



The CITIZENS FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

1990

RICHARD KIER

PRO SCAPES, INC.



CARL J. SINGLE/The Post-Standard

Young Entrepreneur of the Year Richard Kier built his landscaping business up from a one-truck, one-mower operation he started while in high school.

Computer Executive, Landscaper Named Entrepreneurs of Year

By **LILLIAN ABBOTT**
The Post-Standard

Harold Popplewell, chief executive officer of Intellisys Inc., and Richard Kier, president of Pro Scapes Inc., are being honored as entrepreneurs of the year by The Citizens Foundation.

The group seeks to "perpetuate free enterprise in Syracuse and views the award as a step toward fulfilling that mission," said foundation member Tom Lucey, president of Norstar Bank of Central New York.

"We chose two people who represent what we stand for and we've put them on a pedestal," he said.

Popplewell, 36, is being named Entrepreneur of the Year.

He founded Intellisys in 1987 with six other former General Electric Co. employees. The first year, the company had five employees and revenue of \$183,000, he said. In 1989, the company had 75 people and \$10 million in sales, and Popplewell said he expects to pull in \$30 million in sales this year.

The company designs artificial intelligence systems to make humanlike decisions, Popplewell said. It now has a \$9 million contract with the Navy to make computer software that simulates the thinking of naval commanders in fleet situations.

Popplewell predicted that Intellisys will continue to grow at the rate of 500 percent a year. He said the company is seeking additional capital to develop contracts overseas, but would prefer to raise money through a private local offering, rather than by going public.

Kier, 27, is being named Young Entrepreneur of the Year for founding Pro Scapes, a residential and commercial landscaping firm. He started the company when he was 16 years old, using a truck paid for with money earned from mowing lawns. He bought the mower when he was 11 with money saved from his Post-Standard paper route.

"I thought (lawn mowing) was an easy way to get a job and to work," he said.

By time he graduated from high school, Kier was managing three trucks and hiring people as he needed them. He crammed work in during free periods at school, after school and weekends.

He now employs 20 people and has 13 trucks. The company had gross sales of \$415,000 in 1989, and Kier said he would like to see Pro Scapes grow more, especially in the area of commercial landscaping.

But Kier said sticking with the residential business was important to him.

"I don't want to forget those people who helped me along," he said.

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Business

2 win awards for entrepreneurial spirit

The presidents of a high-technology defense contractor and a growing landscaping company will be honored for their entrepreneurial spirit Friday in ceremonies at the Hotel Syracuse.

Rep. James T. Walsh, R-Syracuse, will present The Citizens Foundation Inc.'s annual awards to Harold E. Popplewell and Richard Kier, businessmen who have made impacts in Central New York.

Popplewell, to be named "Entrepreneur of the Year," is chief executive officer of IntelliSys, a two-year-old company that designs computer-based military training systems. It employs four people in its Clay headquarters and 47 others around the country.

Popplewell last year unveiled a system that uses artificial intelligence to simulate actual



RICHARD KIER

conditions of war. The \$6.9 million command tactical trainer, designed for the Navy enables officers to wage war against a computer that thinks like the enemy.

The company, founded by a group of former General Electric employees, has also designed training systems for the Air Force and the Spanish Navy.

Kier, to be named "Young Entrepreneur of the Year," is the 27-year-old president of Pro Scapes Inc., a Jamesville landscaping company he launched 11 years ago with a loan from his parents. The company now has grown to 20 employees and 13 trucks.

Kier began mowing lawns and shoveling sidewalks in the Syracuse neighborhood near his home, he said. With the help of his girlfriend — now his wife, Karen — Kier funneled profits back into the business and kept it growing.

Pro Scapes today offers insulation and construction work as well as landscaping and basic maintenance.

"It isn't necessarily important to be the biggest business in town," Kier said. "But we want to have the happiest employees and the best relations with customers."