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**Elkhart's Small Business
Incubators**

The Lexington Business Centre
www.lexingtonbizctr.com
Eastpoint Business Centre
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**AUTUMN 2003
NEWSLETTER**

Tenant Spotlight

**Where strings are
always attached**

Ken Dattmore faced the start of this school year with some trepidation. Summer can be a time of serious uncertainty for Pegasus Stringed Instruments. That's when school budget makers often grapple with spending cuts that might be necessary for the coming year.

"The football team's a must, but the musical instruments ..."

Dattmore needn't have worried. School money materialized, and autumn is being good to Pegasus, which produces musical instruments — specifically stringed instruments — at Lexington Business Centre.

It's the bread and butter of Dattmore and brothers Roberto Mariano and Luis Tirado.

The current economic upswing "is the feast everyone was waiting for," says Dattmore. "Customers are finding the money, and things are moving now."

Pegasus imports violins, cellos, violas and string basses whose major users include, of course, school systems.

Some of the company's instruments are imported in pieces — boxed parts that are assembled here. A violin, for instance, might be made of parts from four countries (Japan, Germany, China and Romania).

Dattmore faces the usual vagaries of supply and demand. For instance, he had not dealt in string basses until last spring when he found a good European source for the instruments. He still has some sitting in storage after the bottom dropped out of that market almost as quickly as it had developed. "The bass market changed in a year, as soon as the money didn't trickle down," he says.

Pegasus also repairs stringed instruments — a niche that developed almost by accident. When a local repair person retired, he turned his clientele over to Pegasus. "Now



Ken Dattmore (above) with cello assembled at Pegasus. Luis Tirado (left) buffs violin.



people know we do it, and they come to us," says Dattmore.

Highs and lows aside, Pegasus likes being where it has been since 1996, when Dattmore and the Tirados left a

local company and became a startup.

"We've never moved and we don't want to move. This (LBC) is home to us — a good home for five years," Dattmore said.

"The first five good years being so good gave the company a good footing to weather the recent economic slowdown," he says. "If we hadn't had the five good years here to get up and running, we could have found ourselves in some real difficulty."

Roberto Tirado at violin assembly rack.



The Business

EVENTS

NOVEMBER 20

6-8 p.m.

SBDC/SCORE

Workshop

"Starting

Your Own Small

Business"

DECEMBER 17

6-8 p.m.

SBDC/SCORE

Workshop

"Preparing Your

Business Plan"

All workshops are

conducted at

Elkhart Chamber

Cost for each: \$20

(pre-registered)

\$25 at the door

Call

574-293-1531

for details

Alumnus



**Headquarters
57974 CR 3 S.**

'We love Elkhart County ...'

Jim Johnson's stay at Eastpoint Business Center was but a few months in 2002. While there, he turned out no product, sold no service. Nonetheless, "we needed exactly what the incubator was — a place to gather our thoughts. To prepare ourselves for our leap."

The ultimate leap resulted in the launching of Potomac RV, a manufacturer of travel trailers and 5th wheels, now located in a 33,000 square foot building on CR 3 S. There's an option to lease a companion building of about equal size.

The company is producing six to eight units a week.

"There (at Eastpoint), we weren't under the financial gun to do anything silly," says the Potomac president. "We had a vision, we had time, and we could watch it unfold in our minds. It just looked really good."



The business plan and the financials were well in place at EBC before Potomac made its move.

"As it turned out, everything worked," says Johnson, who was with GM for 17 years and with local companies before experiencing the Potomac dream. "Elkhart's about the only place where they'd give a guy like me a chance at this kind of thing."

"We love the work force. We love Elkhart County. This is where we needed to do this."



Photo provided



**Partners
Terry Sappington,
Jim Johnson and
Irv Kontowski**

New faces at the Centres

Well, here we are with the jam-packed Fall Edition of the Business Ledger. I think I say in every newsletter column that "it hardly seems possible" that it is Fall or Spring, etc. The older I get, the faster time seems to go by, but here it is, Fall of 2003 already. Editor Jeff Gillaspay has done a great job of reporting on all of the events and new tenants at the Centres. We have had a lot of activity, lots of new tenants, some we don't have the room to report on so you'll get the low-down on them in the next edition.



