

Lucas Derry, 33

Header Die & Tool President and Owner

By Paul Anthony Arco

Being named a 40 under 40 leader is special to Lucas Derry for one particular reason. "It's good to show that there are younger people involved in manufacturing, and that it's a viable career choice," he said.

Lucas runs Header Die and Tool, a Rockford-based company founded in 1954 that has grown as a global supplier of cold forming tooling and other specialty manufactured parts. His father, Tom, bought the company in 1976; Lucas went to work for his dad in the shop when he went to Guilford High School. "I was handed a putty knife, shop rags and solvent and told to clean the sludge off the floor," said Lucas, laughing.

Lucas left home to earn a business management degree from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He moved on to Milwaukee for two years, before returning to Rockford to work again for his father. And, after Tom suffered a stroke a few years ago, the younger Derry knew what he had to do: he stepped up and took over his father's business, eventually buying it in 2009. "It's what I know, what I enjoy doing,"

he said. "The people I get to work with are all very dedicated. Everyone really wants to do what's best for our customers, and provide them with the best possible products and service. It's not window dressing, it's what we do."

Despite difficult economic times, the second generation owner is proud to continue his father's legacy in the manufacturing business. "My father is one of seven children, five who have had their own business. We're entrepreneurial by spirit," he said. "He taught me to work for what I want. There are lessons he taught me that he didn't even know he taught me. He instilled in me to speak up when things aren't right and fix them."

That's exactly what Lucas tried to do a few years ago when he volunteered to become a Big Brother to a young boy, who was experiencing trouble in school. Lucas, who was single and enjoying his 20s at the time, wanted to give back to his community. He is happy to report his little brother is now 13, and making great strides both at home and at school. "He's influenced my life in different ways," Lucas said of his little brother.



"He's helped me become a better father to my children."

Lucas also is quite active in the community. He's been involved with the YMCA of the Rock River Valley Strong Kids Campaign and he currently serves on the board of trustees for Scandinavian Cemetery. He is also a member of UW-Whitewater's General Management Advisory Board.

But Lucas also makes time for one of his greatest pleasures – biking. Lucas can be found mountain biking at Rock Cut State Park or road biking around Cherry Valley. "That's my release," he said. "If

I'm not on my bike for a week, I can feel it. If you keep stress built up, that's not good for you or anyone else."

What do you do in your downtime?

I enjoy spending time with my wife, Brooke, and our two sons, Charlie and Cooper. I also enjoy mountain biking at Rock Cut or road biking around Cherry Valley.

What did you learn in kindergarten?

I learned how to play nice with others even if you don't really like the person.

"When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened."

-- John M. Richardson, Jr.

Honoring some of the best and brightest of Rockford's young professionals is what the Rockford Chamber of Commerce Forty Under 40 recognition program is all about. These are the people who are not content to let the future happen; but, rather are eager to be a part of making it happen.

Inside the "Class of 2010," you will find entrepreneurs and educators, managers and marketers, bankers and barristers. All form an impressive group of up-and-comers in the Rockford community.

To be selected for this group, each individual was first nominated by a friend, a colleague, an employer. All applications were reviewed by a committee comprised of past Forty Under 40 honorees, who followed an established selection procedure.

We're proud to present the Class of 2010 Forty Under 40 recipients in these pages. We think the future of the Rockford area is in good hands!

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