

BUSINESS CENTS

Spring 2009

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Special Points of Interest

- State Small Business Person of the Year lauded.
- Local and National Small Business Week Winners
- In Remembrance: Donald Carter
- Field File

Helping small businesses **start**, **grow** and **succeed**.



Your Small Business Resource

Small Business Week celebration extols area entrepreneurs and advocates

When Paul De La Torre was only five years old he cut his finger while helping his father make metal braces in the basement of their ranch home in Gibsonia. He and his brother, Edward, grew up helping to better the lives of thousands of the region's men, women and children by enabling them to once again enjoy life via custom-made braces and prosthetics

Likewise, G. Shaun Akers has worked in the funeral industry since he was 15 years old. His resume includes everything from mowing lawns to washing cars to purchasing a funeral chapel five years ago.

In May, the De La Torre brothers were honored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) as the local and state Small Business Person of the Year, while Akers was lauded as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year.



Edward and Paul De La Torre, of De La Torre Orthotics and Prosthetics, the local and state Small Business Persons of the Year

"The stories of all our winners are compelling," stated Carl Knoblock, district director of the Western Pennsylvania SBA district office. "PBM, Inc., our Exporter of the Year, experienced a 20 percent increase in export sales during the past year. In these tough economic times, you might say these are the rainbows we don't often hear about."

For instance, Linda Stevenson began her career as a bank messenger 45 years ago. She has since built several women's business alliances that have propelled women into the spotlight as successful small business owners. One such business owner is Misty O'Connor who launched a company titled Point Click Learn. O'Connor utilizes her education and technology background to distribute educational software and provide professional development to schools throughout the commonwealth.

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Local awardees lauded during 33rd annual luncheon

SBW, from Page 2

Knoblock who makes it a point to personally visit each district winner stated the entrepreneurs and advocates he meets truly give back to the community. “The Thomas Studio of Performing Arts is now employing its third generation of dancers who are teaching their craft to a new generation of children,” he stated. “And Dr. Audrey Murrell has committed her professional career to championing social justice.”

And Knoblock pointed out one winner, Mr. Lew Levick, who currently works with the local SBA office to offer assistance to Pittsburgh residents. “Lew had a very successful career in retail and to date he’s counseled about 700 SCORE clients...now that’s an impressive resume for a retiree.”

“The stories of all our winners are compelling,”

— Carl Knoblock,
SBA, Western
Penna. District
Director

Pittsburgh posts two National Winners

Jer byline has never appeared in a newspaper and she’s never hosted a radio show or worked at a television station, yet Joanne Quinn-Smith recently was lauded as the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) 2009 Journalist of the Year.

Smith tweets, blogs and hosts podcasts – embracing the new medium – to promote Pittsburgh, technology, marketing and professional networking. In two years, Quinn-Smith said her show’s audience has grown to a total of 50,000 listeners and has spawned two

spinoffs – the “Techno Granny Show” and “Monday Morning Marketeer”.

“It’s great to do something positive about Pittsburgh and receive national recognition for it”, she said.

Both Quinn-Smith and Marilyn Landis were invited to a series of galas and events to help observe the 46th Annual celebration of National Small Business Week.

Marilyn Landis, was at the White House for a small business press conference held by President Barack Obama when she found out she had been

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Joanne Quinn-Smith



Marilyn Landis

“It’s great to do something positive about Pittsburgh and receive national recognition for it.”

— Joanne Quinn-Smith
2009 SBA National
Journalist of the Year



Donald S. Carter
Deputy District Director

“Don Carter helped to pioneer the 8A program, and made lasting contributions to the SBA. It will be a true loss for me and for the many entrepreneurs who have been able to benefit and grow our businesses from Don’s helpful advice. Even during Don’s recent illness, he was still reaching out to lift the spirits of other patients. As we move on without our dear friend, we will smile as we remember and are guided by Don Carter’s familiar words, “Each contact is a potential contract”.

— Sandy Burkett, Vital Signs

Small Business Community mourns loss of Donald Carter, Pittsburgh Deputy District Director

Growing up, Donald S. Carter dreamed of becoming a professional baseball player.

Although an injury ended his baseball career, Don, who was recruited by the Small Business Administration, ended up as a “major league” player for small business owners throughout Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Carter enjoyed a 37-year career with the SBA, with his final duties being those of the Pittsburgh Deputy District Director. In light of his lengthy tenure, he once estimated that he had been indirectly involved with some 20,000 SBA loans.

