

Empire gears up for 6th Future Professionals Expo

With a 75+ year heritage in cosmetology education, **Empire Education Group** has long been a leader in preparing future beauty professionals for successful careers in all aspects of the professional salon industry. In fact, in 2010, Empire Education Group will educate more than 20,000 students at 95 campuses and growing across 20 states. One unique experience that Empire provides for its students as part of their education experience is its **Future Professionals Expo**, the largest student competition and trade show in the country. The sixth annual event is scheduled for May 16 and 17 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center in Hershey, PA, and it offers numerous opportunities for salon industry manufacturers, distributors, salon owners and other mentors and employers of cosmetology professionals to introduce their products and career opportunities to more than 3,000 future professionals, welcome them into this wonderful profession and even conduct on-site interviews. **Beauty Industry Report (BIR)** recently had the opportunity to interview **Frank Schoeneman**, CEO and chairman of Empire Education Group, whose family has led this company for three generations, to get the inside story on how Empire came to be the leader it is today, and how the Future Professionals Expo has taken the concept of graduating “salon ready” professionals to a new level. I am delighted to share his comments and insights with **BIR’s** readers.

Beauty Industry Report (BIR): Please tell me about Empire Education Group’s story.

Frank Schoeneman (FS): The Schoeneman family has been dedicated to the growth and improvement of the professional beauty industry for three generations. For 30+ years, my role has been in the education sector, where we serve the beauty industry by dedicating ourselves to producing salon ready graduates through new and innovative programs that are designed to challenge our students technically and inspire them creatively to be the best they can be. Now, my son, **Kyle**, has chosen to join our company. He is learning various roles of the education business from the ground up and began at the school level as

executive director of two different campuses. Now, he works at our home office as a member of our marketing team, where he champions our new media and markets program. I am so proud of him, as I am of our hundreds of other team members across the country who dedicate themselves every day to helping our students better their lives. That is the reason we all come to work every day.

BIR: At 95 campuses in 20 states, Empire certainly operates the largest single-owner cosmetology school “empire” in the country. How did the company grow to become the leader it is today?

FS: We’ve grown carefully and strategically through a planned combination of acquisitions of existing companies plus organic growth both in new markets, as well as to fill in and completely serve existing markets. We doubled the size of our company with our merger with **The Regis Corporation** in 2007. That merger brought all of the schools that Regis had acquired previously into the Empire Education Group system, allowing us to adopt best practices in order to provide the best education possible for our students, as well as the fastest enrollment process, so they can begin pursuing their dreams as quickly as possible. In addition, our partnership ensures our students the opportunity for national placement throughout the Regis system. Empire is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the schools, and with Regis as our partner, we have the equity to continue to grow. In addition, **Paul Finkelstein**, CEO and chairman of Regis, serves on our board, adding his global vision and insights into the salon business to our depth of knowledge in career education, so it really is the perfect marriage. Most recently, Empire assumed operation of nine campuses—**The Beauty Institutes** and **New Wave Hair Academies** in Tennessee and **Carolina Beauty Colleges** in North Carolina. In the next several months, we will be building several new campuses, so we’ve begun the countdown to our 100th campus—certainly an amazing benchmark when you consider the impact our students will make on the industry.

BIR: I understand that your company leads by

its core purpose and strategic vision. Please tell BIR’s readers how they guide your operation.

FS: Our core purpose is to create opportunities for people to improve their lives, while the vision of Empire Education Group is to be the leader of cosmetology education, focused on the success and satisfaction of students throughout their careers. Those key beliefs guide us through every initiative we launch and every interaction with our students.

BIR: Who makes up your leadership team?

FS: Empire Education Group is led by a team of highly talented and experienced executives. **Michael D. Bouman**, president and chief operating officer, has almost 40 years of experience in leading career education companies. His team includes **Joseph A Carretta**, executive vice president, operations; **Bruce R. Schmidt**, executive vice president, marketing; **James A. Wunderle**, senior vice president/chief financial officer; **Carl Bridges, PhD**, senior vice president of education and chief academic officer; and **Phil Jacobelli**, senior vice president, human resources. In addition, **Dorothy McKinley-Soressi** is our vice president of industry relations and plays an integral role in keeping Empire connected with our industry partners. She is currently spearheading our new alumni program, and also manages the career center for our Future Professionals Expo.

BIR: What sets the educational experience at an Empire Beauty School apart?

