

November 6, 2008

This article also appeared in:  
The Vailsburg Leader – November 6, 2008  
The Livingston Herald – December 6, 2008  
The Orange Transcript – November 6, 2008  
The West Orange Chronicle – November 6, 2008  
The East Orange Record – November 6, 2008

## New foundation seeks to revitalize Newark

Urban Investment By Diane Lilli, Staff Writer

Maplewood resident Paul Profeta wants to change the image of Newark, and he's willing to put his money where his mouth is to prove it can be done.

To achieve this, he launched the Profeta Urban Investment Foundation at Rutgers School of Business in Newark on Oct. 21. The foundation will provide investments for minority-owned businesses. And he seeded the venture with \$1 million of his own funds.

Profeta said he wants to build Newark back to the city it once was, and still can be, even in these turbulent times.

After all, he has deep roots - and fond memories - in Newark.

"Newark has been special to me all my life," he said. "In my childhood, friends and I used to take the No. 31 bus down to Newark and hang around like kids do. I remember all of the bar mitzvahs, birthdays and weddings at the Essex House. It was my city."

Profeta recalled the low period of Newark, when violence prevailed.

"The riots of 1967 broke my heart," he said. "To watch on TV and see sections of Newark in flames, and see Newark residents shooting at police and firemen was a trauma to me."

These dramatic images, etched into Profeta's memory, inspired him to start the foundation.

"It has been something I have always wanted to correct and I am hopefully getting the chance to do that now," he said. Profeta found additional support from two local organizations, Brick City Development and City National Bank.

Brick City Development is Newark's own financial catalyst and was created to attract and develop new businesses.

Both organizations have said they'd be willing to invest in any minority business Profeta backs with a 3-1 ratio.

"If I invested \$50,000 in a minority business, I would hope that one of these two institutions would lend \$150,000 in additional funds for a total of \$200,000," He explained.

"This multiplies the benefit of my money fourfold."

Another key component of the foundation is the partnership Profeta has forged with Rutgers Business School.

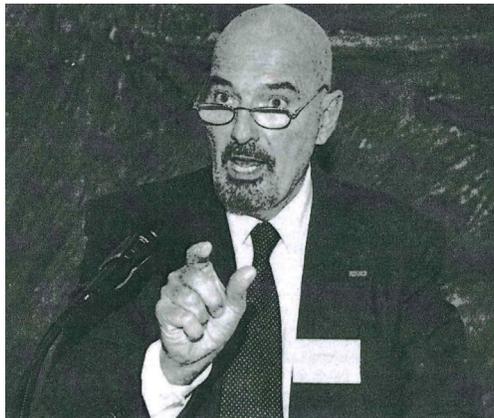
Working with Dean Michael Cooper last December, Profeta said a new center was developed to help him discover which minority companies to back.

"Michael Cooper has really quarterbacked this thing with unusual speed and alacrity," said Profeta. "In less than a few months he created the Center for Urban Entrepreneurship and Economic Development."

The center, under the direction of Newark native D.T. Ogilvie, launched a namesake course. It is within this class setting that students will take an active role in choosing the businesses to receive funds from the foundation.

Profeta explained how the process will work, and why it is different from other charitable organizations.

Why will it be different?" he asked. "Why will it be more



Speaking at the unveiling of a new foundation which provides funding for minority-owned companies seeking to invest in the future of Newark is Paul Profeta of Maplewood, whose

effective? Because all of the proposals for investment requests will come into the class."

Students will analyze every request received by the foundation. Working together, they will narrow the choices, using four criteria: the recipients must be true minority businesses; must have their headquarters in Newark; must do their business in Newark, and must conduct a business that adds value to Newark and furthers the goals of Rutgers Business School and the foundation.

And, at least initially, that means the area located close to the business school will benefit.

"The initial focus geographically will be the area immediately surrounding the Rutgers, NJIT and the Essex County Com-

munity College," said Profeta.

"We understand this area better than any other part of Newark and we understand what sells here."

Profeta said it is important to create businesses near the three campuses for other reasons as well.

"We have 23,000 students with very few places to eat and relax," he said.

The first two recipients the foundation is backing are two businesses that will add allure to the area while helping satisfy its appetite. John Murray is opening the Coffee Cave, and Marissa and Lee Blackwell will serve food at their restaurants and business, Caterings.

Marissa Blackwell said she was shocked and ecstatic when she heard about the foundation money.

"I was so surprised when I found out about this," she said. "We plan on opening our space and hopefully by the end of November we'll be in and settled."

Profeta said he learned the value of a strong work ethic from his parents, immigrants from Italy.

"My father worked from the time he was 7, even when he got to NYU and got his college diploma," he said. "My mother did the same thing."

Profeta said his father was a wonderful man, and taught him valuable life lessons.

"Those who can help should. That was his ethic," said Profeta.

Recently, Profeta and his brother, Fred, dedicated a new athletic field in Maplewood in honor of their mother, 99-year-old Lynnetta Profeta.

Profeta wants to get the word out: help is out there for people who want to build up the city of Newark.

"I really want to publicize this," he said. "I want minority business people in Newark to know what's available."

As he sees it, helping minorities will be a boon for everyone in Essex County.

"These two enterprises are the beginning," he said. "They are the beginning of the transformation. Let us pray that this continues and let us pray that this becomes the new Newark — the Newark that used to be the shining jewel of New Jersey."