Small Business Recognition Program

May 3, 2016
11:30 AM TO 1:30 PM
Small Business Recognition Program

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Welcome and Opening Remarks
Master of Ceremonies
Kristine Walter, Wheelhouse Strategies
Diane R. Howerton
Regional Director, UC Merced SBDC Regional Network
Dr. Samuel J. Traina
Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development
University of California, Merced

Guest Speaker
Julia Rhodes
Founder, KleenSlate Concepts

U.S. Small Business Administration
Fresno District
Carlos Mendoza
District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration, Fresno District

Small Business Development Center Regional Awards

Closing Remarks
Master of Ceremonies
Kristine Walter
Dear Honored Guests,

It is my distinct pleasure to offer congratulations to the small businesses being recognized today. Their achievements exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit that is a hallmark of the United States. Today’s event showcases what is possible when the public and private sector work together to help strengthen our economy through small business assistance and support.

As we recognize our small businesses of the year, the 2016 program results demonstrate the significant economic impact of the University of California, Merced Small Business Development Center Regional Network (UCM SBDC).

The leadership and consulting team assisted more than 1,500 businesses across Central California during the FY 2015 program year. Third-party verification research data indicates SBDC helped clients generate $169.2 million in increased sales and $4.37 million in additional tax revenues.

The UCM SBDC program is a network of host institutions that provides small business services in fourteen counties: Stanislaus Business Alliance, Modesto; Fresno State; California State University, Bakersfield; California State University, Monterey Bay; Cal Poly San Luis Obispo; and UC Merced. We are proud of these partnerships and the contributions our staff and clients make toward improving Central California’s economy.

On behalf of the UCM SBDC Regional Network, we congratulate our businesses of the year on their success and thank them for inspiring other entrepreneurs. Thank you for joining us today to join in the celebration. May their stories inspire other to face the rewarding challenges of entrepreneurship.

Very sincerely,

Diane R. Howerton
Regional Director
University of California, Merced
Small Business Development Center
Regional Network

A Message from Acting Regional Administrator Victor Parker

Thank you for joining the University of California, Merced Small Business Development Center's 2016 Annual Awards Celebration honoring small business owners.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in 1953 as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise, and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation. Small businesses like those being recognized today are critical to our country's success.

Although SBA has grown and evolved since 1953, our mission remains the same: to help Americans start, build and grow businesses. But we don't do this alone. With a strong network of resource partners including Small Business Development Centers, entrepreneurs like you are creating new jobs, improving the nation's economy, and competing in the global marketplace.

Companies across the United States are being honored during Small Business Week. On behalf of the SBA, I want to thank the firms being recognized this afternoon for their innovation and contributions, and express my appreciation to the UC Merced Small Business Development Center for organizing today's event.

Sincerely,

Victor Parker
Acting Regional Administrator
U.S. Small Business Administration

All SBA programs and services are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.

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330 N Brand Boulevard Suite 1200 Glendale California 91203 818-552-3289
Victor.Parker@sba.gov www.sba.gov/offices/regional/ix
Presenting Our 2016 Award Winners

Small Businesses of the Year

OUTSTANDING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Advanced Linen Service
Patterson

RISING STAR BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
TRIS Technology Solutions
Bakersfield

FAMILY OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Elemental Herbs
Morro Bay

WOMAN OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Q-Flex
San Luis Obispo

FAMILY OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Elemental Herbs
Morro Bay

VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Warren’s Automotive
Ridgecrest

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
Current Culture H20
Fresno

Small Business Development Center Impact Awards

ALLIANCE SBDC
Claudia Newcorn

CAL POLY CIE SBDC
Lynn Metcalf

CSU BAKERSFIELD SBDC
Tom Weir

CSU MONTEREY BAY SBDC
Robert Kramer

FRESNO STATE SBDC
Munir Khan

Small Business Development Center of the Year

ALLIANCE SBDC
Modesto | Merced
Kristine Walter has an entrepreneurial spirit. As a business woman and a community advocate she is focused on making Fresno and the surrounding region a better place to live.

Kristine has led several community efforts and worn many professional hats. Over the years, she has been an executive producer and talk show host, organized Valley-wide business forums, led the rebuilding of a community literacy effort, and spearheaded Valley-wide coalition-building for a ballot initiative addressing government accountability.

