

Hard-won fame

GMG inducts Schmidt Siding, Weir Agency into Hall

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MANKATO — For a guy who spent his life in sales, Dale Brenke thought a lot was being asked of him by Greater Mankato Growth as it honored his Schmidt Siding & Windows as one of the Hall of Fame businesses Tuesday night.

“They said I can only talk for 60 seconds,” Brenke said prior to the banquet at

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Mike Brenke (center), owner of Schmidt Siding and Windows, visits with well-wishers, including Jonathan Zierdt (left), president of Greater Mankato Growth. Schmidt was inducted into the business hall of fame.

Photos by Pat Christman



James R. Weir, who founded an insurance agency in Mankato 42 years ago, saw the business inducted into the hall of fame Tuesday night at the Verizon Wireless Center.

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the Verizon Wireless Center. "Sixty seconds to recount 60 years? For an old siding salesman, that's going to be a feat."

Along with Schmidt's, the James R. Weir Insurance Agency was also inducted into the GMG Business Hall of Fame. The agency is now run by Weir's son, Jay Weir, and son-in-law, Mike Donohoe.

James Weir, now retired, said he left the banking business 42 years ago to start the insurance business.

"We came to town and didn't have one policy.

Now the business is huge.

It's good to see," Weir said. "It's nice to see my family continuing it and see it work out. It doesn't always," Weir said.

Jonathan Zierdt, president of GMG, said the annual business awards have been going on since 1987.

In spite of a tough economy, a full house of nearly 400 turned out for the banquet. "Anytime you have an opportunity to celebrate business success, people want to be here to share the experience with their colleagues," Zierdt said.

Schmidt Siding just celebrated its 60th anniversary. The firm was started by Robert J. Schmidt. Brenke began working at the company in 1971 and bought an ownership stake in 1981.

He said a siding, window and gutter business isn't a usual subject to be honored in a hall of fame.

"In a business like this, it's kind of an anomaly. It's a real salute to our employees - we have a lot of long-time ones - they're the ones that give the customer service and make us successful," Brenke said.

"This honor is just awesome."