

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Media Contact:**

Jessica Karsten

[jkarsten@knoxvillechamber.com](mailto:jkarsten@knoxvillechamber.com) | 865.246.2603

**Knoxville Chamber Announces 2017 Pinnacle Award Winners**

More than 600 people gathered at the Knoxville Convention Center on May 12 to celebrate the finalists and winners of the 13th Annual Pinnacle Business Awards, presented by Atlantic Capital.

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 nine award categories, which highlight the range of businesses that make up Knoxville's thriving, vibrant economy, and honor contributions to the local community.

**2017 Pinnacle award winners:**

The **Impact Award**, sponsored by Publix Supermarkets, 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 winner is **Shoney's of Knoxville, Inc.** The business has served the Knoxville community for the past 55 years in a quiet but impactful way. Annually, the family-friendly restaurant donates food and meal certificates to countless charitable organizations throughout a 10-county area, serves as a major sponsor for the East Tennessee Children's Hospital's Fantasy of Trees, raises funds for the Knox Area Rescue Ministry's "Feed the Need" program as well as Mobile Meals, contributes to Dine Out for Education and Zoo Knoxville, and donates meals or reward items to Knox County Schools. These recurring contributions, along with their support of community programs that encourage families to be safe, active, healthy, and learning, such as the Shoney's KidCare Photo ID Program and Tennessee Smokies Reading Program, are a direct investment in the children and families of our community. It is difficult to quantify how Shoney's 55 years of quiet generosity have helped the residents of our region, however, their enthusiastic support of community causes – both big and small – has undoubtedly made a significant impact on the people of East Tennessee.

The **Innovator Award**, presented 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 Protomet Corporation, EventBooking, and PureMagic Carwash.

**PureMagic Carwash** took home this year's award. In 2005, Jim and Teri Rooney opened East Tennessee's first low-price, high-value express car wash under the name 3 Minute Magic. As the first company to bring the Express Exterior concept to the region, they expertly and efficiently cleaned Knoxville's cars, expanding to four regional locations by 2015. Their fourth location on Alcoa's Airport Motor Mile brought the Polish Tunnel to the United States. A revolutionary technology, the tunnel

introduced a new way to polish a vehicle while it travels through the carwash on a traditional over-and-under steel conveyor. In 2016, the Rooney's opened their fifth location, rebranded as PureMagic Carwash, and once again introduced a progressive new technique to the full-service car wash model – a conveyORIZED production concept that cleans vehicle interiors on a 12-foot wide moving floor. At PureMagic, they have bridged the gap between innovation, convenience, and customer care, completely revolutionizing how customers think and feel about a traditional full-service carwash.

The **Small Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by Sword & Shield Enterprise Security, 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 Axle Logistics, LLC, EventBooking, and Johnson Architecture.

This year's recipient is **EventBooking**, a Software as a Service company that specializes in online booking and venue management for arenas, stadiums, convention centers, and performing arts centers. The first of its kind in the industry, the software empowers clients to manage multiple spaces or buildings from one master calendar, share available or reserved event dates with their prospects, eliminate double-bookings through conflict checking, track sales opportunities, generate proposals or contracts, manage the finances of their event, and more. The cloud-based technology is currently utilized by more than 700 venues worldwide, and the company is developing a new, B2B collaboration platform designed to radically transform and improve the way concert tours are routed.

The **Minority-Owned Business Excellence Award**, presented 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 El Charro, Sandra G's, and MBK Wellness.

**Sandra G's** received this year's award. Sandra G's is an alterations shop that specializes in custom fit and design and offers expertise in wedding and formal attire. Although Sandra began her career in the banking industry where she worked for over 12 years, her love for sewing - passed on to her from her mother - was a hobby that she continued. When she made the switch from the banking profession to the wedding industry, her passion for the hobby flourished while sewing for Knoxville's premier bridal salons. Since 2004, Sandra has strived to make Sandra G's the "go-to" destination for specialized and personal fits for each client who walks through the doors. Her reputation has continuously blossomed and now what was once many clients' secret has become one of the most trusted and referred alterations shops in Knoxville.

The **Woman-Owned Business Excellence Award**, presented by Microbial Insights, Inc., 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, Innovative Design, Inc., and Graphic Creations were finalists for this category.

