

NY NEWSWIRE

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GLEASON PR TO LEAVE NEW YORK

Entrepreneur Cites Leadership Opportunities and Stronger Growth Prospects for Departure

An open letter to the community and its media by Kerry T. Gleason

(ROCHESTER, N.Y. – July 30, 2008) Today, we announce that Gleason Public Relations, which tried to revolutionize advertising and marketing practices for medium and small businesses in Upstate New York, will be moving its headquarters to Coastal Georgia in September.

Gleason Public Relations will be embarking on a new direction. We will continue to cultivate successful opportunities for our existing clients, develop effective internet marketing programs and design trendy collateral for bigger companies, in addition to launching a green industry that has multi-billion-dollar potential. After much study, we decided that state and county governments elsewhere are more in tune with what entrepreneurs need to start thriving businesses. Our prospects will be brighter elsewhere.

Factors in the decision to relocate are:

- Digital communications that allow current workflow to be processed remotely
- Cheaper, more dependable utilities
- Immediate tax savings of about 14%
- A greater passion to embrace change in a growing economy

Let's talk about some of those advantages, first. I'll be relocating to Saint Simons Island in the Golden Isles of Georgia. I have some friends there, although I've been accused of having friends everywhere. It's an hour away from Jacksonville, Florida, where I had my greatest PR success in launching the world's number one contact lens for Vistakon, Johnson and Johnson's contact lens division. The area has a growing economy, in contrast to the shrinking economy of Upstate New York, and to the north of SSI, the Port of Savannah is the fastest-growing seaport in the world, and fourth-largest in the United States. I'm excited about handling marketing and sales for one Webster-based client, AbsorbTech, which distributes Magix organic lawn and garden care products made from worm castings, because of the year-round growing season in the Southeast.

The timing for closing our Rochester base is the Friday before Labor Day. We will be moving in mid-September and opening for business in Georgia in October. But we will be changing our focus from small-business consulting to corporate consulting in food and beverage, green industries and medical and pharmaceutical industries.

In the past year, I've resurrected an invention I first developed in 1993 that replaces cardboard pizza boxes with a reusable and recyclable delivery mechanism. It could reduce landfill waste by as much as 500 million tons annually just by eliminating cardboard boxes from the waste stream. I need to ensure that this new organization is able to create new jobs and initiate efficient marketing, manufacturing and sales operations while generating healthy profits. New York's tax rates and RG&E's inability to guarantee consistent service has ruled New York out. As an aside, at my current office, I lost parts of 30 days of electrical service due to blackouts, brownouts and inept service in a one-year span. RG&E refused to issue a service refund or to pay for electronic computer equipment damaged by hard stops and starts. It has more acts of God than the Vatican bookshelves, and even more excuses. So New York is crossed off the list.

I don't know that Georgia will be the best site for the Re-Pizza Delivery System. It does offer advantages in the first phase of our development.

I grew up in Irondequoit. Somewhere, there's a trophy at Eastridge High School indicating that I contributed to making the school a better place. From there, I went to St. Bonaventure and won journalistic awards for talent and integrity, and later, I earned top awards in public relations and marketing for major national companies. Generations old enough to have seen Wendy's "Where's the Beef?" commercials still remember Clara Peller's name in part because of my work. People wearing affordable, disposable contact lenses might be doing so because of the brilliant team I worked with to bring that product to the light of day. Here, my virtual agency was less about national brands, and more about helping locally owned businesses survive competition from national chains, and helping the owners send their children to college, build a new home, or reach milestones despite incredible odds. We innovated local TV ads, introducing effective 15-second commercials to the landscape; became the first agency to put its clients on the internet in 1994; pioneered internet press release distribution with NYNewswire.com, established in 1996 to provide instantaneous transmission of news to more than 500 editors and reporters; resurrected faltering events, and rebuilding them to prosperity; promoted local restaurants through our Tuesday Night Supper Club, which resulted in three happy marriages; and building non-descript businesses into the envy of their industries. Personally, I wrote, as my tribute to Rochester, a screenplay about the life of Frederick Douglass, who overcame tremendous adversity with passion and perseverance. The rewards transcended dollars and cents, but there comes a time when the dollars need to make sense.

I've seen many of my clients sell to competitors, move to sunnier climes, or simply fold due to the pressures of the struggling economy. Adversity is present for us all, and it's how we react to it that makes us heroes or winners.

Just yesterday, one of my long-time clients told me that he was talking with a "national marketing guy." That was a bit of a snub, but it opened my eyes to the fact that people here think of me in terms of my small-scale work with small businesses. Even though we were successful, and boasted more than 100 clients from 1998 to 2002, I realize now that my original business plan for

AdWorks and Gleason PR did not take into account the nuances of small business management. Now, I long to get back into national marketing and PR, such as the successful program we implemented in March for PMQ Pizza Magazine and the New York Pizza Show, where we generated international media coverage and a spot on Live with Regis and Kelly.

I envision a bright future for Rochester. As Gov. David Paterson said, it will take time and sacrifice. It will take leadership with vision. It will require a community willing and eager to embrace change.

At 47, it's time for me to work in a place where there are fewer obstacles to success. We've been disappointed and surprised by political interference with some of our proposals for the good of the community, especially our 2004 plan to revive the Holiday Light Show using renewable energy to power a month-long visitor attraction and the refusal of Frontier Field Management to meet with Rochester Red Wings management and me to negotiate a contract to expand our Pizza All-Stars event to make Rochester a regional capital of the pizza industry and raise money for ALS research. Other communities have invited me to organize similar events, because they share the same vision and passion that I do.

I've got a world of respect for the small-business owners in Rochester, the entrepreneurs, the local media who are professional through and through, and my many friends who have listened to my rants before and provided me with life-sustaining support during the past few difficult years. My good friends understand my need to move, to re-tool and to use all I have learned since my return to Rochester 20 years ago in a new adventure in a new home. It may be for one year, or many, but I will always have a special place in my heart for the people of Rochester.