

Virtual Office Used for Real Business

Franchise operates in Evesham

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Bruce Bard, owner of The Intelligent Office, talks to receptionists Sarah Hagerty (left) and Katherine Frazier at their office in Evesham.

Steve Lonegan, mayor of tiny Bogota in Bergen County, wants to be governor.

As part of his strategy, Lonegan, a Republican, has established a campaign headquarters at Five Greentree Centre on Route 73.

But he and his staff are not physically there. The headquarters is what is known as a "virtual office."

Lonegan is a client of the Intelligent Office, a new franchise in a 6,000-square-foot office suite in Five Greentree Centre.

Using the Intelligent Office, Lonegan can have all of his campaign calls screened and relayed to him by a receptionist. He can hold meetings at the Evesham site when he is in South Jersey.

Lonegan can also have a receptionist fax information, provide mail, do scheduling or other customer services as needed.

Intelligent Office is a 5-year-old company founded in Colorado. The company has 25 offices in 14 states.

Bruce Bard of Voorhees owns the Evesham franchise, which is the first Intelligent Office in New Jersey.

The Intelligent Office is a big help to a small business or politician, Bard said, because it can provide a mailing address, a receptionist service and conference space for meetings. It allows a business to have the convenience of an office without paying monthly rent, furniture cost, or phone bills, he said.

For example, a client pays \$275 a month for use of the receptionist service, business address, voice mail, mail box, and access to the building. The receptionist answers all calls and forwards them to any phone

anywhere. Calls are handled according to the client's specifications.

"When people call my headquarters in South Jersey, (the calls) are handled very professionally," said Lonegan, who announced for governor in August. "They track every single call. No calls fall through the cracks."

Bard, 46, founded a software consulting group in Media, Pa., in 1987, but sold the company in 2001. He said he was too young to retire, but he wanted to stay close to home and work regular hours.

He paid a \$48,000 fee for the Intelligent Office franchise, and he pays 5 percent in royalty fees. He has five employees.

Bard said his 50 clients represent a cross-section of the business community including attorneys, accountants and real-estate agents.

"Half of our clients never set foot in here at all," Bard said of the Evesham office.

Bard leases space at \$15 an hour for an office, \$20 an hour for a conference room, and \$35 an hour for a boardroom conference.

The cost to rent office space by the month varies from \$600 to \$1,600, he said.

Of the 15 offices available at Five Greentree Centre, half are leased to clients who visit every day and the rest are rented when needed, Bard said.

Lonegan, who is a custom homebuilder, said the Intelligent Office made sense to him from a business perspective.

"I'm from the private sector," he said. "It's efficient and convenient."