

# BUSINESS



Ethan Kelley

Gathered at the GoodWorks sales and service office, from left to right, are Joseph L. Grochmal, president and CEO, Melissa J. Beeson-Higgins, partner for business development, Lillian M. Barker, partner for customer service, Deborah E. Wright, partner for customer service, and Peter M. Gay, COO and CFO.

## GoodWorks Insurance opens office

By Ethan Kelley

GREAT BARRINGTON — For GoodWorks Insurance founder and president Joseph L. Grochmal, good business and good communities have a trait in common: sustainability.

Small wonder, then, that Grochmal is launching an insurance firm that splits its earnings right down the middle, with half sustaining the company and the rest sustaining the community it serves.

At GoodWorks Insurance — offering personal and commercial services from its first branch office, located on Maple Street in Great Barrington — a premise Grochmal calls “responsible capitalism” commits the firm to donating 50 per cent of its operating profits every year to education, health care and public safety causes in the local community.

Moreover, says Grochmal, GoodWorks has committed in writing to a “charitable contract” that establishes its financial obligation to the community, makes its financial performance transparent and accessible, and allows any member of the community to

enforce the contract upon request. “Some day we’d like to see ourselves giving away an aggregate of a half million dollars a year in the community,” he says.

As part of its commitment, GoodWorks will give a minimum of \$15,000 a year to community programs, even during the early months of its existence when it has yet to turn a profit.

As such, the company — which has only been open for business for six weeks, even though its non-service headquarters in North Canaan, Conn. has been conducting behind-the-scenes preparations since 2004 — is holding its inaugural donation ceremony on April 6.

GoodWorks will donate \$4,000 to the Berkshire Hills Fund for Excellence, which provides yearly grants to teachers in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District who need funds for educational programs not covered in the school budget.

A parent of children in the school district, Grochmal says the charitable focus of GoodWorks was inspired in part by his wife Anne Grochmal, who has ties to

Housatonic, where the family lives.

It is a concept embraced by other GoodWorks board members, including Bob Norris, chairman of the board of trustees for Berkshire South Regional Community Center, and Peter M. Gay, who oversees the company’s finances.

From Grochmal’s start 25 years ago at a Connecticut investment firm — where a focus on the insurance industry allowed him to learn so much in practice that he decided never to get an MBA — to his latest endeavor with GoodWorks, testing ideas has been the key to success.

GoodWorks is coming to fruition after three years of research, including many conversations with industry leaders and future community participants. Now, with the first of what Grochmal hopes will be many regional offices up and running, the GoodWorks method even has a U.S. Patent pending for its model of doing business.

“We want to do things that make people want to be associated with us,” Grochmal says. “We want to build our identity on doing good things in the community.”