We would like to welcome to Eastpoint: Jim Cobb and the gang from Laro Corp., and Nan Greer and her crew from Innovative Seats and Design, as well as Jeff and Kathy Nelson from Bolt Document Management, which will be highlighted in the next Ledger issue. At Lexington we have Vernon Martin's company, Precision Home Builders, and Dan Holtz and Jon Tucker of Impact Graphics as well as Esteban Calderon of E & C Marketing Agency, which will be highlighted in the next Ledger issue. Welcome to all.

Also, we would like to wish Dave Pixey the best of luck in his effort to be elected to the Elkhart City Council. Dave is running for an at-large seat on the Council. I personally think it takes a lot of courage to make that kind commitment. Good luck, Dave!!!

You'll find an advertisement in this issue featuring Fessenden Management Consulting from Eastpoint. Let me give you a little background on that company. Mark Fessenden, principal of the firm, has decided to take his 25-plus years of successful sales and management experience and help others become equally successful. In case you don't know, Mark was the president of State Wide Aluminum for a number of years and was a big factor in the success of that organization. Recently, Mark hooked up with Resource Associates Corporation of Mohnton, Pa., to package his skills (using their training programs) and put together an extensive training program (on how to be successful) which he plans to offer here in our area. For more information on the program, give Mark a call at his office or e-mail him; you'll find his e-mail address on the Eastpoint Business Centre website.

Look for us in the next Ledger issue. Until then, all the best.

Carl Tiedemann is president of Lexington and Eastpoint Business Centres

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INCUBITS

Items of more than passing interest

In the conference room of fledgling Potomac RV (an alumnus of Eastpoint Business Centre, see Page 4) out on C.R. 3 in Jimtown sits a conference table that's long ... really long ... maybe a zillion feet long. And really wide, too. Potomac Prez Jim Johnson says he saw it in Chicago and had to have it. "It's the mother of all conference tables," he says. At least. Perhaps the father, too.

...

Iron Art is in.

At least the folks at gardeninterludes.com and Colmar Products believe so.



The Iron Art collection of "garden structures" has joined the distinctive botanical markers and the classic Cascade vases on the website. The products, designed by Garden Interludes, a landscape design and consulting company, are manufactured and distributed by Colmar Products, which calls Eastpoint Business Centre home.

Chuck Borneman and Mark Fessenden are partners in Colmar.

So far, the Iron Art collection includes a large moose, a small moose, a sunburst, a butterfly and a ladybug (see photo). And Kokopelli, the Aztec fertility god.

...

None of the personnel at Pegasus Stringed Instruments (see Page 1) plays a stringed instrument.

In fact, Ken Dattmore, president of the company headquartered at Lexington Business Centre, plays brass (trombone and tuba). Dattmore, who started out to earn a music degree, learned quickly that there were "plenty of places to play if you didn't want to eat." He ultimately earned a degree in business, and the rest is history.

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E-mail your "Bit" to jgillaspay@fedmed.com

Today's tenants

Incubator Tenants at Lexington Business Centre: Advanced Engineered Space, AFLAC, Alternative Business Solutions Inc., Century Tel, Dawn Realty Inc., E&W Sales, Greenleaf Services, Impact Graphics, Indi-Cal Corp., Junior Achievement, KB Sales Co. Inc., Pegasus Stringed Instruments, Pixey Enterprises, P.M. Buttons & Embroidery Inc., Poly-Stitch, Precision Home Builders Inc., Precision Wire Die Inc., Pro-Line Enterprises, Inc., QP Inc. Dossy Meters, Quality Wine & Ale Supply LLC, and R.A. Current.

Incubator Tenants at Eastpoint Business Centre: Do Group Systems Inc., Fessenden Management Counseling, Homestead Finance Corp., Innovative Seats and Design, Laro Corporation, P.T. Services Inc., The Hope Builders Group Inc., and Wise Electric Inc.

New Tenants



'I know the house'

Vernon Martin's Precision Home Builders Inc. specializes in concrete houses, foam-filled block all the way up to the roof line. Or they'll build a log cabin if the customer prefers that.

"We build conventional homes, too," says Martin (photo at left) with a smile, "but we've moved pretty much to a specialty market — totally different from standard construction."

