



## Galway Young Entrepreneur 2003

### Junior Chamber Galway

In association with Galway Advertiser



#### NEWS

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### Would you like to become Galway's Young Entrepreneur for 2003 ?

#### Meet last year's award winner Bellissimo's Mike O'Connor

Junior Chamber Galway in association with Galway Advertiser invite nominations for the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award. The closing date for application is the 29<sup>th</sup> September. The adjudication process will take place during the week beginning 6<sup>th</sup> October when the finalists will be announced. The overall winner will receive his/her award at a special ceremony on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October. Junior Chamber Galway hosts national convention in the Radisson SAS hotel, Galway where hundred of delegates from Junior Chamber Ireland will meet for their annual event.

Last Year's Award winner, Mike O'Connor said that he realised, after winning last year that people didn't fully understand the importance of an award like this, and indeed what it has done for someone like him in business. Winning the 2003 Junior Chamber Young Entrepreneur Award gave him a huge advantage and he had benefited greatly.

He said that it gave him confidence. It became apparent to him that Bellissimo was now highly regarded in the business community and this opened many doors for him. He was now looked at as a serious businessperson not just a young hairdresser from Galway. Winning the award also made him realise the value of sharing ideas and he found that he could talk with people in the business world that he had always admired, making a real contribution in any business discussion.

But most importantly it gave him belief in what he was doing not only in Bellissimo but also in other areas of business life. He strongly encourages as many people as possible to enter the 2004 Junior Chamber Young Entrepreneur Awards and he thanks Junior Chamber Galway for giving him the opportunity to develop himself and his business in this way.

#### **The Bellissimo Story**

Mike O'Connor's career started in Haircare in Ballybane at the tender age of 14, and by the age of 19 he had opened his own salon 'Mike Daniels' in Cross Street. Gaining vast experience in the industry, he worked in a large hair and beauty operation in Moscow, and began to make plans to expand his own empire into a one-stop-beauty-shop.

In 1998 he left his salon on Cross Street to venture into a totally new concept in the Irish hair and beauty industry and set up Bellissimo, a state-of-the-art 6,000sq ft beauty complex, in the Galway Retail Park. Dedicated to making customers look and feel beautiful, it was the first of its kind to open in Ireland and was immediately met by an enthusiastic reaction from the public. Bellissimo (meaning 'beauty' in Italian) has become a household name synonymous with convenience and pure luxury. The complex consists of several

## *Junior Chamber Galway - "Entrepreneurs in Action"*

departments, catering to men, women, and children, including Bellissimo Hair, Health, Beauty; a coffee shop; barbers; retail; and the most recent addition, wigs. Bellissimo is a one-stop hair, beauty, and overall image complex, successfully running for the past five years.

O'Connor's enterprise goes from strength to strength with his latest addition being *Nail Creations* where a specially dedicated nail bar and specialist have been installed in Bellissimo. The *Wigs At ...* franchise is now based in 17 units nationwide where local businesspeople integrated the wigs idea into their salon or retail unit. Not forgetting the men of Galway, over the next few weeks the new male grooming room - a men's beauty salon will be launched shortly.

O'Connor gives huge credit to the people who have helped him along the way. "The most difficult hurdle was the financing of the whole project and in retrospect I have learned a lot, but received a huge amount of support from all angles."

The secret to O'Connor's success in the running of the company lies in the delegation of management, and in having very capable and professional people who understand the unique services they have to offer running each department within the company. He meets regularly with all managers and values the necessity of delegation. "Having the right people around you at the right time is vital," he says, "and delegating authority to make decisions and to take on responsibility means I can step back and look at the business as a whole, and concentrate on improving and expanding it."

Bellissimo, under the same concept and brand, expanded in 1999 when it opened in Limerick city. As a duplicate of the original Galway model, Bellissimo in Limerick continues to be a huge success, and the company is now exploring, through feasibility studies, the possibility of expanding further afield. Mike O'Connor has taken full advantage of the € 5,000 worth of consultancy from Price Waterhouse Coopers he won through the competition and is continuing this relationship into the future.

With more than 100 staff between the two branches, O'Connor describes the most enjoyable aspect of his own job as designing user-friendly staff incentives and management schemes. "I really enjoy training staff to understand the day-to-day running of the company, while giving them incentives and involving them in the financial side of the company." The 'Bellissimo Bank' is one such scheme, which allows staff an integral understanding of the financial aspect of the company through this monopoly-type money scheme. □

For more information on the world of Bellissimo, or to make an appointment, call (091) 568555

For further information or application forms for the Young Entrepreneur Award contact Fiona Glynn at 087 2382326 / Ann Martyn at 091 509744 or Deirdre Timoney email [dtimoney@siebel.com](mailto:dtimoney@siebel.com) for more information. Junior Chamber Galway is a voluntary organisation for young people and meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month in the Ardilaun House Hotel at 8pm. You can also write to Junior Chamber Galway, Young Entrepreneur Competition, P.O. Box 99, Galway, for an entry form or visit our website @ [www.juniorchambergalway.com/gye](http://www.juniorchambergalway.com/gye). Closing date for receipt of applications is Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2003.

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