

Monday, October 28, 2013

## Two business school alums honored at OU Alumni Awards Banquet

The Oakland University Alumni Association (OUAA) honored two business school alums at the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Alumni Awards Banquet Friday, Oct. 25.

**Thomas Mittelbrun, III, SBA '88**, Benefits Director, National Electrical Contractors Association, received the Spirit Award recognizing exemplary volunteer service to the university.

**Rick Williams, SBA '06**, Co-owner, Burn Rubber Shoes and Founder and Creative Director, The Distinct Life, is one of two recipients of the Outstanding Young Alumni Award recognizing alumni who have demonstrated the worth of their education through their post-college achievements and, generally, have graduated within the last ten years.

### About Thomas Mittelbrun SBA '88

Tom Mittelbrun is no stranger to the OUAA. He served on the OUAA Board of Directors for seven years, including valuable time on the sub-committee supporting the OUAA Scholarship Program. It was through this committee work that Tom saw potential for growing the annual OUAA golf outing, both in terms of participants and in scholarship donations.

"The focus of the golf event is to raise money for scholarships to help students finish their education and to expose people from all over the country to the university," he said.

Thanks to Tom's leadership and passion for helping OU students, more than \$167,000 in proceeds from the outing has been added to the OUAA's scholarship endowment since 2007. "Tom is always an advocate. He never misses a chance to promote OU and encourage friends, colleagues and fellow alumni to visit campus, attend a basketball game, or come to an event," said Chris Carmody, regional director for GTS Advisors and Tom's former classmate. "Tom has a knack for connecting resources to OU."



This dedication to the university is reflected in Tom's family history. He is the first of four children in his family to attend Oakland. His siblings Dan, Sue, and Ken earned bachelor's degrees from Oakland in electrical engineering, management information systems, and finance/economics, respectively. His daughter Kaitlin currently attends OU for marketing and daughter Madison is in the Oakland Community College to Oakland University (O to O) Program for early childhood education and speech pathology.

For the past 24 years, Tom has served as the benefits director for the Electrical Workers' Joint Boards of Trustees with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Southeastern Michigan. While earning his OU Bachelor in Business Administration, Mittelbrun earned a Journeyman Wireman certificate from the National Electrical Contractors Association and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He went on to receive the Certified Employee Benefit Specialist (CEBS) designation from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He also completed the International Foundation of Employee Benefits Plans' Administrators Master's Program.

### About Rick Williams, SBA '06

Rick Williams' 10 years of experience in marketing, brand development, and business ownership have paved the way for success in a variety of individual and collaborative entrepreneurial projects. As co-owner of Burn Rubber Sneaker Boutique in metro Detroit and the contemporary mens' boutique *two/eighteen* by Burn Rubber, Rick possesses a visionary approach to business.

Rick's business acumen and marketing experience have helped him to dissect what drives consumer behavior and understand why consumers must first identify with a brand, and then relate to it. Rick's ability to build relationships through trust and consistency played a key role in creating successful partnerships with major companies such as New

Balance, Saucony, Reebok and U.S. Playing Card Company (Bicycle Playing Cards), to name a few. Rick was recently ranked as one of Complex Magazine's 50 "Most Influential People in Sneakers."

Rick is also owner of The Distinct Life, a brand development company that brings life to businesses in areas with untapped potential. For example, The Distinct Life has partnered with companies like Heineken and New Balance to shed positive light on the city of Detroit. Through the Distinct Life, Rick has participated in and developed fundraising initiatives for various causes like The Jordan Thomas Wachler Foundation, which contributes money to juvenile diabetes research and Wolverine Human Services, one of Michigan's largest agencies for rehabilitating delinquent youths. The Distinct Life also collaborated with Detroit Denim, as a part of the first offering of The Distinct Life's Dry Goods Collection.



Rick received his bachelor's degree in marketing from OU's School of Business Administration in 2006. As a student, his leadership was apparent through his involvement in OU's Greek life as an officer and member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. As Jean Ann Miller, director of the center for student activities and leadership development noted, "Through Rick's efforts on Oakland University's campus, he positively impacted his peers and commanded the respect of faculty and staff by successfully promoting the importance of being involved with one's community – on campus, locally and globally."

#### SUMMARY

The Oakland University Alumni Association (OUAA) honored two business school alums at the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Alumni Awards Banquet Friday, Oct. 25.

**Thomas Mittelbrun, III, SBA '88**, Benefits Director, National Electrical Contractors Association, received the Spirit Award recognizing exemplary volunteer service to the university.

**Rick Williams, SBA '06**, Co-owner, Burn Rubber Shoes and Founder and Creative Director, The Distinct Life, is one of two recipients of the Outstanding Young Alumni Award recognizing alumni who have demonstrated the worth of their education through their post-college achievements and, generally, have graduated within the last ten years.

Created by Claudette Zolkowski-Brown (zolkowsk@oakland.edu) on Monday, October 28, 2013  
Modified by Claudette Zolkowski-Brown (zolkowsk@oakland.edu) on Monday, October 28, 2013  
Article Start Date: Monday, October 28, 2013