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40 UNDER FORTY

New leaders for a new Hartford!

Congratulations to our eighth annual group of 40 Under Forty winners! As you'll see throughout this special issue of the *Hartford Business Journal*, they have accomplished a great deal in a short time.

Sharing their stories with you not only celebrates their achievements, but also may put a mirror up to your own efforts. As you'll see, professional accomplishment is only one measure of what it takes to be on the 2004 40 Under Forty team. Our judges — Anne Evans, Larry Brown and Lou Golden — also look carefully for community service and other “giving back” activities among the people vying to be chosen to receive this award.

It was an easy choice this year to assemble our young business and professional leaders at several of Hartford's new development projects. This is an exciting time for the city, and no publication has carried more words and pictures about Hartford's changing skyline than the *HBJ*.

We know there are many uncertainties about the region's future, including delays on the mixed-use Front Street project and whether it will even be built in its currently planned form.

But we also know that Hartford has badly needed an economic development boost, and that we now have one. Seeing the building cranes in the air, seeing new people moving downtown and seeing new retail businesses crop up to serve them represents the best hope the city will see in a generation to create more prosperity for the people and businesses that are already here.

This window of business opportunity is opening wider as the new levels of construction move higher, and now is the time to seize the moment, to help create a new image for the city and the region.

Seizing the moment is one of the most common attributes of this year's 40 Under Forty winners.

We hope you enjoy their stories, and that you can join us in honoring them at a special breakfast on Friday, Sept. 17 at the Bond Hotel.

Sincerely,
Philip Moeller
Editor



Ari Santiago

Age: 28

Title: President

Company: IT Direct LLC

Company Location: Hartford

Residence: Hartford

Career Highlights:

An entrepreneur at heart, I started my first business at age 14. Years later, with additional life and work experience, I established IT Direct in 2001. Instituting a business during the recession was challenging. Yet in three years, I've evolved IT Direct from a one-man company to a multi-faceted operation, quadrupling its revenue in its second full year, completing a move to our largest location, and continuing to grow at a strong pace. As a business owner, I am also proud to provide high quality, well-paying jobs in Hartford as a contribution to the overall resurgence of our city.

Community Volunteerism Highlights:

As an active member of the Hartford community, I am currently involved in many local charities and organizations. Access Hartford, Hartford's young professional organization, has provided me with valuable insight, relationships, and a forum for ideas. I am a current board member of Access Hartford, and I am proud to have been an active executive committee member since 2000. In addition, providing guidance to children in Hartford's coach pitch baseball league has been particularly



rewarding, and I have still been able to enjoy the city's rich arts community, through an active membership at both the Wadsworth Atheneum and the Real Art Ways gallery.

Biggest Success:

As a true believer in the importance of technology, my biggest success is demonstrating to clients how the proper implementation of information technology can propel their businesses into the future. I am still amazed at how many of my clients are stunned by the proficiency, ease and increased efficiency that technology can bring to their companies. My team's ability to give people that competitive advantage is truly the root of my success.

Dream Job:

I'm doing it!

Businessperson You Most Admire:

I was raised by the businessperson I most admire — my father, Rafael Santiago. Determined to succeed, my father earned a scholarship to study electrical engineering at Tufts University. Later, having discovered a passion for law, he put himself through graduate school and became partner in a Hartford firm. He now runs his own commercial law practice. His grit and positive energy are truly contagious. I admire him as a businessperson, a mentor, and a father.