman Software Suite, which choreographs and monitors every part of the manufacturing process.

"We have 700 jobs at one time on the floor, and sometimes we have 1,200 jobs," Gary says. "We can track every little nut and bolt, and we know profit and loss instantly."

Later this year or early next, GK will work with Dell Computer to make the hardware and software available to other U.S. manufacturing companies to enhance competitiveness in the global marketplace.

And at home in Donald, GK recently purchased an additional 200 acres to ensure it's ready to keep growing and renewing in the manner that led to being honored by the Austin Family Business Program.

Gary calls the AFBP recognition "a very powerful award."

"I love my family," he said. "I love all my employees, though some might not notice that. It takes everybody to make this work. It's not just me and it's not just the family – it's everybody."

## AT A GLANCE

number of generations in the business: **2** | number of family members in the business: **8** | age of youngest family member in the business: **16** | age of oldest family member in the business: **63** | last family vacation destination: **SAND DUNES, MYRTLE WOOD, COOS BAY** | favorite restaurant for family dinner: **HOME BBQS** | name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **DELAP ACCOUNTING FIRM** | best business decision: **INVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY**

# The Cronin Company

It's hard to imagine many operations adapting and evolving more, or over a longer period of time, than Business Renewal finalist The Cronin Company.

"It's an honor to be recognized," said company president Heidi Cronin Mandell. "We are proud to be a fifth-generation company."

P.J. Cronin founded the business as a saddle and harness company in Portland in 1878, and two decades later it was producing saddles known as "high backs" for soldiers fighting the Spanish American War.

A few years after the war, when automobiles started taking hold in American society, Cronin branched into the auto parts business, then at mid-century shifted into its current area, flooring material.

Pat Cronin, Heidi's father, bought out his five siblings in 1964 and helped grow the workforce from a handful to the more than 150 the company employs today.

Heidi has been with the business for more than 22 years, moving from samples to customer service to opening a branch, to purchasing, operations and now president.

"The most interesting and challenging part of a family business is keeping the values, expectations and integrity alive from the generations before you," she said. "It is important to respect and honor those before and after you. In order to run the business or lead you have to



Heidi Cronin Mandell with her father Pat Cronin

work hard and get your hands dirty. You earn respect from others by working your hardest and learning from your mistakes. Family members are hired into the company on the same basis as anyone applying for a job."

The Cronin Company operates on a vision based on 12 concepts: the value of time, the success of perseverance, the pleasure of working, the dignity of simplicity, the worth of character, the power of kindness, the influence of example, the obligation to duty, the wisdom of economy, the virtue of patience, the improvement of talent, and the joy of originating.

Ambrose Cronin Jr., Heidi's grandfather, is credited with coming up with those dozen guiding principles.

"When hiring, we not only look at skill, we look at whether or not a candidate will fit our company culture," Heidi said. "Our employees make the company a success. We pride ourselves on our integrity and dedication to customer service. We make sure our team members are on board with our vision.

"In planning we make sure we have a Plan B in place," she added. "We watch trends, bring on lines that are viable and think outside the box to ensure the company will thrive in the years to come."

## AT A GLANCE

Year started: **1878** | Number of generations in the business: **2** | Number of family members in the business: **2** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **46** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **75** | Last family vacation destination: **FISHING THE KENAI RIVER IN ALASKA** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **JAKE'S FAMOUS CRAWFISH, PORTLAND** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **MARK PELLEGRINO, RAINIER GROUP** | Best business decision: **EMPHASIS ON TRAINING EMPLOYEES WELL**

# Pride Disposal Company

At Pride Disposal, business renewal means using more than 100 years of experience - mistakes included - to strive toward a leadership role in the solid waste industry for the next century and beyond.

“We keep our equipment up to date and on the cutting edge of technology, including trucks fueled by compressed natural gas, with computers and cameras on each truck,” said company vice president Kristin Leichner. “This helps us to provide service as efficiently and effectively as possible as the family begins transitioning the business from the second generation to the third generation.”

The Leichner family has been in the trash hauling game in northwestern Oregon and southwestern Washington since 1914, with Pride tracing its roots to 1986, when the briefly retired Lorry Leichner and son Mike purchased a Washington County disposal company and renamed it Pride Disposal.

When the Sherwood-based company, one of this year’s Business Renewal finalists, got bigger, Mike’s wife Cindy joined the team as controller. Kristin, and Mike and Cindy’s other child, Michael, worked for Pride throughout their youth.

“We started working summers between school years, helping out with administrative tasks,” Kristin said. “As we got older, those tasks became more involved. Michael worked summers as a driver until he graduated from University



Mike, Cindy and Kristin Leichner

of Washington and then remained in Seattle and is not currently active in the business. I started as a customer service representative out of high school and worked several years in that capacity. I then moved into managing part of the office and took over managing the whole office in 2010.”

Pride has franchise agreements for garbage and recycling collection services with the cities of Beaverton, Tigard, King City, Durham and Sherwood, and also with Washington County, to service the county’s unincorporated areas. In addition, Pride operates a dropoff recycling center in Sherwood.