Precision draws up all its homes,



Clockwise, from top, Nan Greer, president of Innovative Seats and Design; Theresa Hill, Shane Watts and Shannon Wagner.

Going where the market goes

Innovative Seats and Design manufactures dinettes and jack-knife sofas for the horse trailer industry, says Nan Greer, because that is "where the market has taken me."

She had done other things for other companies. When one of the companies went from vans to Hummers to horse trailers, she stayed with it. From two to three units a week, that firm went to 30 — and Greer picked up two other customers as well.

After nine years in business at her home, Greer needed more room. Folks at PM Buttons, from whom she bought sewing supplies, suggested that she become a fellow tenant at Lexington BC. Nothing was available at the time but there was a spot at Eastpoint. Already, she's concerned about outgrowing it.

'We can do this...'

"With my background business, and his in graphics — we were able to convince our wives we could do this."

That's Dan Holtz speaking of his and former neighbor Jon Tucker's decision to become partners in Impact Graphics, which now occupies Suite 135 at Lexington Business Centre.

Impact produces masking for manufacturers who spray paint their own vehicles. "We provide this product to their paint booths, says Holtz. "RVs and boats are our bread and butter right

now. Our focus is on vinyl spray mask, but there is the capability to do more, signs, etc."

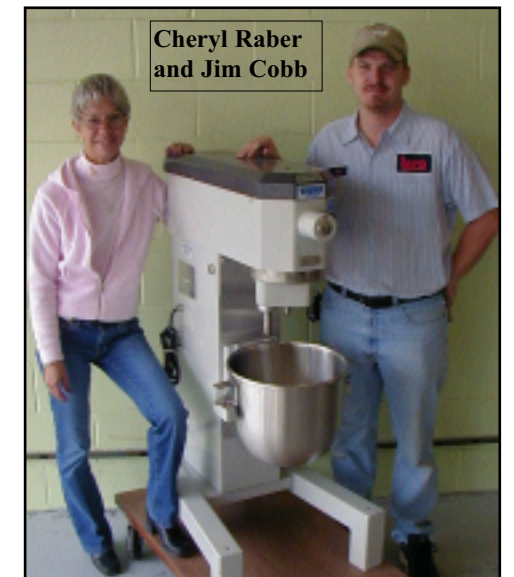
Holtz says Impact "can either help a manufacturer formulate graphics, or we can work with an individual. The manufacturer normally has a pattern; we computer-cut that pattern for their paint shop in such a fashion that it works every time.

"There is a big and growing market of buyers of RVs, motorhomes, big offshore boats, that prefer full-body paint to a white body with a couple of stripes."

"so I know the house," Martin says. "I know where everything goes. We make whatever modifications are necessary right here in the office."

Martin has been in construction since he was 16, owned a business since 19, and been a general contractor for four years.

He worked out of his home until Dale Denlinger joined the company: "I was too busy and didn't want two guys to have to operate out of the small office I had there." LBC solved that.



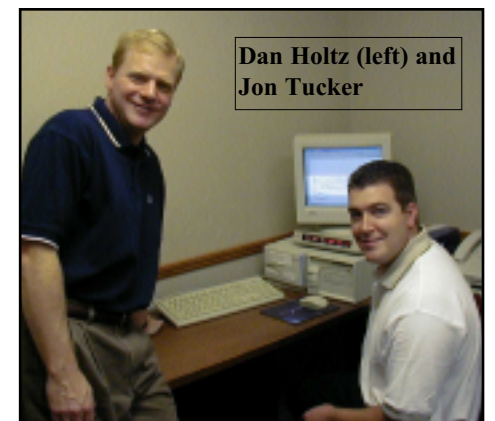
Cheryl Raber and Jim Cobb

And there's a 'special'

Laro Corp., a downtown supplier of restaurant equipment since 1979, needed smaller quarters and lower overhead. Eastpoint to the rescue. The move was made recently.

President Jim Cobb says the company still will handle sales and service of major restaurant gear but will eliminate small wares. Laro also will be involved in sales and service of heating and air conditioning equipment.

Oh, and there's a fall furnace tuneup special — \$69.



Dan Holtz (left) and Jon Tucker