

MyCommunity**NOW**

www.mycommunitynow.com | [Return to regular view](#)

Original Story URL:

<http://www.mycommunitynow.com/story/index.aspx?id=574568>

Maple Dale alumnus gives pep talk to students

CEO encourages students with stories

By Jane Ford
Staff Writer

Posted: March 7, 2007

Industrialist Scott Stern stood before Maple Dale students and told them that for nine years, he sat right where they sit today.

And not only that, the teachers he had at Maple Dale were instrumental in his being able to take this company into the global economy, he said.

Stern is president and chief executive officer of the Norscot Group in Mequon. Its products are sold in 70 countries. A major part of Norscot's business is manufacturing die-cast scale models of vehicles, especially Caterpillar construction equipment. The level of detail and realism of these models and their distinctive "Caterpillar yellow" color have helped make them collectors' items the world over.

Norscot also provides promotional products such as caps, polo shirts, jackets, pens and other articles carrying company logos for large companies.

Norscot started in 1970, and Stern has been president for 20 years.

Maple Dale invited Stern as an alumnus and successful businessman to speak to grades six, seven and eight.

"It was fun to go back to my grade school," Stern said after giving his three talks.

He had not been through the schoolhouse doors in 41 years. But when he came back, Stern had some important things to say. He had discovered, he said, things he learned in the classroom proved to be a vital link to his future.

He was thinking especially of two Maple Dale teachers, both long retired. One, he told the students, instilled in him the self-confidence he needed to extend the reach of his company in Mequon into the world. The other teacher instilled in him a love of the adventure of foreign lands.

To the youngsters' amazement, the boost in self-confidence came after an embarrassing flop that probably would have intimidated most children.

In a fitness run, the seventh-grade Stern came in 35th out of 36 boys. But his physical education teacher would not give up on him.

"The whole next year, he kept up on me saying, 'You gotta do this, you gotta do that, you can do better,'" Stern remembered.

After the eighth-grade run, Stern was surprised that he was to run against the top two runners. That's when he really wowed his young audiences.

"I was the class champ in the 50-yard dash and I broke the school record," he said.

"It is a perfect example," he said, "that you can show great improvement in anything if you really, really set your mind to it."

He went on to encourage the students with another example, telling them that he ran for the Maple Dale student council six times and lost six times, including two runoff elections called because of ties. But his point was that they should not be discouraged. When he got to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he won election to the student senate and even became majority leader.

"If you think you might be good at something, you'll prevail," he encouraged. "It helped give me the courage to go global."

The other Maple Dale teacher who made a huge impression on Stern was his fifth-grade teacher. An avid traveler, the teacher opened the world to the young Stern by showing slides from his trips every Friday afternoon.

"He talked about the people, the culture, the food, landmarks," Stern remembered. "The saddest time was when the bell rang, because then it was over."

Stern acquired a love of far-away places that helped keep him undaunted when it came time to take his company onto the world stage, he said.

There was a time for questions, and Stern said he was impressed by the youngsters' inquiring minds.

One asked him what courses a student should take to get ready for the global economy. His answer was to learn a foreign language. And he recommended Mandarin Chinese.

"If I were a student, I would take Chinese," he said.

As it was, he studied Spanish and years later found it extremely helpful.

"One of our best customers was in Spain," he said.

Annette Evans, seventh- and eighth-grade teacher at Maple Dale, said after the talks, "He's quite a visionary."

"He had a real good connection with the kids," she said. "I think (the students) learned they can dream and that their dreams can be fulfilled."

They also were given the message that the skills they acquire now will mesh with things they learn about themselves, and that they will be able to apply the skills to their jobs, she said.

Jane Ford can be reached at (262) 317-8552. Her e-mail address is jford@cninewsonline.com.

© Copyright 2006, MyCommunityNOW.com. All Rights Reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#)
Designed & Produced by [Journal Interactive](#)