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TELECOM PIONEER SHARES MESSAGE WITH GRADUATES

By Tony D'Imperio Special to the County News

Ever since John Goeken was in high school, running a radio repair business in the back of a friend's vacuum cleaner shop, he's had a 'head' for business.

Later he gained more knowledge in electronics as a microwave specialist in the U.S Army Signal Corps.

The seventy-something Goeken has founded, among others, Microwave Communications, Inc. (MCI) and the FTD Mercury Network, a premier electronic network used by all major wire services to order flowers.

When AT&T, the world's largest corporation in the early 1960s, opposed the operation of startup MCI, Goeken waged a legal battle against them. MCI's victory led to open competition in the telecommunications industry.

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believe in yourself and be honest."

His favorite quote: "Shoot the moon and fall among the stars,"

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Sending flowers to someone from a long distance before FTD was a tedious process of contacting the location to get a list of the florists.

When Goeken sent flowers to his daughter using this method, he decided it was time to create a more efficient system. So, he started FTD!



John Goeken, right, and Ryan Cameron Director of Information Technology at MMCS D.

In the mid-1970s, Goeken literally created the air-to-ground telephone industry by founding Airfone Corporation. He also founded Railfone, Inc., a domestic satellite service.

John Goeken is known worldwide in the communications industry as an innovative entrepreneur, succeeding through hard work and perseverance.

Goeken's family was not rich; his dad was a Lutheran minister. "I helped prepare the holy water when I was a kid," Goeken quipped during an interview with the *County News*.

"The press has been very good to me," Goeken said, explaining his willingness,

with a busy schedule, to sit for an interview. "I make a lot of money, but they [media] promote the things I do."

Goeken's sincerity showed when he said, "I believe every person in a company is important---even the person who empties the trash can." And his humility was obvious: "I don't have a lot of brains, just common sense," he smiled.

"So many people helped me along the way," he continued. "Now I'm giving back with these speaking engagements." (Goeken has addressed audiences at MIT, the White House, foreign governments, numerous communications groups and commencements at many universities.)

"Before we die, we should all ask: What did I do to make the world a better place," Goeken reflected.

In 2000, he was inducted into the Industry Hall of Fame, in the prestigious company of Bill Gates and other industry giants. Next to his name, it reads: "Jack" Goeken, Builder of World's Largest Data Network; this is one of many awards.

So, how did Mount Morris School make connection with John Goeken? It's because of Ryan Cameron, the Director of Information Technology Services, in his second year at Mount Morris Central.

Cameron, a 2001 graduate of Southern Illinois University, spent his senior doing an internship with the Goeken Group Corporation.

(One company in the Goeken Group can send a person's medical history to an emergency room anywhere in the world.)

During Cameron's internship, he met with "Jack" Goeken in his office near Chicago. Goeken handed him a stock statement that had a bottom line amount "in the millions," and he said that someone "told me that this would be impossible to do." Cameron got the point.

In one of Goeken's conversations with Cameron during the internship, he said, "Live by one simple principle: how can you help someone."

When Cameron introduced Goeken to the graduates, he remarked that "this man taught me never to be afraid of success."