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Dressed for Success

Dublin man helps servicemen look their best for job interviews

Members of the U.S. armed forces already command respect when in uniform.

Now, a Dublin man is working to make sure they're dressed in their best when they return home and enter the job market.

Jim Rieser is vice president of U.S. sales for Hunter & Lords, a custom men's clothing tailor with a branch in Columbus. Last year, the Dublin resident started a new endeavor at Hunter & Lords called Suits for Soldiers.

Rieser put out a call across Ohio for names from family members of armed forces members, asking them to nominate their uniformed kin for an opportunity to win a \$1,000 custom-made suit and a pair of Allen Edmonds shoes to match. He received a sizable volume of entries containing many great stories about the people nominated, he says.

"It was really hard to pick just (four winners), because their stories were just ridiculous," says Rieser. The project is being carried out in conjunction with Operation Homefront, an organization created after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks to assist the families of deployed soldiers. The group has been a big help when it comes to navigating military regulations, Rieser says.

The 2010 winners were Calvin T. Marshall of Columbiana, Air Force Reserves; Daniel Grime of Archbold, Army; Guy Zierk of Columbus, Marines; and Jamal Harris of Cleveland, Marines. As they returned to Ohio, Rieser gradually brought all of the winners down to Hunter & Lords' local office in the Short North to begin work on their

custom suits. The winners were very humble and thankful, Rieser says – to the point where he was compelled to ask them to stop thanking him, because the effort was organized as a thank-you to them.

"There are some really good stories that you don't hear about from the typical media, but you hear from these guys," says Rieser.

Zierk, executive officer for Lima Company – Marines 3rd Battalion, 25th Regiment – is a first lieutenant and has spent 16 years in the Marine Corps. He has done tours in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and his work with the Marine Corps has taken him to a variety of other countries as well.

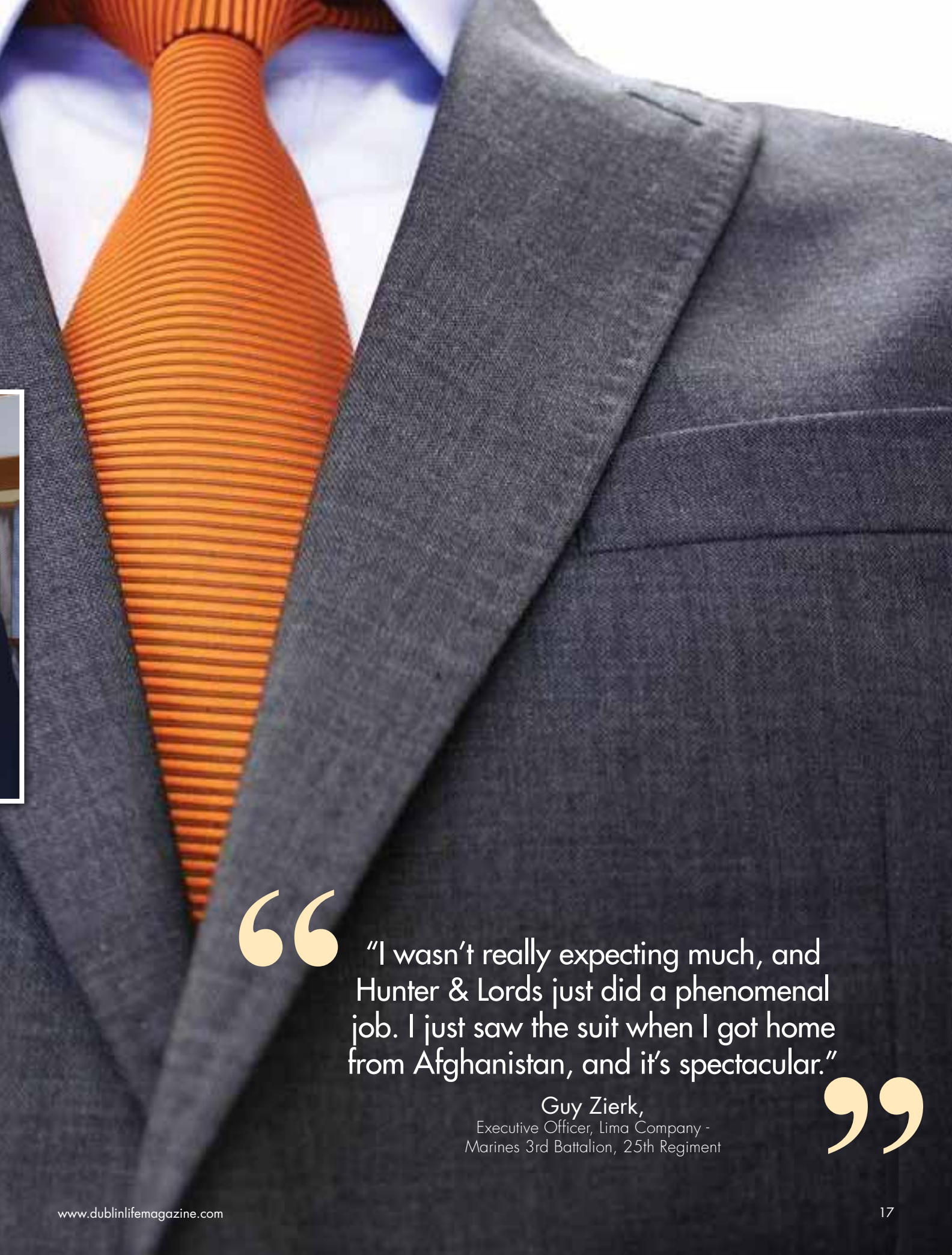
The northeast Columbus resident was nominated for the contest by his mother and finally got a chance to try on his new suit when he returned from Afghanistan in early April. Zierk looks forward to using the suit for job interviews and other formal occasions, he says.

