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Knoxville Chamber Announces Finalists for the 2015 Pinnacle Business Awards

The Knoxville Chamber is pleased to announce 24 finalists for the 2015 Pinnacle Business Awards, presented by FSGBank. This is the 11th year the Chamber has held the awards, which recognize excellence in business.

The Chamber received more than 180 nominations for this year's Pinnacle Awards. The Chamber's board of directors was tasked with reviewing and scoring nearly 100 applications to determine the finalists and eventual winners.

"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 2015 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 companywide. The winner will demonstrate the ability to overcome obstacles as well as a historical index of growth in revenues and workforce.

Finalists

- **All Occasion Catering** — A premier provider of various catering services for events of all types and size in the Knoxville area.
- **Expoquip, Inc.** — A worldwide distributor of quality parts and components for the construction and mining industries.
- **Mac's Pharmacy** — A locally owned, independent pharmacy that is committed to improving the health of its customers.

The **Woman-Owned Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by Management Solutions, LLC, 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

- **Performance Training Inc.** — A physical training company dedicated to enhancing the performance ability of amateur and professional athletes.

- **Cannon & Cannon** — A full-service consulting engineering and field surveying firm that services communities throughout the southeastern U.S.
- **Moxley Carmichael** — A premier public and media relations firm that provides a variety of communications and creative services to its clients.

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

- **Marc Nelson** — A designer clothing and lifestyle brand that specializes in producing small-batch, limited designs.
- **B&B Lawn Services** — A comprehensive lawn care company that provides lawn restoration, mowing, landscaping, among other services.
- **Paramount Hospitality Management Company** — A hospitality company that owns and operates six hotels under the Hilton and Marriott brands, including the new Hilton Garden Inn on Cumberland Avenue.

The **Young Entrepreneur Award**, sponsored by FSGBank, acknowledges the importance of the entrepreneurial spirit. This award recognizes young professionals, 40 years of age or younger as of May 8, 2015, 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

- **Eric Barton**, president and CEO of Vanquish Worldwide — Barton started his company in 2007 as a government contracting provider. Today, in addition to handling government contracts, Vanquish Worldwide has expanded into a U.S. transportation and logistics business.
- **Mike Brown**, president and CEO of M&M Productions USA — At the age 13, Brown started his company as a DJ business. Since 1988, the company has transformed into a full-service event, broadcast, and video production company.
- **Bradford Jones**, operations director of Bradford Catered Events— Jones led the rebranding and repositioning of his father's catering company, Abner's Attic. The company specializes in social events and weddings.

The **Impact Award**, sponsored by Publix, 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.

Finalists

- **SunTrust Bank** — In partnership with the SunTrust Foundation, the financial institution has contributed more than \$300,000 for local and national programs in Knoxville. SunTrust teammates also completed more than 6,000 volunteer hours in the region, with 3,000 of those logged in Knoxville.
- **Gerdau** — Located in the Lonsdale community, the steel mill is committed to improving the neighborhood through various outreach programs. This includes Gerdau's creation of the Lonsdale Community Advisory Committee, which seeks to address and impact issues like drugs, crime, neighborhood cleanup, and environmental concerns.
- **Prestige Cleaners/ Prestige Tuxedo** — For 30 years, Prestige Cleaners has been dedicated to bettering Knox County through its participation in initiatives like Project Classroom and Coats for the Cold. In 2007, owner and president Eddie Mannis created HonorAir-Knoxville, which has flown more than 2,200 World War II and Korean War veterans of East Tennessee to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorials built in their honor.

The **Innovator Award**, sponsored by UT-Battelle, 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

- **1st Choice Franchise Concepts** — A unique franchise consulting company that offers a comprehensive system that addresses all aspects of a franchisor's business, including mission and vision; branding; marketing programs; initial training programs; and support programs.
- **Magnum Venus Products** — A premier producer of composite application equipment. MVP serves a variety of industries such as automotive, aerospace, and marine. In addition to composite application, the company also supports the foam and polyurethane industries.
- **Proton Power** — A sustainable energy company, which has developed a technology to convert biomass material into a hydrogen-rich gas stream, which is then used to create heat, electricity, and liquid fuels.

The **Business Excellence Awards** are 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.

Mid-size, sponsored by Coulter & Justus

Finalists

- **Johnson & Galyon, Inc.** — Offering an array of construction services, the company works on a variety of projects ranging from residential to multi-million dollar commercial projects. Johnson & Galyon, Inc. has 102 local employees.
- **Harper Auto Square** — The auto dealer group boasts luxury brands like Audi, Porsche, Jaguar, Infiniti, and Maserati, as well as more moderate brands like Volkswagen and FIAT. The dealership has 190 employees and had a record sales year in 2014.
- **Threds** — Through an expansive product line as well as creative and fulfillment services, the company helps businesses expand their brand reach through promotional products. The company currently has 70 staff members. Last year alone, Threds printed more than 1 million t-shirts, and shipped 30,000 packages to more than 40 countries.

Large, sponsored by ARG Financial Staffing

Finalists

- **Blackberry Farm** — Located in Walland, Tenn., the company offers luxurious accommodations and world-class dining in the heart of the Smoky Mountains. Blackberry Farm employs 385 staff members and is continuing invest in its facilities with several multi-million dollar construction projects that are currently underway and in the works.
- **Radio Systems Corporation** — As the producer of Invisible Fence, SportDOG, and PetSafe products, Radio Systems has long been committed to making the lives of pets and their owners happier. The company has 350 local associates at its West Knoxville headquarters, as well as 600 worldwide.
- **TeamHealth Holdings, Inc** — The company is one of the largest suppliers of outsourced healthcare professional staffing and administrative services to hospitals and other healthcare providers in the U.S. The company's more than 13,000 affiliated physicians provided care for more than 16 million patients per year in 990 hospitals nationwide.

The winners will be announced on May 8 at the Knoxville Convention Center. The black tie-optional gala will feature a silent auction and reception, sponsored by Comcast Business starting at 6 p.m., followed by a dinner and awards program emceed by WBIR's Robin Wilhoit. The evening will culminate in a champagne toast to the

winners, sponsored by Caris Healthcare. Bandit Lites and All Occasion Party Rentals provide production assistance for the event.

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