In 2010, she founded Wheelhouse Strategies, Inc., a company focused on providing strategic solutions to companies and organizations in the areas of coalition-building, networking, marketing, community relations, fundraising strategies, and event planning.

She is grateful for the opportunity to serve many local organizations and regional institutions including Central Valley Angel Group, Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Fresno Ideaworks, California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, The Mayor’s Office for the City of Fresno, Leadership Fresno, Valley Children’s Hospital, CA Forward, Community Medical Centers, and Fresno State’s Board of Governors.

Her path has crisscrossed with others so many times over the years it has substantiated one of her favorite sayings: “It’s a small world; you gotta behave.”

Julia Rhodes founded KleenSlate Concepts in 2001. She started with the humble beginnings of a teacher and went on to invent, patent, manufacture, and market the first KleenSlate product: an attachable eraser for dry erase markers. Since then, she has built a thriving international company with a growing line of award-winning products.

She especially enjoys assisting inventors with the daunting steps of production and marketing. In this capacity, she has worked with the U.S. Patent Office and PBS Inventor show Everyday Edisons. To encourage and inspire women inventors, in particular, Julia wrote and published the book, The Right Sisters: Women Inventors Tell Their Stories.
Advanced Linen Service
Patterson

Gordon Hickman founded Advanced Linen Service in 1986. During the day, he delivered product and made new customer calls. In the evening, he laundered linen using an East Bay company’s idle equipment. Business grew steadily, especially in upscale restaurants in the Bay Area. In searching for an affordable, larger location, in 1987 Gordon bought a dry cleaning company in Newman. He relocated, combined the businesses, and continued on the path that proved successful.

Gordon realized that if he was going to continue to grow and be part of the strengthening Bay Area market, he would need to enlist the skills of key industry people. After a thorough search and strenuous evaluations, Gordon invited Eleazar Garza and William Perry to become partners. Eleazar brought a background in production and labor management; William, experienced customer service and outside sales. He also found an acceptable facility in Patterson, The company was housed in a 12,000-square-foot facility. By 2013, however, it was literally “bursting at the seams” with numerous temporary structures to accommodate growing production and more than 70 employees. They had outgrown their facility yet again. In mid-2013, Gordon purchased a 44,000-square-foot former agriculture processing plant.

Advanced Linen Service is being recognized as the 2016 Outstanding Business of the Year because Gordon had an idea for his business, adjusted where necessary to accommodate the changing and developing marketplace, and has seen it flourish. Some strategy fundamentals revolved around team effort, implementing technology, and a willingness to adapt. He also expanded in a controlled and very astute manner to maintain the company’s financial well-being while growing.

If you’ve enjoyed fine dining in the Bay Area, or at a conference event in Northern California in the past 10 years, there is a good chance you used linens provided by Advanced Linen Service of Patterson.

www.advancedlinen.net

TRIS Technology Solutions
Bakersfield

In 2014, Josh Lowrey, a systems engineer, took a huge leap of faith and decided to open TRIS Technology Solutions in Bakersfield. As Josh said, “It was tough in the beginning but we hit the ground running and haven’t looked back.” They have not had time to look back!

TRIS - Technology Resources and Information Specialist - has evolved. Josh and his wife Stephanie started working from their home, barely able to make ends meet. After a year in business, they hired their first part-time employee. Now, a year and a half later, they have three full-time employees, two part-time employees, and a new commercial office.

One of their greatest entrepreneurial achievements, besides surviving their first year, is achieving a 100 percent customer satisfaction rating resulting in major growth within their business. They’ve been able to innovate in their industry during a down economy by partnering with HP to offer servers at 40 percent off MSRP - savings they pass on to their clients saving them thousands of dollars.

Their goals in the technology field are to increase soft skills among their staff, help clients understand user needs while staying current on advancements in technology products, and continue finding solutions to provide outstanding service.

The expansion of TRIS in such a short time period shows the hard work, dedication, and staying power of this business. In addition, TRIS is a huge supporter of the community. They are involved with and sponsors of two nonprofit organizations: The League of Dreams and Bakersfield Bobby Sox.

In December 2015, they filed paperwork with the State of California to start BOSS Ladies (Business Opportunities for Support and Success), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping women in business while raising money to help support local children with developmental disabilities.