“Our business depends on maintaining our franchises with the jurisdictions we service,” Kristin said. “Family members maintain these franchises by building and maintaining relationships with city staff, elected officials and other involved

parties, as well as providing excellent customer service. Our company is local and centralized rather than a larger conglomerate that may be slower to make decisions and changes. We live and work in the local communities so we have a better pulse on what is going on in our service areas.”

Kristin’s grandfather, Lorry, had once been one of several Leichner brothers in the waste-hauling business; together they operated Clark County Disposal in Washington.

“Several brothers sold their interests, leaving only Lorry and his brother Elmer to manage the business,” she said. “Lorry eventually sold his interest and retired in 1984. The past generations had conflict that had a negative impact on the business and the family. As our business transitions to the next generation, we keep that in mind so as not to make the same mistakes.”

## AT A GLANCE

Year started: **1986** | Number of generations in the business: **2** | Number of family members in the business: **3** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **30** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **58** | Last family vacation destination: **DISNEYLAND** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **CARTHAY CIRCLE** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **LEE KELL, KELL, ALTERMAN & RUNSTEIN** | Best business decision: **TAKING THE TIME TO HIRE THE RIGHT PEOPLE**

# The Charlton Kennels & Farm



Standing (left to right): Ian Andreasen, Kelly Charlton, James Cutrona, Dave Powell, Betsy Powell and Mac Powell; seated (left to right): Lindsey Andreasen, Jeremy Powell, Cheddar and Jessica Powell

**At Charlton Kennels and Farm, harmony emanates through the company owners from their late parents to those who haven't yet breathed the sweet air of the family's 168 idyllic acres on Sauvie Island.**

"Sauvie Island was originally inhabited by the Multnomah Indians," said Betsy Charlton Powell, who owns business with her older sister, Kelly Charlton. "The family's vision comes from a Native American saying that our dad, Jim Charlton, liked to share: 'Walk softly on this Earth for the children yet to be born are looking up at you.' He strongly believed that each of us is just a temporary caretaker for this land and to never take this place for granted. Our family's promise is to leave this place better than how we found it and to preserve it for future generations."

For the fifth, and current, generation in charge of this year's Family Harmony winner, cooperation and rapport stem from an ability to compromise and a willingness to, when necessary, pull back for a bit.

"She does things her way and I do things my way, and both ways can be great," said Betsy, 56. "We've taken art classes together, and when we've done that we've learned that our results can be very different and our processes can be very different, and that's OK. When it comes to conflict, thinking about it in those terms is really important. And we know how to walk away from each other if we need to, just to catch our breath."

"I have a Ranger, she has a golf cart – we can drive to separate places if the other needs space," added Kelly, 58, "I'm not afraid of conflict with her because I know we'll work it out."

The Charlton family has been working things out since before



Oregon was a state as the farm traces its roots to an 1845 Donation Land Claim issued to Kelly and Betsy’s great-great-grandparents. One hundred twenty-two years later, Jim and Ellie Charlton added a 30-run dog kennel to the family homestead, and today their daughters’ oversee an operation that includes the farm, boarding space for 100 dogs (as well as a handful of cats) and the duck hunting club that was founded in the early 1900’s. The key to the success of the longstanding duck club has been the family stewardship of the land. Each generation has run it differently, including Kelly, the first woman manager.

Jim, a giant in the world of hunting dog training, died suddenly in 2004, collapsing during a fishing trip to British Columbia. His wife and key business partner, Ellie, an eastern Oregon ranch girl, model and Seattle television personality, died five years later.

Kelly, a former Miss Oregon USA who had a career in the fashion industry, and Betsy, who still works as an art teacher, speak lovingly of the humility, gentleness, kindness, civility and class of their parents, who met in 1957 while attending Oregon State. Betsy appreciates her husband David, an executive at Intel, as a critical partner in her success noting “I couldn’t manage without him.”

“Dad would speak at public meetings, and inevitably his words were what ended up in the newspaper,” Kelly said. “He had a way of communicating without throwing daggers.

“And Mom, she could pick up a cat hairball with such grace,” Kelly said, laughingly, of the mother who sent her daughters to finishing school. Kelly credits her mom’s “strength and knowledge” of the business operations as a top reason behind the successful transition to the daughters after the unexpected loss of their father.

Between them, Kelly and Betsy have five children ranging in age from 18 to 29.

“Our children will be the sixth generation to manage this farm and business,” Betsy said. “They are well aware of our vision as caretaker and steward. Having our children involved on a part-time or occasional basis in so many of the farm and kennel tasks helps them to understand the importance of their future involvement.”



James Cutrona and a canine client

“Conservation is important to the entire family,” Betsy continued. “We have preserved close to 50 acres of wetland, pond and stream habitat not only for our neighbors, friends and this family’s enjoyment but more importantly for future generations and future wildlife populations. Mom and Dad did it right, and going forward we want to do it right.”

The Austin Family Business Program award is “really an honor for our parents,” Kelly said. “They worked so hard, and it’s a delight to carry that on and it’s an honor. I’m in awe of them so often.”

