

Businesses thankful this holiday

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It has been a tough year for the nation's economy, but area businesses said they have much to be thankful for on this Thanksgiving Day.

"I'm most thankful for the family atmosphere we have here," said Robert Parker, CEO of Digi-Net Technologies in Gainesville. "We have here people of various backgrounds because we recruited people from all over the United States and from the University of Florida. We've come together and have been able to succeed."

He and company employees have put "a lot of blood, sweat and tears" into making the business a success, Parker said.

"I am thankful for their effort. We've had an excellent last couple of years. There's been a lot of work and a lot of our employees put in some long hours, but so far it's been worth it, he said. Parker added that he also is "very thankful for my blood family and my health."

The company recently opened a branch office in Atlanta, where the focus will be on sales and business development.

"The headquarters will remain in Gainesville, and I will be traveling back and forth," Parker said.

Trish and Billy Ward, owners of Ward's Super Market, are thankful for their business.

"We're most thankful for being independent, being able to survive the big guys and stay in business," said Trish Ward.

James Singleton, owner of James Masonry in Gainesville for 25 years, said he's just grateful to be alive.

"God has been good to me, and business has been a blessing to me this year," he said, adding that 2002 has been a good year for his company.

Good health is at the top of the list for Joe Belgrade, a certified financial planner, chartered life underwriter and chartered financial planner in Gainesville.

"The thing I am most thankful for is my health, because that is a true blessing to have your health," he said, adding that he also is appreciative of his acquaintances, clients and the people he works with.

There is much to be grateful for and happy about in these times, according to Howard Wallace, president of the Gainesville Builders Association, and co-owner with wife Anne of HKW Enterprises Inc.

"I think we're living in virtual paradise and probably a lot of people don't realize it," he said. "When I turn on the electric switch, light's there. I turn on the water tap and the water's hot. This is a good country to live in, and I think a lot of us spend more time worrying about the small stuff and don't think about the big picture."

The GBA also is having a good year.

"The association is in the best shape ever, with about as many members as it has ever had, and it is in a stronger position in terms of public relations in the community," Howard Wallace said. "We're exceedingly thankful for the amount of business we've had and the role we play in the local economy."

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