

Biography of Robert Luddy

Robert Luddy is a lifelong entrepreneur. At the age of 20, while attending LaSalle University in Philadelphia, Bob opened a fiberglass manufacturing business and worked at night. In 1967, Bob sold his company and was drafted into the military.

In 1976, Bob settled in Raleigh, and with \$1,300 capital, he opened Atlantic Fire Systems in a one-room facility. Recognizing the demand for high-quality kitchen ventilation equipment, Bob purchased a sheet metal shop in 1981 and transformed it into CaptiveAire Systems, Inc.

CaptiveAire is now the nation's largest and most well-respected manufacturer of commercial kitchen ventilation systems, with sales reaching \$211 million in 2007. CaptiveAire employs 750 people in four plants and 60 offices in the U.S. and Canada. Its clients include independent restaurants, national chains, and other public and private institutions.

CaptiveAire is continually voted "Best In Class" by industry dealers and consultants, according to *Foodservice Equipment & Supplies* magazine. *INC.* magazine has repeatedly named CaptiveAire one of the 500 fastest growing private companies in the nation. In its home base of North Carolina, CaptiveAire is among the 100 largest private companies (*Business North Carolina* magazine), and one of the 50 fastest growing private companies in the Raleigh Triangle (*Triangle Business Journal*).

In addition to CaptiveAire, Bob Luddy drives other economic development in the area. Bob founded and developed the Franklin Park Industrial Center, which has drawn over 15 entrepreneurial businesses and hundreds of jobs to Franklin and Wake counties.

A strong advocate of excellent education, Bob founds schools which help youth develop good character and reasoning skills. In 1998, Bob established the Franklin Academy, an award-winning public charter school in Wake Forest, which now serves over 1,200 K-12 students. In 2001, Bob founded St. Thomas More Academy in Raleigh, a classical, college preparatory high school. The academy is one of the 50 best Catholic high schools in the country (and one of the top 25 for academic excellence, Catholic identity, and civic education). In 2007, Bob opened Thales Academy in Raleigh, the first in a network of private community schools offering a high-quality K-8 education at low-cost tuition.

In 2006, Bob won the Ludwig von Mises economic research institute's first ever "Mises Entrepreneurship Award" for three decades of leadership at CaptiveAire and for exemplary "dedication to learning, prosperity, and freedom."

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Current Civic Leadership Positions

- Member – Blue Ribbon Charter School Commission, 2007-present
- Founder and Chairman of the Board – Thales Academy, 2007-present
- Chairman of the Board – J. W. P. Civitas Institute, 2006-present
- Member – Blue Ribbon Committee on the Future of Wake County, 2005-present
- Founder and Chairman of the Board – St. Thomas More Academy, 2001-present
- Founder and Chairman of the Board – The Franklin Academy, 1998-present
- Member, Board of Directors – John Locke Foundation, 1993-present

Past Civic Leadership Positions

- Chairman of the Board – American Conservative Union Foundation, 2006
- Chairman of the Board – The Center for the Study of Popular Culture, 2002-2005
- Director – Center for Education Reform, 1998-2001
- Member – State Government Reorganization and Privatization Committee, 1995-1997 (Co-Chair – Privatization Subcommittee)
- Member – Franklin County Economic Development Commission, 1994-1997 (Chairman, 1994-1995)
- Chairman – Wake County Citizens' Task Force, 1994-1995
- Chairman – Raleigh Entrepreneurial Commission for Quality, Service and Efficiency, 1994-1995
- Chairman – North Carolina Entrepreneurial Development Board, 1993-1995
- Co-Chairman – North Carolina Mathematics and Science Coalition, 1991-1994
- Founder and Developer – Franklin Park Industrial Center, 1989
- Principal Speaker and S.B.A Group Sponsor – SCORE Workshops, 1986-1999