## AT A GLANCE

Year started: **FARM 1845; KENNEL 1967** | Number of generations on the family land: **6** | Number of family members in the business: **2** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **18** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **58** | Last family vacation destination: **MALIBU FOR JEREMY’S GRADUATION** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **PAPA HYDEN** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **BOB WILEY, OUR NEIGHBOR; NICK PARSONS, PARSONS AND GEMER ACCOUNTING; LINNTON FEED AND SEED** | Best business decision: **PLANNING BUSINESS TRANSITION FROM OUR PARENTS**

# C and D Landscape Co.



Brothers Isaac, Caleb and Josh Kearns

## Family harmony, a core value in the first generation, continues as a central foundation for the second generation of C and D Landscape Co.

Three brothers, of Cal and Debbie Kearns' five children, are working directly in the business. In fact, the three brothers have been sharing an office because they were reluctant to move their father out.

Founder Cal's approach to engaging his children in the business was highlighted in 2004 when the company was an Oregon Family Business of the Year. Cal said he wanted his children to make up their own minds about their choice of career. "I wanted them to get their own education and do what they want with their life," he said. "The opportunity is here if they want it, but they're not being forced to. We want to help them have the freedom to make their own choices."

Each brother now serves the business in their area of expertise. Josh, the Mid-America University graduate manages the operations as president. Isaac, the Oregon State University

horticulture graduate manages landscape design and holiday décor while Caleb, who graduated from Linfield College, directs the masonry and outdoor kitchen builds.

While many families can speak to the importance of good relations among siblings the Kearns' family unity has been put to the ultimate test. Big changes have thrust the family members into new roles as Cal faces unexpected medical issues that pull him away from the business. It has fallen to the three brothers to ensure the day-to-day operations of the business. The family mantra of being "as recession proof as possible" drives this higher-level planning. In the early 80's Cal sold everything the young company had to make it through the winter. His sons acknowledge the importance of planning and the bond the family members gained from that struggle. From those early days all the way to 2008 the company was on a steep incline of growth. Through sound strategic planning they have weathered a second recession together with record sales. Now, without their father's guidance, the brothers have begun to navigate the complex process of buying out their parents. This challenge is formidable in any family business where the founder has achieved a sizeable and successful enterprise.

### AT A GLANCE

Year started: **1977** | Number of generations in the business: **2** | Number of family members in the business: **4** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **31** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **64** | Last family vacation destination: **OREGON COAST** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **MOM'S** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **BILL STOLLER** | Best business decision: **HIGH VISIBILITY OF LOCATION**

# Jag Forms

**What's in a name? Well, that question takes on many layers for people who join their family's business.**

Just ask Sara Gundell of Jag Forms, one of this year's Family Harmony finalists.

"One challenge I encountered early on was what the heck to call my dad when we meet with clients or vendors," said Sara, the sales and marketing director for the commercial printing, business forms, logo'd apparel and promotional products company her father founded 30 years ago in the San Francisco Bay Area and moved to the Portland area in 2001.

"It felt unprofessional and almost juvenile to say things like, 'Well, let me ask my dad,' but it also felt a little weird to say, 'Let me check with Jeff.' That said, I went with the latter – until long-term clients and vendors started teasing me for calling him Jeff. 'Don't you mean Dad?' they'd say. I've since coined the moniker 'DadBoss' as a nice middle ground."

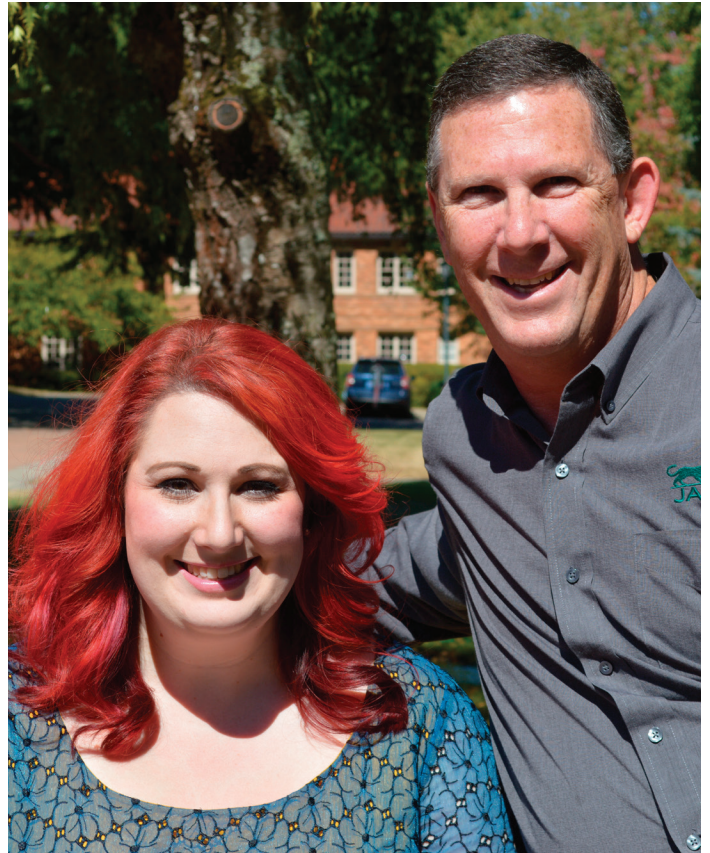
Jeff didn't have the salutary hurdles to clear that his daughter did but had his own father-daughter minefield to navigate.

