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## Knoxville Chamber Announces 2013 Pinnacle Award Winners

Knoxville, Tenn. – The Knoxville Chamber recognized excellence in business at the ninth annual Pinnacle Business Awards gala held on May 3 at the Knoxville Convention Center. The event was sponsored by BB&T and honored recipients in nine award categories. The categories highlight the range of businesses that make up the thriving Knoxville-area economy, and honor contributions to business enterprise and the greater community.

The winners are as follows:

**Innovator Award, sponsored by Pershing Yoakley & Associates** – 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. Finalists were Wampler’s Farm Sausage Company, Inc., LED North America, and Cadre5.

The winner is **Wampler’s Farm Sausage Company, Inc.** Founded in 1938 with just \$38 of building materials, today **Wampler’s Farm Sausage Company, Inc.** utilizes the latest in meat packing machinery, including several internally developed processes and equipment. These innovations allow the company’s food manufacturing plant to go from a sow harvest to finished sausages in just 75 minutes, and a patty stacking and packing machine they co-invented stacks 840 sausage patties per minute allowing product to move out the door equally as fast.

Wampler’s has set an aggressive goal of operating its sausage plant “off the grid” and to have a negative carbon footprint. They are the first company in the world to install the Proton Power Cellulose to Hydrogen Power System, which converts biomass into syngas which will power natural gas generators. They have also done two separate Solar PV System installations, a smaller one in 2009 and a large installation in 2011 that covers five-acres with more than 2,000 solar panels.

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**Small Business Excellence Award, presented by BB&T** – Honors a small 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. The finalists were Management Solutions, LLC, Design Innovation Architects (DIA), and Southern Shores Development, LLC.

The winner in this category is ***Design Innovation Architects (DIA)***. Founded in 1989 by Faris Eid, DIA has grown from a one-person practice into one of Knoxville's leading architectural and interior design firms. With client satisfaction as one of the company's core values, nearly 90 percent of revenues come from repeat clients and in 2005 their need to expand led to the development of their current state-of-the-art office space in downtown Knoxville. Continuing to build their business through innovation and excellent service, the firm has established an award-winning reputation for its adaptive reuse of existing and historic building and boasts a varied portfolio that includes the University of Tennessee Student Health Center, the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center, and Atlanta's Hilton Hotel.

**Impact Award, sponsored by Aqua-Chem** – Recognizes those businesses committed to making East Tennessee a better place to live through the development and support of a community or program. This year's finalists were Radio Systems Corporation, Moe's Southwest Grill, and Prestige Cleaners.

The winner is ***Radio Systems Corporation***. The parent company of PetSafe, the leading manufacturer of electronic pet training products in the United States, Radio Systems Corporation has committed itself to improving pet welfare in the local community by funding the construction of six dog parks in and around Knox County, donating \$100,000 each year since 2009 for the construction of the parks. In this same vein, the company also developed an educational program aimed at teaching children about proper pet care, behavior with dogs, and costs associated with pet ownership. In 2012, the program reached over 1,800 students.

While animal welfare causes are central to their core mission, the company's engagement in education initiatives has also been significant. As the founder of tnAchieves, a scholarship and mentoring program for Tennessee high school graduates and specifically first generation college students, Radio System's efforts have resulted in the opportunity for students from 23 of the state's 95 counties to attend college at no cost.

Through its philanthropic efforts, Radio Systems Corporation has supported more than 30 youth education and pet-related causes in the community. In total, the company and its associates have regularly contributed more than \$500,000 and countless volunteer hours each year to help make Knoxville a better place to live.

**Minority-Owned Business Excellence Award, sponsored by Covenant Health –**

Presented to a minority-owned business that has produced outstanding business results and growth and overcome the obstacles of race. Finalists were ExpoQuip, Inc., CG Services, and LeGacy Resource Corporation.

The winner is **ExpoQuip, Inc.** Servicing machines weighing between 2 and 720 tons, the company allows customers to immediately get quotes or place orders through its interactive website and works to establish fast, efficient distribution channels. Focused on getting its customers up and running, ExpoQuip has proven to be a small company that could offer the same quality products and competitive pricing in an industry dominated by large, well-established companies.

**Woman-Owned Business Excellence Award, sponsored by LBMC –** Given to an

outstanding East Tennessee woman-owned company that is independently owned, operated, and controlled by a female. The winner is selected based on a demonstrated ability to compete in a non-diverse field. The finalists were Management Solutions, LLC, Cannon & Cannon, Inc., and the Shelton Group.

