

Vincent Fantegrossi

Athlete

Entrepreneur

Class of 1969



Although the late 60s was a turbulent time, and the Vietnam War was compelling students into hard decisions, Vincent Fantegrossi nevertheless sees his high school experience as very much like that of today's young people who are facing similar pressures, concerns, and issues. He credits his Needham High teachers with showing him how to work through problems, maintain discipline, and stick to an appropriate moral compass.

An accomplished wrestler at NHS, Vincent received the Mike DeFazio and the Paul Bleakney wrestling awards, and he won the Bay State sectional championship in 1968 and 1969. His interest in wrestling has lasted to the present time, as have many of the friendships he made in the sport. With his athletic training and his high school education, Vincent felt well prepared for Boston College, where he graduated with a B.S. He then earned an MBA from Babson College in 1974.

Armed with an outstanding all-around education, Vincent entered the world of business, working for food and consumer product companies. He helped turn the fledgling Bread & Circus into a profitable business and then sold the company to Whole Foods Markets in 1992. He next became a partner and investor in a venture fund that focused on natural food companies.

In 1996 Vincent formed a group that purchased Cape Cod Potato Chips at a time when the company had shut down. As president and CEO, Vincent saw reviving the company

as a challenge. In its first year the revitalized business grossed \$8.2 million, in 1997 \$20 million, and in 1998 \$30 million. 1999's goal is \$37 million. In addition to making money, the company provides jobs in the community.

Cape Cod Potato Chips also participates in the community. Each year it sponsors the Jimmy Fund Walk, and Vincent and his family join fellow workers at freshening stops, providing water and chips to the walkers. The company also supports efforts to save the Cape's historical lighthouses, in part by manufacturing a pretzel shaped like a lighthouse and donating proceeds from its sales to this cause. When Vincent was with Bread & Circus, the company as a whole backed a variety of charitable endeavors, focusing on eradicating hunger and saving the environment.

Vincent's personal interests center on his children's activities and sports, particularly wrestling, although he has coached Little League and Summer Baseball. He is a member of the Boosters Club and of the Friends of Needham Wrestling, and a supporter of USA, Boston College, and Harvard wrestling. Vincent attends his son's matches, frequently in the company of old wrestling friends. This coming December, Vincent's old teammate, Alan Meltzer - a previous recipient of a Needham High School Distinguished Career Award - will be bringing his son's high school team from Maryland to wrestle in a Massachusetts holiday tournament along with the Needham team. It will seem like old home week for these two Needham High graduates.

Our award winners are asked, "What was the most important thing you did not learn at NHS?" Vincent's answer suggests a worthwhile goal for all: "How to deal successfully with people, creating 'win-win' situations. This took years of experience."

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