"As a parent, learning to become hands off as your kids reach adulthood is an immense and never-ending challenge," he said. "It's even more so when the role of parent is combined with boss and mentor. Equality is not part of the parent-child relationship, but it is absolutely critical to the survival and success of a family business."

Sara says her father has done a fantastic job of paving the way for that equality.

"Especially when I first started working with him, I struggled a little bit to take a stronger leadership role," she said. "Part of that was, of course, my inexperience with the company and in the industry. And also I recognized that my dad had worked hard over many years to make Jag a successful business; I didn't want to screw that up. And I respected his knowledge, experience and expertise. I still do."

"But my dad was always really good about giving me the autonomy to make decisions about work – both day-to-day operations and for long term planning," Sara added. "He's made



Sara Gundell with her father Jeff Gundell

it clear – and I have since embraced the idea – that this is my company, too, even if I don't yet have an official ownership stake. When we make decisions about the company, we make them together."

Togetherness – in the form of open communication and spending time as a group – is a hallmark of the Gundell family.

"We work really hard to instill the values we uphold as a family into the values we uphold as a business," Sara said. "The recognition from the Austin Family Business Program feels like validation and reaffirmation that we're doing things right. And it motivates us to continue striving to do better." Jeff agreed.

## AT A GLANCE

Year started: **1986** | Number of generations in the business: **2** | Number of family members in the business: **2** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **31** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **56** | Last family vacation destination: **DISNEY WORLD** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **FAMILY DINNERS AT HOME OR PICNICS ON THE BOAT** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **TIM WOODS, FOSTER & WOODS, RETIREMENT PLAN ADVISORS; DAVE ADAMS, CPA, GEFFEN MESHER & COMPANY** | Best business decision: **RELOCATING FROM CALIFORNIA TO OREGON IN 2001**

# Benchmade Knife Company



From left: Les, Jon, Roberta and Melissa de Asis

**Benchmade Knife Company's approach to generational development has been to encourage the founders' two children to follow their own dreams and passions - including, and even especially, pursuits that don't involve Benchmade, or even Oregon, the Northwest or the U.S.**

"Other companies have had children who went right into the business, and they were given executive positions with no worldly experience," said Benchmade founder Les de Asis. "That doesn't do the business any good and it's not doing the children any favors."

"We wanted them to go out and learn and bring back to the hive," de Asis said of son Jon and daughter Melissa. "We love having them in the business but if they want to chase their own life, that's OK."

The push-them-out-of-the-nest technique is paying big dividends for the Oregon City blade maker, this year's Generational Development winner.

"Jon spent nearly six years in a manufacturing plant in China after graduation, obtained his MBA at the U of O and is now our senior director of operations," Les said. "Melissa spent nearly seven years in New York City (at an advertising agency); she is now our senior project manager, re-implementing our ERP system. Ongoing career and management development has led to increasing job responsibility within the business. Both receive regularly scheduled mentorship from executive leadership as well as our family business coach, and they're able to gain valuable oversight experience via active membership on outside nonprofit boards."

The company Melissa and Jon are working toward taking charge of is Les and wife Roberta's second foray into knife manufacturing; the first, Pacific Cutlery (originally known as Bali-Song), relied on knives and parts imported from Japan and went

bankrupt in 1987 after six years when the dollar crashed against the yen.

Les and the couple's children moved from Southern California to Clackamas, Ore., to start over while Roberta, a mental health professional, stayed behind and sent money north. "Every penny except what I needed for food and gas," she said.

The agreed-upon plan was to use the money to buy a house, but unbeknownst to Roberta, Les was sinking it all into equipment for a vertically integrated knife-making operation.

When Roberta learned where the money had gone, she was livid.

"I thought we had tons of money for a down payment," she said. "I had \$12 in my wallet and we had no money in the bank. I told Les, 'If I had any money I'd leave you.'"

Fortunately, Roberta stayed and this time, so did the business, turning out high-quality pieces that were a combination of factory made and handmade: hand assembly of precision-machined components. Growing demand necessitated a move from a 15,000-square-foot shop in Clackamas in favor of the current 144,000-square-foot facility on Beaver Creek Road at the south end of Oregon City.

"Jon would sweep floors, do odd jobs in the office," Les said of the early days. "Jon was talking to employees, learning as he was sweeping. When Melissa was old enough she'd man the reception desk. We're a family business but we're running it like a private corporation. You don't buy respect, it's not bestowed on you, you have to earn respect. Finish projects, work hard and play hard."

