

January 4, 2010

**Waterbury Regional Chamber  
CHAMBER HAPPENINGS**

**Smith Awards honor small companies**

Each year, we are proud to honor individuals and businesses that demonstrate entrepreneurship, innovative thinking, and commitment to their employees and the community at our annual Harold Webster Smith Awards breakfast.

In 1935, 24-year-old Harold Webster Smith borrowed money from family and friends to found First Federal Savings of Waterbury, a savings and loan institution dedicated to helping people build and buy their homes. He served as chief executive officer until 1987 and as chairman of the board until 1995, when First Federal was renamed Webster Bank in his honor. To celebrate his legacy, the Harold Webster Smith Award is presented to small companies and entrepreneurs that share his passion for business and economic progress in the Waterbury region.

The 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year is Rocco Corso, owner of Corso Printing & Engraving (formerly Master Engraving & Printing), a fullservice print shop serving the Naugatuck Valley and Waterbury area since 1987. Corso began his career as a printer in 1971 at Brew Printing Co. in Stratford, where he worked as a pressman in the company's letterpress department. Following a passion he'd possessed since high school, he quickly advanced in the industry and began acquiring his own businesses. Corso is a community activist and the recipient of numerous awards for his generosity. He has also served as event chairman for the Naugatuck Chamber's highly successful Annual Duck Race since its inception in 2006.

A family enterprise since 1930, this year's Small Business of the Year award recipient Copes Rubbish Removal is owned and operated by Janet and Bill Dunbar. Residents of Watertown for 37 years, the Dunbars are recognized as generous, civic-minded business owners, deeply committed to supporting youth athletics and other nonprofit organizations throughout Watertown and Oakville. They have donated both financial support and inkind services to numerous nonprofit organizations.

Founded in 1930 by Janet Dunbar's grandfather, Guisepppe Copes, and joined by her father, Robert Copes Sr. in 1958, Copes Rubbish Removal continues to be family owned and operated into its fourth generation. The company has flourished under the tenure of Bill and Janet, who are now joined by their sons, Bill Jr. and Tim.

**Manufacturer of the Year Gar-Kenyon Technologies is a 50-year-old designer and manufacturer of hydraulic and pneumatic valves used in aerospace and defense applications. Steve Fournier, CEO and owner, began transforming Gar-Kenyon into a nimble customer-focused organization soon after acquiring the company in 2003. The family-run business relocated, talented engineering and manufacturing personnel were recruited, and investments were made in technology and manufacturing equipment.**

**Since Fournier took the helm, Gar-Kenyon's revenues have increased by almost 60 percent. Committed to lean manufacturing and continuous improvement, with the assistance of CONNSTEP and the chamber's coordination of training grants made available by the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board, the company has seen a significant increase in productivity over the past few years.**

We are grateful to this year's business sponsors BlumShapiro and Thomaston Savings Bank, and to Webster Bank for once again participating as the event's premier sponsor. Join these generous sponsors and the chamber community on Wednesday, Jan. 21, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Southbury as we celebrate these outstanding honorees. Call (203) 757-0701 or visit [waterburychamber.com](http://waterburychamber.com) to register.

*Lynn Ward is president and CEO of the Waterbury Regional Chamber. Contact her by e-mail at [lward@waterburychamber.com](mailto:lward@waterburychamber.com) or by phone at (203) 757-0701.*