

Jobs satisfaction

Marco businessman takes multitasking to a new level

By: Quentin Roux

Naples Daily News - April 5, 2006

Some people profess to wear many business hats in their regular jobs, but Marco Islander Al Wagner takes it way further.

He wears multiple hats in a whole bunch of businesses he conducts — five, to be exact.

So, on any given day, expect Wagner to be on the phone at his Post Plaza office, talking about accounting and tax preparation, about his karate school, about his new Marco Island coins, about his interest in gap housing using an affordable construction material, or about a member payment service he coordinates for clubs and organizations.

Consider that he's also a married dad of four who makes sure to set aside quality time for his family, and you might say Wagner is something of a master of time management.

Surprisingly relaxed and easygoing (his accounting business card features a cartoon character in a hammock slung between letters), Wagner is even busier than usual this time of the year because of tax-preparation services leading up to mid-April.

But he still found time to talk about his multiple ventures: The Casual Accountants LLC, Gator Kenpo Karate School, the Marco Island Liberty Dollar, Wavtech Homes and Member's Payment Service.

Besides his bread-and-butter profession of accounting, Wagner is most excited about the Liberty Dollar business, his karate school and Wavtech Homes, which uses steel-insulated building panels in construction.

Wagner, who will officially unveil the Marco Island Liberty Dollar at 6 p.m. Thursday, April 6, at The Bar at The Esplanade, said the coins are primarily for novelty and collection value.

But he also wants to popularize the silver pieces with participating local businesses, which he hopes will treat them as an alternative currency.

Already, he says, 5 Brothers Pizza at the Marco Walk plaza accepts the coins as payment, and some others are showing interest.

The 1-ounce coins, with the words Marco Island stamped on the back above Lady Liberty's torch, have a \$20 face value.

Wagner sells them at \$30 apiece.

But he also sells batches of coins at wholesale prices that are below face value. He makes a profit on sales, as do retailers like 5 Brothers, if they buy coins to place in their registers and then use them as change for customers.

"It's not legal tender," Wagner said. "It's voluntary, but my goal is to get many local businesses to accept it as a form of payment."

When he's not thinking in \$20 terms, Wagner enthuses about the karate school, a result of his 14-year interest in martial arts.



Photo by Quentin Roux / Marco Eagle

Take five: Al Wagner operates a literal handful of businesses on Marco Island, ranging from a karate

He has about 12 students in the school.

school to an accounting practice.

Wagner said Kenpo karate is the art of practical self-defense, but added that he places as much emphasis on focus, discipline and respect as on preparing students to get themselves out of threatening situations.

Wavtech Homes, Wagner said, could be ideal for the gap-housing push currently receiving so much attention in Collier County.

The company's first project is already under way in Lehigh Acres, he said, and should the technique prove popular, he's thinking of delegating responsibility and leaving most of that business in the hands of his business partner, Lance Viola.

Attractions of the steel panels are strength and relatively quick construction methods, he said.



Photo by Quentin Roux / Marco Eagle

The Lehigh home, he said, runs in the \$239,900 range, looks like a modest ranch-style home and comprises about 1,300 square feet under air to accommodate three bedrooms, two bathrooms and living space on a quarter-acre lot.

Wagner plans to soon submit a proposal for a two-story commercial unit on the island.

Office assistant Sam Jeffrey displays a Marco Island Liberty Dollar coin, which Wagner will launch Thursday, April 6, at The Bar at The Esplanade. Wagner hopes the coin, besides being a collectible, will become a fun "alternate currency" on the island.

The payment service business basically coordinates dues from clubs' members, Wagner said. He primarily targets health and martial arts clubs.

"We turn everything into electronic payments and charge a percentage of what we've collected," he said.

His service also updates member information.

John Nacheff of 5 Brothers Pizza said Wagner has a definite "entrepreneurial bone."

Wagner, he said, is intelligent and studious, delegates accordingly and is a master of time management.

"That's what it's all about," said Nacheff, who has known Wagner for six years and initially asked him to take care of his business accounting.

Wagner, born and raised in Philadelphia, met his wife, Eileen, while they were working at Sears during their college years. They are parents to Jonathan, 3; Jacob, 5; Julia, 6; and Joshua, 7.

The children's names are not coincidentally biblical — the Wagners are devout Christians and use Saturday, the Sabbath, to be together.

As for the future, Al Wagner said entrepreneurial ideas keep popping into his head.

"I always look for ideas to see if they fit for what we do," he said. "Accounting gives me the opportunity to work in just about any industry. ... Everybody needs someone to count up the stuff."