"I worked at Benchmade every summer since I could use my thumbs," Jon added. "Growing up in the company, it seemed like something new and exciting was happening every single day. I'd see how my parents were putting everything into the company every single day, and that put me on a path of being curious for how I could contribute. It's a tough business; making knives is not all that easy."

But taking an edge off the difficulty are devoted employees.

"It feels like I'm going to work with a bunch of cousins," Melissa said. "It makes my job a lot easier when people really care."

Melissa added that going through the process of competing



Jon and Melissa de Asis

for and winning the Generational Development award has contributed to her feeling of family unity.

"It's really flattering to be considered for receiving this great recognition," Les said. "G2 is much more prepared than we were, and they're not encumbered by the past. No one in our family is a member of the silver spoon club. We want our kids to do their job and ask questions when they're lost and thank people for getting them back on track."

Jon said having his parents' heart is his greatest asset for helping Benchmade continue to thrive.

"Their legacy and our ability to follow in their footsteps and continue that legacy is huge," Jon said.

Added Roberta: "Always our first priority is what's best for the company and it just so happens our children are what's best for the company."

## AT A GLANCE

Year started: **1987** | Number of generations in the business: **2** | Number of family members in the business: **3** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **31** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **64** | Last family vacation destination: **AVENTURA, FLA.** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **WE HAVE A ROTATION** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **MARK GREEN, FAMILY BUSINESS CONSULTANT; IVAN HERNANDEZ, OMNIA FAMILY WEALTH MANAGEMENT, AVENTURA, FLA.** | Best business decision: **ESTABLISH PREMIUM-QUALITY, US-MADE, KNIFE MANUFACTURING COMPANY**

# C&R Remodeling

C&R Remodeling’s company name serves as a reminder that generational development within a family business hinges on the family members actually being well suited to work together.

The initials stand for Calvin and Ron, two brothers-in-law “who began a remodeling company and learned after six months they were better friends than business partners,” said Andrew Lethin, grandson of Ron Lethin.

Ron then branched out into the lumber/hardware/home improvement store business with a model that was ahead of its time: “Helping clients with do-it-yourself projects on nights and weekends when other stores were closed,” Andrew said. “His vision for homeowners was an approach where they could help with 50 percent of the work and C&R could assist with the other 50 percent – well before HGTV and Home Depot! We continue this tradition of seeing ways we can exceed the clients’ expectations and get them the results they are looking for.”

Andrew is now a co-owner of the 55-year-old company, along with his sister Beth Rhoades and their father, Doug, Ron’s son.

“From a kid growing up in a hardware store to now helping run the remodeling company, I can say that my father always took the time to show us the importance of the company and how it works within the community,” Andrew said. “We bring this same love and passion to our fourth generation. A clear, outlined organizational chart along with job descriptions and education allows for growth for other members with an understanding of the expectations and requirements.”

Andrew and Doug focus on sales, while Beth’s area of emphasis is design/estimating. In July, Beth’s husband, Sam, joined the company as production manager.

“We are in the process of creating our buy/sell agreement for the transition from second to third generation and, with this outline, the approach for the third to fourth generation if desired,” Andrew said. “Our two focus sessions a year are structured around our past performance, current and future. With our working five- and 10-year business plan document for the company in place it allows the third generation to make



Elizabeth Rhoades with her brother Andrew Lethin and father Doug Lethin

decisions not just for the moment but for the years ahead. Monthly reviews of our profit and loss along with the actual vs. budget allow for quick correction or growth as needed with the seasonal shifts in construction.”

Beth says being a family business makes it easier to roll with the challenges of the home-remodel industry. “We build on each other’s strengths and work to fit like puzzle pieces, complementing the other partners and their talents,” she said.

## AT A GLANCE

Year started: **EARLY 1960s** | Number of generations in the business: **2** | Number of family members in the business: **4** | Age of youngest family member in the business: **31** | Age of oldest family member in the business: **64** | Last family vacation destination: **LEAVENWORTH** | Favorite restaurant for family dinner: **BEST LITTLE ROADHOUSE** | Name and firm of most helpful family business professional: **JUDITH MILLER, J. MILLER & CO.** | Best business decision: **REMODELING ADVANTAGE**

# Nicholas Strebin

**A never-ending chase for improvement is what gives Student Award winner Nicholas Strebin the most pride when he thinks of his family business, Strebin Farms.**

“It is remarkable to hear previous generations talk about how we used to be a small dairy farm, and now we have integrated to become a much larger family operation offering many more products and services,” he said. “Throughout the generations, the business has become a large supplier for row crop vegetables for both domestic and foreign customers.”

Nick, who earned an agricultural business management degree in 2016, is a third-generation member of the Troutdale-based family business, which traces its roots to 1959; Nick’s ancestors arrived in Troutdale some 100 years before that.

Strebin Farms’ specialty is growing, shipping and packing russet potatoes, but the operation is both diversified and large: four states, three packing facilities, 4,500 acres in cultivation and a customer base that’s both foreign and domestic.

