

'I just like people'

Valenty tells students about his entrepreneurial experiences

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The most common advice successful entrepreneurs give to those seeking to follow in their footsteps is simple: Love what you do.

Entrepreneurs generally offer that advice because they are aware of the dedication and commitment required to make a business successful.

That is also why so many pursue a single commercial venture in a field they love.

Salvatore "Sam" Valenty is different in that respect. Valenty, who turns 77 next week, has had many successful ventures spanning a variety of businesses.

Valenty lectured to St. Francis University students Monday about his career experiences as part of the Upstarts and Innovators series, sponsored by Greater Johnstown Keystone Innovation Zone and The Tribune-Democrat.

What he expressed to them was not a love for any particular line of business, but rather a passion for simply doing business.

"I've just always liked doing business," Valenty said. "I always liked being with people.

"I could go into a room with 250 people I don't know, and



after an hour or two, I would know half of them. I just like people."

Valenty's current business is Valenty Bottled Water. His past activities have included a produce business, a card and gift shop, a milk-delivery service and a business that manufactured and delivered ice.

Valenty's business ventures have been driven by finding markets of opportunity and filling a need. It is a formula that seems simple enough, but Valenty said he has come to realize that being in business is not for everybody.

"I have a son who's been teaching for 30 years and a daughter who's a beautician, and neither one of them want anything to do with being in business," Valenty said.

"You have to like being in business. You have to nurture your business and take the



good with the bad. I know I've made some mistakes, but I've made some good decisions over the years, too. The key is that you have to love it."

One of the most important points Valenty stressed was the need to care for a community.

The Barnesboro-born Valenty has established a scholarship for business students at the four institutions of higher learning in Cambria County.

In addition, he has served on the boards of many non-

profit organizations. Valenty assisted Miners Medical Center in gathering more than \$750,000 as chairman of the hospital's fundraising drive and he helped raise more than \$100,000 as a celebrity waiter for the Leukemia and

Lymphoma Society.

Most recently, Valenty and another businessman donated a dog to Northern Cambria Borough police to be trained as a drug-sniffing canine.

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Sam Valenty speaks at St. Francis University as part of the Upstarts and Innovators series.

TODD BERKEY/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

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SAM VALENTY

community that has been there to support your business," Valenty said. "It's one of the most important things you can do as an entrepreneur."

Valenty said he likely is done starting new businesses.

But that does not mean he is out of ideas.

He said he has come to realize that the two groups that serve as the best targets for a new product or service are teenagers and the elderly. He explained that those in between those two groups tend to have less discretionary income available.

So, if Valenty were to attempt one more business, what would it be?

"If I could get into one more business, it would beasket manufacturing," Valenty said.

"If I was 30 years younger, that is."

"A good funeral gets the dead where they need to