

The 2014 NEWH ICON of Industry



Bob Thomas

Bob Thomas is an investor. Throughout his life he has invested in people, ideas, and companies.

Boasting a hospitality career that spans 45 years, Bob has been involved in every facet of the industry. After working as a sales manager with Holiday Inn for more than a decade, and overseeing John Portman's Design & Purchasing firm for six years, Bob moved to the manufacturing side in 1986. He assembled and managed numerous sales forces in fabrics, upholstered furniture, and case goods, among other products.

One of Bob's proudest accomplishments by far, however, is founding Signature Hospitality Carpets along with his two partners, Brenda Smith and Bryan Ownbey. Over the past 16 years, Signature has become a major resource domestically and internationally with major hotels and design firms. As a totally vertical mill, every carpet manufacturing process including yarn extrusion, twisting, heat setting, tufting, primary and secondary backings, and final coatings are owned and controlled in-house. With more than 50 sales representatives worldwide, Signature Hospitality Carpets is prepared to meet and exceed the expectations of the hospitality industry.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Bob has always been a big supporter of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and continues to this day. He has "served time" as an MDA Jailbird to raise money to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and through Signature, he sponsors a team on the Miracle League, which provides children and adults with mental and physical challenges an opportunity to play baseball. Through their financial support the league was able to build a special field and the company has people there to assist the children and adults as they take their turn and bat.

In 2010, Bob became a sponsor for a child in Ethiopia through Compassion International. The young man's name is Grace. Through Compassions International Bob is able to make a difference in this child's life by educating him, clothing him, and seeing that the funds are available so he has medication. This is just one of the many things that Bob has done with no one watching that will make a change in the life of this child, the child's family, the village, the country, and the world.

Bob Thomas is a man that one can truly say is, "A friend to everyone he meets and a true leader. Bob makes a difference in the lives of others, always a kind word, and loves to laugh."

Please join NEWH in honoring Bob Thomas for his contributions through the award of the NEWH ICON of Industry. It is truly a privilege to induct him into our esteemed group of amazing professionals.