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Orthopaedic and Spine Center of the Rockies
Mike Bergerson
CEO



Founding members of
Orthopaedic and Spine
Center of the Rockies
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The Bravo! Entrepreneur Master Class

BizWest thanks these experts for conveying how they succeeded in business by overcoming obstacles and finding solutions.

- Scott Ehrlich, Greeley honoree, 2002
- Susan Jessup, Loveland honoree, 2006
- Martin Lind, Outlying Area honoree, 2007

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— Regional Spirit

Larry Kendall,

Founding partner of The Group Inc.

Author of *Ninja Selling*



By Doug Storum
news@bizwest.com

FORT COLLINS — Larry Kendall has blended people-power with his own compassion to carve out a career worthy of BizWest's 2020 Bravo! Entrepreneur Regional Spirit award.

During a career that spans five decades, Kendall has helped thousands of people find the home of their dreams, and he has helped thousands of agents hone their skills to aid in those transactions. Along the way, he has volunteered time and effort to help the Northern Colorado community.

Kendall fell in love with Fort Collins when on a road trip in the 1970s, and he decided to put down roots. Finding himself without a job, he turned to selling real estate, but he was turned off by the hard-sell approach driven by quotas that was taught at real estate seminars of the day. He thought there had to be a better approach and decided to create one that suited his people-oriented personality.

Kendall helped co-found The Group Inc. in 1976 with 11 other Realtors.

The employee-owned real estate sales group was formed long before employee-owned businesses were fashionable. It quickly became a laboratory for experimenting with group dynamics, teams, self-directed work groups, employee empowerment and leadership — all the while working to find the best way to buy-and-sell real estate.

Susie Ewing, one of those first partners, recalls that it was Kendall's idea to open a real estate company that was employee-owned.

"All partners bought stock in the company and benefited from the profits," Ewing said. "In 1976, that was unheard of, and 44 years later the company that started with 12 partners now has 212 partners and six offices in Northern Colorado. He was then and still is a visionary."

Ewing said that Kendall is driven by bringing out the best in people.

"From the beginning, he was always a good leader, mentor, motiva-

tor and friend. He has a very unique way of recognizing the talents that people have long before they do and then helping them build on those talents. He is a true Go Giver — always willing to share what he has learned in order for people to be better."

In 1994, Kendall was instrumental in co-creating the Ninja Selling system. The sales-training system is based on building relationships, listening to customers and helping get them to where they want to be. In addition to making a transaction smooth for buyer and seller, the goals of the system include increasing an agent's income per hour, customer satisfaction and improving the quality of an agent's life.

The system first was used by the members of The Group but has since been taught internationally. Propelled by Kendall's book "Ninja Selling," the system has been taught in the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Spain with approximately 100,000 graduates. The book offers insights and case studies of Kendall's "soft" approach to sales and business development that he says never puts sellers in the position of being rejected or causes customers to feel pressure.

These "soft" skills such as empathy, communication and collaboration, generally are not taught in college, but frequently are sought by employers, Kendall said. The skills turn salespeople into "counselors." A key ingredient to the Ninja Way is for agents to have up-to-date and detailed market research at their fingertips, enabling them to offer counseling backed by statistics.

Ajay Menon, president and chief executive of the Colorado State University Research Foundation, said Kendall is adept at building the human asset and human spirit.

"He is a visionary who can paint a picture for individuals who only see chaos and lack of a path," Menon said.

Menon added that Kendall shared his knowledge and "secret sauce" (the Ninja Way) at no cost to the students at CSU during a 10-year period when he taught at the university's Everitt Real



Estate Center.

Kendall has offered his business skills to a number of community organizations. When he was chairman of the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce, he helped double the organization's membership, pay off debts and raise funds that saved the chamber from financial turmoil.

He also secured more than \$2 million in donations, as well as in-kind donations, which enabled Respite Care, a nonprofit day-care center for special-needs children, to move to a larger building so it could serve more children from Fort Collins and Loveland.

"Larry and his wife, Pat, have always been huge supporters of Respite Care," Ewing said. "Each year, Respite sells raffle tickets for people to win a car that has been donated. Larry and Pat have won that raffle twice and both times they gave the car back to Respite Care so it could benefit from the proceeds."

