

## 200 years later, Newburyport goes international again

By Stephanie Chelf  
Staff Writer Newburyport Daily News

NEWBURYPORT — Two centuries ago, international trade made Newburyport one of the richest cities in America.

No one's betting on that kind of success now, but a growing number of businesspeople — consultants, attorneys and investors — are again looking to distant shores to boost the city's economic development.

It's not about attracting a big corporate headquarters, they say. It's about start-up companies, networking and a growing international market.

Local attorney Mark Guay, who has a Rolodex filled with international clients, and retired international marketing and sales executive Ron Martino have formed the International Business Coalition. The nine-month-old group has three main goals: to help local firms grow internationally, to recruit firms that do business internationally and to market Newburyport as a place for thriving international business.

So far, the coalition has hosted officials from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the state Office of International Trade and experts from major foundations. Last week, Oleg Gorelik, an investment adviser who worked with the government of Mongolia on privatization reform, spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at the monthly meeting.



(Mark Guay & Ron Martino leaders, co-founders.)

Members of the group are working to build venture capital to support business growth, develop nonprofit projects, explore free trade and collect a database of international firms.

"We're bringing all these people into the room to let them solve their own problems," Guay said.

"Why whine about outsourcing when you could do something about it?" Martino said. "We do a lot of international business in the Industrial Park, and we also do international business on our main streets."

Traditionally, large corporate tenants can anchor a local economic base. But the International Business Coalition believes the small start-up company or consulting firm is what can thrive in Newburyport.

"There's a gap between the traditional thinking of attracting big companies," Martino said. "You can also bring in 100 jobs with consultants, marketing and other businesses."

The coalition touts one successful venture.

Last fall, as the coalition was getting off the ground, Mike Cyros was developing a U.S. headquarters for a European company, Allied Vision Technologies. Allied manufactures digital cameras used in scientific applications.

Cyros, a Newburyport resident, knew he would base this subsidiary in his hometown.

"The opportunity came to help set up this subsidiary from scratch," Cyros said. "I told them salary is negotiable; location is not. I wanted something in Newburyport, and I knew I could find the talent pool here."

Cyros, through the Chamber of Commerce and the coalition, was connected with local accountants, attorneys and sales professionals with international experience.

"The timing was just right," Cyros said. "It was great to be part of an experienced group, and the connections were there."

In January, Cyros opened in downtown Newburyport on Washington Street. It was the German company's first U.S. branch.

At Allied in Newburyport, Cyros imports products from Germany and sells them in the United States. So far, the staff includes him and two employees. He plans to grow to at least seven employees.

"It can be overwhelming for a small company to do international business," Cyros said. "But when you're part of a

group with experience, you can get started."

Another Newburyport business has benefitted from Cyros' decision. Strand Marketing, owned by David Strand, was hired for Allied Vision's marketing in North America.

Newburyport is the perfect place for subsidiaries of foreign companies, Guay said.

"We can provide them with a team of people," Guay said. "There's tremendous knowledge in this community, and people like the place."

The coalition is hoping to start a fund of as much as \$20 million, pulling together venture capital to invest in start-up concepts.

As the group develops its mission, it is looking at ways to market Newburyport as community to live in and do business.

International business is nothing new to the city. After the American Revolution, the city's shipbuilding and shipping business grew phenomenally by tapping international markets. The dozens of elegant Federal-era homes in Newburyport are a testament to the riches brought to the city.

"Our history of trading internationally is there," said Bill Piercey, president of the Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "We have an attractive downtown, the Towle building, the industrial park. We're not going to bring in the big international player, but the international business who wants to set up a small operation in Newburyport."