

A Man with a Purpose

Michael Fiterman is honored with the AICC/Paperboard Packaging Hall of Fame for his professional accomplishments as well his service to his community and his family.

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EDITOR

Michael Fiterman, president and ceo of Liberty Diversified International (LDI), was inducted into the 2009 Paperboard Packaging/Association of Independent Corrugated Converters (AICC) Hall of Fame at AICC's annual meeting held earlier this month in Las Vegas.

The award marks Fiterman's outstanding contribution to the industry in volunteer service

neapolis in 1918 with a shared horse and wagon to collect and re-use wooden boxes and textiles. Jack's son Ben joined his father in the business, and in the 1950s, worked with his father to acquire corrugated manufacturing equipment.

Mike worked for his father, Ben, on weekends as a teenager, back when Liberty Carton was in downtown Minneapolis. By 1970, when Mike became Liberty's purchasing manager



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Michael Fiterman in 1984 after he took over leadership of Liberty and Fiterman today.



and his stature as a respected corrugated container industry leader.

"This award is a tribute to my father and grandfather, in whose footsteps I walk, as well as the many talented employees of our paper and packaging businesses," Fiterman says.

The Beginnings

Mike's grandfather, Jack Fiterman, a Jewish immigrant from Russia, began his company in Min-

neapolis after graduating from the University of Minnesota, the company was in larger quarters in Golden Valley, having become a successful manufacturer of corrugated boxes and promotional packaging. In 1972, the Fitermans created a holding company for all their operations, Liberty Diversified Industries.

"Liberty is known for coming up with different solutions and new products," says John Davis, chairman and ceo of Great Northern Corp.

In 1983, Mike became the third-generation leader of the company with the goal to raise sales — which he did more than eight-fold. The company now has five box plants and a 100 percent recycled paper mill. The company employs 18,000 people worldwide with 15 different divisions. The company created a holding company Liberty Diversified International, to reflect the global reach and the scope of the company's offerings.

"He's always differentiated his company and offering things that no one else has," says Joel Tilsner, president of Tilsner Carton. "But he still does the basics, just better and faster than anyone else."

LDI now consists of:

- Liberty Carton Co., a corrugated packaging and P-O-P company;
- Liberty Paper, Inc., a 100 percent recycled board mill;
- Safeco Products, an office products company;
- Milltronics CNC Machines, specializing in manufacturing high-value, high-quality CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) machines;
 - Diversi-Plast Products, the world's largest manufacturer of corrugated plastic;
 - Ergolet A/S, based in Korsoer, Denmark, offers technical aids for the elderly and handicapped;
 - Valley Craft, specializes in high-quality metal fabrication;



- LDI Transport, Inc., a federally licensed motor carrier with authority to haul general commodities within the forty-eight United States;

- Presentation Packaging, a specialty packaging and displays company; and

- Takumi Machinery Co., a manufacturer of high precision vertical machining centers and high speed machines with its main facilities located in Taichung, Taiwan.

The fourth generation of the Fiterman family

is working at the company now: son Jack, director of sales at Liberty Carton's Golden Valley operation and daughter Ann, working in the company's training and development department.

The Ideal Balance

The whole company is based around family — not only is it family-run, but the family feel is evident throughout the company.

"My dad thinks of every employee as family and we all treat each other as family," Jack says. "I really believe that's our competitive advantage."

"My dad used to say 'imagine life is juggling a bunch of balls,'" daughter Debra Fiterman says. "All of the balls are rubber except one, which is glass. He said to protect that ball with all your might. If you're going to let a ball drop, let it be any of the rubber ones — whatever you do, protect the glass one. And that glass ball is family. Anything else, work or whatever, will bounce back but you always have to protect your family."

"We all know people who work, work, work and build a great business and my dad did that. But that's not all he did," Jack says. "My dad has taught be balanced in my life. He has helped me build a great career but helped me live my life as a father and as a son — he helped me be a well-round person."

As the company states on its website, LDI does



its best to demonstrate its commitment to improving the environment, by constantly acting on the value of community involvement — LDI's goal is to set the standard for other companies to follow.

"He understands he has a responsibility to his community," Davis says. "He does all he can for it."

Liberty Diversified currently sponsors the United Way, Paul's Pantry and EDGE (Employee Directed Giving Empowerment) program

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The Fiterman family has been a long-time supporter of local and national volunteer organizations, giving time and financial support.



Mark Arzoumanian, (right) *Paperboard Packaging* contributing editor, awarded Fiterman with the Hall of Fame earlier this month during the AICC annual meeting in Las Vegas.



but Mike's community reach stretches beyond a handful of handful of organizations. Mike's deep dedication to the community he belongs to is evident by the volunteering he does, physically and financially. The Fiterman are a big supporter of United Way and Mike has chaired the local campaign.

"Any capital campaign in this town, you'll find the Fiterman name associated with it," says Mort Naiman, campaign director of the Minnesota Jewish Federation.

"When my dad gets involved in something, he dives in — he doesn't just get step in," Jack says.

The Fiterman name, lead by Mike, is known throughout the Minneapolis community and the corrugated container industry as the never-say-no name to all volunteer opportunities.

"He's always been an innovator and brought job opportunities to the community he loves," says Richard Sharfstein, chairman of the Strive Group and the 1996 Hall of Fame inductee. P

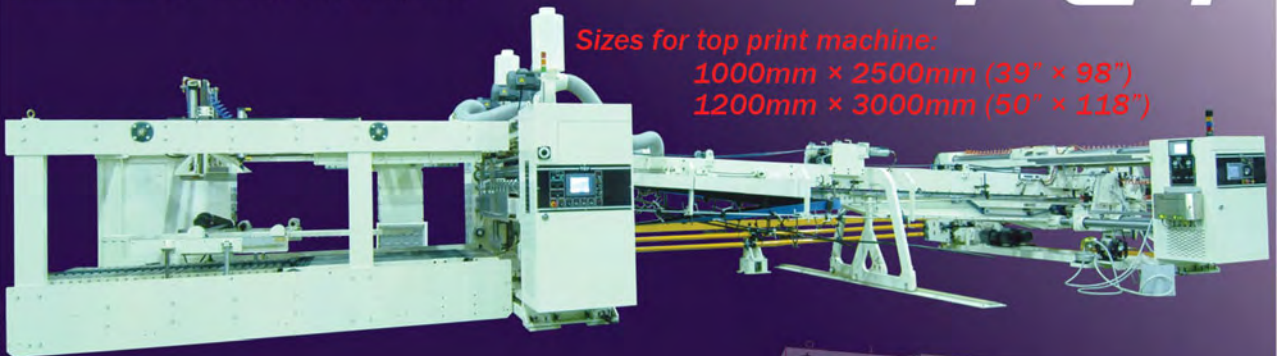
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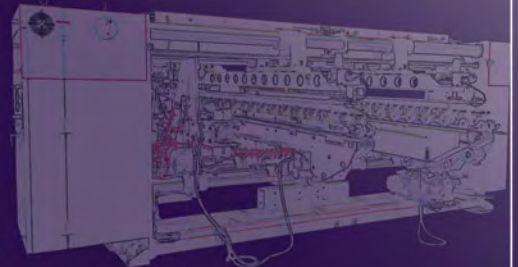
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