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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Knoxville Chamber Announces Finalists for 2017 Pinnacle Business Awards

The Knoxville Chamber is pleased to announce its finalists for the 2017 Pinnacle Business Awards, sponsored by Atlantic Capital. This is the 13th year the Chamber has held the prestigious award ceremony acknowledging and celebrating regional business excellence.

“A Pinnacle Business award is one of the most prestigious honors a local business, entrepreneur, or organization can receive,” said Mike Edwards, Chamber president and CEO. “We are proud to recognize businesses and businesspeople that are positively impacting our region by contributing to the economy and making it a great place to live.”

More than 130 companies were nominated in eight different award categories recognizing outstanding local businesses and businesspeople.

Members of the Chamber’s board of directors are divided into committees and charged with vetting and scoring the applicants. Selections are based on information submitted during the application process by the nominated companies and any information available to the general public. Final scoring of the applicants is completed independently by each member of the selection committees on a secure website. Scores are tallied by an independent agency and presented to the Chamber for awarding.

The finalists for the 2017 Pinnacle Business Awards are:

The **Small Business Excellence Award, sponsored by Sword & Shield**, honors an East Tennessee small business that has 50 employees or less company-wide. The winner will demonstrate the ability to overcome obstacles and have a historical index of growth in revenues and workforce.

Finalists

- **Axle Logistics, LLC** – A non-asset based, third-party logistics company with a focus on providing safe, reliable, and advanced transportation services to a wide variety of customers throughout the continental U.S., Canada, and Mexico.
- **EventBooking** – A Software as a Service (SaaS) company that specializes in online booking and venue management for arenas, stadiums, convention centers, and performing arts centers.
- **Johnson Architecture Inc.** – A full-service architecture, planning, and interior design firm that works with facilities of all types including commercial, educational, health care, residential, restaurant, tourism, and spiritual.

The **Business Excellence Awards** are divided into a mid-sized category for businesses with 51-200 total employees, and a large category for companies with 201 or more employees. The Business Excellence Awards recognize East Tennessee businesses that have shown remarkable profitability, growth, and stability. Companies must have a significant presence in East Tennessee and be nationally or internationally recognized in their respective sectors.

Finalists – Mid-Sized Business Excellence Award

- **SMG Knoxville** – The venues management and booking company that manages Knoxville’s three largest facilities: Knoxville Convention Center, Knoxville Civic Auditorium and Coliseum, and Chilhowee Park and Exposition Center.
- **House of Thaller** – A family-owned and operated company that develops and produces ready-to-eat foods for the food service industry and retail supermarket chains.
- **Michael Brady Inc.** – An architecture and engineering services firm offering a comprehensive range of services including architecture, structural engineering, land surveying, and construction administration.

Finalists – Large Business Excellence Award, presented by LBMC

- **TeamHealth** – Based in Knoxville, the physicians’ services group provides a full range of services nationwide in emergency medicine, anesthesiology, inpatient services, post-acute care, scribes, urgent care, pediatrics, and other function.
- **U.S. Cellular** – The first wireless carrier in East Tennessee, U.S. Cellular is a full-service wireless carrier that provides national network coverage and industry-leading innovations designed to elevate customer experiences.
- **Connor Concepts** – The parent company and operator of The Chop House and Connors Steak & Seafood “polished casual” restaurants with 16 locations in six states.

The **Woman-Owned Business Excellence Award, sponsored by Microbial Insights**, is given to an outstanding woman-owned business in East Tennessee. Companies must be at least 51 percent owned by one or more women, and one or more women must control daily management operations.

Finalists

- **BGT Recruiting & Consulting, Inc.** – A professional recruiting and HR consulting company providing services to clients locally and nationally, focusing mainly on accounting, finance, HR, administrative, marketing, operations, and sales disciplines.
- **Innovative Design, Inc.** – An engineering design consulting firm specializing in mechanical, structural, electrical, environmental, and process-related projects for industrial and government clients.
- **Graphic Creations** – An innovative market communication and print solutions company for businesses offering products that range from business cards to vehicle wraps.

The **Minority-Owned Business Excellence Award, sponsored by Covenant Health**, recognizes companies that have achieved notable growth and are at least 51 percent owned by an ethnic minority.

Finalists

- **El Charro** – A full-service restaurant serving and catering authentic Mexican food with an emphasis on fresh ingredients and customer service.
- **Sandra G's** – An alterations shop that specializes in custom fit and design and offers expertise in wedding and formal attire.
- **MBK Wellness** – A group of licensed massage therapists providing comprehensive massage services that incorporate several techniques including Swedish, deep tissue, sports therapy, and Thai —tailored to each individual client's needs.

The **Young Entrepreneur Award, sponsored by Atlantic Capital**, acknowledges the importance of the entrepreneurial spirit. This award recognizes young professionals, 40 years of age or younger as of May 12, 2017, who started or are at risk in ownership of a non-franchise business in East Tennessee. The winner will have overcome obstacles and moved their business from early growth to some maturity.

Finalists

- **James Oliver, president and CEO of Draft Agency** – Founded in 2007, the full-service creative advertising agency, headquartered in the heart of downtown Knoxville, works to create unforgettable ads that get results.
- **Courtney Jones, founder of MomSource Network** – MomSource Network was founded in 2013 and now offers ongoing professional development for women, opportunities for peer-led networking, and access to progressive employers who offer flexible full-time, permanent part-time, job-shared, and telecommute work.
- **Courtney Herda, CEO of Smarter Searches** – Herda founded her company in 2012, which has quickly grown into a successful creative digital marketing agency providing marketing and advertising solutions for business of all sizes in an incredibly diverse range of industries.

The **Innovator Award** is presented to an East Tennessee business that has developed a new technology, innovative product or service, or has applied a business system or service in an innovative way.

Finalists

- **Protomet Corporation** – The Oak Ridge-based company provides engineering and manufacturing services for a variety of markets including marine/boating, automotive, homeland security, industrial, energy, and power.
- **EventBooking** – A Software as a Service (SaaS) company that specializes in online booking and venue management for arenas, stadiums, convention centers, and performing arts centers.

- **PureMagic Carwash** – A car washing and conveyor systems company providing state-of-the-art interior and exterior carwash services at five locations across greater Knoxville.

The **Impact Award** is awarded to a non-charitable, East Tennessee business that is committed to making the region a better place to live through the development and support of a community project or program. The recipient should demonstrate the ability to improve community conditions that significantly impact the region.

The winner of the 2017 community Impact Award will be revealed during the Pinnacle Business Awards ceremony.

In addition to the eight awards listed above, the Chamber honors one outstanding business leader each year as the recipient of the **James A. Haslam II Chairman's Leadership Award, sponsored by Prestige Cleaners**. The 2017 honoree of this award is **Pam Fansler, chairman of First Tennessee Bank's East Tennessee region**. This award is presented to a longtime Knoxville business leader that exhibits strength in character, resolve, commitment to the community, and exemplary success in business.

The winners will be announced and recognized at the Pinnacle Business Awards on May 12 at the Knoxville Convention Center. The black tie-optional gala will feature a silent auction and reception starting at 6 p.m., followed by a dinner and awards program. The program will conclude with a champagne toast to the winners. This year, the festivities will continue with an After Party following the event.

M&M Productions, Bandit Lights, All Occasions Party Rentals, and Above the Rest Balloon & Event Designs will provide production assistance for the event.

Individual tickets and table sponsorships can be purchased online at www.pinnacle2017.eventbrite.com.

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