



THEY'VE LIT MONUMENTS, 
AMPLIFIED CONCERT HALLS

 FILMED TIME, AND TAUGHT COMPUTERS TO




read our minds

Each person on this list is 

BRILLIANT

IN A DIFFERENT WAY,
whether it's in terms of inventing,
healing, designing,

 or discovering
ONE'S BEEN
TO THE MOON

Another takes his patrons
OVER THE MOON.

AND THEY'RE ALL INCHING

SOMETIMES CATAPULTING — US FORWARD,
into a world that's **MORE** fluid, **MORE** connected,

and **MORE Beautiful**



MEET 16 OF THE
CITY'S BEST AND
BRIGHTEST WHO
ARE CHANGING
THE WORLD.

The Innovators



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Dr. Gurpreet Padda still has the original flyer from GP Enterprises, the construction company he founded at age 14, the summer before he entered Parkway North High School. Back then, his criterion for hiring an employee was “Can you drive?” After school, Padda had to be picked up and driven from job to job; he supervised everything from walking dogs to remodeling basements. “Install roof turbines? Well, of course we do that...”

Such resourcefulness has led to his success as a physician and his eventual reputation as a serial entrepreneur. Shutting GP Enterprises when he entered medical school at the University of Missouri–Kansas City, Padda eventually became board-certified in pain medicine and anesthesiology, establishing the Padda Institute in 2001.

Ami Grimes is the CEO of the Padda Institute and the real serial entrepreneur, says Padda. The self-proclaimed “patron saints of lost real-estate causes” also develop local restaurants and the vertical integration that supports them. Café Ventana and Sanctuaria are already

The Serial Entrepreneurs

DR. GURPREET PADDA AND AMI GRIMES HAVE REFINED AND PERFECTED THE CONCEPT OF VERTICAL INTEGRATION, MOVING FAR BEYOND THE TYPICAL SMALL-BUSINESS OWNER.

established. On deck are Diablito's Cantina and Hendricks BBQ & Moonshine Blues Bar—the latter a 17,000-square-foot multilevel restaurant in St. Charles' former Water Works building. And scheduled to open in 2012 are DiSilvio's (an Italian eatery next to Ventana) and a brewpub (with a steak and lobster focus, no less) at the duo's Cathedral Square Brewery.

The partners have made developing restaurants look almost easy. For Sanctuaria's decor, they commissioned a famous folk artist from a local flea market. At Diablito's, Padda had dozens of tin chandeliers

inexpensively replicated from one that he sourced in Morocco. Padda also transformed retired Mexican highway signs into tabletops.

Recycled materials are a hallmark of the duo. At Hendricks, a template chair was purchased for \$150 and sent to Rajasthan, India, with tons of reclaimed barn wood acquired in France. Six hundred replicas were made and delivered for \$50 each, sparing the landfill and saving Hendricks \$60,000.

Padda gives Grimes most of the credit, praising her ability “to envision an entire project after a 1-minute tour.” Padda's strength is

making those thoughts economically viable. Through contacts and unique sourcing, he can outfit a restaurant for less than competitors—financing it through cash flow, not debt.

The partners believe vertical integration is essential to their ultimate success. At one farm, they're experimenting with aquafarming. Another, Foundations Farms in Belleville, Ill., was acquired to supply organic produce, fruit, eggs, cheese, and eventually other proteins for their growing list of restaurants. Expecting a massive uptick in the prices of foodstuffs, they feel the farms will be one key to survival.

Their integration extends far beyond food, however. In the building next to Café Ventana is iNeoCortex—what Padda describes as “the new brain,” an incubator for “nimble, app-based companies.” (Padda and Grimes have an interest in such a company, Deal Current, an enterprise that gives businesses the tools to compete with companies like Groupon and whose sales quickly rose from \$4,000 to \$450,000 per month, says Padda.) iNeoCortex is housed in a renovated space that is texturally deep, like their other projects. There, Padda and Grimes plan to nurture other low-cost/high-yield companies that, as Padda puts it, “will flower in the cross-pollination.”

SHARED SPACE

New venues for collaboration are spurring new and exciting ideas throughout the region.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT COLLABORATION, it's frequently in the context of crime (“The suspects threatened the cartel's collaborators”) or bland corporate partnerships. Similarly, much of what's called sharing is really publishing, as we broadcast thoughts on social networks, where even ideas shared by thousands may not produce action. We often wait for singular men and women—like the individuals profiled in these pages—to shape our reality.

But collaborative, shared spaces are fostering mental meetings that could reshape our city. The maker movement, for instance, blending shop class and art class, has found a home at Arch Reactor (archreactor.org). The city's first hackerspace, bringing together “techie, tinkers, and freethinkers,” lets members collaborate on projects ranging from

3-D printing with a MakerBot to launching weather balloons laden with high-tech tools.

Spaces like this thrive on easy access to online project ideas, tutorials, and parts, which can make the difference between building a robot in a night or a fortnight. Driving such connectivity is a regional push to turn office space into data centers. As architecture journalist Robert Sharoff noted in *The New York Times* this past February, companies like Contegix, Digital Realty Trust, Unisys, and Xiolink are working to make St. Louis a regional data-center hub—which, in addition to connecting collaboratives, could feasibly increase tech jobs and lead data-intensive outfits like mobile-payments processor Square (which already has an office here) to add infrastructure.

The same factors that have attracted those companies—plentiful office space and low rents—have also made possible shared workspaces like Saint Louis Coworking (stlcoworking.com) and Cherokee Nebula (southsidespaces.com/?p=498). Members of these coworking cooperatives pay a monthly fee for access to office space—and the potential to establish rich creative partnerships with officemates.

Watch these spaces for the next big idea.



WEB EXCLUSIVE: To learn why Padda is convinced that midtown is St. Louis' next growth area, go to stlmag.com.