



News Release

Louisiana Small Business Development Center
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Louisiana Small Business Development Center Celebrates 25 Years of Excellence

(Baton Rouge-June 4, 2008)- The Louisiana Small Business Development Center (LSBDC) celebrated its 25th anniversary by honoring Small Business Stars from across South Louisiana. Featured speakers are Louisiana Economic Development Secretary, Stephen Moret, and Michael Ricks, the district director for Louisiana from the U.S. Small Business Administration. The LSBDC 25th Anniversary Celebration will be held Wednesday, June 4th at the Louisiana State Museum, 660 North 4th Street, Baton Rouge, beginning 11:30am to 1:30pm with the award ceremony starting at 12:15pm.

“On the occasion of the LSBDC’s 25th anniversary, we are pleased to honor our clients who exemplify the entrepreneurial drive and commitment which have built Louisiana’s economy,” said Mary Lynn Wilkerson, LSBDC State Director.

The following recipients including will be honored with the LSBDC Small Business Star award.

James Smith, Jr., owner of Smith Research Corporation, was nominated by LSBDC Technology Center at LSU in Baton Rouge. In just 8 years with LSBDC assistance, this Baton Rouge architectural, engineering, and program management company grew its sales more than 100-fold, creating 70 jobs. He came to the LSBDC Technology Center for assistance in preparing a business plan, guidance with government contract procurement, and business training.

Eddie Jackson, III, owner of Assorted Tool Repair, was nominated by LSBDC at Southern University, Baton Rouge. This hydraulic and pneumatic tool repair business is based in Baker, Louisiana. Jackson came to the LSBDC at SUBR for help to get financing so that he could expand his business. He needed additional equipment and working capital for marketing purposes. LSBDC helped Jackson develop a business plan, which was used to secure financing to purchase much needed equipment and to implement some of the new marketing strategies recommended by LSBDC consultants. With LSBDC assistance, Jackson created 3 jobs and anticipates a 50 percent increase in sales in 2008.

Tina Emenes, owner of Tina’s Cajun Creations was nominated by the LSBDC-Greater New Orleans Region. Tina triumphed over the storm by exceeding pre-Katrina sales by 80 percent. With assistance from LSBDC-Greater New Orleans Region, Tina revamped her marketing strategy and began selling her multiple lines of spices and gourmet mixes nationally and internationally.

Olaf Ross & Richard Henry, owners of North Cypress Fitness Center, were nominated by LSBDC at Southeastern Louisiana University. Ross and Henry first came to the LSBDC at SLU in 1997 for help in opening their first fitness studio, North Cypress Fitness Center, in Hammond. The award-winning studio employs 31 workers. Ross and Henry returned to LSBDC at SLU for assistance in opening a second state-of-the-art fitness resort. The \$5 million project which opened this month employs 40 workers.

Lamont & Roslin Growe, owners of Huntington Oilfield Services, were nominated by LSBDC at University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The Growes’ rise to success is a real Cinderella Story, with LSBDC playing the role of fairy godmother. 15 years ago, Lamont was the janitor at Huntington Oilfield Services in

Lafayette. Today, he is the owner and president of the company, which filters and recycles completion fluids for drilling companies. Nominated by Chevron, Growe won the 2007 “Supplier of the Year” award from the Louisiana Minority Business Council. Growe and his wife, Roslin, first came to the LSBDC at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette for help to buy Huntington Oilfield Services. After a year of negotiations and some creative financing, the Growes are among a handful of black-owned companies in the oil and gas industry.

Stacey Vezinot, owner of Stacey’s Armoire, was nominated by LSBDC at McNeese State University. She first came to LSBDC for help with financial projections and polishing a business plan in order to open Stacey’s Armoire in Lake Charles. LSBDC consultants provided demographic data that helped her decide on the perfect location. Armed with a thorough business plan, her savings and ten years of experience in the field, Stacey secured a loan to open her clothing shop.

In an earlier ceremony in Monroe, Louisiana, the following entrepreneurs from North Louisiana were also honored with the LSBDC Small Business Star award.

Paul Meeks of Tallulah is a serial entrepreneur who created two multi-million dollar companies with assistance from the LSBDC at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. His first company, API, which manufactures hunting and sporting goods grew to become the largest employer in rural Northeast Louisiana. In the poverty-stricken Delta, API employed 350 workers. After Meeks sold API, he started his second company, **Great Day, Inc.**, which manufactures ATV accessories. Great Day currently employs 42 employees.

LSBDC Small Business Stars, **Taji Helaire** and his brother, **Chioke Helaire**, from Natchitoches represent the spirit of entrepreneurship. These rising Small Business Stars started a successful construction company, **P.A.C. LLC**, with a lot of persistence, determination, and assistance from the LSBDC at Northwestern State University.

Yasuko Makishi of Shreveport bought a struggling franchise, **Craters & Freighters**, and turned it around within the first year. Craters & Freighters provides packing, crating, and shipping services. With ingenuity and assistance from the LSBDC at LSU in Shreveport, Makishi increased her sales and created new jobs.

LSBDC network is a unique partnership between Louisiana Economic Development, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and host universities. LSBDC is nationally accredited, award-winning network of nine centers statewide, offering free, confidential, individual business consulting and low-cost entrepreneurial training. Every business day, LSBDC helps clients create 4 new jobs and save 2 jobs. For every dollar invested in the LSBDC program by Louisiana Economic Development, LSBDC clients return \$4 dollars to the State Treasury.



Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration, Louisiana Economic Development, and participating universities

