

GREATER FORT WAYNE  
BUSINESS HALL OF FAME

*Inductee*

# A LEGACY OF ACHIEVEMENT



**Chuck Surack**  
SURACK ENTERPRISES



FOR CHUCK SURACK, TRUSTING THAT “ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE” SUSTAINED HIM AT THE HELM OF SWEETWATER’S MUSIC BUSINESS AND NOW AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SWEETWATER BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND SURACK ENTERPRISES. THAT BELIEF, HE SAYS, COMBINED WITH THE BOY SCOUT OATH LEARNED IN HIS EARLIEST YEARS, “ARE PRINCIPLES WHICH SET ME UP FOR LIFE AND REMAIN THE BASIS OF ALL OF MY ACTIVITIES.”

[SINCE 1984]

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Believing anything is possible is why Surack didn’t let the 2008 recession or the 2020 Covid pandemic stop him. “I chose to not participate in the recession. We didn’t have layoffs. Instead, at Sweetwater, for example, we dropped some product lines and added others so the team could focus on the customer,” Surack says. “During the pandemic, the team came together and was resourceful, doing the right thing for customers and each other. Today, Sweetwater has grown to more than 2500 people.”

Surack is driven by a mission to help others, whether that support is offering the best in eyesight for quality of life through Longe Optical or getting them to the joys of family or the demands of business faster at Sweetwater Aviation.

Because Surack also wants to save jobs and serve people, his business savvy has enabled him to turn businesses and spaces in the community into success stories. “I’m inspired by others and I want to make an impact when I see opportunity,” he says. “Our newest venture, The Pearl, has me very excited. The ability to mix living and meeting space, create Amoré restaurant, and develop ventures within the dedicated 40,000-square-feet of Pearl Street Arts, for instance, are ways to further the growth of downtown Fort Wayne.”

Surack admits he’s not good at planning in advance, but after 43 years, he “recognized that selling the original Sweetwater music component of the business was the right decision to ensure it continues to thrive beyond my years. I remain its largest individual shareholder and am Chairman of the Sweetwater Board. I can’t imagine slowing down.” With the sale of the Sweetwater, Surack Enterprises retains ownership of the Sweet Family of Companies. “The number of companies within Surack Enterprises can be a moving target, as I discover new opportunities to save jobs and serve people. Right now, it’s 19 companies employing approximately 600 people,” Surack says. “I don’t see business investment potentials as a risk; I see them as paths to creating success.”

Surack’s wife Lisa is his partner at Surack Enterprises, and he says, “while her counsel and her ideas are not always visible, they are vital. She is especially driven by our Surack Family Foundation non-profit investments in the community.”

“I can’t imagine what Fort Wayne would be like without Chuck and Lisa Surack and the wide-ranging public generosity they have shown in this community,” says Mike Packnett, retired Parkview Health CEO. “At the same time, their influence is privately significant as well, demonstrated through those they have individually and intentionally helped without seeking public recognition.”

For the Suracks, these investments are “very intentional, because we believe no one is above another. We all have fears, dreams, and ambitions, and we want to offer others the respect and love we each deserve.” Surack continues, “We give others the ability to achieve their dreams. And, I remind dreamers – don’t let others discourage you. Do the research, be involved, and be all in. Ultimately, as we help others and as Surack Enterprises invests in the community, we can leave the world a better place.”

