

National trade publication features county business

Comet staff report

A Carroll County business is featured in the October 2009 issue of *Pumper*, a monthly publication dedicated to the liquid waste industry. The cover story highlights the achievements of American Pumping of Camden, owned by Jim Hodge.

The article titled "Waving a magic wand" focuses on Hodge's success in growing his business despite tough economic times.

Hodge started American Pumping in 1992 as a sideline to farming. It soon became apparent, he said, that his sideline business was more lucrative than farming, so he started renting out the farmland.

Hodge said in the article that the business has grown an average of 12 percent a year.

When deciding a name for the business Hodge said that he wanted it to be something patriotic to honor his dad, a World War II veteran. The fact that it came at the

top alphabetically was an added bonus.

American Pumping's services include septic pumping, grease trap cleaning and Terralift soil restoration.

Hodge is quoted as saying that because he has kept his business to strictly pumping, it's "kind of recession-proof because I don't do installations. It's emergency work,



Jim and Cindy Hodge

Winston Briggs featured in magazine

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Attorney W. Winston Briggs, formerly of Flora, is featured in the November issue of an Atlanta, Ga., magazine.

He is one of 16 attorneys, representing 13 law firms, in a special series section entitled "Attorneys of Distinction." The publication is *Jezebel*, a prominent lifestyle magazine for professionals.

Briggs is a trial lawyer, and the W. Winston Briggs Law Firm is located in Atlanta.

Briggs followed in the footsteps of trial lawyers in his family, including his grandfather, uncle, father, mother, and sister. He is the son of Anne Briggs of Flora and the late William "Bill" Briggs.

According to the article, Briggs is a veteran of more than 120 jury trials and is widely considered "one of the best trial lawyers in the

state (Georgia)."

Briggs is a 1980 graduate of Carroll Jr.-Sr. High School, a 1984 graduate of DePauw University, and a 1987 graduate of Wake Forest School of Law.

Following graduation from Wake Forest, Briggs practiced 20 years with the Atlanta litigation firm of Decker, Hallman, Barber & Briggs.

The article stated that after winning multiple noteworthy trials, Briggs opened his own law firm in July 2009. He has one associate, Robert Glass. Their practice focuses on representing people who have been injured or killed by the negligence and carelessness of others.

The article further states that the two attorneys pride themselves on their willingness to take cases to trial, and that Briggs is well-known for trying cases in front of juries.

Future leaders get primed to run

It is good to have a choice...

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

A panel of current and past county leaders provided preparatory advice to residents who may be interested in running for public office at a Thursday night program hosted by Leadership Carroll County. Panelists Pat Clawson, Carolyn Pearson, Ann Brown, Mary Ann Burton and Bill Pickart discussed personal experiences as candidates who have run for office. They answered questions from moderator Todd Ladd as well as audience members.

"We all have to work together to live in Carroll County," began Ladd. "And let's face it - we need good leaders."

All of the panelists, those who have been in office for some time and those who are relatively new to the political arena, expressed being connected to their communities and doing volunteer work as a common theme. Brown referred to herself as "a professional volunteer" after retiring from owning two businesses in Flora. Clawson said he was a business person and a volunteer firefighter without an agenda.

"This is just what I do," he said. "I am able to look at things in a very practical way. I will talk to anyone."

Pearson said she is not "a typical politician" having served on the Delphi City Council for 22 years after providing volunteer services to the community as well as raising her children as a stay-at-home mother.

Panelists urged those inclined to run for office to do so because it gives the voters a choice at the polls. They all agreed that running for office is a learning experience that can cost as much or as little as the candidate wants to spend.

The consensus of the panel is that holding an elected of-

fice is a public service. It is expected office holders be as available as much as possible to those they serve.

"You have to be willing to serve people any way you can," Burton, who has an office in the courthouse, advised.

"You have to understand that serving the public is work," Brown said. "And you always have to keep the taxpayers in mind when you are weighing options."

"I ran for kids and taxpayers," Pickart, who served on the Carroll School Board for 28 years, said. "Keep in mind, you are not going to please everybody."

