

## Bio of Jim Zilli

Jim Zilli has always had a strong aptitude and desire to lead and manage. His first job was as a paperboy for the *Milwaukee Journal* at the age of 10, and by the time he was 15, he was a managing coordination and distribution of the newspaper as a station captain. This complex job involved money collection, distributing papers for the various routes and paper assembly. His career might have been in journalism but his parents bought a Tasti-Freeze in Waukesha when Jim was 15 so he went to work for the family business. Jim recalls working long hours doing a little bit of everything, learning as they went. Jim's father, Angelo Zilli, remodeled the restaurant into a family restaurant.

Jim's father turned more and more duties over to him over the years. By 1972, Jim was 20 and working hard in the restaurant. He was skilled at all the aspects of running the business seven days a week: opening and closing, scheduling and interviewing staff, cooking and serving, and more. Jim's father passed away in 1977 and that same year, Jim ventured into catering with great success. That first year, 1977, they did \$1,300 in business. They next year it was \$13,000 and the following year revenue was \$39,000.... and kept going. In the beginning Jim worked both sides of the business but his brother, Stephan Zilli, soon stepped in to run the restaurant while the catering took off.

Jim led their growth as the catering grew. He invested in modernization, new signage, and more. In 1986, they chose to close the restaurant to again reinvent themselves and re-opened in 1988 as The Grandview Inn, a fine dining restaurant. Jim was also growing his business acumen, partnering in the Manchester East Hotel, creating solid business plans for their growth in catering, and acquiring Theurich Catering to expand and grow.

Today, Jim will say he's not a food expert, but he knows a lot about how to run a food business.

Jim's speaks regularly at industry conferences such as NACE, ICA and CaterSource about efficiency, business development and management. He also coaches and mentors his peers in the industry and enjoys helping others. He's also invested time in aligning with industry leaders in other markets so he can learn from them.

Jim is a natural leader, driven by his curiosity about people and interest in the workings of business. He credits his mother and wife with reinforcing the importance of strong values in their business, and believes that ethics and morality play a role with vendors, staff and everyday life.

In addition to spending time with his family, he is a huge advocate of horse racing (harness racing in particular); he likes watching golf and tennis and plays both when he can; he enjoys politics and continuing to read about business.