

George R. Zoffinger '70

"Can you hold for a second?" George Zoffinger asks in rapid-fire speech that reflects his Long Island upbringing. "I have a state senator calling and I have to talk to him." As president and CEO of the New Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority (NJSEA), Zoffinger is accustomed to balancing such demands on his time. Appointed to the top job at NJSEA in 2002, Zoffinger oversees the Monmouth Park Racetrack, Atlantic City Convention Center, Wild-woods Convention Center, and the sprawling Meadowlands Sports Complex, which includes Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands Racetrack, and the Continental Airlines Arena. The Meadowlands is home to five pro teams—New York Giants, New York Jets, New Jersey Nets, New Jersey Devils, and the pro soccer team NY/NJ Red Bulls—plus one college basketball team (Seton Hall Pirates).



Needless to say, Zoffinger is one busy guy directing the NJSEA, a potent force in New Jersey's economy. The Meadowlands complex alone contributes 7,500 full-time jobs and \$1.2 billion annually to the state's economy. And that number will go up with the completion in 2008 of yet another attraction at the Meadowlands— Xanadu, a 4.8 million square foot "entertainment destination" that will include interactive entertainment, fine dining, outdoor amusements, and the country's first indoor skiing in the Snow Dome. Zoffinger and his staff predict it will add another 20,000 permanent full- and parttime jobs and millions of visitors to the eight million who already attend events at the Meadowlands.

Zoffinger was well prepared for the NJSEA job having previously served as the commissioner of Commerce and Economic Development under New Jersey Governor Jim Florio. In that post he developed plans to improve international trade, small business development, travel, and tourism. As commissioner of commerce, Zoffinger was instrumental in bringing seven sold-out World Cup Soccer games to the Meadowlands in 1994.

After graduating from Penn State Harrisburg in 1970, Zoffinger earned an M.B.A. from the Stern School of Business at New York University in 1971, then started his career in banking in New York. Among other positions, Zoffinger served as chairman of CoreStates New Jersey until it merged with CoreStates Bank, N.A. and was CEO of Value Property Trust, a publicly owned real estate investment trust. "I developed a reputation for taking on troubled situations and turning them around," Zoffinger says.

He's done the same with the Meadowlands, which was losing money when he was appointed and has now become profitable. That reputation led New Jersey Monthly magazine to name him one of the top five most powerful people in the state.

Though Zoffinger is firmly rooted in New Jersey, he continues his support of Penn State Harrisburg, whether lending his expertise to a panel discussion on campus or supporting students by endowing two scholarship funds. Zoffinger, a life member of the Penn State Alumni Association, was named an Alumni Fellow in 2003. He and his wife, Judith, live in central New Jersey and have three grown children and two grandchildren.