In 2019, CSU's Everitt Real Estate Center inducted Kendall into its Real Estate Hall of Fame.

Menon said that Kendall was inducted into the center's hall of fame for several reasons, including his positive impact on the strength and richness of the real estate industry, nationally and locally.

"He had an innovative approach to bringing a new model for real estate sales practices," Menon said. "He has high standards for integrity, ethics, professionalism, innovation and most inspiring is his story of reinventing himself through the Ninja sales workshops and as an author," Menon said.

"One hundred years from now,

people will remember Larry not for The Group, nor the Ninja Selling book and workshops. He will be remembered for the impact he had on individual lives, the community in which he has worked and giving hope to the less fortunate in our society."

Community activities

- Past-president of the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce
- Past-president of the Fort Collins Area United Way
- Past-chairman of the Colorado State University Development Council
- Alumni fellow, Kansas State University
- Kansas State University College of Business Dean's Advisory Board
- Director of First Bank Holding Co.

Awards

- Special Achievement award from the National Association of Realtors for teaching and impact on national real estate education
- Colorado Realtor of the Year
- Realtor of the Year from the Fort Collins Board of Realtors
- Business Person of the Year from Business World Magazine
- Entrepreneur of the Year from Fort Collins Inc.
- Collins Award for service to the Fort Collins community
- Charles A. Lory Public Service Award, from Colorado State University
- Bravo! Lifetime Achievement award from BizWest
- Best in the Business award from Fort Collins Coloradoan



2020 Bravo! Entrepreneur
 – Weld County
Jeff Demaske, Founder and Partner
Journey Homes



2020 Bravo! Entrepreneur
 – Weld County
Larry Buckendorf, Partner
Journey Homes



By Luanne Kadlub
 news@bizwest.com

In the 1990s, Jeff Demaske had no intention of building houses. Instead, as owner of J&J Construction, his plan was to prepare lots for other builders.

That plan took a different direction when some builders couldn't close on the lots during the economic downturn in the late '90s. So Demaske did what they couldn't do; he built a handful of houses.

That's when he saw there was profit to be made not just in dirt work but in building homes.

Shortly after, he met Scott Mueller, then owner of Journey Homes.

"I started doing his excavating work. We got to be friends. We hunted and fished together. The conversation always turned to if we could have more lots we could build more houses."

They became partners on Willowbrook, a Greeley subdivision, with each keeping 75 lots and selling the remaining 50. In 2003, when Mueller picked up stakes and moved to South Dakota, Demaske bought his company.

Journey Homes has been on an upward trajectory ever since.

Today Demaske, along with Larry Buckendorf, who became his partner in 2001, and Scott Schumacher, who came on board as a minority partner in 2017, oversee three companies: Journey Homes, J & J Construction and Crow Creek Construction with a total of 125 employees. Factor in subcontractors and trades and there are about 2,000 people working on Journey subdivisions and homes at any given time, Buckendorf said.

"Our subs are incredibly loyal.

Some have been with us from the beginning. Behrens Roofing has roofed every roof of ours. We talk to subs every month if not weekly. We have high expectations and hold them to it. The opinion out in the field is we're hard to get along with. We just hold everyone accountable. There's a difference."

Subs bank on getting paid, Buckendorf added, and Journey doesn't disappoint.

"They know there's a steady and consistent revenue stream and that they will be paid," he said.

Not only have the number of closings spiraled upward, so have home prices.

When Demaske got in the business, a starter home — which Journey Homes specializes in — sold for \$89,000. Today Journey's starter homes range from \$330,000 to \$500,000 in multiple subdivisions along the Front Range, including Greeley, Loveland, Fort Collins, Timnath, the Tri-Town area of Frederick, Firestone and Dacota, and most noticeably Severance, essentially in Demaske's backyard. At one time Journey Homes even had a division in Colorado Springs.

"We believe we're 20 to 25 percent of the market share," said Buckendorf, a lawyer and CPA who cut his teeth in land development working at Clarkson Land and Lifestyle Homes in Greeley before joining Demaske.

