

# JOHN CARDWELL BELIEVES IN DECATUR AREA GROWTH

By Jody Sexton, editor

When economic development is discussed, John Cardwell's name is mentioned. Several area developers stated that Cardwell is "the imaginative thinker, with foresight to take buildings in the downtown and totally remodel them adding beauty and value" that gives Decatur and the area the edge it needed to ride the wave of the strong economy.

Each developer has added to the value of the area with their own developments but it is Cardwell, as an investor and a developer, who has seen what could be done and did it.

Both Roy Mosser, Mosser and Associates, and Steve Horve, Steve Horve Builders, Inc., mention the present One Main Place building as a prime example. "That place was considered an eyesore but John saw something different," according to Horve. Cardwell hired Steve Horve Builders, Inc. to take his dreams and turn them into reality.

In speaking with John Cardwell, it is still One Main Place that holds a special place in his mind. "One Main Place is completely occupied with businesses and in my



**John Cardwell stands outside in the Courtyard of Jimmy Ryan's Restaurant, located in Cardwell's One Main Place. The Courtyard features outside dining around a fountain and beautiful lighting.**

restaurant, Jimmy Ryan's, we just opened a courtyard with dogwood trees. This completes the expansion of the building," he proudly states. One Main Place is the headquarters of Cardwell Companies, too.

But, Cardwell states that the recent purchase of Park 101 in Northeast Decatur

with its 300,000 square-footage of office/warehouse space "fills the real estate package I have been trying to devise for years. The package includes farmland, residential, commercial, light industrial and multi-family. I now feel that with this package in hand, I am diversified enough to ride out the ups and downs of the economy," Cardwell states.

## CARDWELL HERE 25 YEARS

John Cardwell came to Decatur 25 years ago as a project manager for the rebuilding of Lakeview High School after the 1974 rail car explosion near Archer Daniels Midland. A few years later, Cardwell moved here permanently and has weathered the bad times in the 1980s and the good times the past three to four years.

"We have a lot of catching up to do in the way of providing retail, manufacturing and

Cardwell cont. on pg. 42

## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

**JOHN S. CARDWELL**  
CEO/PRESIDENT  
CARDWELL COMPANIES, INC.  
421-1111

Years in own business: 21

Years in business world: 30

Birth date: Feb. 12, 1950, Baltimore, MD.

Family: Wife, Donna, who is a realtor.

Children, Cody, 14, and Casie, 12.

Education: 1973: Bachelor's degree from Rice University.

What do you do in your spare time: "I read, golf, travel, and attend as many of

my children's events and activities as I can."

Honors/Awards: "Realtor of the Year, 1999,

Chamber of Commerce Pride of the Prairie

Award, 1998, Downtown Decatur Council

Pride Award, 1999, Historical Architectural Sites

Commission Preservation Assn., 1997/1998.

What do you remember as one of Life's

lessons that has helped you be the person

you are? "For as much as you believe you

know about something, there is always

someone else that knows more...be humble."

Who do you admire the most? Why?

"My father, Ray Cardwell, a well respected,

successfully hard working, devoted family

man, good friend, the best grandfather

kids could have."

## business outlook...

### COMMERCIAL ATTORNEYS

#### WINTERS, FEATHERSTUN, GAUMER, KENNEY, POSTLEWAIT & STOCKS

225 N. WATER, STE. 200  
DECATUR, IL 62523

PHONE: 429-4453 FAX: 425-8892  
E-MAIL: wfgkps@fgi.net

YEAR STARTED: 1921

#### KEY PERSONNEL:

- Robert D. Winters, Partner
- Glen A. Featherstun, Partner
- Daniel L. Gaumer, Partner
- Frederic L. Kenney, Partner
- R. Samuel Postlewait, Partner
- Jerrold H. Stocks, Partner
- Joseph N. Van Vooren, Associate

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 6 partners, 1  
associate, 5 staff

#### COMPANY UNIQUENESS:

Quality of service.

In the last issue of Business Quarterly's Business Outlook section, Manpower's employee, Kelly Wadsworth's name was misspelled. We regret the error.

## CARDWELL cont. from pg. 23

additional office space. In the 1980s, our image of Decatur was described as a tough union town with a high unemployment rate.

"Today, the unemployment rate is low, unions are amiable, and the city has developed a strong commitment to make the area developer-friendly," Cardwell states. "We all need to build on this."

"I have diversified in Decatur and not gone too much outside because I am more comfortable if I can feel, touch and kick my buildings," he adds.

#### VILLAGE MALL

"I had this idea that I could turn the Sears Auto Mart to a mall housing a variety of stores with quaint storefronts and an individual look to each." And in July, that dream became a reality when Village Mall opened behind the totally new Decatur Public Library (scheduled to open in September). The mall is anchored by Cardwell's own Carlson Wagonlit Travel/Atlas Travel, a state-of-the-art travel agency located in the west side of the building. Village Mall has a variety of stores complimented with a gift and floral shop, a hair salon, and Cardwell's second Bronx Bagel eatery.

Other projects Cardwell is busy with include:

- Flora Gem Building's exterior, interior and the roof. The project is almost complete and Cardwell states that nearly all of the office space is leased.

- Spittler Park Plaza will be under construction beginning in July. This plaza, located on the corner of Rt. 121 and Spittler Drive, will be a combination of office, commercial and retail with an Ace Hardware store as the anchor.

- Near the new Super Wal-Mart located on East Rt. 36, East Gate Plaza will be developed. It will include office space, fast food and a bakery.

- "An old project revised" has been Mt. Vernon Place. Cardwell marketed and built condominiums for single families that are maintenance-free. "We built to suit and

that project is still ongoing."

- "We were the successful bidder for the former downtown Mutual bank facility. We have three to four candidates looking at the facility and an announcement will be forthcoming around the end of July. To me," Cardwell says, "It is the most attractive piece of architecture in the downtown business community. I didn't want the exterior to be altered."

#### INTERNET AN INTEGRAL PART

Cardwell has made good use of the Internet. "We started a website, (www.cardwell.com), a few years ago just to test the water. We would update it every two or three months. We then found we needed it to be updated more often and today we have a full time employee who is in charge of updating the site every day," explains Cardwell. "The Internet has made the world smaller. Designing is quicker and there are fast-track systems on the web. We wanted to take advantage of a good opportunity instead of a lost one."

Cardwell feels the whole Decatur business community should give support to Millikin University. "Not only is Millikin a major asset as a 'business' but the students attending give small businesses a good source of part-time employees. It is hard to get good help for restaurants and small businesses.

When I work with businesses especially restaurant chains that are looking at Decatur, more and more are not just looking at demographics but are looking for the university's student labor nearby to know there will be a strong, dependable work force for the business," Cardwell emphasizes.

Like many other economic leaders, Cardwell is a strong proponent of getting Rt. 51 South completed to Vandalia to link it with Interstate 70. "When that is completed, it would mean a bonanza for our area. Decatur would be a direct way to reach Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis. We all need to work on that development," he concludes.