

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chamber Announces Finalists for 2013 Pinnacle Business Awards

The Knoxville Chamber is pleased to announce 24 finalists for the 2013 Pinnacle Business Awards presented by BB&T. Established to recognize the region's outstanding businesses and businesspeople, the Pinnacle Awards have become an emblem of excellence within the business community. This year over 200 nominations were submitted and the Chamber's board of directors was charged with reviewing and scoring applications for the awards, determining the finalists and the eventual winners that will be announced on May 3 at the 2013 Pinnacle Business Awards Gala.

"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 economic prosperity of the community and making it a better place to live."

Finalists for the 2013 Pinnacle Business Awards are:

Business Excellence Awards - Divided into a mid-sized category for businesses with 51-200 total employees, and a large category for those 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 for the Mid-Sized Business Award are **Aqua-Chem, Inc., Claris Networks,** and **Harper Auto Square.** Finalist for Large Business Excellence sponsored by Cherokee Distributing are **21st Mortgage; Caris Healthcare, LP;** and **U.S. Cellular.**

Impact Award sponsored by Aqua-Chem, Inc. - Awarded to an East Tennessee non-charitable business committed to making East Tennessee 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 our region. Finalists for this year's award are **Moe's Southwest Grill, Prestige Cleaners,** and **Radio Systems Corporation.**

Innovator Award sponsored by Pershing Yoakley & Associates - Presented to an East Tennessee business that has developed a new technology, innovative product or service, or applied a business system or service in an innovative way, nominees are asked to provide evidence of business growth resulting from their advancement. The 2013 finalists are **Cadre5, LED North America,** and **Wampler's Farm Sausage Company, Inc.**

Minority-Owned Business Excellence Award sponsored by Covenant Health - Recognizing companies that have achieved notable growth and are at least 51 percent owned by an ethnic minority, the finalists for this year's Minority-Owned Business Excellence Award are **CG Services; Expoquip, Inc.;** and **LeGacy Resource Corporation.**

Small Business Excellence Award sponsored by BB&T - Honoring an East Tennessee small business that has 50 employees or less company-wide, the winner will demonstrate the ability to

overcome obstacles as well as a historical index of growth in revenues and workforce. The 2013 finalists are **Design Innovations Architects, Inc.; Management Solutions, LLC;** and **Southern Shores Development, LLC.**

Woman-Owned Business Excellence Award sponsored by LBMC – This award is given to an outstanding East Tennessee woman-owned business. Companies must be at least 51 percent owned by one or more women and daily management operations must be controlled by one or more women. Finalists for the 2013 award are **Cannon & Cannon, Inc.; Management Solutions, LLC;** and **Shelton Group.**

Young Entrepreneur Award sponsored by UT-Battelle - Acknowledging the importance of the entrepreneurial spirit, this award recognizes young professionals, 40 years of age or younger as of May 3, 2013, 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 to growth to some maturity. Finalists for this year's award are **John Sharpe, StaffSource; Paul Sponcia, The IT Company;** and **Matt Tunstall, Stall Talk, Inc.**

Winners will be announced at a black tie optional gala on May 3, 2013 at the Knoxville Convention Center. One of Knoxville's marquee social events, the ninth annual Pinnacle Business Awards presented by BB&T will feature a silent auction and reception sponsored by Provision Center for Proton Therapy, a dinner and awards program emceed by WBIR's Robin Wilhoit, and culminate in a winner's toast sponsored by EnergySolutions. Production assistance for the event will be provided by Bandit Lites and Sound Ventures.

Tickets and table sponsorships can be purchased online at www.knoxvillechamber.com/pinnacle.