

Manhattan company started in car trunk

By Ron Wilson

Director

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How does a person take a business from the trunk of a car to a multi-million dollar enterprise? There's no easy answer. In fact, if I was asked to describe how to achieve such business growth, I might reply: "It's Greek to me" -- not just because I don't know how, but because a company named It's Greek to Me has done it.

Dave Dreiling is owner of GTM Sportswear, which began as It's Greek to Me. This is the remarkable story of his business.

Dave is an entrepreneur with rural Kansas roots. In the 1950s, Dave's parents, Leo and Carolyn Dreiling, were newly married and Leo was managing a clothing store at Stockton. A friend of theirs moved to Mankato and heard that the people in Mankato wanted a clothing store in their community. He referred them to the Dreilings, who were interested but didn't have necessary funding. The downtown merchants pooled their money to help bring a store to their rural community of Mankato, population 923 people. Now, that's rural.

The Dreilings expanded their clothing business over time, opening another store in Smith Center. Meanwhile, their son Dave went to high school in Concordia and Cloud County Community College before coming to K-State where he

majoring in business.

"I learned business at home," Dave said. "While other families might be talking about ball games or the weather around the dinner table, my folks were talking about the store. My dad is my mentor."

Dave put his business skills to work when he came to K-State. As a student, he bought a limousine and operated it part-time. He also became social chairman for his fraternity, which meant that he occasionally bought Greek-lettered products from vendors. In the process, he met a guy from Colorado who was taking orders for Greek products from the various fraternities.

"He basically sold stuff out of his car's trunk," Dave said.

After he and Dave had gotten acquainted, he suggested that it would be good to have a full inventory of products on hand to sell, rather than simply taking orders. Dave was interested in that business idea and asked what it would take for him to become involved. The answer is a classic, which demonstrates the plight of so many small business startups. His friend said, "Well, I have this invoice here from a supplier, and it's 90 days overdue. If you can pay the invoice, then you can get into the business with me."

Unfortunately, that is often the type of situation in which many small businesses find themselves: strapped for cash and without a system to manage it. Anyway, Dave sold his limousine and scrounged together the cash to pay that overdue

bill. With that, he was in business.

Because their target market was the fraternities and sororities of the collegiate Greek system, the business was named It's Greek to Me. Dave went to work to expand the business, and he ultimately bought out his partner. Sales in the first year were about \$500,000, but today he has built the business to approximately \$70 million in sales. The business, now known as GTM Sportswear, is selling products coast to coast and diversifying into various markets for athletic products and sportswear. In fact, there is \$18 million in inventory and 150 sales representatives at the company's headquarters in Manhattan.

Dave has worked at making the supply chain more prompt and efficient so as to cut costs. When he started, it might take four to six weeks for a customer to design and receive a customized product. Now, if the artwork is ready, in some cases the product is available on the next day.

"We want to have great service, and we want to be the most convenient place to order sportswear," Dave said. The company website is www.gtm sportswear.com.

It's Greek to Me - not just the keys to business success, but the name of this original business with rural roots. We commend Dave Dreiling and all the people of GTM Sportswear for making a difference with entrepreneurship, leadership, and service. That is simply good business.

Award given to pianist

Senior Andrew Shores and Junior Jessica Klemm performed their piano numbers that they played for regional and state music contest at 7:30 p.m. on March 6, 2011, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church for the Goodland Federated Music Club.

Shores played "Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm, #6 by Bela Bartok. His teacher is Pat Ziegelmeier of Colby.

Klemm played "By the Spring, Opus 101, 35" by Cornelius Gurlitt. Her teacher is Geryllyn Parker of Goodland.

Shores earned the 2011 Margaret Martin Piano Award. The family of Margaret Martin gave an engraved plaque to Shores and his name was engraved on a large plaque that includes the names of all the recipients at Goodland High School. His mother is Nancy Shores of Goodland.

Martin was a longtime Goodland piano teacher, and this award is given by her family Bonnie Trachsel and Char and David Avila, all of Goodland, to recognize a senior piano student who has achieved distinction. The Goodland Federated Music Club evaluates nominations from piano teachers and recommends to the Margaret Martin family the senior who should receive the award.

Previous award recipients include Cheryl Hinger in 1980, Marlene Corke in 1982, Owen Freiburger in 1983, Ping Huang in 1985, JoAnna Long in 1986, Diane Coon in 1993, Heather Por-



Goodland High School Senior Andrew Shores and his award.

terfield in 1995, Matthew Barnes in 1996, Mandy Hatcher in 1997, Nicholas Parker in 2000, Erinn Hardy and Jill Sowers in 2001, Amanda Hoffman in 2003, Kayla Rasure in 2004, Grace Langness in 2005, Samantha Philbrick in 2006, Jillian Parker in 2007 and Renea Reasoner in 2008.

Andrew Shores has accompanied and played in jazz band in high school. He participated in regional contest all four years, and earned I's at state contest for three years, both under the sponsorship of the Kansas State High School Activities Association.

He has contributed to his community by playing at his church, Lions Club, the Goodland School District's Senior Citizens Dinner and Thetis Club. "Highway Couch Patrol," a band in which he is a member, has performed at Relay for Life and the 2009 Flatlander Festival, in which they earned first place in the talent competition.

His personal achievements include participating in Pat Ziegelmeier's studio recitals and Northwest Kansas Piano Clinics. Shores participated in 2009 and 2010 in Kansas Music Educator's

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