FS: First and foremost, the quality of our education—we embrace new technology, products and trends and integrate them into our classrooms quickly. Empire uses the exclusive **Certified Learning in Cosmetology (CLiC)** curriculum, which we have developed exclusively for our schools. CLiC provides the most visually stimulating and technically concise visual learning education system. It’s specifically tailored to maximize the creativity and retention of right brain learners through cutting edge and interactive educational aids, including **NxtBook** and **TeamBoard** teaching technology systems. Empire’s education is nonproduct specific, which allows our students to assimilate easily into any salon, regardless of the products its team uses and recommends.

Empire also places a strong emphasis on ensuring that its graduates have practical experience in entry level business skills, including marketing their services, upselling their clients on additional services, recommending the proper take home products, educating clients to maintain their styles at home and rebooking clients' next service. That's a huge advantage for them when interviewing for their first position after graduation, and helps the salon owner/manager to integrate them into a working team of successful professionals. And, our Future Professionals Expo is an event like no other that opens the door to career success for our students.

BIR: In fact, over the past five years, Empire Education Group's Future Professionals Expo has gained quite a reputation as being "the" place to be for anyone who wants to reach more than 3,000 future professionals—as well as our faculty from across the country—in just two days. Please share its evolution.

FS: Back when we had just a handful of schools, we held smaller scale competitions to expose our students to different products and allow them to experience techniques beyond what they learned in the classroom. Six years ago, we decided to create a national event that would bring our students together from all of our campuses to experience their industry on a much grander scale. We added a trade show floor and classrooms, as well as more competition categories, and invited our industry partners to participate and network with and mentor our students, so students could learn everything possible about future career opportunities. We quickly outgrew that space, moving to Hershey, PA, which is both fun and accessible to most of our students, and provides a very cost effective venue for our partners, exhibitors and sponsors. Last year, we retained **Frankie Cacciato** as our ambassador to help us make sure that any company that wants to reach our students has the opportunity to showcase its products, programs and/or opportunities to our 3,000 future professionals with the appropriate sponsorship package. Attendees are in a learning mode and want to see as many products, tools and techniques as possible and meet with potential employers and mentors in a very short time frame.

“Attendees are in a learning mode and want to see as many products, tools and techniques and meet as many potential employers and mentors as possible.”

BIR: What's new for the 6th Annual Future Professionals Expo?

FS: The big news this year is that we're adding an exciting guest artist and speaker, who will provide valuable insights and experiences with the students on how to be successful in their future careers as beauty professionals. In addition, we have more opportunities than ever for our students to experience a professional trade show, including an expanded exhibit hall where they can meet with vendors and learn all about their products. We've also enhanced our career networking center, where students can participate in mock and real interviews, show their portfolios and review their resumes with potential employers, while learning everything possible about what national,

regional and local salons offer them. Our exciting competitions will add Hair Braiding and other categories to Long Hair Design, Ladies Trend Cut and Style with Color, Makeup Artistry, Nail Art and Men's Hair Cut and Style. Our competitions begin next month at the school level, with the exciting national finals and a glitzier than ever awards ceremony happening live at the Future Professionals Expo. We'll have more prizes, including exciting trips to prestigious professional seminars and international shows, new tools and product collections to winners and participants.

BIR: How can companies get involved?

FS: We invite any company that wants to reach our students to participate in a variety of ways. That might include exhibiting on our show floor, sponsoring an advanced education classroom, providing mentors for the career networking area or offering prizes for competition winners or participants or for show attendees. For example, in 2009, students received prizes from **Redken, Diamond Shears, OPI, Logics** and **Makeup Forever**. 2009 sponsors also included **Arrojo Salon Group, Goldwell, Conair, Milady, Moroccanoil** and **Sally Beauty Supply**. It's so motivating to experience the enthusiasm of these future professionals and we invite everyone to join us!

BIR: Anything else you'd like to share?

FS: Empire offers students unmatched career advantages, not only by providing them with the very best education and skills they need to succeed, but by our emphasis on connecting them with potential employers. As a result, our students tend to be very successful in launching their careers. And the great news is that the job opportunities are out there for licensed cosmetologists. At the end of the day, this is one career that can't be outsourced.

To get involved in Empire Education Group's 6th Annual Future Professionals Expo as an exhibitor or sponsor, contact Frankie Cacciato, show consultant, at 630-742-2169 or fcacciato@futureproexpo.com or John Mascarini, show director, at 570-628-4752 or jmascarini@futureproexpo.com. To learn more about the career center and networking opportunities, contact Dorothy McKinley-Soressi, show coordinator, at 917-579-6479 or dsoressi@futureproexpo.com. For updates, visit www.futureproexpo.com.