

Reception/Dinner for Jim and Sharon Weinel

Washington, D.C. -- The Signage Foundation, Inc. honored the vision of philanthropy of Jim and Sharon Weinel at a reception on Friday evening, March 28, 2008 at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort in Orlando, Florida. Approximately fifty guests, including the Weinel's daughter and son-in-law Siri and Fred Oss, long time friend Noel Yarger, Gemini, Inc. Board member Mike Paxton and representatives from the University of Cincinnati-Dr. Will McIntosh, Dean of the College of Business, Dr. Robert Probst, Interim Dean of the College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning, Dr. David Edelman, Professor in the College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning specializing in Urban Planning and Dr. Karen Machleit, Department Head-Marketing joined with the Board of Directors of the Signage Foundation, Inc. in the celebration.

Joe Rickman, Chairman of the Signage Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors welcomed the guests and chronicled the personal and professional partnership of Jim and Sharon Weinel. Mr. Rickman noted "It is rare that a situation arises where philanthropy and a vision for how to change the dynamics of how society responds to an industry merge as clearly as seen in the career, vision and giving of Jim and Sharon Weinel."

James (Jim) Weinel was born in Minnesota and spent his early days in Randolph, graduating from Randolph High School in 1951. From there he attended and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1956.

Sharon Weinel was born in eastern South Dakota, grew up on a farm and graduated from Howard High School. She attended South Dakota State College in Brookings for three years and later graduated from Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis in 1985.

Jim and Sharon met in Minneapolis and were married in 1956-a very successful partnership of 52 years. They have three children—2 daughters and 1 son; they have 11 grandchildren.

After a brief active duty tour in the Army, Jim and Sharon settled in Minnesota. Jim worked in aerospace engineering for five years then had an opportunity to purchase a small company in Minneapolis, Gemini, in 1964. This vacuum forming company made various articles for industry in and around the Twin Cities and soon began making letters for the sign industry. They grew and expanded this venture into a major industry making letters in plastic, aluminum, stainless steel, cast metal, and bronze. Gemini now has plants throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Jim and Sharon have been very active and lifelong members of the Lutheran Church of Minneapolis. Philanthropy has been a very intentional part of both their personal and professional lives.

In 2006 Jim and Sharon established the Don Osell Chair of Sales and Marketing for Engineers at University of Minnesota. Additionally they established a 501©3 corporation to reach out to high school students in locations where Gemini has plant operations. The Ross Wagner Scholarship Program for Engineers awards educational grants to high school students who have selected engineering as a career choice.

In December of 2007, Jim and Sharon Weinel announced a generous gift to endow the James S. Womack Chair of Signage and Visual Marketing at the University of Cincinnati.

The Weinels have grown their company, Gemini, into a significant part of the signage industry. They are also the model for how philanthropy can continue to grow the sign industry and impact all business development. In his responsive comments, Mr. Weinel noted "I realize that change must occur for the signage industry to be fully appreciated and understood. The growth is clearly one based on relationships and a thorough understanding of the need to impact the planners of tomorrow's communities and cities and the need to shift from "defending signage" through litigation to a more proactive role of education, research and consumer behavior analysis."

The Signage Foundation, Inc. is a nonpartisan organization which was established in 2003 and views on-premise signage and storefronts as fundamental components of today's mobile society's communication

system and a necessity for the development of a visually pleasing, economically healthy and diverse community. The Foundation seeks to develop research, build partnerships, and educate the public and the regulatory community about the value of signage, the laws regulating signage, the human science factors involved in signage design and the public policy implications of sign regulations. From the beginning, the Signage Foundation has believed that there is a significant alignment with academia to train community designers and planners while creating a knowledge base on how signage, advertising and marketing touch our lives every waking moment. Through symposia, seminars, publications, or technical assistance, the Signage Foundation is working to become the presumptive resource for education and research on signage and its positive usage.

The focus which drives the work of the Signage Foundation, Inc. is the establishment of full and unconditional acceptance and endorsement of storefront signage. The message of the Signage Foundation is one of clarity and is best articulated in this manner: The Signage Foundation works to protect the fundamental right to signage through research and education.

Mr. Rickman and the entire Board of Directors of the Signage Foundation, Inc. asked everyone in attendance to join in applauding both the VISION and the PHILANTHROPY of Jim and Sharon Weinel and to thank them for their example of giving and tireless efforts to grow the knowledge base which impacts the economy and business development. In concluding comments, Mr. Rickman stated "You have just heard how a strategic alignment of vision and resources can impact not only today's understanding of marketing, advertising and urban planning but also train the community builders of tomorrow. Thank you, Jim and Sharon Weinel, Fred and Siri Oss and the entire Gemini Corporate family for demonstrating such a strong financial commitment to support education and research. Your giving has defined a benchmark and has challenged all stakeholders to respond to the continuing need for research and education."

Photo of the guests shown left to right: Ken Von Wald, Jim and Sharon Weinel, Roy Cox, Greg McCarter, Duane Laska and Joe Rickman (Not pictured - Signage Foundation Board member Tom Black).

About SFI

The Signage Foundation, Inc. (SFI) works to promote signage in the societal sense, educating the public about its social, economic and aesthetic value to the at-large society, emphasizing to users how to maximize their communication effectiveness. The Foundation focuses on bringing education to sign users and to those who interact with sign users, including advertising agencies, lenders, appraisers, attorneys, regulators, business form franchisers and small businesses.

On the Net: www.thesignagefoundation.org

Contact: Joe Rickman, Chairman of the Signage Foundation, Inc. at 202.251.0624.