

BUSINESS

IN THIS SECTION

- Sports, xx
- Dear Abby/Puzzles, xx
- Classifieds, xx
- Comics, xx
- Weather, xx



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Danvers native sells fake fangs, other Halloween items online



MARK TEIWES/Staff photos

Scott Smiledge creates films and photos for the website at his studio in the Cummings Center. When asked about his plans for Halloween this year, he said that will become a father with the baby due on the holiday.



Smiledge models chains and plastic fangs sold on his website.

BY ALAN BURKE
STAFF WRITER

BEVERLY — Scott Smiledge was a high school dropout doing “specialty makeup” for Halloween tourists at a Salem joke shop when a man came in to ask for “custom-made fangs.”

It took him aback. Was there such a thing? Smiledge, now 34, did some research and found a company that could provide the frightening faux bicuspid teeth thanks to an “easy” molding process. Then, when word got around about the fabulously realistic fangs that Smiledge could provide, “I had people lined up waiting outside the door.”

Sensing that he’d gotten his teeth into something special, he resolved, “I’ve got to find a way to make some money off of this.” In 1993, he founded Vampfangs. Last year, he did \$2.5 million selling frightening false choppers and various high-end, Halloween-style items over the Internet, he said.

“We are the world’s largest source for custom-fitted fangs, special-effect contact lenses, and anything creepy and spooky,” he says. “We sell all over the world. We’re open 24 hours a day, and we ship out 30,000 to 40,000 packages a year.”

His contact lenses — they can turn your eyes into cat’s eyes, for example — have been provided to film companies for movies like “Ghost Writer” and “Underworld Evolution.”

“People say it all the time to me,” Smiledge muses, “how do you make money

A business with BITE



Smiledge sits with some of the props he uses in photo shoots for his company’s website.

selling plastic teeth?” Indeed, he’s done it by following an unlikely path.

A Danvers native, Smiledge bounced around as a young man, leaving Danvers High, staying with his aunt and uncle in Colorado, traveling “all over the country,” before deciding that he loved the East Coast. Coming home, he took that job in Salem because it appealed to his love of magic.

Ironically, the man whose business is scaring people doesn’t enjoy being scared himself.

“The first horror movie I watched was ‘The Shining,’” he explains. “It scared the heck out of me, and I didn’t see another one for 10 years. ... I’m so not the vampire, creepy guy. I’m the guy wearing a Hawaiian shirt.”

He cites Salem’s Haunted Happenings as his inspiration but admits that his success has had more to do with hard work than any affinity for horror.

“I worked for a lot of years to make this happen. For a good five or six years, I ran it out of an apartment. And I didn’t have anybody to tell me anything. I’m self-taught.”

On the website, “characters walk out and talk about the product.” The multimedia approach to selling, Smiledge says, “I think is the wave of the future.” And he saw no reason to hire outsiders to mount it. Instead, he took film courses to learn the techniques.

While the business operates out of Gloucester, Smiledge runs a studio in Beverly’s Cummings Center where the online media is created.

Married, he’s had the support of his wife, but she doesn’t like to be frightened either.

Smiledge laughs at the cliché of the instant Internet millionaire.

“Nobody starts a business online and gets rich overnight,” he warns. “It just doesn’t happen. ... I would really emphasize that hard work pays off.”

The fangs at the heart of Vampfangs are made in America, Smiledge proudly notes, by a company in California. That’s kept him

Please see VAMPFANGS, Page 1

Restaurant sows seeds in Beverly

BY JESSE ROMAN
STAFF WRITER

BEVERLY — When The Farm Bar & Grille in Essex opened last April, the owners’ vision was ambitious — now it has spread to Beverly.

“Our goal from the beginning was not just to open one restaurant, it was ultimately to be as successful as we can,” says Noah Goldstein, who opened the food and entertainment venue with his cousins Brad Atkinson, 28, and Ryan Cox, 30.

Goldstein, 29, and his cousins opened their second restaurant, the Farm Downtown, at 350 Rantoul St. in Beverly on Friday.

The Beverly restaurant will have 14 or so seats, and feature all of the favorite menu items of the Essex location. The idea is to offer something to health-conscious people who maybe don’t have a lot of time.

“We want to revolutionize the industry by offering healthy, fresh food fast,” Goldstein said.