SBDC was very helpful to Josh and Stephanie in their big step to move from a home-based business to a storefront location. They continue to work with their consultant as they grow. They plan to add additional employees and get a loan to purchase new equipment and a credit line so they can be of better service to their clients. Their perseverance to overcome startup phase obstacles and then “give back” to the community is only part of the reason they were selected as this year’s Rising Star.

www.trisbak.com
Mother-daughter team Hong and Andrea Cao never could have guessed their simple idea for a personal acupressure system would turn into a million-dollar operation. Q-Flex really is an innovative product, with its curved acupressure wand ergonomically designed to apply pressure to precise points on one's body.

Cal Poly CIE SBDC helped Hong and Andrea better understand the legalese of the documents.

They jumped in to assist the duo to prepare for the 2015 Christmas shopping season, with hands-on training and consulting in marketing, social media, and sales. Q-Flex sales increased from $159,359 in 2014 to more than $1 million in 2015. The SBDC also helped them tackle for accounting, tax, and insurance procedures.

Hong and Andrea are currently making it a priority to build a social media presence for Q-Flex with assistance from one of Cal Poly CIE SBDC’s expert marketing consultant teams.

Rusty and Tina Warren founded Warren’s Automotive in 1986; their business has been successful because they have smartly adapted to change. Rusty is a veteran serving in the U.S. Army from 1977-1981 and retiring as an E-5 Sargent. It was during his time in the Army that Rusty was trained as a mechanic.

“The military taught me a lot about myself. It showed me how to harness and use my skills, like determination, tenacity, and the ability to keep driving to succeed,” Rusty said. “It also drove me to realize I could achieve whatever I set my mind to, while always progressing through education.”

Over the years, Warren’s Automotive has transitioned from a single event-driven business (meaning the customer breaks down, they fix it and send them on their way), to a preventive maintenance-based business.

They have improved the quality of the team members and their retention rates. In the 1980s, the ability to find skilled mechanics who also were team players was extremely difficult. Rusty and Tina totally restructured as well as created processes and procedures. They included methods for holding on to their employees, making them accountable and inspiring them to perform at the highest levels. As a result of their improved hiring strategy, they have a low turnover rate and a team of 13 employees.

With efficient money management and hard work, they recently purchased a prime property and plan to break ground on a new facility later this year. They will be moving from a 6,000-square-foot facility to a 16,000-square-foot facility. The Warrens credit their SBDC consultant for the crucial assistance in supporting them with this transaction.

They are involved in their community and serve in a number of ways. Rusty is currently the president of the local Optimist Club, and Tina has served on the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors since 2011, currently as chairperson.

The Warren’s Automotive team regularly gets together on clean-up projects and is involved in the Ridge Project, a local Community beautification effort. For the last 15 years, Warren’s Automotive has been the only Automotive Service Facility in the area approved by Automobile Club of Southern California. Their awards include Best Gross Profit High Volume Award, Automotive Training Institute; 2014 Business Achievement Award, Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce; 2015 Veteran Owned Small Business, Kern County.
Elemental Herbs®
Morro Bay

Elemental Herbs, Inc. produces the All Good lifestyle brand of products. Its vision is to inspire others to live in balance with nature. Caroline Duell, a massage therapist and outdoor enthusiast, was working in emergency care and studying alternative medicine at the University of Vermont. She had the vision to create a product that would harness nature’s power to heal. Her first product developed into All Good Goop healing balm in 1998, while living on a northern California organic family farm. Initially, she made product for herself and friends. After consistently hearing how much it was helping people, she decided to start a business.

Established in 2006, the company continues its growth with a diverse line of organic body care products. Caroline’s husband, Ryan Rich, joined in 2008 taking charge of sales and brand building. Together, they have developed and created eight new product lines: mineral sunscreens, healing and lip balms, deodorants, hand sanitizers, body lotions, coconut oils and a pain relief spray.

There are 12 employees on the All Good team, now headquartered in Morro Bay where they renovated a downtown warehouse into an eco-friendly environment for offices, inventory, and shipping. The company’s new space has been a source of true economic development for the small town of Morro Bay, population 10,400. Just up the road is Caroline and Ryan’s organic farm. They grow herbs for All Good products; have company gatherings; provide a venue for nonprofit partners and the campus for a local nature school.

