



NEWS RELEASE

WYOMING DISTRICT OFFICE

Release Date: April 16, 2009

Release Number: 09-14

Contact: Sharon Nichols (307) 261-6508

Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/wy>

Cliff A. Knesel Named Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year 2009

Gillette – The Wyoming District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration has named Cliff A. Knesel, Vice President of Peregrine Leadership Institute, Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year 2009. This award will be presented to him on Thursday, April 30, 2009, at the Chamber Luncheon to be held at the Clarion Inn in Gillette. Mr. Steve Despain, District Director of the Wyoming Small Business Administration, will be presenting Mr. Knesel with this award. Cliff was nominated by David W. McNulty, Director, Veterans Employment and Training Service.

This award is given to an individual or entity who has fulfilled a commitment to advancing small business opportunities for veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Evaluation criteria includes active support for legislative or regulatory action designed to help small businesses; evidence of increased business opportunities for veterans as a result of the nominee's actions; advisory activities to improve awareness among veterans' groups of small business opportunities; advocacy of special consideration for veteran-owned small businesses in government policymaking; demonstrated accomplishment in obtaining support within the community for the establishment of veteran-owned small businesses and other accomplishments demonstrating the nominee's effective advocacy of veteran-owned small businesses. The President of the United States recognizes contributions of the small business community to the American economy and society by proclamation each year.

Mr. Knesel has been involved with promoting veterans and veteran businesses in Wyoming for the past 34 years. After retirement, Cliff, who is a Vietnam Combat Veteran, and one other individual, started the Peregrine Leadership Institute to share their knowledge and success. When you look at the Peregrine Leadership Institute's website, you will see a section called *Support Our Troops*, "I can tell you this permeates the business and all of the individuals who work for them," said Dave McNulty who nominated Cliff.

He is a volunteer for Employers in Support of the Guard and Reserve. He volunteers his time traveling around the state talking with Guard and Reserve Members that are mobilizing or demobilizing to explain their employment rights. He also covers loan programs and business opportunities through the Small Business Administration and his efforts have helped many veterans keep their business in operation during military call ups and get back on their feet when they return. Cliff's work with businesses and veterans has had a huge impact over the years in the number of businesses that are successful and the number of veterans that decide to start their own business.

- - -

For more information about SBA's programs for small businesses, call 307-261-6500 or TDY 307-261-6527 or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov/wy.

###