



Ex-Highlands star inspires business

By Ryan Clark • Enquirer contributor • July 18, 2010

FORT THOMAS - In 1983, Highlands High School football hero Tom Groeschen suffered severe brain damage in a car crash. After rehabilitation, he was able to walk again, and to talk a little. He was then sent home to be cared for by his mother, LaVern.

His brother, Rob Groeschen, became successful in business, while the only job Tom could hold was cleaning restrooms at a truck stop. Tom would sometimes get lost on the way home, sometimes shoplift lighters from stores. His injured brain affected him in odd ways.

After starting his own successful company, Rob wanted to find a job for his brother, something he could do that would be rewarding. In 2005 in Blue Ash, he opened InRETURN, a place where those with brain injuries and other special needs can help make products like industrial socks, which are used by their company's clients to soak up things like oil and solvents. InRETURN also helps their workers develop communications skills, as well as participate in other activities like art projects.

"It's about giving back," said Rob Groeschen, 45, who now lives in Loveland. "It's about what we can do for these people to help them and their self-esteem."

InRETURN has now been recognized by national bestselling author Robert L. Shook, of Columbus. In September, Shook will release his latest book, "Heart & Soul: Five American Companies that are Making the World a Better Place."

InRETURN is one of the five companies in the book.

"We're fortunate that Robert Shook felt we should be in the book," Rob Groeschen said. "What we want is to spread the word of InRETURN and let people know what can be done."

After five years, Groeschen says the progress he sees in his brother is amazing. Tom Groeschen, now 47, lives independently in Oakley.

"I come in and I see him and he's happy and he shakes my hand," Rob said. "Life is about opportunities, and this is an opportunity for those with brain injuries, for those recovering from strokes, for those with autism, to work their way back, learning life skills."

But the focus of the book is that not only can the business make a difference - it also can survive on its own as a business model.

"Each (business) enjoys a healthy bottom line and supports the author's premise that doing good is good business," said a release describing Shook's book.

"We have 16 employees and we want them to be good workers," said Groeschen. "After all, this is the real business world. This isn't about what I've done. This is about what all of these people do."

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In this photo from December 2007, Tom Groeschen works at InReturn.

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