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Knoxville Chamber Announces 2018 Pinnacle Business Award Winners

More than 600 people gathered at the Knoxville Convention Center on May 4 to celebrate the finalists and winners of the Knoxville Chamber's 14th Annual Pinnacle Business Awards, presented by Regions Bank.

The gala kicked off with a reception and silent auction, sponsored by Radio Systems Corporation. Attendees then transitioned into the convention center's ballroom to enjoy dinner and the awards program, emceed by WBIR-TV's Robin Wilhoit.

Companies and individuals were recognized in eight award categories, which highlight the range of businesses that make up Knoxville's thriving, vibrant economy, and honor contributions to the local community.

2018 Pinnacle Award Winners:

The **Impact Award**, sponsored by Publix, honors a business that displays a commitment to making East Tennessee a better place to live and work through the development and support of community projects or programs. This year's finalists were Master Service Companies, Strata-G, LLC and Blount County Eye Center.

This year's winner is **Strata-G, LLC**. Its team of more than 200 engineers, scientists, safety professionals and project managers is dedicated to the responsible care of client-entrusted resources in the environmental, energy, utilities, manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. Since its inception in 2002, Strata-G has aspired to create a positive impact through a three-part definition of corporate significance: hire exceptional

people, empower them to earn customer respect and invest time, talent and treasure in the community. The Strata-G outreach program focuses on four areas: food and shelter for neighbors in greatest need; education investments to positively affect the life trajectories of local youth; stewardship and conservation of the environment for present and future generations; and grassroots causes dearest to the hearts of company employees. Strata-G desires to create the greatest possible impact for those they serve by coupling financial gifts with investment of the team's time and professional talents.

The **Innovator Award**, sponsored by Cirrus Insight, is given to a business that has developed a new technology, innovative product or service, or applied a business system or service in an innovative way. The finalists this year were 2:45Tech, Smart RIA and GRIDSMART Technologies, Inc.

GRIDSMART Technologies, Inc. took home this year's award. The company develops, commercializes and sells efficient Intelligent Traffic Systems through the Internet of Everything and services to municipal partners around the world. GRIDSMART is the world's only single-camera solution for intersection actuation, traffic data collection and situational awareness. GRIDSMART's iconic Bell Camera delivers the industry's only horizon-to-horizon view with exclusive enter-to-exit tracking. Built on uncompromising core principles - simple, flexible and transparent, GRIDSMART delivers simple solutions for complex traffic problems for customers of all sizes.

The **Small Business Excellence Award** is presented to a business with 50 or fewer employees that has consistently grown its workforce and revenue and overcome obstacles including access to capital, operational efficiency, control of expenses, customer loyalty and distribution. Finalists in this category were TAG Resources, LLC, Pipe Wrench Plumbing, Heating and Cooling and Axle Logistics.

This year's recipient is **Pipe Wrench Plumbing, Heating and Cooling**. Starting with one employee and a single truck in 1998, Pipe Wrench Plumbing, Heating and Cooling has grown steadily over their 19-year history. Originally offering only plumbing services, in 2014 they added HVAC services to diversify the business, and in 2017 experienced growth that exceeded all previous company projections – generating a 40 percent increase in new business, a customer retention rate that is 20 percent above industry average, 26 new employees and 12 additional vehicles in their fleet.

The **Minority-Owned Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by Covenant Health, recognizes a minority-owned business that has produced outstanding business results and growth and overcome the obstacles of race or ethnicity. This year's finalists were Compassionate Care Home Health, Insurefit RM and MBK Wellness of Knoxville.

MBK Wellness of Knoxville received this year's award. In 2011, the Massage By Kenneth (MBK) brand was officially launched, and what started as a massage practice developed into a whole-body health solution. In 2016, the company was rebranded as MBK Wellness coinciding with the opening of owner Kenneth Robinson's first private studio and extended product line. Currently two specialized therapists call the Bearden studio home, and a second MBK Wellness studio is scheduled to open in the spring of 2020. In addition to massage therapy, MBK Wellness' product lines include: a natural full-body sugar scrub, an all-natural herbal tea lotion, aromatherapy soy massage

candles and an essential oil air spray. Some of the massage and therapy techniques utilized by MBK Wellness include Cupping, Traditional Thai Massage, Reflexology, Hot Stone Massage, Lymphatic Drainage, Chinese Acupressure and Pain Management Massage.

The **Woman-Owned Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by Cannon & Cannon, is given to an outstanding woman-owned business that is independently owned, operated and controlled by a female. The winner demonstrates the ability to compete in a non-diverse field. BGT Recruiting & Consulting, The Pavilion at Hunter Valley Farm, LLC and Knoxville Graphic House were finalists for this category.