"You're not going to get rich doing this," Clawson added. "No matter what district you represent, you have to look at how your decision will affect the whole county."

Ladd asked, "What makes elected officials effective?" to which the panel in virtual unison replied, "Honesty!" and shared thoughts about how to be an effective leader.

"Keep in mind, the easiest thing is to say 'yes'," Pickart said. "It is hard to say no."

"Keep yourself educated," Brown said. "You know how to meet the challenge when you are educated about the issue."

"Learning is the reward that comes from running and serving," Pickart added.

Brown warned possible first-time candidates about a campaign pitfall to avoid.

"Don't make campaign promises because you really don't know enough to promise anything!" she concluded.

Republican Party chair Penny Titus and Democratic chair Denise Strasser were introduced. Both recommended those interested in running for an office contact the head of the party they are registered in to gain valuable insight and to learn what the organized party has to offer them.

when people are in trouble."

He also credits his business success with always putting customers first and hiring quality employees. His employees David Crume, Jeff Clawson and Ben Bennington are all former factory workers who have been let go or the factories closed down.

"Hiring at a higher level keeps the business self-sufficient," Hodge said in the article.

Hodge's wife, Cindy, is involved in the business too, as is his son, Miles, a student at Purdue University. Their two daughters, Courteny and Madison, are students in Delphi Community schools.

The cover story in its entirety can be found at www.pumper.com. In the search line type in American Pumping.



Getting the work done

American Pumping owner Jim Hodge is seen on a Daewoo mini excavator backfilling a tank at a job site. He has two of his vacuum trucks outfitted in front with an attached carrier for an excavator. Tim Bath photos

You are invited to attend an
Open Door Law
Training Seminar
Monday, Nov. 30, 5 p.m.
at the Delphi Public Library
Hosted by the *Carroll County Comet* and
presented by Steve Key, General Counsel
for the The Hoosier State Press Assn.

The concept of "transparent government" has been a goal of Indiana lawmakers and media for many years. There is a state statute which dictates when elected officials of one governing body can meet without public notice and when they are required by law to provide that notification, if any media, such as the Comet, requests it.

The law can sometimes seem vague. What defines a "governing body" and what is a "meeting" exactly? Is the police merit board a "governing body" and subject to public notification when a meeting is scheduled? When the commissioners adjourn a bi-weekly meeting and then three community members wander up to the dais and discuss other county business with all three of them at one time, is that a violation?

Those who violate this particular law are only bound to uphold it by virtue of their consciences. There are no legal penalties for non-compliance.

But we believe, for the most part, violations happen because of ignorance, not due to malicious intent.

The Comet staff has decided to help area lawmakers, elected officials and the general public learn and understand what is contained in the state's Open Door Law. An "Open Door Law Training Seminar" featuring Steven Key, the counsel for the Hoosier State Press Association (HSPA), has been scheduled for Nov. 30 at 5 p.m. at the Delphi Public Library.

All elected officials in the county, including towns/city, townships, county government, as well as all taxing entities, such as school boards, are invited to attend. Community members are also welcome to learn about how the law works in communities.

Key will explain the law using practical examples from the office of the public access counselor and his own files. He will give specific situations in which the law is most often violated and explain how to avoid those situations.

Key is a willing recipient of quires from newspapers around the state, including the Comet, about interpretations of the Open Door Law. He writes a bi-weekly column for HSPA newspaper, "The Publisher." He is also a presenter at the annual HSPA Newsroom Seminar every December.

Key knows the problems faced by reporters because he used to be one. He earned a Bachelor's degree in journalism from Butler University in 1977 and law degree from Indiana University School of Law in 1994. Currently, Key represents HSPA before the Indiana General Assembly, lobbying for the public's freedom of information rights and the interests of the Indiana newspaper industry.

The Comet staff urges elected officials, those considering running for an elected office, and those serving on appointed boards and committees to attend the training seminar on Nov. 30. Learn how to make your service to Carroll County truly transparent!

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Opening government
to public oversight
is the ultimate safeguard
of democracy.

