



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA Announces Columbus District 2011 Small Business Champions of the Year And Special Category Winners

Every year since 1963, the President has proclaimed National Small Business Week to recognize the contributions of small businesses to the economic well-being of America. Thomas K. Mueller, District Director of the Small Business Administration Columbus District Office announced today that 8 small business owners/advocates will be recognized for their achievements as small business owners and champions during “The Celebrating Success in Small Business Ceremony”. Special recognition awards will also be presented to the SBA’s outstanding participating lenders.

The Columbus District Office 2011 small business champions and special category winners are:

Small Business Person of the Year – Mark Pukita – Chief Operating Officer, Fast Switch, Ltd, Dublin, OH –Founded in 1996, Fast Switch has grown to over 300 employees and is a privately-held, high-growth IT staffing, consulting, technical recruiting, and executive search company.

1st Runner up Small Business Person of the Year – Michael C. Bridges, President, Peerless Technologies Corporation, Fairborn, OH – specializing in engineering, IT, human performance, and innovation and research services to federal clients nationwide, in Defense, Energy, and Homeland Security.

SBA Financial Services Champion – Jerome Jones – Business Lending Officer, Telhio Credit Union, Columbus, OH– Jerome works with customers to assist them in determining which loan products fits their needs. He also represents Telhio at various outreach activities.

SBA Veteran Small Business Champion – Haleema T. Shafeek, Owner, Green Office Furniture Solutions, LLC, Hilliard, OH - an interior design and office furniture firm offering a customer focus for “Green” furniture, fabrics and interior solutions. Haleema is an advocate for veteran owned small businesses and is an active member of Veteran & Military Business Owners and Disabled American Veterans.

SBA Women in Business Champion of the Year – Mary B. Relotto, Founder, Dames Bond, LLC, Columbus, OH -Dames Bond is a unique networking community comprised of all women. This organization fosters relationships between women by providing a platform for women to connect both online and offline.

SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year – Walker Evans, Founder, Columbus, OH - Underground and The Metropreneur.com, Columbus, OH – an online media company focusing on the community/consumer side of Central Ohio and looks to highlight and foster discussion about local businesses and people. The Metropreneur.com focuses on helping people create small businesses and venture into entrepreneurship.

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Service Excellence and Innovation Center Award – Kathleen Keller, Director, Small Business Development Center at Rhodes State College, Lima, OH – through its programs and services the Center provides entrepreneurial development assistance and business consulting to start-up and existing business owners.

SBA Minority Small Champion of the Year – Sheila A. Mixon, Director, Ohio SBDC at Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH – provides counseling and training, assists entrepreneurs to increase their capacity allowing them to take advantage of new business opportunities and help them grow and succeed in their business..

The Columbus SBA will honor our 2011 award winners at Celebrating Success in Small Business on May 4, 2011 at the Pinnacle Golf Club, Grove City, OH. For more information or to make a reservation, please contact Shannon Feucht at Shannon.Feucht@sba.gov or 614-469-6860 ext 244.

SBA would also like to give special thanks to the following sponsors: Business Development Finance Corporation, Community Capital Development Corporation, Commerce National Bank a division of First Merchants, First Financial Bank, Heartland Bank, Huntington National Bank, U.S. Bank, Ohio Statewide Development Corporation, KeyBank and PNC.

The U.S. Small Business Administration congratulates all the winners and thanks them for their commitment and contribution to the small business community.

Additional information about SBA's programs and services is available at SBA's Web site:
www.sba.gov

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