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Company of the Month: ALLEVATO - All about retail, architecture, innovation and rock & roll!

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A commentary by Lou Allevato

Hey, it's all about me. We at ALLEVATO will celebrate 14 years in business. It's amazing how time flies by, but looking back, I can honestly say it's been one hell of a great ride. We continue to be a leader in the industry of retail architecture. We used to say we are "big by being small" and that has evolved into 30 plus full time staff. We like to think we are still big by being small as we do think big, with big results.

How did we get here? Well this story has a definite beginning, with no ending in sight!

Prior to and after graduating from Franklin High School in Franklin, Mass., I goofed off in a rock and roll band, playing guitar with my rock star drummer brother "Johnny A." I was thinking I would be a rock star too. As it turns out, I was asked to leave the band because they found someone who could actually sing. So, I needed to grow up and get serious about what to do with my life. Architecture seemed right for me as I am very "right-brained" and can actually draw better than I can sing. And so my architectural journey began when I started attending Boston Architectural College at the tender age of 23.

After completing my degree in 1990, my new career led me to work at a number of firms, gaining valuable experience in a variety of architectural genres. It was during my tenure at Sumner Schein in the early nineties where I was first introduced to the exciting world of retail design and architecture. I love shopping, so combining that with my flair for retail design, I quickly embraced that high octane atmosphere and never looked back.

After years of working within the larger firm structure, developing trusting relationships with the area's top retail developers and building invaluable relationships within the leasing community, I took a leap of faith and decided to venture out on my own. Working in Cambridge, most nights I was getting home just as my two small sons, Nicholas and Alex, were going to bed. It was pretty clear what I had to do. In August of 2002, I opened the doors to my own architectural firm in Franklin, Mass. I was now able to be close to home where I could actually spend time with my family. Upon giving my boss, Stephen Schein, president of Sumner Schein, notice that I was leaving, he did something for which I will always be grateful. He knew he couldn't convince me to stay, and recognized I may need help during the "lean" months of starting a new business. So Stephen continued to pay me one half my salary through the end of the year. He was right, and his generosity allowed me to build the business and keep food on the table. Such kindness and generosity is hard to find in this day and age. I aspire to follow in his footsteps and treat my staff with the same degree of kindness and support.

I have spent years assembling a team of the most talented architects in the area. ALLEVATO consistently demonstrates leadership, professionalism, and dependability. These attributes, together

with the experience of the staff, enable the firm to reliably generate superior design.

ALLEVATO has become known for designing responsive solutions that guarantee every project is successfully positioned in the marketplace, now and in the future. I personally maintain a "hands on" approach on all projects within the firm.

Specializing in retail architecture, ALLEVATO has been involved in over 20 million s/f of retail development over the past fourteen years, including University Station. A two million s/f mixed-use development located in Westwood, Mass., University Station features a Wegmans supermarket, Target and popular anchor stores, specialty shops, high end residential apartments, restaurants, a Life Time Fitness, assisted living, hotel, and office uses. University Station encompasses our keen sense of contemporary design respectfully influenced by the New England character of the region.

We design retail projects nationally including Florida, New York, and many other magnificent places. Presently we are designing outlet mall projects in Little Rock, Arkansas and Des Moines, Iowa.

We passionately embrace new technologies integrated into active and vibrant shopping environments to attract the multi-generational population of shoppers. Outdoor spaces filled with activities to bring people together, enticing shoppers to stay longer, and incorporating new innovative technological ideas set our retail projects apart from the rest.

Staying true to my so called "rock and roll" roots, it's only fitting that we are designing the flagship store for Joey Kramer's Rockin' & Roastin' Caf  . Joey is a Rock and Roll Hall of Famer and legendary drummer for the band Aerosmith who has taken his passion for music and applied it to his, and our, other favorite passion: a great cup of coffee. It's amazing for me to be a part of this venture. I saw Aerosmith when they played at the gymnasium of Franklin High School way back in the '70s. My father was a custodian at the high school for 40 years and he snuck me, my brothers, and sister in to the show. What a thrill that was!

I wake up every day loving what I do. I am one of the lucky ones who truly enjoys being in the office and having fun with my wonderfully talented staff. I am blessed to be surrounded by a great group of clients who actually look out for us and appreciate what we do. We are people first. A handshake still means something to me. My father once said to me when he came to my office for the first time, "Lou, never be afraid to pick up the broom and sweep." Amazing words from the man who was so proud of me.

By the way, I still play guitar, I still love to shop and I never shy away from an opportunity to pick up a broom.