As a Certified B Corporation, they proudly and consistently meet sustainability standards, and strive to solve social and environmental problems through the power of their business. They belong to “1% for the Planet” donating one percent of annual sales to organizations supporting sustainability initiatives or protecting natural resources. Through nonprofit partners and efforts like these, Caroline and her team have raised more than $70,000 for environmental causes.

Caroline and Ryan found support in local resources all over the Central Coast community, including the Cal Poly CIE SBDC. The SBDC was helpful in guiding the All Good family through the challenges in their transition to the new space last year, providing support with cash flow analysis, supply chain assistance, as well as marketing and sales.

Current Culture H2O®
Fresno

Current Culture H2O® is a hydroponic company that has developed a patented system of growing plants. The system utilizes a continuous flow system with fluids rather than conventional substrates, like gravel/bark/coconut fibers.

Since 2006, Current Culture H2O® has been cultivating hydroponic evolution by designing, manufacturing, and distributing innovative and relevant products that promote efficiency and maximize productivity for hobby and commercial hydroponics growers.

Its innovative hydroponics systems and nutrients are used in a wide variety of modern agricultural applications throughout the world, in both greenhouses and in Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) under supplemental lighting.

Current Culture H2O® currently operates through more than 900 retailers and distributors throughout North America and other countries. The company has had outstanding annual growth and has 15 employees. Team members are highly educated and have applicable technical backgrounds.

Fresno State SBDC consultants have provided Current Culture H2O® with strategy and market opportunity assistance; and they are currently assisting with the financial needs for new product development and marketing, and plans to expand into a new manufacturing facility in 2016.

Current Culture H2O® is being recognized as Innovation and Technology Business of the Year because of its innovative technology, dedication to business, unique marketing efforts, and the “disruptive” nature of its product to traditional agriculture.

www.elementalherbs.com

www.cch2o.com
Small Business Recognition Program

Past Award Winners

Outstanding Business of the Year
2012  Nick Sciabica & Sons, Modesto
2013  Clever Ducks, San Luis Obispo
2014  Rosa Brothers Milk Company, Hanford
2015  World Wind & Solar, Tehachapi

Rising Star of the Year
2013  Performing Arts Academy: Ruby Slipper, Visalia
2014  Cole Video, Sonora
2015  SLO Safe Ride, San Luis Obispo

Woman Owned Business of the Year
2010  The Book Lady, Exeter
2011  City Wigs, Fresno
2012  Avecinia, Fresno
2013  iResult, LLC, Monterey
2014  Ritzy Rage & Things, Modesto
2015  Innovation Commercial Flooring, Fresno

Veteran Owned Business of the Year
2010  Specialized Printing & Promotion, Inc., Fresno
2011  Navo Financial, Inc., Visalia
2012  Falcon Builders & Developers, Fresno
2015  Gopher Grabbers, LLC, Lemoore

Stakeholder Champion of the Year
2011  William Bassett, CEO, The Alliance, Modesto
2012  Kristine Walter, Founder, Wheelhouse Strategies, Fresno
2014  Debbie Adishian-Astone, Executive Director, Fresno State Foundation
2015  Mike Murphy, Murphy & Brawley Attorneys at Law, Merced

Family Owned Business of the Year
2010  A Wish Your Heart Makes, Porterville
2011  Mid Valley Foods, Inc., Oakdale
2012  Nx Stage Security, Oakdale
2013  JND Thomas Co., Inc., Riverdale
2014  Fallon Electric, Carmel

Innovation and Technology Business of the Year
2010  Childsharing, Online Parenting Class, Atascadero
2011  Torian Group, Visalia
2012  Valley Network Solutions, Fresno
2013  DataPath, Inc., Modesto
2014  Guidekick, Inc., San Luis Obispo
2015  Aqua Cents Water Management, Fresno

Export Business of the Year
2012  TGN Distributing, Exeter
2013  Variance Reduction International, Inc., Bakersfield

Entrepreneurial Success of the Year
2010  West Coast Equipment Repair, LLC, Catheys Valley
2011  Bakker Construction, Salinas
2012  Salter’s Distributing, Madera
UC Merced SBDC Regional Network

