

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber recognizes Ambling's Mike Godwin for Thinking BIG

If you aren't sure what a BIG thinker looks like, take a look at Mike Godwin, co-founder of one of our community's true business success stories -- Ambling Companies. The Chamber proudly announced his selection as the 2008 BIG Thinker at the Chamber's Mid-Year Membership Meeting on July 17 at the Conference Center.

According to those who know him best, Godwin was entrepreneurial in nature even as a very young man, with strong work ethics instilled by his father. Godwin took a break from his college studies at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College to work in mechanical engineering and plumbing. Math and problem solving were his strengths, so Godwin was a quick study and seemed to excel at whatever task given. He advanced rapidly with each organization he worked for, but he always knew he wanted to be in business for himself. And at age 22, he was presented with the opportunity to go into business on his own with a company specializing in apartment plumbing.

Godwin says that at that time he was "reasonably successful and happy" in his career, but he needed a bigger challenge. He met Ryan Holmes, a successful contractor in the student housing market, at a golf tournament, and the two began to talk about doing business together. From the beginning Godwin and Holmes have had a great partnership. "Mike is the innovator, thinking ahead and analyzing every angle, then passing it to me to implement the vision," says Holmes. "We work so well together, and even though I was young, he never told me a project wouldn't work, he never said no," Holmes added. "Hiring creative young minds has been what has helped make us so successful," said a very humble Godwin.

Godwin is constantly looking for ways to do things better and smarter. He has an uncanny ability to analyze and anticipate the future of real estate. Listed among the top 50 property managing companies in the country, Ambling has built or manages more than 40,000 properties in the U.S. and employs more than 75 professional employees.

Since Ambling's establishment in 1994, Godwin's commitment to Valdosta has been ever present and he has made the decision to retain his corporate headquarters here. Because he

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believes that this community has been an important part of the success of Ambling, he gives back to many worthwhile local organizations including Boys and Girls Club, First Methodist Church, America's Second Harvest Food Bank, The Annette Turner Center for the Arts, and the Chamber's own IMPACT 2012 initiative.

His tireless effort at forming a local fund-raiser for Cystic Fibrosis has resulted in the largest fund-raiser for this cause in the State of Georgia. This local event has raised over \$500,000 in just four years, and has been recognized as the leading new event in the country for Cystic Fibrosis.

“Mike has scaled incredible business and philanthropic heights, which has brought our community to the forefront in a very positive light,” says his friend Byron Courson (Valdosta Insurance Services). “He does so much without fanfare and with humility rarely seen in our world today. He truly exemplifies the qualities any community would be proud to uphold as a leading citizen.”

Godwin joins an elite group of homegrown, self-made entrepreneurs who epitomize the entrepreneurial qualities of a BIG Thinker. Frank Ranicky (WCTV-6) presented Godwin with a replica of Rodin's famous sculpture, The Thinker, on behalf of the Chamber at the Chamber's Mid-Year Membership Meeting.

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