This year's winner is **BGT Recruiting and Consulting**. BGT was established in January of 2012 by owners Jill Green and Christine Bell with nothing but their personal credit cards and a \$5,000 loan from a family member. As former hiring managers themselves, Jill and Christine saw a need for recruiting and consulting services that meet the needs of all businesses -- large or small -- and felt they had an approach that would allow them to meet their clients' needs more effectively. Now in its fifth year of business, BGT provides recruiting services in the greater Knoxville area and consulting services for companies locally and nationally. It places professionals in permanent, contract, and temp roles; and its recruiting services focus mainly on accounting, finance, HR, admin, marketing, operations, and sales disciplines. The company has experienced a significant amount of growth over its 5+ years in business, and has doubled its full-time employees since inception – from two to four – and anticipates this number to grow by at least one or two employees over the next two years.

The **Business Excellence Award** is divided into a mid-sized category for businesses with 51-200 total employees, and a large company category for those with 201 or more employees. These awards are presented to businesses headquartered in East Tennessee, or those with a significant presence in East Tennessee that have shown remarkable profitability, growth and stability and are recognized regionally, nationally and/or internationally in their respective business sectors.

Finalists for the **Mid-Sized Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by Master Service Companies, were Lloyd's Electric Service, Inc., Michael Brady, Inc. and Rodefer Moss & Co, PLLC.

Lloyd's Electric Service, Inc. took home this year's award. In 1982, the father and son team of Jim and Doug Lloyd formed Lloyd's Electric Service, Inc. Jim Lloyd, a firefighter for the City of Knoxville and his son Doug, a master electrician, provided residential and small commercial electrical jobs. The company's quality-driven services attracted the attention of three notable clients: Pilot Oil Company, Lowe's and the Copper Cellar Corporation, who is still a client today. Today, Lloyd's Electric provides high-quality commercial and industrial electrical services throughout the Southeast along with their in-house divisions that provide HVAC/refrigeration, alternative energy solutions, back-up power and data and telecommunication products and services.

Finalists for the **Large Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by LBMC, PC, included Burleson Brands, Covenant Health and DeRoyal Industries.

This year's winner is **DeRoyal Industries**. Since 1973, DeRoyal's industry-leading healthcare products and related business services have been helping providers improve the care of their patients. A world-class company with a home town feel, they credit their success to producing quality products, building customer relationships and providing innovative, technological solutions that help clients care for their customers. Celebrating 45 years in business, DeRoyal is a proven, sustainable company operating today with the same mission and values on which the company was founded – listen, care, deliver.

The **Young Entrepreneur Award**, presented by Rodefer Moss & Co, PLLC, is awarded to a young professional, 40 years of age or younger as of May 4, 2018, who lives and works in East Tennessee and has achieved success while overcoming obstacles, to become one of tomorrow's top leaders. The winner will have started or is at risk in ownership of his/her business and will have moved the company from early growth to some maturity. This year's finalists were Andrew Randazzo of Prime Medical Training, Bradford Jones of Bradford Catered Events and Dr. Will Tantum of Blount County Eye Center.

The 2018 recipient is **Bradford Jones, CEO of Bradford Catered Events**. Taking ownership of Bradford Catered Events from his father in 2014, Bradford Jones now runs the full-service, off-site catering company that services the East Tennessee area for weddings, social events, corporate events, parties and galas. As an approved, preferred or exclusive caterer for over 50 area event venues such as University of Tennessee Athletics, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the City of Knoxville and Y-12 National Security Complex, Bradford Catered Events was voted the **Cityview Magazine** Best of the Best Caterer for 2017. Jones also operates a longtime Knoxville favorite, The Lunchbox, as a grab-and-go café concept with two Knoxville area locations.

The **James A. Haslam II Chairman's Leadership Award**, presented by Prestige Cleaners, is given to a longtime business leader that exhibits strength in character, resolve and a commitment to the community and has demonstrated exemplary success in the regional business community.

This year's honoree is **Sharon Miller Pryse, CEO and founder of The Trust Company of Tennessee**.

Originally an Atlanta native, Sharon Miller Pryse attended the University of Tennessee and has never considered leaving Knoxville. After graduating with a Finance degree, she began as a clerk in the Trust Department of Valley Fidelity Bank. While still in her twenties, she became the bank's youngest senior vice president; then at age 35, founded The Trust Company. Today, The Trust Company of Tennessee manages \$3 billion in assets and employs 75 people across three cities. Sharon's long-standing community commitment includes social service, the arts, economic development and education. She has served as board chair for the Knoxville Chamber, Leadership Knoxville, YMCA, United Way and has also chaired United Way's annual fundraising campaign. Sharon supports the university that made Knoxville her home, and currently holds a position on the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees and Board of Directors for the U.T. Foundation.

The gala concluded with a champagne toast to the winners and a Chairman's

Celebration featuring dessert, drinks and live music.

The production of the 2018 Pinnacle Business Awards was made possible by assistance from All Occasions Party Rentals, M&M Productions USA, Bright Event Productions, Moser Visuals and Big Slate Media. Media sponsors for the event included the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, *Greater Knoxville Business Journal* and NewsTalk 98.7.

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