"I wasn't really expecting much, and Hunter & Lords just did a phenomenal job," says Zierk. "I just saw the suit when I got home from Afghanistan, and it's spectacular."

Zierk's suit is dark blue and single-breasted, with cuffs and no pleats. It was even custom-fitted for suspenders, which Zierk says he prefers, and the shoes are very comfortable to boot.



Jim Rieser



“

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”

Guy Zierk,
Executive Officer, Lima Company -
Marines 3rd Battalion, 25th Regiment



Dan Grime of the Army's 2nd Battalion 325th Airborne Infantry (left) and Calvin Marshall of the Air Force Reserves pose with Jim Rieser.

"They're probably the most comfortable dress shoes," he says. "If I could wear them as part of my dress uniform, I would."

The great response Rieser got last year inspired him to bring Suits for Soldiers back for another go round in 2011. The nomination period began on Memorial Day and will run through Independence Day, and once again, four Ohio winners will be chosen – one from each branch of the military.

Suits for Soldiers pays tribute to men in uniform, but its purpose goes beyond that, Rieser says. It's also an effort to counteract an elevated unemployment rate for armed forces members returning from overseas – 3 percent higher than for the general public.

"That's a huge problem," Rieser says. "There's definitely something wrong with that."

Corollary to the message of helping armed forces members re-enter the workforce is a message to buy American, Rieser says. Hunter & Lords is an American company that dates back to 1932 and has been family-owned for three generations. All of its clothing is made in Knoxville, Tenn.; none of it is outsourced to other countries.

"We're an American company, so the broader message ... (is), what can other companies also do to help out our returning servicemen who are having a hell of a time getting re-acclimated back into the civilian workforce?" Rieser says.

Allen Edmonds, which has partnered with Hunter & Lords for years, is also an American company – it is based in Wisconsin and was founded in 1922.

Not only is Suits for Soldiers coming back for another year in Columbus, it's being expanded. The company's Maryland branch – located near Washington, D.C. – is doing its own version, selecting four winners from that state as well.

Those interested in submitting their loved ones' names for Suits for Soldiers can do so via Hunter & Lords' website, www.hunterandlords.com, or via the Operation Homefront website, www.operationhomefront.net. Winners will be announced shortly after Independence Day.

Garth Bishop is a contributing editor for Dublin Life Magazine.

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10:30 a.m. Contemporary Service - (Held in the Activity and Recreation Center)

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