Nick’s father and three uncles – all sons of the founder – are part of the management team, and other second- and third-generation family members are involved as well. Nick also noted the importance of non-family member managers.

Nick’s role is sales.

“On a daily basis I sell produce to wholesalers, retailers, processors and restaurants,” he said. “I am responsible for checking the quality of the produce each and every day to ensure that customers enjoy our products. Lastly,



Recent OSU graduate Nicholas Strebin

I am responsible for following up with customers to ensure that they received the produce in a timely manner, and to double check that our produce meets the standards that the customer expects.”

“My experiences at OSU played an important role in developing my skill set for my current role,” he added. “I enjoyed being able to expand my knowledge through an internship that allowed me to view how another family business is run.”

Nick is striving to build his customer relations skills as well as working on product and market expansion.

“I have strived to push our produce into new markets,” he said. “One key area I am focusing on is creating a connection with restaurant chains in order to supply them our produce.”

Nick’s best advice to OSU students who plan to enter their family’s business is “enroll in Dr. Sherri Noxel’s family business management course .”

“The course teaches you all aspects of how a family business is run,” he said. “I have been able to apply many of the key topics that were discussed in the class, such as governance, succession and estate planning. It’s a great opportunity to learn key concepts and I enjoyed how we were able to hear from multiple family businesses, which allowed you to broaden your perspectives. No matter who the guest speaker was, there was always something to take away from the discussion that could be applied to a career in a family operation.”

# Recipients of the Excellence in Family Business Awards

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Abeton Group  
A-dec, Inc.  
Advanced Wealth Management  
Aggregate Resource Ind.  
Air Filter Sales and Service, Inc.  
Airefco, Inc.  
Alan Brown Tire Center  
Anderson Family Farm  
ArborBrook Vineyards  
Batzter Construction, Inc.  
Beacock Music Company  
Beaverton Foods, Inc.  
Bedmart Inc.  
Benchmade Knife Company  
Bike Newport  
Bill Naito Company  
Blue Raeven Farmstand, LLC  
Boyd Coffee Company  
Bronleewe, Inc.  
C and D Landscape Co.  
C&R Remodeling  
CA/OR Broadcasting, Inc.  
Capital City Companies, Inc.  
Capitol Auto Group  
Carl Greve Jewelers  
Cascade Publications, Inc.  
Cat Hospital of Portland  
Central Homes  
Chin's Import Export Company, Inc.  
Chown Hardware and Machinery  
Chrisman Deveopment  
Clatskanie Chief Publishing Co.  
CM & WO Sheppard Inc.  
Coelho Winery  
Colas Construction, Inc.  
Collier Arbor Care  
Conser Homes, Inc.  
Consolidated Business Machines  
Consolidated Supply Co.  
Cooley's Gardens, Inc.  
Corvallis Custom Kitchen & Baths  
Courtesy Janitorial Services, Inc.  
Cutsforth's Thriftway Marketplace  
David H. Sutherland & Co., Inc.  
Day Family of Businesses  
Denton Plastics  
DeSantis Landscapes, Inc.  
Diversified Welding Works, Inc.  
Drake's 7 Dees Garden Center & Landscaping  
Duck Pond Cellars  
Eagle Newspapers, Inc.  
East Oregonian Publishing Co.  
Ediger's Church Furniture  
Evergreen International Aviation, Inc.  
Fall Creek Farm & Nursery, Inc.  
First Response, Inc.  
Fitzpatrick Painting, Inc.  
Flaming Medical  
Freres Lumber Company, Inc.  
Fruithill Inc.  
Garland Nursery  
General Tool & Supply Co.  
Generations, L.L.C.  
Gimre's Shoes, Inc.  
GK Machine, Inc.  
Glass Alchemy, Ltd.  
GloryBee  
Gomberg Kite Productions Intl  
Gormely Plumbing & Heating  
Hagan Hamilton Insurance  
Halton Company  
Healthy Pets Northwest, Inc.  
Heceta Head Lighthouse Bed and Breakfast  
Henningsen Cold Storage Co.  
Henry A. Schroeder & Sons  
Hessel Tractor & Equipment Co.  
High Cascade Printing  
Hillsboro Implants & Periodontics  
Hotchkiss Company Inc.  
Hybrid Real Estate  
IB Roof Systems  
Interstate Roofing, Inc.  
JaCiva's Chocolatier  
Jag Forms  
James W. Fowler Affiliates  
JLE Enterprises, Inc.  
John Helmer, Haberdasher, Inc.  
Josephine County Title Company  
Kadee Quality Products Co.  
Kelly's Home Center  
Koeber's Inc.  
Kraemer Farms  
La Costa Verde, dba Andina Restaurant  
Lacey Glass, Inc.  
Lacey's Bomber Rest. & Catering  
Lakeside Lumber Company  
Lamont Featherland Farms Inc.  
LaRog Jewelers  
Lawrence's Jewelers  
LAZERQUICK  
Lee Farms  
Les Schwab Companies  
Leupold and Stevens  
Lonely Lanes Farms, Mt. Angel  
Loy Clark Pipeline  
Lukas Auto Painting and Repair  
Lum's Auto Center  
Madden Industrial Craftsmen  
Mater Engineering  
Mattress World, Inc.  
McGuire Bearing Company  
Medford Fabrication  
Meisel Rock Products.  
Melvin Mark Companies  
Meyer Sign Company of OR  
Micro-Trains Line Co.  
Miles Fiberglass & Composites  
Mill End Store  
Morse Brothers, Inc.  
Mo's Enterprises  
Musgrove Mortuaries & Cemeteries  
Nature Bake/Dave's Killer Bread  
Naumes, Inc.  
Neil Kelly Company  
Neilsen Manufacturing, Inc.  
Nesko Rock  
Newberg Steel & Fabrication, Inc.  
Nicholas Restaurant  
North Lincoln Sanitary Service  
Nosler, Inc.  
O'Keefes Working Hands Crème, Inc.  
Old Dominion Collision Repair  
Oliver Insurance  
Olshen's Bottle Supply Co.  
Olufson Designs LLC  
O'Neill Pine Company  
Oregon Coffee & Team  
Ornelas Enterprises, Inc.  
Otto's Sausage Kitchen, Inc.  
Paradise Harley-Davidson and Buell  
Peninsula Glass Company  
Portland Transmission Warehouse  
Powell's Books  
Power Equipment Systems  
Pride Disposal Company  
Pro Weld, Inc.  
ProWorks Corporation  
R & R King Logging  
Rainbow Carpet Cleaning  
Raindogs  
Ray Shultens Motors  
Reece & Associates, Inc.





