



News Release

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: May 25, 2010
Release Number: 10-30

Contact: Mike Stamler (202) 205-6919
Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/news>

Computer Simulation Company from Florida Is National Small Business of the Year

State winners from South Carolina and Illinois are Runners-Up

WASHINGTON – Waymon Armstrong, the owner of a small business that uses computer simulations to help government and private sector clients prepare for and respond to natural disasters, medical emergencies and combat, was today named *National Small Business Person of the Year* by Karen Mills, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Mills made the announcement during ceremonies at SBA's celebration of National Small Business Week 2010.

“Waymon Armstrong is a perfect example of the innovation, inspiration and determination that exemplify America's most successful entrepreneurs,” said Mills. “He believed in his brainchild to the point where he deferred his own salary for three years to keep it afloat. When layoffs loomed for his staff after 9/11, their loyalty and belief in the company was so great that they were willing to work without pay for four months.

“Waymon's commitment to his employees and to his business – Engineering & Computer Simulations, Inc. – demonstrates the qualities that make small businesses such a powerful force for job creation in the American economy and in their local communities,” said Mills. “It's the same qualities that will lead us to economic recovery. We are especially proud that his company benefited from two grants under SBA's Small Business Innovation and Research Program.

“I applaud Waymon, and all of the state small business persons of the year who are here today. We are all grateful for their contributions to our economy.”

First runner-up is Rebecca Ann Ufkes, president of UEC Electronics, LLC, of Hanahan, S.C., which helps clients turn their ideas into finished products through its design, prototyping and manufacturing capabilities. Second runner-up is Warner Cruz, president of J.C. Restoration, Inc., of Rolling Meadows, Ill., who took over the company his father had established and turned it into a full-service disaster restoration company with 70 employees in eight different divisions.

The National Small Business Person of the Year and runners-up were selected from among the 53 state small business winners, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam, who are being honored this week in Washington, D.C, as part of National Small Business Week. The awards were announced at today's National Awards Luncheon, sponsored by Sam's Club at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

--more --

Armstrong, the top winner, started Engineering & Computer Simulations (ECS) in 1997. Today it is one of Inc. Magazine's 500 fastest growing private companies in America. Armstrong and ECS use cutting edge technology to help government and private clients prepare for natural disasters, medical emergencies, and times of war.

ECS is a leading provider of game-based simulation systems and interactive performance assessment tools that train emergency medical personnel and emergency management teams from different jurisdictions to cooperate in the event of a natural disaster, and simulation training programs that teach unmanned vehicle operational personnel procedures to launch and operate unmanned vehicles.

The ECS engineering team brings together an experienced staff that values innovation and creativity while focusing on customers' needs. Today, ECS employs 45 people, and recruits from the central Florida talent pool. ECS doubled its revenues in 2008. The company has seen a 640 percent sales growth over the past three years. The loyalty of his staff was rewarded with generous benefits: full insurance, personal time off, every other Friday off, monthly catered appreciation lunches, bonus and profit-sharing plans, and on-site massage therapy.

First runner-up Ufkes founded UEC Electronics, LLC, in 1995 as a home-based engineering consulting firm with one customer. Fifteen years later, her 8(a) certified woman-owned company helps clients develop their product ideas by applying manufacturing, hardware, software, and mechanical and electronic design. Recent projects include time-release restraint device for non-combatants in hostile zones, and a portable UV sterilization system. UEC has 95 employees and occupies an 80,000 square-foot campus.

When a business slump hit her biggest customer, Ufkes began seeking government contracts, becoming the first graduate of the Navy's Manufacturing Technical Assistance Production Program. Within one year, UEC had become a successful Defense subcontractor and within two years, a successful Defense prime contractor. Revenues grew from \$9.7 million in 2007 to \$13.4 million in 2008, as employment rose steadily each year, even during 2009, despite the recession.

Cruz, the second runner-up, was groomed by his immigrant father to one day take over the family business, J.C. Restoration. Jose Cruz came to the U.S. in the 1970s from Guatemala, and his weak English skills resulted in many hiring rejections, but he managed to learn how to clean buildings damaged by flood or fire. In 1982, he opened his own restoration company.

Warner Cruz learned the business from the ground up, cleaning carpets and managing the front office. He took over the business in 2002, and built the company into a \$15 million business. Today it's a full-service disaster restoration company with 70 employees, working from a state-of-the-art facility financed with an SBA-backed loan.

Small Business Week 2010 sponsors and cosponsors include: Sam's Club, Visa, Ford, ADP, Raytheon, Cbeyond, UPS, Intuit, Google, eBay, AT&T, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, D&B, Verio, ASBDC, NADCO, NAGGL, NASE, NSBA, WIPP and SCORE.

The U.S. Small Business Administration's participation in this cosponsored activity does not constitute an express or implied endorsement of any cosponsor's, donor's, grantee's, contractor's or participant's opinions, products, or services. All SBA programs and cosponsored programs are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis. Reasonable arrangements for persons with disabilities will be made, if requested at least 2 weeks in advance, by contacting sbw@sba.gov. Cosponsorship Authorization #SBW2010