Advisory Board

Ron Truly, Board Chair
Retired Executive
Fresno

Alison Cox, CEO
Ali Cox & Company
Turlock

Reese Davies, Retired Executive
Founders Community Bank
San Luis Obispo

Mike Dozier, Executive Director
Office of Community & Economic Development, Fresno State
Fresno

Vickie Goudreau, Owner
Innovation Commercial Flooring
Fresno

Mark Jackson, President
Blue Dolphin Engineering
Madera

Carlos Mendoza, District Director
U. S. Small Business Administration
Fresno

Jo Anne Miller, Managing Partner
Brown Dog Partners
San Luis Obispo

Mike Murphy, Attorney
Murphy & Brawley, LLP
Merced

Christine Nutting, Deputy Director
Business Services and Organizational
Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board
Fresno

Christine Schweininger, CEO
Vision Magazine
Modesto

Douglas Yount, Principal
Applied Development Economics
Monterey

2016 Small Business Recognition Program

Planning Committee

Diane Howerton, Chair
Regional Director, UC Merced SBDC Regional Network

Mike Dozier, Executive Director
Office of Community & Economic Development, Fresno State

Vickie Goudreau, Owner
Innovation Commercial Flooring

Karmjot Grewal, Program Manager
Office of Community & Economic Development, Fresno State

Cindy Merzon, Assistant Director
CSU Monterey Bay SBDC

Christine Nutting, Deputy Director
Business Services and Organizational
Fresno Regional Workforce Investment Board

Mysty Rusk, Associate Regional Director
UC Merced SBDC Regional Network

Michael Shubin, Program Specialist
UC Merced SBDC Regional Network

Ron Truly
Retired Executive
Thank You!

Luncheon and Award Sponsors

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and UC Merced Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Regional Network have partnered in 2016 to provide energy saving programs and tools to the business clients served through the SBDC Network.

SBDC consultants have been trained on three key PG&E tools in an effort to help more small business owners save energy and take advantage of tools that can enhance your business operations.

The three PG&E tools are:
1. PG&E Online Account
   Setting up a PG&E online account takes less than five minutes and provides the following benefits:
   - Multiple bill payment options, including going paperless
   - See a ‘forecast’ of upcoming bills
   - Monitor energy usage - overlay weather to see the impacts
   - Run a custom rate comparison to see financial impact
   - Get tailored energy savings tips
   - Easily start, stop or transfer service

2. Online Business Energy Checkup Assessment
   Inside your PG&E online account is a program to create customized energy plans. Simply answer the basic questions and the system will serve up recommendations for energy savings based on your unique business. Your SBDC consultant also is trained to help you through this program.

3. Energy Efficiency Opportunities
   One of the most exciting tools PG&E offers is the energy efficiency rebates and 0% On-Bill Financing. SBDC consultants can help you determine if your business has opportunities to leverage these programs. PG&E has special incentives available for business owners who lease or rent their facility, are based outside of the Bay Area and Sacramento, have less than 10 employees, and speak a primary language other than English.

   Work with your SBDC consultant to determine if you’re a good fit, and they will connect you to the right PG&E customer representative to help you. Alternatively, you can reach out directly to Megan Porter at PG&E, mxel@pge.com, 707-695-8279.
UC Merced SBDC Regional Network

Service Centers

ALLIANCE SBDC
Serving Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Merced, Mariposa counties
MODESTO OFFICE
1020 10th Street, Suite 102, Modesto 95354
(209) 567-4910
MERced OFFICE
1735 M Street, Suite 111, Merced 95340
(209) 386-1008
alliancesbdc.com

CAL POLY CIE SBDC
Serving San Luis Obispo County
869 Monterey Street, San Luis Obispo 93401
(805) 756-5171
sbdc.calpoly.edu

CSU BAKERSFIELD SBDC
Serving Kern, Inyo, Mono counties
1631 17th Street, Suite 200, Bakersfield 93301
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CSU MONTEREY BAY SBDC
Serving Monterey, San Benito counties
106 Lincoln Avenue, Salinas 93901
(831) 422-6232
csumb.edu/sbdc

FRESNO STATE SBDC
Serving Fresno, Madera, Tulare, Kings counties
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VISALIA OFFICE
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Thank You for Joining Us Today!