

Like Father, Like Son

Local PR Duo Places Focus On Protecting Environment

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Dick Barton is a man with many passions.

Driving and fixing up cars is a passion he developed as a young man. He'd visit local auto dealers and test drive cars to see what's new on the market. His middle child, Alex, shares the same enthusiasm. For enjoyment, Dick would also race cars in one of Universal Oil Products

(UOP) parking lots in Des Plaines where organizers would set up a track where racers could compete for the best time.

When Alex joined Barton & Barton, Ltd. in 1998, he brought with him a passion of his own to the family business: life sciences and the protection of the environment. From there, a new passion was born for the growing Park Ridge marketing and
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international trade," said Pat-

Road and just east of Route 53,

Barton

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public relations company to focus on.

"We only have one planet," says Alex, 39.

"Our business has become more focused on helping the environment," adds Dick. Barton & Barton has spearheaded the marketing, public relations and promotion of a number of green initiatives not only in Chicago's suburbs but also in other parts of the country.

In 2008 as the national economy worsened under the weight of the Great Recession, one of the Bartons' key clients was worried that a major trade show it hosted in Houston, TX, was going to become a disaster. Major players such as General Motors and Ford were cutting the amount of booth space they normally occupied at the show. That resulted in an extreme slicing of revenue for the organizers, the National Assn. of Fleet Administrators (NAFA). Something had to be done -- quickly.

"We came up with a concept for a Green Zone Pavilion at their expo," explains Dick. "It was a display area where companies would show attendees alternative fuels and how to save fuel. People could drive alternative fuel cars there."

The pavilion became a hit transforming what could have been a major disaster into a huge success. That success carries on to this day.

Around the same time, Alex and Dick took their Green passion to Maine Township where they implemented an Idle Reduction Policy for township vehicles and a biodiesel program that used a special blend of fuel that greatly reduced the amount of fossil fuels entering the atmosphere.

"We pitched schools in Park Ridge-Niles Dist. 64, Catholic schools and the Park Ridge Park Dist. to create No Idle Zones for vehicles near their buildings where parents would drop off their children children," the elder Barton mentions. They also promoted the use of Green garbage cans in Park Ridge that



Alex Barton and dad Dick run Barton & Barton Ltd.

promoted recycling of certain materials.

"My passion in this area started while I was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison," says Alex. "I became involved in the Sierra Club and I majored in life sciences, which is the study of the environment, College of Agriculture."

Long before the Bartons' began focusing on protecting the planet, father Dick founded Barton & Barton Ltd. in 1995. A former newspaper editor, Dick at that time had no clients and a small office he shared with Rick Ornberg, a former Des Plaines resident, firefighter and executive director of the Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce. Before his career in public relations began, his passion for automobiles was at its peak when he opened Winner's Circle auto parts store in Villa Park in 1971. It closed in 1978.

"I was able to solicit two clients that would sustain me," says Dick referring to his new public relations business. "We now have a dozen clients whom we provide PR and marketing services for. And we also sell items for clients such as magazine sponsorships and advertising."

Today, Alex has replaced Dick as president of Barton & Barton, the umbrella organization of Barton Marketing Group and Green Transportation Solutions.

Dick continues to attend community functions ranging from chambers of commerce to township board meetings and he services the many clients he has built up over the years.

He is also a past president of the Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce.

Looking toward the future, both Bartons believe the drive for better, fuel efficient cars will continue and that at some point, government will step in and offer tax breaks making the use of fuel efficient vehicles more attractive.

So, while Dick Barton has relinquished day-to-day control of the company to Alex, his passion for the work of Barton & Barton, Ltd. remains in tact, as does Alex's.

Their passion for each other as friends and co-workers also remains as strong as ever.