

2019 SPRING EDITION

# Regional BUSINESS

 Fredericksburg Regional  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# *Faithful,* *Approachable,* *Teachable*

Bill McAvinney, 2019 recipient of the Prince B. Woodard Leadership Award, shares about leadership, what motivates him and gives a message to today's business leaders.

“As a business owner and/or a professional, people do not understand how much they can impact their sphere of influence. They have influence whether they know it or not, wherever they go.”



*Bill standing with his right hand man, Mark Whitacre, COO of Christian Business Men's Connection (CBMC), at a CBMC conference.*

**B**ill McAvinney is the 2019 recipient of the Prince B. Woodard Leadership Award. He is the president of McAvinney Employee Benefit Services as well as the owner of McAvinney & Associates, an insurance and financial services firm serving all industries. For the last two years, he has served as the president of the Christian Business Men's Connection (CBMC) nationally after previously serving on their board for 14 years. Bill served on the board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes for 13 years and has been involved with various sports programs at Fredericksburg Christian Schools. A graduate of the inaugural class of Leadership Fredericksburg, Bill has a passion for mentoring others and giving back to the community. He is married to Ginny, his wife of 45 years, and has four daughters, Julia, Melissa, Susannah and Christy.

### Why Fredericksburg?

We moved to Fredericksburg from New England 30 years ago for one reason, to put our four daughters in Fredericksburg Christian Schools (FCS). We had searched up and down the country and after finding FCS, we decided that was the kind of education we wanted for them. We moved here knowing no one, into a rental house we had never seen and I had to completely restart my business. The day after we moved in, I put on a suit, went down to the Chamber office and started looking for people to meet. From the connections I was able to make at the Chamber, I launched my business. Fredericksburg really, really, really invested in our family's life.

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### What are some of the things that have helped you in business?

Something that has helped me tremendously is having people in my life that have strengths in areas I don't. They are an informal advisory board that are not making money from me and have no personal gain except to see me do well. They give advice, input and feedback, but do not have final say. This has been huge. Also, planning for the long term. I have had those moments where I was three days from not being able to take a paycheck. Having the long view and realizing that life and the world changes has helped me prepare.

### Why is being a Chamber member important to you?

Being a Chamber member was my portal to businesses and relationships with them from my first week in 1989. The Chamber gave me a platform to meet and build relationships in the community and gave me credibility as I started my business and as our business grew. As in anything, you get out of the Chamber based on the efforts you invest.

“ Leadership is not something you can demand, it's something you command based on your actions, spirit, how you are and how you treat people. That is true leadership. ”

### What is one of the challenges you have faced as a business owner?

Legislative change has been the biggest challenge to my business for the last 20 years. After performing a SWOT Analysis with my informal advisory board 20 years ago and identifying it as my biggest threat, I decided to diversify my business to keep my health insurance portion at no more than 40 percent. When the Affordable Care Act came in, my employee benefit business took a 50 percent loss that will not be recovered. We were prepared for it though. Nobody lost a paycheck, and we came out on the other side stronger.

### What has motivated you?

My motivation is to serve my Lord through my business appropriately, professionally, ethically and relationally. It is to have a good reputation among all and to help people in their life pathways, whatever that might be. I love helping people. Through the Christian Business Men's Connection, I learned to live a life of servanthood in the business world and care about others more than myself.

### What do you think is missing from leadership styles today?

Being a servant, relationships and remembering not to think so highly of ourselves. As leaders we tend to become isolated. We also tend to think we need to be in charge and run things, but we can do all of that while still having a servant spirit. As a business owner and/or a professional, people do not understand how much they can impact their sphere of influence. They have influence whether they know it or not, wherever they go. I do not believe we recognize it, but once we do, what a tremendous opportunity to make it a positive sphere of influence.

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### What qualities do you believe are the most important to be a leader?

Sincere humility. If it is not sincere, people know immediately. Putting others first and being F.A.T. – Faithful, Approachable, Teachable.



From top: Bill with his family at the 28th Annual Awards & Gala; Bill sitting with the Young Professionals Advisory team for CBMC that is creating a movement across the country to engage the next generation.

**Can leadership be taught? If so, how?**

Yes, but the teaching has to follow with observing it. Leadership is not something you can demand, it's something you command based on your actions, spirit, how you are and how you treat people. That is true leadership. The real teaching of this comes from walking with someone that has it and that has been successful in business.

**What are a few resources you would recommend to someone looking to gain insight into becoming a better leader?**

Most of my leadership teachings and applications came from Proverbs. There is a tremendous amount of business principles in the Bible. *Business by the Book* by Larry Burkett was also a tremendous help to me.

**What message do you have for other business leaders?**

Keep the reason why at the top of all that you do. For me, it was for my Christian faith, my family, my community and my customers. If you haven't, consider developing a life purpose statement. Why do you do what you do? What is your purpose in life?

**Is there anything else you want to share with business leaders or individuals in the community?**

If you haven't thought about your faith, I would just ask you to take a journey down that path and check it out. It has worked for me. If you would like to talk more about this journey, please reach out to us at the CBMC any time at 540-840-8620. ♦