**Ken Austin meets with students at the 2015 Excellence in Family Business Awards.**

Register Guard  
 Roberts Motor Company  
 Robnett's Hardware Inc.  
 Roe Motors  
 Rose City Label Company  
 Roth & Miller Autobody, Inc.  
 S. Brooks and Associates  
 Sabroso Company  
 Second Glance/The Annex  
 Security Signs  
 Shonnard's Nursery, Florist & Landscape  
 Sid Johnson & Co.  
 Silver Eagle Industries  
 Skanner News Group  
 Skipanon Brand Seafoods  
 Snyder Roofing & Sheet Metal  
 Sokol Blosser Winery  
 Solar Summit  
 Specialty Polymers, Inc.  
 Speed's Towing  
 Starker Forests, Inc.  
 Stewart Stiles Truck Line, Inc.  
 Stronglite, Inc.  
 Sunset Farm and Nursery  
 Sweeney Promotions Inc.  
 Tec Laboratories, Inc.  
 Teeny Foods Corporation

The Bookkeeping Company, LLC  
 The Charlton Kennels & Farm  
 The Cherry Country  
 The Cronin Company  
 The Fisher Ernst Group  
 The Hanson Family Singers  
 The Joel Palmer House  
 The Ulven Companies  
 The Victory Group, Inc.  
 Thermal Mechanical, Inc.  
 Thompson's Sanitary Service, Inc.  
 Timmco Insurance, Inc.  
 TNT Builders  
 Tomco Electric, Inc  
 Twelve-Mile Disposal Service  
 TWGW, Inc.  
 Tyco, Inc.  
 Typhoon!  
 Umpqua Dairy Products Co.  
 Unger Farms, Inc.  
 United Disposal  
 Valley Fire Control  
 Van Natta Public Relations, Inc.  
 ViewPlus Technologies, Inc.  
 ViewPoint Construction Software  
 Wanderlust Tours

Weisinger's Winery  
 Wentworth Auto Group  
 Western Communication  
 Western Fluid Power Corporation  
 Wilcox Farms  
 Wildish Land Company  
 Wilfs Restaurant and Bar  
 Willamette Valley Pie Company  
 WSC Insurance  
 Yoshida Group of Companies

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## 2016 Dean's Award for Leadership in Family Business



### Bill Stoller

Express Services, Inc.  
Express Employment Professionals  
Xenium  
Stoller Family Estate

### IMPACT OF YOUR FAMILY'S BUSINESS ON YOUR SUCCESS:

It certainly helped to grow up in a small business such as my parents had with their turkey farm. I didn't have any idea what any other job was like before going to college and after, meaning working for someone else. However, my only 10 years of working for someone else, I was in a very autonomous situation and was really my own boss which helped when I started my own businesses when I was in my early 30's.

### BEST ADVICE YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR CHILDREN:

Go to college and either major or minor in business.

### LAST FAMILY VACATION DESTINATION:

Last year, we all went to Brasada Ranch in Redmond, Ore. This year, we vacationed in Martha's Vineyard, but not everyone could attend.

### BUSINESS BOOK THAT YOU RECOMMEND THE MOST:

*Good to Great* by Jim Collins. It gives you a very good perspective of how long-term success is brought to the companies that are written about in the book.

### GREATEST ADVANTAGE OF FAMILY OWNERSHIP IN BUSINESS:

It gives you a greater chance to build a sustainable company that can be run in the right way and not by the bottom line.

