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RELEASE**

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Bruce Landon, President and General Manager of the Springfield Falcons hosted the Young Professional Society of Greater Springfield for their January CEO Luncheon, the monthly series that connects YPS members with area business leaders. Sharing his and his hockey club's lengthy history in Springfield, Mr. Landon's passion for hockey and Springfield were evident, noting "The American Hockey League is the 2<sup>nd</sup> best league in the world." Fans may not realize that 82% of NHL players have played in the AHL. With an exciting and talented team in Springfield, why wait and spend big dollars to see star players, when you can spend \$10.00 now to watch them in action?

During his conversation with YPS members, Mr. Landon sighted two things that have contributed to his success: networking and building lasting relationships. Advising the group, "I want you to be a connector; your business will grow as you connect with others." Relationship building and networking allow you to successfully connect with others. "Networking is not expecting the sale immediately. It shouldn't always be about what *they* can do for *you*; it's about building a relationship to connect people. Be patient, relationships take time to build, the sales will come."

The visit to the Falcon's home at the MassMutual Center couldn't be timelier, given that the team is launching a campaign to reach out to Springfield and the surrounding communities to bolster support for this long-time Springfield institution. Currently, the team boasts \$850,000 in corporate sales. With a season ticket base of only 1200, Landon and his sales team are now focused at increasing season ticket sales – most notably through convenient corporate packages. There are many ways for individuals and local companies to get involved, the easiest is to purchase a season ticket package and use the tickets for employee recognition. Affordably, the cost for a whole season (40 games) is less than \$500.00, there are also flex packages available for much less. YPS members who are eager to help keep the Falcon's in Springfield – don't be daunted by the "perception" of downtown Springfield. GO to the games, have dinner or drinks at a downtown restaurant or bar. Support your city and your local AHL team!

Mr. Landon's tenure with Springfield hockey began in 1969 after his renowned goaltending skills placed him 39<sup>th</sup> overall in that year's Amateur Draft, chosen by the Los Angeles Kings to play for their American Hockey League affiliate in Springfield. Due to a career ending knee injury in 1977, at the age of 28, Landon retired from the ice, but not from the game.

This is where the interesting business development story begins! From sales and marketing to advertising and game night promotions, Landon has long been at the helm of promoting hockey in Springfield, entering his 14<sup>th</sup> season as president and his 24<sup>th</sup> as general manager of the Springfield AHL affiliate. Landon shared that, in 1994, when Springfield lost its professional hockey team, he and longtime partner and former teammate Wayne LaChance, pulled together the financing and were awarded an AHL expansion franchise – the Springfield Falcons. In those days, recounts Landon, the region's constant upbeat attitude was, "We're with you, win or lose!" Today's fans don't seem to have the same heart, with attendance numbers tied to the numbers in the win column. Prior to the 2002-03 season, Landon helped assemble a new ownership group, entitled Springfield Pro Hockey, LLC, which is the current owner.

Today, the issue is being able to retain this AHL team in Springfield. In addition to the team, there are many stakeholders in the equation - the City of Springfield, the area parking facilities, Global Spectrum, the downtown business community, and the fans – all would be impacted should the team have to relocate to a city which would give its full support to a hockey franchise. Noting that there is very little support from individuals and corporations from surrounding towns that have considerable discretionary income, *we challenge young professionals* to heed the call of this longtime Springfield mainstay. As Landon explained, the Falcons "need your support, your company's support, your neighbors' support!" Spread the word, come downtown and show **your** support for hockey and Springfield – hockey is always a good time!

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