

SPRINGFIELD BUSINESS JOURNAL

Reprinted from May 12, 2014

SERVING SOUTHWEST MISSOURI

2014 W. Curtis Strube
SMALL BUSINESS AWARD

FINALIST

The Greek Corner Printing and Embroidery

by *Brian Hom* · Contributing Writer

Jason Parke is always on a timer and usually under the gun. The president and owner of The Greek Corner Printing and Embroidery is rebuilding the reputation of his business on the cornerstone of on-time delivery – no matter what effort it may require. He relates the story of an 11th-hour express run to Lenexa, Kan., to retrieve a stalled shipment of hoodies and meet a 3 p.m. pickup time for a customer's large, multifaceted order.

"In the last five years, the company has never missed a deadline," Parke says. "Everyone practices the philosophy of, 'If it needs to be done, pitch in, and get it done.' The entire team believes they are dependent upon each other to succeed."

That type of focused commitment is what The Greek Corner needed. When Parke purchased the operation in 2009, it had a nearly 30-year history of producing screenprinted and embroidered sportswear in Springfield. It began at Grand Street and National Avenue in 1983, when entrepreneur Steve Bean launched a two-pronged approach to meeting emerging demands for name-brand athletic shoes and fraternity and

Owner: Jason Parke
Founded: 1983
Address: 2109 E. Rockhurst, Ste. A
Phone: (417) 865-8011
Web: GreekCornerPrinting.com
Services: Custom screen-printing and embroidery
Employees: 8 full time, 1 part time

sorority apparel.

A recession-based layoff from his position at a local title company led Parke to the realization he would rather captain the helm of his own ship than keep making bank deposits of, "someone else's money." Since stepping out on his own, he has deposited quite a bit, as The Greek Corner's annual revenues averaged a 38 percent increase over the past four years, bolstered by a watershed 62 percent gain in 2012.

But not all that money has gone into the bank. In the five years since purchasing the business, Parke has reinvested nearly all profits back into the company, including capital improvements totaling more than \$70,000 through 2013. January 2014 brought the acquisition of local embroiderer Integrity Designs, which has increased product quality and consistency, while decreasing customer wait time by bringing a previously contracted



Jason Parke, owner, and Brad Parke, general manager

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service in-house.

The house is new, too, as the company made a short 475-foot move to a new location. Though net square footage remains the same, additional showroom space and a better layout for production operations are setting the stage for future growth. A big key to that growth came May 12 with the addition of a 14-head automatic screen-printing press, which Parke says cost a hefty \$125,000, but will double the company's hourly capacity.

It is a vital component in Parke's key initiative to building a diverse book of business. A contract with the city of Springfield was a milestone in that effort, which also has led to creative product offerings.

Greek Corner's special services include multicomponent spirit packages for area youth sports teams, an express catalog of the most-popular items and the establishment of online company stores, or e-stores, for larger corporate customers with a consistently high volume of employee merchandise orders.

Along the road to resurrecting The Greek Corner brand, Parke also has taken his own leadership role to the next level, participating in Leadership Springfield's Class 29 in 2013. He credits his Christian faith, which he makes a point to have permeate his operational philosophy. As a result, Greek Corner was awarded the Better Business Bureau's 2013 Torch Award for Marketplace Ethics.