### BEST BUSINESS DECISION YOU'VE MADE TO POSITION YOUR COMPANIES TO LAST FOR GENERATIONS:

Creating corporate culture around your values and the business proposition that helps all concerned.

# Family Business Classes

## Family Business Management (BA 463/563)

This senior seminar offered each spring term on campus enrolls **students from a wide variety of majors, provided they come from a family business**. Students participate in a comprehensive course that allows them to design a career development plan, either inside their family business or in another career that builds upon their family business experience. A hallmark of the course is the wide range of guest speakers from family business CEOs to advising professionals. Students find the class experience to be a valuable part of their undergraduate experience.

“This course helped me transition into my family enterprise with an understanding of how family businesses truly work. Because of this course I am confident that the organization of my family enterprise will be much smoother, and functional,” remarked a past BA463 student.

What other students have said about BA463:

- Excellent class! I always left class thinking about the conversation we had and how to apply it in my family business.
- Fantastic course! Best one I took at OSU. Class will actually help in the future! I would highly recommend this to any student who is or will be involved with a family business.
- This was one of my favorite business courses at OSU. The professor had a great layout of the course and brought in great speakers to the class.

**THANK YOU** to the speakers who supported the 2016 Family Business Management class and the future leaders of Oregon’s family businesses:

- Chris Bamburg, Adhesives and Packaging Systems
- Dawson Bean, Lane Irrigation
- Domonic Biggi, Beaverton Foods Inc.
- Clint Bentz, Boldt, Carlisle + Smith
- Samuel Coelho, Coelho Winery of Amity
- Amelia Eveland, Gathering Together Farms
- Renee Fellman, Renee Fellman and Associates
- Rachel Finch, OSU Career Development Center
- Jessica Kneisel, Second Glance Annex
- Steve Lytle, Agnew Companies
- Lucas Rue, Victor Point Farms
- Shawn Stanley, IB Roof Systems
- Williams Thompson, TEC Equipment
- Steve Tremaine, The Ulven Companies
- Alan Vezzani, Kadee Quality Products Co.

## Family Business Management (BA 365 online)

This online class is offered fall, winter and summer term to students and professionals who are not from family businesses. It is of **particular interest to entrepreneurship minors and financial services majors**. The ten-week course focuses on the opportunities and problems characteristic of family businesses, including management succession, ownership transfer, mixing family and business roles, family conflicts, and working with outside advisors. Students can differentiate their resumes by learning about family business clients, employers or competitors in Oregon’s economy.

# Family Business Student Engagement

## Scholarships

Each year **nearly \$20,000** in scholarships are awarded to College of Business undergraduates from family businesses. Students work with their College of Business advisor to determine eligibility and apply. The scholarships are supported by the generosity of members of the family business community.

## Family Business Boardroom

The Austin Family Business Program hosts a **quarterly conversation on campus** for students from family businesses. Meetings feature a guest speaker from a family business and provide the opportunity for students to meet one another and network, hear insights from family business leaders, and meet the Austin Family Business Program staff.

## Family Business Day

April 14, 2017, marks Family Business Day in Austin Hall. As part of the Fridays in Austin programming in the College of Business, Family Business Day will provide students the opportunity to **hear from industry speakers on a variety of family business topics** to help them lead, start or advise family businesses.

## Featured Speaker

Stephen Babson, MBA, J.D., who serves as Managing Director at Endeavour Capital and on ten corporate boards, will discuss **what corporations can learn from successful family businesses** on April 20, 2017, in Austin Hall.

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# FAMILY BUSINESS 360°

The premier source for family business education & networking

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## 2016/17 Schedule:

### TUALATIN

Hayden's Grill, 8187 SW Tualatin Sherwood Rd.

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**Dec. 13: Family Offices 101: An Introduction and Best Practices** | Carol Wachter, Deloitte Tax LLP

**Feb. 16: Avoiding the Ditch: Keeping Your Family Business Communication On Track** | Mark Wickman, Family Business Counsel

**April 11: Do Your Kids Want the Business? Planning for Yes or No** | Steve Bennett, Farleigh Wada Witt

### PORTLAND

BridgePort Brew Pub, 1313 NW Marshall St.

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**Nov. 10: Beyond the Startup: Taking Your Family Business to the Next Level** | Don Krahmer and Matt Bisturis, Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt

**March 16: Building Family Business Value from the Inside Out** | Francis Brown, KeyBank

**May 18: Family Business Charters: The Essential Guide to Evolve, Grow and Sustain the Operation of the Family Business** | A. Jeffrey Bird, Lane Powell PC

### SALEM

Kroc Community Center, 1865 Bill Frey Dr.

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**Nov. 15: Tax Issues for Family Businesses**

### ONLINE WEBINARS (noon - 1 p.m., free)

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**March 8: Taxes and Succession Planning** | Carol Wachter, Deloitte Tax LLP

All breakfast sessions run from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Cost is \$40 per person, with a 25 percent discount available for three or more registrations.

To register please visit: [business.oregonstate.edu/familybusinessonline](http://business.oregonstate.edu/familybusinessonline) or call **800-859-7609**