

Young professionals learn from seasoned developer

By Keila Torres Ocasio

STAMFORD — At 23, **Connor Nolan**'s goal is to enter the property development business someday.

“It’s definitely in the plans,” said Nolan, an associate with **Saugatuck Commercial Real Estate** in Westport.

It’s one of the reasons he has participated with the **Stamford Chamber of Commerce’s Young Professional Council**.

“It’s really nice to work alongside and have conversations with the people who have been there,” Nolan said.

He was especially thrilled to sit down with local developer **Randy Salvatore**, founder and president of **RMS Construction**, to discuss the challenges and rewards of being in the industry during the chamber’s round-table discussion Tuesday at **First County Bank**’s Summer Street offices.

“It’s nice to hear straight from the developer,” Nolan said.

From his hands-on work ethic to why he avoids commercial real estate, Salvatore shared his experiences in his journey from commercial brokerage to the residential and hotel construction business.

“It’s important if you’re interested in the industry to ask a lot of questions and learn as much as you can,” he said. “I tried to ask as many questions and talk to everyone that I could.”

He said Shelton-based developer **Robert Scinto**, who he met as a teenager, has been his biggest mentor. Scinto gave him tours of his buildings and let Salvatore attend meetings when he was still in college.

Salvatore said he “stumbled” into the construction and hotel businesses and learned by getting his hands dirty and personally delving into all the details.

He said losing a partner right before opening Hotel Zero Degrees in Stamford in 2009 “was the most miserable experience.” But he said learned a lot about the hotel business from it.

The developer also said he likes to be involved in every aspect of his business, even down to signing the roughly 500 checks a month.

“The minute I say, ‘That’s not important to me; you guys handle it,’ that is the day our reputation starts to go down,” he said.

Matthew Casey, 24, a commercial banking associate in People’s United Bank’s Stamford office, said hearing about Salvatore’s journey will motivate him to work harder in his own career.

He said he enjoys the variety of programming the chamber offers to young professionals. The last event he attended was a large-scale networking scene held last summer.

“There really isn’t a right way to do it,” Casey said. “People like to attend the different styles.”

Nolan said events like the one held Tuesday are important for the chamber to focus on because young professionals are the future leaders of the business world.

“The demographics will be changing and it’ll be up to us to keep it going,” he said.

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