This year's winner is **Innovative Design, Inc. (IDI)**, an engineering design consulting firm specializing in mechanical, structural, electrical, environmental, and process-related projects. IDI provides services to government and industrial clients including environmental, nuclear, aluminum recycling, water, and automotive. The company offers the full spectrum of engineering and design services and can perform large-scale projects from concept to construction. IDI also performs smaller projects for its customers, whether it be equipment, piping, structural, fall protection, cranes, facility revisions, and much more. The company recently purchased a commercial building in Hardin Valley for its permanent

headquarters. By investing in a permanent Knoxville headquarters, IDI is set to keep creating jobs and opportunities in our community.

The **Business Excellence Award** is divided into a mid-size 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-Size Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by Rodefer Moss and Company, were SMG Knoxville, House of Thaller, and Michael Brady, Inc.

**House of Thaller** took home this year's award. House of Thaller, founded in 1964 as a father and son team, is a refrigerated foods manufacturer specializing in co-packing and private label dips and deli salads. Steady growth over the past 53 years has expanded their operations from the original three-room facility to a state-of-the-art food plant that houses 200 employees and has capacity to produce more than 70,000 pounds of product daily. A third generation, family-owned and operated business, the company is dedicated to serving its customers through innovation, quality, food safety, and commitment to relationship building. These attributes have positioned House of Thaller as a leader in both the branded and private label segments of the refrigerated foods industry.

Finalists for the **Large Business Excellence Award**, sponsored by LBMC, PC, included TeamHealth, U.S. Cellular, and Connor Concepts.

This year's winner is **TeamHealth**. Founded in 1979 to staff two hospital emergency departments in Knoxville, Tennessee, TeamHealth expanded to hospitals throughout the Southeast as its reputation for high quality and service excellence spread. Along the way, TeamHealth expanded its services from a singular focus on emergency medicine, and it is now one of the largest suppliers of outsourced professional staffing and administrative services to hospitals in the U.S. based on revenue, patient visits, and number of clients. The company's approximately 20,000 affiliated physicians and advanced practice clinicians now provide care to more than 29 million patients per year in more than 3,300 healthcare facilities and physician groups across the nation.

The **Young Entrepreneur Award**, presented by Atlantic Capital, is awarded to a young professional, 40 years of age or younger as of May 12, 2017, 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 Alex Oliver of Draft Agency, Courtney Jones of MomSource Network, and Courtney Herda of Smarter Searches.

The 2017 recipient is **Courtney Herda, CEO of Smarter Searches**. Herda founded Smarter Searches in 2012 with no clients, no background in sales or entrepreneurship, a single laptop, a 45-page business plan, and eight years of experience in digital marketing. Now, as a cohesive and united team of five employees, they work together to increase sales, provide the highest quality of work possible, and continue to grow their brand. Smarter Searches is a digital marketing agency that drives online visibility for businesses in focused way. Its primary services include website design, social media marketing, search engine optimization, online advertising, video production, and graphic design. The company

works with a wide range of industries, spanning 39 states, and has worked with businesses from start-up to multi-billion dollar, multi-location offices.

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 **Pam Fansler**, chairman of First Tennessee Bank's East Tennessee Region.

When Fansler took a job as a teller at Knoxville's Valley Fidelity Bank in her early 20s, she had no plans to begin a career in the banking industry. Forty years later, she retired as First Tennessee Bank's East Market President. During her time at First Tennessee Bank, Fansler rose in the company ranks, making strides in the male-dominated industry of finance and banking. Beyond her professional achievements, she has also served on the boards of Covenant Health, the Knoxville Symphony, the Knoxville Chamber, Girl Scouts of Tanasi Council, and Friends of Literacy. Fansler also served as campaign chair for the United Way of Greater Knoxville in 2011-12 and was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the YWCA in 2013.

The gala concluded with a champagne toast to the winners, sponsored by Regal Entertainment Group.

The production of the 2017 Pinnacle Business Awards was made possible by assistance from All Occasions Party Rentals, Bandit Lites, M&M Productions USA, Above the Rest Balloon & Event Designs, and Moser Visuals. Media sponsors for the event included the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, *Greater Knoxville Business Journal*, and NewsTalk 98.7. BigWheel is the official software provider for the event.

###