The company has grown from 187 closings in 2001 to 644 closings in 2019. Demaske said they anticipate 500 to 600 closings annually for the next three to five years, unless the economy throws them a curveball. He also anticipates building 300 to

400 apartment units annually as well.

"We run our business based on what we do well. We don't pay attention to what competitors do," Buckendorf said.

What they do well is build the same houses. Over and over and over. A Model 1444 in Greeley, for example, is the same as a Model 1444 in Severance and in Loveland.

The downside, Buckendorf said, is there's not much flexibility. "The upside is we know how to build those houses."

From the time the foundation is poured and framing begins, a Journey home goes up in 45 work days.

"We had good success working on our efficiencies, bringing ways to finish products with high quality standards and quicker than other builders," Buckendorf said. "Jeff is hands on. You'll find him onsite, behind the backhoe, managing the site, dealing with inspectors."

It hasn't always been smooth sailing, but during the Great Recession of 2007-09, Journey Homes was one builder that escaped unscathed.

"We weren't over leveraged," Buckendorf explained. "We went to our banking partners and explained how we'd get through it. We also had cash reserves. Jeff pumped a significant amount of cash back into the business to keep us solvent."

"We made it through by following through with what we said we'd do," he added. "We never defaulted on loans in the late 2000s. That speaks to the tenacity of our entire organization."

Without intending to, and only because the opportunity presented itself, the partners became bankers in

about 2012 when they bought Loveland-based Advantage Bank.

"It was a very risky market and we were the largest shareholder, and stuff was just going wrong," Demaske said. "All we were trying to do was help the bank survive. It is our favorite bank. The only way for it to survive was to buy it. They needed two things: capital, which wasn't easy to come by, and structure. We provided both," Demaske said.

During their ownership the market changed and assets that once were worth \$10 were worth \$20 a year later.

"We sold it in August 2019. It was another timing deal. That goal was to exit in '21 or '22, never to be in it long term. We didn't see ourselves being 25-year bank owners. There's a lot of regulation in banking, but Larry was able to deal with it. Without him that deal wouldn't have been possible."

OK, let's talk about the lake in front of Demaske's home at the intersection of Colorado Highway 257 and Weld County Road 74 (Harmony Road).

"It's not a lake because Jeff wanted a fishing lake," Demaske said. Instead, the water, which comes from the Eaton Ditch system, is not treated but instead filtered multiple times and delivered as nonpotable water to 1,500 lots in Severance as well as to 50 acres of parks and 30 to 40 acres of open space in Severance.

"Cornfield to carpet is our bread and butter," Demaske said. "It's pretty darn fun in the spring to go to the subdivisions one or two years later and see 30 kids playing in the park you built. Quite honestly, most of those people would never be able to afford a house if it weren't for us."

Congratulations

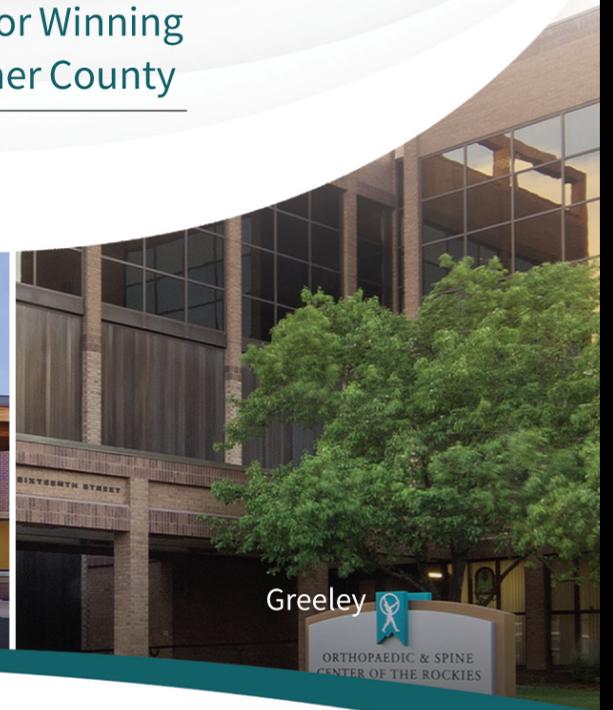
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2020 Bravo! Entrepreneur

– Larimer County Orthopaedic and Spine Center of the Rockies

Mike Bergerson, CEO



By Barbara J. Kelly
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Demand for orthopaedic services as the population both ages and grows in Northern Colorado has propelled the Orthopaedic and Spine Center of the Rockies into a major provider of services within the health-care community.