Goldstein, a former salesman, Atkinson, a lawyer, and Cox, an engineer, found themselves eating a lot of pizza slices and bad burgers in a jam on the road. They thought there was a better way.

At the Farm downtown, a quarter pound, fresh angus burger is about \$4.25. A big plate of nachos with homemade tortilla chips and smoked pulled pork is \$6. The restaurant will also offer fresh fish and chips, smoked BBQ ribs and much more.

The trio quit their successful and profitable careers in the corporate world to open the flagship Essex Farm restaurant in April 2009. Partnering in business was an idea all three shared in college, and despite the recession, they decided, “We’re all young, we have the energy and time, let’s do it now and give it a shot,” Goldstein explains. They’re glad they did.

Please see FARM, Page 1



MARK TEIWES/Staff photo

Cousins Ryan Cox, left, Noah Goldstein, and Brad Atkinson (not pictured) are opening the Farm Downtown in Beverly. They are expanding after success with the Farm Barn and Grill in Essex.

Call it a wrap for Movieworks

The Biz

Ethan Forman



A week ago Tuesday morning, **Movieworks** in Danvers Square started a going-out-of-business liquidation sale that could take six to eight weeks to play out, manager Chris Purington said.

Movieworks also operates a location in Brookline, which will remain open, he added.

“We hung on as long as we could,” Purington said. Part of the problem involved the way new releases are handled nowadays.

It appeared Movieworks was holding on and offering a wide array of products, from Blu-ray discs to movies on VHS as local, independent competitors dropped one-by-one. The **West Coast Video** in Salem is in the midst of a liquidation sale.

Even **Blockbuster** is not immune. On Sept. 23, the Dallas-based video rental chain filed for bankruptcy protection, keeping its stores open as it moves to recapitalize its balance sheet.

Movieworks found it hard to compete with the likes of **Netflix** and **Redbox** and on-demand. “It’s a dying breed,” Purington said.

Axcelis announces CFO’s retirement

Beverly-based **Axcelis Technologies**, which makes equipment for the semiconductor industry, said its chief financial officer, Stephen Bassett, will retire on March 31, and that the company has started a search for his successor.

Axcelis said Bassett joined the company in 2003 as an executive vice president and chief financial officer, and during his time at the company, he has reduced expenses and rebuilt the balance sheet.

“Axcelis is well positioned for future growth

Please see XX, Page 1

Home sales on the North Shore vary in August

Single-family homes sales were at their lowest level in more than 20 years in August, the **Warren Group** said in a recent report. However, sales were up in some North Shore communities, bucking the state trend.

The Boston-based publisher of **Banker & Tradesman** said 3,659 single-family homes were sold in the Bay State in August. That number represents an 18.5 percent drop from the 4,492 homes sold in August 2009. The Warren Group said this was the first time August sales had dropped below 4,000 since the company began tracking sales in 1987.

The **Massachusetts Association of Realtors** reported similar numbers, with 3,311 single-family homes sold in August 2010, a 18.4 percent drop from the 4,058 homes sold in August 2009.

There were some bright spots to these reports. Realtors said home sales were up 3.1 percent month-to-month. And The Warren Group said year-to-date, sales were up 9.35 percent from the same period one year ago. As for prices, the median single-family home price was \$315,000 in August, up from \$303,000 year-over-year, The Warren Group said.

— Ethan Forman

NORTH SHORE HOME SALES

Town	Aug. '09 sales	Aug. '10 sales	%	Aug. '09 price	Aug. '10 price	%
Beverly	28	22	-21.43	\$346,250	\$342,750	-1.01
Boxford	7	12	71.43	\$633,150	\$466,250	-26.36
Danvers	23	21	-8.7	\$342,500	\$330,000	-3.65
Hamilton	7	10	42.86	\$466,500	\$521,500	11.79
Ipswich	9	11	22.22	\$445,000	\$394,000	-11.46
Marblehead	22	20	-9.09	\$484,000	\$508,500	5.06
Middleton	8	4	-50	\$464,000	\$313,200	-32.50
Peabody	25	16	-36	\$293,500	\$250,000	-14.82
Salem	18	9	-50	\$301,500	\$350,000	16.09
Swampscott	15	10	-33.33	\$410,000	\$412,500	0.61
Topsfield	5	5	0	\$375,000	\$480,000	28
Wenham	2	6	200	0	\$507,500	NA

Source: The Warren Group