

Letter from the Chamber Chairman

Customers have beaten a path to George's Furniture for more than forty years. Not only Henry County residents, but folks from the surrounding counties make their way to this mainstay business on North Scott Street. They are drawn by name brands, knowledgeable staff, good value, and time-trusted service.

Paul Chamberlin bought the business from Donna Higbea on November 3, 1993 and timing had much to do with the sale. He had grown up in Grand Rapids, Ohio, taught school in Fayette, and was in his twentieth year with the Lion Stores in Toledo. His career with Lion started out part-time and summers with warehousing, driving, and delivering, while he studied and taught. He moved to full-time and eventually was persuaded to accept a supervisory sales position in furniture and bedding. A sales representative, who called on both the Lion chain, as well as George's, alerted Paul that the business was for sale in Napoleon and it represented a good opportunity. It took Paul about thirty days to weigh what the future would hold for him with Lion against that of business ownership. He decided on George's Furniture and it turned out to be the right move. Another month was spent on developing a business plan and arrangements for financing.

The business grew and in 2001, a five thousand square-foot warehouse was constructed behind the store. That allowed for expanded retail showroom space and an enlarged inventory to satisfy customer demand. Paul's son, Chris, joined the business in 2002. On the surface, his background in coaching, sports information, and golf course management does not seem like a fit. Paul knew; however, that his son's organization

and people skills, along with a penchant for researching trends and industry patterns were an ideal match and indeed it was. Creative Elements opened in Grand Rapids in 2003 and immediately drew a large following of Toledo area customers in search of quality home furnishings. The first year proved so successful that in 2004 an addition was built, almost doubling sales space.

A variety and constantly changing format of advertising, including radio, print and the familiar yellow sign out front catches the eye of customers. Periodic promotions provide shopping attractions and fun experiences, such as the recent Pajama Party, where customers were at the door at 5:30am in anticipation of the 6:00am opening (in P.J.'s of course). Behind the promotions though is service and Paul indicates that satisfied customers are the very best form of advertising. Not forgetting his earlier experiences, Paul still makes deliveries, for he never has forgotten that it is the last and most important contact with a customer on a particular sale. The care and attention in bringing a newly purchased item into a home is a big event in our lives and he understands it.

Paul and Chris have come from entirely different work experience backgrounds, but they are a team of equals with a common goal of understanding their customers and a shared passion for satisfying them. While they might continuously work at it, it just seems to come off so naturally and extends to their entire staff. They fully believe that a successful business is rooted in excellent employees and they are fortunate to have them.

- Chairman Andy Anderson