During his SBA career, as Don often related to staff members, he held almost every district-level job within the agency. “I’ve worked with loans, directed the 8(a) program, worked in the disaster program, did counseling, training and was an SBDC project officer,” he once said joking. “I’ve done it all, there’s nothing I haven’t done except maybe get a loan.”

He also served as assistant district director for minority small business; assistant district director for business development and acting district director in both West Vir-

ginia and Pittsburgh. In 1996, he relocated to Pittsburgh to assume the role of the office’s deputy district director.

Carter, who attended West Virginia State College, once worked for a telephone company, an entrepreneurial development company and even owned a daycare center.

He stated that he loved his job with SBA. “I enjoy helping people and seeing people become successful and obtaining their dream,” he once said. “But, I am most proud of my involvement in the 8(a) program.”

He served on a number of local business-related committees including the Minority Business Opportunity Committee, Minority Women Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and the African American Chamber of Commerce. His involvement did not go unnoticed as he was honored three times by the Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board as Bronze Award winner for the Excellence in Government Awards program. He also was a recipient of the Minority Small Business Advocate award.

2009 Small Business Week Awardees

Small Business Person of the Year

Paul De La Torre, Chairman/Owner
Edward De La Torre, President/Owner
De La Torre Orthotics and Prosthetics

Minority Small Business Champion of the Year

Dr. Audrey J. Murrell
Directory, Berg Center for Ethics/Leadership,
University of Pittsburgh

Small Business Exporter of the Year

PBM, Inc.

Small Business Journalist Champion of the Year

Joanne Quinn-Smith,
Dreamweaver Marketing

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

G. Shaun Akers, Funeral Director/Owner
Akers Funeral Chapel

Women in Business Champion of the Year

Linda L. Stevenson, Senior Vice President
National City Bank, now a part of PNC

Financial Services Champion of the Year

Marilyn Landis, President & CEO
Basic Business Concepts, Inc.

Family-Owned Business of the Year

Linda Spencer, Jessica Spencer, and
Damon Spencer
The Thomas Studio of Performing Arts, Inc.

Woman-Owned Business of the Year

Misty O'Connor, President/Owner
Point Click Learn, Tech Camp for Kids

SCORE Volunteer of the Year

Mr. Lew Levick
SCORE counselor, Western Pennsylvania
(District 358)

Western Pa. National Winners celebrate Small Business Week in D.C.

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lected as the SBA's Na

tional 2009 Financial Services
Champion of the Year.

The White House was a far cry from Landis' humble banking beginnings. She started her career some 30 years ago as a teller, found out she loved banking and worked her way into management where she learned about the SBA. Eight years ago, Landis started her own firm, Basic Business Concepts, a multifaceted service firm that provides CFO level services to small businesses to keep

Quality Circle 2009 recognizes resource partner achievements and Champion Award winner



Rebecca L. MacBlane, executive director, Regional Development Funding Corporation, was lauded as the 2008 SBA Champion Award winner.



Award-winnign SBDC Directors (from left) Jim Kunkle, Woodrow Yeaney and Raymmond Vargo with Carl Knoblock, Western Pa. SBA district director

More than 150 lenders and non-lending resource partners descended on Seven Spring Mountain Resort March 12-13 for the Western Pennsylvania Association of SBA Guaranteed Lenders' (WPASGL) annual Quality Circle.

Citing education as the mission, Rebecca MacBlane, WPASGL president, explained that each November, the group begins to explore ideas for the seminars.

"We have to have the basics but want timely subjects as well," she added. "We wanted to explore commercial real estate and Carl Knoblock came up with a business banking roundtable.

In addition, MacBlane said the regulatory roundtable concept proved to be a popular forum.

Each year both lenders and non-lenders are recognized for the efforts to the small business community. The SBDC awardees were: Capital Formation – University of Pittsburgh and Gannon University; Training: Gannon University and St. Vincent College; Consulting: St. Vincent College and Clarion University.

Rebecca MacBlane received the annual SBA Champion award for her outstanding efforts as an SBA lender. "The award was a very nice atta girl," she said. "It meant a lot because I don't mind staying past five if people say 'yeah, she's doing her job,'"