Bravo entrepreneur award winner Mike Bergerson, CEO of the Orthopaedic and Spine Center of the Rockies, said in 2016 when the center opened its newest facility in Greeley, “Our office in Greeley will help us keep up with increasing patient volume and demand for orthopaedics. Our doctors and staff are looking forward to being a part of the Greeley business and health-care community.

The Greeley location has indeed achieved that goal under Bergerson’s direction, as have OCR’s other two locations in Fort Collins and Loveland. And, in October, when a merger with Front Range Orthopedics and Spine becomes effective, those successfully attained goals will spread to the new facilities that come with the merger, including an additional one in Fort Collins along with sites in Longmont, Lafayette, Westminster, and Frederick.

The partnership will create the largest privately-owned, fully vertically integrated orthopedic and spine medical group in Colorado.

Medical Care

Most of OCR’s present physicians, who are fellowship trained and board-certified in specialties such as sports medicine and podiatry in addition to orthopaedics and spine-related matters, traveled to all three of its facilities prior to the pandemic. Post-merger, that pattern will likely be expanded. But currently, said Carli Taylor-Drake, director of marketing and practice development, all are taking advantage of telemedicine. “We plan to continue to offer telemedicine options to our patients where and when possible.” However, she added, “Due to the nature of our organization, much of what we do requires an in-person physical evaluation and hands-on care.”

Over the last 50+ years, Taylor-Drake said OCR has “grown from a small, general-orthopaedic clinic into a highly subspecialized, vertically-integrated model of musculoskeletal care.” That model includes, in addition to its medical clinics, therapy facilities, X-ray and MRI centers, a trauma program and a sports-medi-

cine outreach program.

Following the merger and the full integration of both organizations, the center will have 45 physicians and surgeons, 34 physician assistants and nurse practitioners, and other professional and support staff bringing the total number of employees to approximately 600 people. The goal of all is to provide the highest quality of care and the best patient outcomes in the lowest cost settings.

Non-Medical Care

OCR physicians contribute to their communities in non-medical ways as well. For example, they match, dollar-for-dollar, all contributions to the Jean Friday Fund to which employees who choose to wear denim on Fridays contribute \$3. The “Jeans Dollars” then go to a variety of non-profits and food banks several times a year. Other ways in which the center and its employees involve themselves are by holding an annual food drive for the Larimer County Food Bank and donating to several organizations \$1 for each patient survey that is returned.

Another example of OCR’s out-of-the-exam-room activities is the Greeley facility’s “Walk with a Doc” on the third Saturday of each month. “Walk with a Doc” offers Greeley residents a five-minute talk by either a family or sports-medicine physician, or both, along with a 30-minute walk during which walkers can have their blood pressure checked and can also ask the physician(s) general health questions.

OCR and FROC History

Both the Orthopaedic and Spine Center of the Rockies and Front Range Orthopedics & Spine are roughly 50 years old. OCR got its start in 1969; FROC opened its doors a year later.

OCR’s original four physicians pioneered and supported procedures such as internal-fixative devices for trauma and fracture surgery. Its physicians were among the early adopters of arthroscopic surgery that involves using a surgical scope and small incisions to operate on damaged joints, such as the knee and shoulder.

FROC’s original practice composed of four orthopedic surgeons has grown to 11 physicians and nine physician assistants who see patients in four locations: Longmont, Lafayette, Westminster and Frederick. It is the longtime provider of sports medicine services to the St. Vrain Valley School District.

Founding members of Orthopaedic & Spine Center of the Rockies



Dr. Robert Johnson



Dr. Benedict Magsamen



Dr. Charles Collopy



Dr. Douglas Murray

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OCR



Mike Bergerson

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