



TOP Business LEADERS

The
Creative
Mind

Kevin JONES

CLAIM TO FAME

President/CEO of America's Best Championships and Spirit Innovations

For nearly 30 years, Kevin Jones has been a force to be reckoned with in the all-star industry, maintaining a belief that anything's possible. "The biggest lesson I've learned is to stay true to your way of thinking," he says. "It's important to care and have an opinion. You may not always be right or get your way, but if you're passionate and involved, great things will develop."

Nowhere is this theory more evident than in the success of America's Best Championships and SI (part of the JAM Brands family) which continues to set the pace for inventive cheer uniforms. Jones credits a great team of designers and pattern makers with consistently churning out new ideas that value

form and function. He promises a new crop of designs for 2010 that's sure to have the industry abuzz. And true to his dedication to diversifying, he looks forward to the launch of "Studio Dance," a new division of SI, featuring a special line for dance studios, all-star dance teams and competitive high school teams.

Jones' business philosophy exemplifies the quality customer service that America's Best Championships and SI (part of the JAM Brands family) have come to stand for. "Always think ahead, look outside the familiar for inspiration and stay close to your customer," he advises. In keeping with this, both companies have recently

adjusted pricing and offered special deals to meet the needs of loyal customers.

Jones admits that, because there are so many creative and talented people in the industry, there's no way to determine what the "next big thing" will be. But it seems that his money's on SI to introduce groundbreaking trends for years to come. Jones recently spent two weeks touring Italy and brought back plenty of inspiration for the next crop of SI fashions. "Everyone will have to wait and see, but I can tell you that 2010 designs are exclusive SI original creations that will once again set the standard for all-star uniforms!" says Jones. —LE

"Kevin is one of our industry's leading visionaries. In the '90s, he was a huge part of NCA's early lead in the all-star market, helping to develop the original 10-point judging scale. I think he's really helped change the landscape of the all-star world and continues to invent and reinvent the future of our sport."

—Justin Carrier, vice president, Varsity All-Star

Q: What's one thing no one in the industry knows about you?

A: I enjoy gardening and landscaping.

Q: What can you tell us about uniform trends?

A: I've watched cheer uniforms go from bulky wool sweaters and skirts to form-fitting designs constructed with "bling" accents, so I've seen a lot!

Q: Describe a typical work day.

A: I'm usually at the office by 7:30 am. Some days are filled with strategic planning meetings and conference calls to discuss the sales side of the business, while other days allow me to spend time

with our uniform designers, direct photo shoots and develop new product lines.

Q: What do you love most about your current position?

A: Seeing teams wearing SI uniforms and knowing I had a part in making that happen. I hear all the time, "We can always spot an SI uniform on the competition floor—they're so unique and original." I love being creative with cheer and dance uniform designs, and I'm very proud that SI is leading the way in changing the look of cheerleading.

Q: What's your favorite cheer memory?

A: There have been so many! One of my fondest is an afternoon I spent with Herkie. In 2001, A&E did a feature on cheerleading, covering several teams attending our Big "D" Championship at Southern Methodist University. Herkie arrived on time, but the TV crew was running three hours late. Herkie was so patient as we sat in the stands at Moody Coliseum at SMU for three hours and just talked.

We talked about his early days as a gymnast, back-flipping from the top of pyramids, to his early camp days, to all of his daughters. It was truly a special few hours. ★