



## ARTISTRY IN ANATOMY

**▶** INSIDE a nondescript building on the stretch of Main Street connecting Great Barrington with Sheffield is a bustling enterprise where thousands of intricate mimetic (“imitative”) medical models have been designed, manufactured, and shipped across the U.S. and to more than 50 countries around the world for use in simulated surgical training.

In any given year, between 200 and 400 pieces are produced in this location, says Lisa Chamberlain, co-founder with her husband Eric of The Chamberlain Group, celebrating its 20th anniversary. Seventy percent of the company’s revenue comes from commercial entities such as pharmaceutical and biotech companies, as well as medical device suppliers like Johnson & Johnson.

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### A COUPLE SCHOOLED IN SPECIAL EFFECTS MAKE THEIR MARK IN MEDICAL MODELS

—By—

EVELYN BATTAGLIA

■ *“Most of our domestic work comes over the transom and is built on relationships, relationships, relationships,” says Lisa Chamberlain, co-founder with her husband Eric of The Chamberlain Group.*

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How a couple of top-notch film professionals ended up creating anatomical parts out of silicone and polymer for clinician training is a matter of serendipity. The couple met at the Academy-Award-winning R/GA design company in New York City in the 1980s. Lisa was an intern with an MFA in theater management from Yale who went on to become a full-time producer; Eric, some 15 years older, was head of physical effects. It was after six years of working together in New York City, then seven years of not working together, when they met up again in the Berkshires in 1995 after they had taken jobs on different movies.

Paths crossed, the two became partners in life and work, and more collaborations on commercials and movies ensued. While handling

## REAL ESTATE

### *Investing in the Berkshires*

special effects for *The Matrix*, they received an out-of-the-blue phone call from a medical device executive saying, “Your silicone supplier tells me you make excellent models for movies, how about making medical models?”

“We said ‘Sure, what are those?’ That literally was the phone call that got us into this business,” says Lisa.

“We took all the innovative stuff we had done for films and our artistic abilities and applied them to this life-changing industry instead,” says Eric.

With an initial investment of \$12,000, they formed The Chamberlain Group with Eric’s brother Craig (now retired) and Steven Thurn (lead designer and sculptor) and set up shop in Sheffield. Unlike the models that were then available—cold, hard things you see in doctor’s offices, as the couple describes them—they set out to create ones that were more organic, with Eric patenting a four-chamber beating-heart model early on. They also saw an opportunity to disrupt the “see one, do one, teach one” tradition, meaning residents are expected to learn in real-time, live-patient procedures.

“That model is not entirely gone, nor should it be because obviously experience plays a big role in the process,” says Lisa. “But there is also a place for deliberate practice.” Eric points to the fact that training is often done on animals, who end up dying. “We have been able to

persuade the teachers to use our models instead,” he says. “That’s been a big part of our journey.”

Not that there wasn’t a steep learning curve. “System by system, we had to collaborate with our clients to be cumulatively educated in anatomy and surgical procedures,” says Lisa.

Today, The Chamberlain Group counts 20 employees working out of 10,000 square feet. In the beginning everything was sculpted by hand; now they marry computer 3-D sculpting with industrial-style manufacturing CAD in the design and development phase and use 3-D printers (they were early adopters) for fast-track prototyping and printing actual parts, such as pelvic bones.

They’ve seen the burgeoning of the simulation industry in the past two decades. One of their clients at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is building a 200,000-square-foot facility that is essentially a simulation center, among other things.

The Chamberlains say they have tried to push what they call the tissue-to-technology piece: “Whatever that technology is, whether it’s a suture or catheter or surgical robot, our models create an appropriately realistic educational experience for the clinicians,” says Lisa. “In doing so, we feel like we’ve made some small contribution to people being accepting of this as a modality by which you can legitimately teach and learn.”

**THE BERKSHIRES IS GETTING BOOSTS** (a.k.a. financial high-fives) from inside and out and all over. Tokyo-based Toppan Printing announced plans to purchase Interprint from Wrede Industrieholding of Arnsberg, Germany, by the end of 2019. Included in the deal is Interprint’s sprawling 130,000-square-foot Pittsfield facility on Route 41, where 176 employees work and where the company’s decorative surfaces are designed and produced for use in furniture, flooring, and interior finishes.

In Great Barrington, **The Bookloft** owner Pamela Pescosolido has purchased the building at 63 State Road (next to the Great Barrington Fire Department) and hired Diego Gutierrez of Housatonic Architecture to create a new home for the store, which will have a small patio out front, a main entrance from the parking lot in the back, and a better event space and gas stove-slash-fireplace indoors. A grand opening is planned for May 2020.

Meanwhile, the foursome behind Marketplace Hospitality Group were expected to open **The Miller Pub** at 280 Main Street in Great Barrington in July. The 49-seat watering hole—named for the building’s past as The Miller Hotel—will offer select brews, whiskeys, and scotch, and (according to MHG partner David Renner) very little in the way of food given there’s no kitchen, just a stove. The model: Sip, then stroll to a nearby restaurant.

After a nine-month redo of what was once PW Vintage Lighting (D & B Property Service of Pittsfield did the work), **Jess Cooney Interiors** has moved from its off-the-beaten-path post on Main Street to the much more visible spot at 2 State Road.

Two historic Lenox inns are in the news: The sale of the 57-room **Village Inn** (16 Church Street), on the market since 2015, closed in June for \$995,000, down from the original \$1.3 million asking price. The new Colorado-based owners (a pair of married couples) landed in Lenox after exploring New Hampshire and other scenic locales. Plans to update the property are underway while the inn remains open for business. Having been purchased in June 2018 by the Wardman Group, the 32-room **Seven Hills Inn** (40 Plunkett Street) is now fully operational after undergoing an extensive \$2.2 million renovation, including of the 5,000-square-foot, 165-person capacity ballroom.

And there are two notable turn-key, live-work properties for sale for prospective restaurateurs: Long-running **The Bridge Restaurant** on North Main Street in Sheffield is on the market for \$595,000, while **Chez Nous Bistro** in downtown Lee is listed at \$795,000. A mixed-use, three-story building at 4 Housatonic Street that’s home to the Lenox Chamber Visitor Center is also up for grabs at \$595,000. Opportunity awaits!

—Evelyn Battaglia