The winner is **Management Solutions, LLC**. Misty Mayes founded **Management Solutions, LLC** in November 2002 intent on providing superior project management services that allowed clients to deliver on schedule every time. Beginning with a single part-time contract, the company now boasts more than 50 clients including the United States Army Corps of Engineers, UT-Battelle, and the Y-12 National Security Complex. Management Solutions' strategy of listening to clients, identifying problems and providing solutions has created an award-winning, nationally recognized small business.

**Business Excellence Awards –** Awarded to a company headquartered in East

Tennessee or a company with significant presence in East Tennessee that has shown remarkable profitability, growth, and stability. Nominees must be recognized regionally, nationally, and/or internationally in their respective business sector and should have made

significant investments in facilities and employees. Two awards are presented, one company with 51-200 employees company-wide and one company more than 200 employees

Finalists for the **Mid-Sized Business Excellence Award, presented by Publix**, were Claris Networks, Aqua-Chem, Inc., and Harper Auto Square. The 2012 winner is ***Aqua-Chem, Inc.*** The company's products and services have been supplying safe drinking water for the U.S military, pharmaceutical industry, offshore oil and gas industry, commercial marines, bottled water industry, and micro-utilities market since 1940. Offering a full range of thermal and membrane water treatment technologies including vapor compression distillation, flash evaporation, reverse osmosis, membrane filtration, and ion exchange, Aqua-Chem has established itself as the premier water treatment and micro-utility company in the world.

The finalists for the **Large Business Excellence Award, which was presented by Cherokee Distributing**, included 21<sup>st</sup> Mortgage Corporation, U.S. Cellular, and Caris Healthcare. The winner is ***Caris Healthcare***. The company delivers care to people with life-limiting illness and their families through a professional team of healthcare workers, which include a nurse on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days per year. Since its founding in Knoxville 10 years ago, Caris has grown from one office to 24 branches, serving 93 counties in Tennessee and has become the No. 1 hospice, by market share, in the state.

**Young Entrepreneur Award, sponsored by UT-Battelle** – Presented to a professional 40 years of age or younger who is on track to be one of tomorrow's top business and community leaders. The 2013 finalists for the award were Matthew Tunstall, owner of Stall Talk, Inc., John Sharpe, owner of StaffSource, and Paul Sponcia, partner in The IT Company.

The winner is ***Matthew Tunstall***. In only two years, Tunstall's company Stall Talk, Inc., has become the world's largest outdoor advertising company specializing in advertising on portable restrooms. Tunstall has established multi-year exclusive contracts with just over 20 percent of the U.S. Portable Restroom Industry and is also works with high profile companies such as the University of Tennessee/IMG College, Tennessee Titans, NASCAR, NFL, MLB, MLS, ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, Disneyland, the City of Chicago, AC Entertainment, and Star Events.

**James A. Haslam II Chairman's Leadership Award, sponsored by Prestige Cleaners** – This award is presented to a longtime business leader who exhibits strength in character, resolve, commitment to our community, and exemplary success in business.

This year's recipient is described by friends as driven and dedicated, and he has become a pillar of the community since starting his Knoxville-based construction firm in 1985. Over the past 27 years, **Raja Jubran**'s unwavering commitment to excellence has propelled Denark Construction Inc., to more than \$600 million of commercial and residential projects. Of Lebanese descent, Jubran came to Knoxville in 1977 to study engineering at the University of Tennessee and, after graduation, chose to make East Tennessee his home. Equally as recognized for his work ethic and community involvement, the CEO has served in numerous leadership roles including the Knoxville Symphony Board of Directors, the Board of Directors of Boys & Girls Club of Knoxville, the Knoxville Chamber, Leadership Knoxville, Investor's Council of the Jobs Now! Campaign for Economic Development, and the United Way of Greater Knoxville, just to name a few.

The 2013 Pinnacle Awards Gala presented by BB&T featured a silent auction and reception sponsored by Provision Center for Proton Therapy, a dinner and awards program emceed by WBIR's Robin Wilhoit, and culminated in a toast to excellence sponsored by EnergySolutions. Additional sponsors of the event included *The Greater Knoxville Business Journal*, NewsTalk 98.7, and Bluegill Creative. Production assistance was provided by Bandit Lites and Sound Ventures.

### **About the Knoxville Chamber**

The Knoxville Chamber is the region's leading business organization with more than 2,000 members that employ more than 276,000 individuals. More than 80 percent of Chamber members are small businesses with 50 or fewer employees. It fulfills its mission of *Driving Regional Economic Prosperity* by recruiting new businesses and supporting existing companies, and manages Innovation Valley, a regional economic development initiative. The organization actively advocates on the behalf of the business community. Members receive marketing, networking, professional development benefits, and many other cost-effective services. For more information visit [www.knoxvillechamber.com](http://www.knoxvillechamber.com).

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