

Young Guns

The 'Forty Under 40' Have Been Selected — and Will Soon Be Announced

Mike Katz weighs in below.

The Forty Under 40 have been chosen!

That's all we'll tell you, for now. From a list of more than 80 nominations, a panel of three judges has identified those who will comprise *BusinessWest's* inaugural Forty Under 40. These individuals will soon be notified of their accomplishment, and warned to keep things hush-hush. That will help build some excitement for a special section in the May 14 edition of *BusinessWest*, in which the chosen 40 will be profiled. Later this spring (date and time to be announced), they will be introduced to the public at ceremonies at the TD Banknorth Center in Springfield.

Selecting 40 was quite a challenge, according to the three judges chosen to review and score the nominations — Deborah Bellucci, dean of Continuing Education and Online Learning at Springfield Technical Community College; Russell Denver, president of the Affiliated Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield; and Michael Katz, a partner with the Springfield-based law firm Bacon & Wilson.

They told *BusinessWest* they were impressed with the depth and diversity of the field, thought the sum of the nominated talent bodes well for the region, and offered the hope that it may inspire others to reach higher and attempt to do

more for the community.

"I'm impressed with how much these people have accomplished at this stage of their careers," said Bellucci. "It made being a judge very difficult; overall I was pleased to see a variety of industries, businesses, and institutions represented."

Said Denver, "it was an extremely diverse set of nominees, and by diverse I mean in respect to community involvement, occupations, business involvement, and geography — up and down the Pioneer Valley."

Katz agreed. "This list shows that we have some outstanding people working in the Pioneer Valley; it's a very impressive group — there are a lot of very smart people dedicated to their jobs but still very involved in the community."

He also said the stories told within a two-inch-thick folder of materials presented to the judges were somewhat eye-opening, even for someone like himself, who keeps a keen eye on the business community.

"I was surprised at how many people that I frankly hadn't heard of and didn't know about," he said. "There are many unsung heroes out there that many of us

just haven't had the opportunity to know or work with yet."

The judges were instructed to review the nominations and give each individual a score from 1 to 10 (with 10 being the best), but not told how to arrive at those numbers, other than to weigh factors such as business achievements, awards, testimonials (if there were any), and service to the community, and to be consistent with the weight given to each.

All three judges considered community service an important consideration, and a must if one is to be considered a true leader in the business community.

"Most of these people have achieved some great things in their chosen field, and I think community service is what separates people out," said Bellucci. "Anyone can do well at school or ace a resume, or spend 80 hours a week at the office, but giving something back is extremely important in my opinion."

Katz agreed. "This program gives us an opportunity to recognize that there are many high-quality people in this area, many of them doing good things in the community; maybe it will inspire

other people to do more."

Denver said he was generally impressed with the Forty Under 40 field, but especially with the number of business owners in the mix. The region has been working to encourage entrepreneurship, he said, and the large number of business owners among the candidates should generate optimism about future job creation.

"I was more impressed with individuals who own their own companies," he said, noting that there are many of them on the list, "people who know what it's like to meet a payroll every week but still find the time to be very active in their community."

Katz told *BusinessWest* that he gave careful consideration to all aspects of one's nomination, but as an intangible, he gave some extra credit to those who overcame challenges and adversity to achieve success in their specific field.

"I considered success in the workplace, but measured by challenges that needed to be overcome," he said. "There were some people who faced difficulties within their industry or within their specific job; these people were able to meet those challenges, and it made them stand out even more."

For continued information on the Forty Under 40, keep reading *BusinessWest*, or visit www.businesswest.com.

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