

Local caterer named to national post – My Chef owner elected to U.S. Chamber

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By David Sharos Special to The Sun

In 1939, Mr. Smith went to Washington.

This year, Naperville will send Bill Garlough of My Chef Catering.

The owner of the local catering company, which began here in 1989, Garlough has been elected to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the largest business federation in the world. It represents more than 3 million businesses and includes hundreds of associations and local chambers.

"I think the national chamber feels there is enough representation on the board regarding big business, and wants to get a voice for the smaller businessman," Garlough said.

The board itself is composed largely of chief officers and presidents of many national companies, including the senior vice presidents of 3M, FedEx Express, and Rolls Royce America, the CFO of IBM and CEOs of groups such as the American Medical Association and Mutual of Omaha.

The organization was launched almost 100 years ago on April 12, 1912 - fulfilling a vision of President William Howard Taft.

Path to nomination

Garlough has been the recipient of a great deal of recognition during the past few years, beginning with his local Naperville Chamber of Commerce Small Business Award in 2006. Last year, his reputation grew to national status after being recognized as the U.S. Chamber Small Business of the Year - an award he received May 24 at America's Small Business Summit 2007 in Washington, D.C.

Garlough said he believes last year's recognition may well have paved the way to his election on the board.

"I found out I was nominated this year after I won the national Small Business award," he said. "I think those two things are why I was selected."

Rita Bond, an administrative assistant with the U.S. Chamber, confirmed Garlough's hunch about his nomination.

"We received a nomination from one of the members of the Council on Small Business. It's one of the policy sub-committees we have here," Bond said. "This is the process we use here for selecting and electing members."

In preliminary talks with members of the national board, Garlough has learned he will attend at least four meetings a year, in addition to sub-committee meetings in areas where he has expressed an interest. "I want to be involved in things related to the small businessman, but also health care and transportation," he said. "These are things I feel passionate about."

Honor for city

Upon learning of the award, Jennie Gates, senior vice president of program services for the Naperville Chamber of Commerce described the local feeling as one of "complete pride."

"Mike Skarr - our former CEO - served on the national board, but this is the first time we've had business representation," Gates said. "It's truly an honor to have the Naperville business community represented, and the fact that 85 percent of the chamber business here is small - less than 10 people - means they'll be a voice now in Washington, D.C., for the majority of our members and others throughout the country." Garlough will receive no salary and said that to the best of his knowledge, all travel expenses will be his as well.

"Clearly, this is a position of service to others, not self-service," Gates said.



Bill Garlough of My Chef Catering was elected to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Garlough says he wants to represent the interests of small businesses like his, among other important issues, on the national board.
Courtesy of My Chef Catering