

2009 Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Success Awards Recipients



Duluth , MN - The University of Minnesota Duluth Center for Economic Development announced the recipients of the 17 th Annual Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Success Awards during a luncheon on April 21, 2009.

The 2009 recipients in each category are as follows:

Micro-Entrepreneur Award

Ablaze Custom Cleaning, LLC, Don Liimatainen Jr., Cloquet

Founded in January 2007, this professional cleaning company specializing in janitorial services, carpet cleaning, and window cleaning. Beginning with a \$60 investment in window cleaning supplies, Don has built a business that was recognized last October by StartupNation as one of the top 20 businesses in the U.S. run by a college student. Don handles all the day-to-day operations of the company, which has a growing client base that includes nationally known corporations as well as many local companies and residences.



Emerging Entrepreneur Award



Monaco Air Duluth - Don Monaco , Duluth

Monaco Air Duluth is an aviation services business, specifically a fixed-base operator, located at the Duluth International Airport and providing fuel, de-icing, ground handling, aircraft maintenance, hangar space, and other services to airlines, charter operators, the military, general aviation aircraft owners, flight crews, and passengers. Don Monaco started Monaco Air Duluth in November 2005 and under Don's leadership, it quickly became recognized locally as a community success story and globally as a premier provider of aviation services. The operation has been transformed inside and out, making it a highly efficient operation and attractive gateway to Duluth. Revenues have increased, employees have been added, and the company has opened up many new aviation-related opportunities through its creative approach to business and incredible company service. Don provides overall strategic direction for the company, participating in setting policy and leading initiatives to grow the business.

CONTINUE ---

Established Entrepreneur Award

World Block, Inc. - Dan Stocke and Rod Johnson, Duluth

World Block, Inc. builds steel block forms for the ready-mix and pre-cast concrete industry. The forms are used to create large concrete blocks used for landscaping, product divider bins, security, etc. One of the few businesses to fill this growing and profitable niche market, World Block was on the Inc. 5000 list of fastest growing companies in both 2007 and 2008. It has shown rapid growth in both sales and profits. Dan and Rod assumed ownership of the company in January of 2007 and are each 50 percent owners. They are involved in all aspects of the company, with Rod focusing on the manufacturing side and Dan working on sales and marketing.



Mature Entrepreneur Award



Positively 3rd Street Cooperative Bakery - Andrea Wood, Michael Latsch (worker-owned business), Duluth

This worker-owned cooperative bakery, founded in 1983, specializes in whole-grain breads, baked goods, and granola, using as many organic and local ingredients as possible. Positively 3rd Street serves primarily wholesale customers (75 percent) and enjoys a good share of walk-in patronage as well. While the bakery has seen some lean years, it is going strong today, providing people with not only great bread, but also with a different outlook on business and profitability. All involved are worker-owners and essentially business partners who share responsibilities. Its success not only contributes to the local economy, but also proves the viability of the worker-owned cooperative as a sustainable business model.

Innovative Entrepreneur Award

Clearly Superior, Inc. - Doug Stetzer, Dan Krisak and James Colborn , Superior

This innovative company is a research/development and manufacturing plant focusing primarily on hydration and nutritional therapy, with a focus on Dysphagia patients. It was founded in August 2007. A true start-up, the company is taking a brand new product as well as a brand new concept to market. While AquaCareH2O is in its infancy, it has already received global recognition. Just as importantly, it has made a difference in the lives and health of its customers.



CONTINUE ---

Two Special Awards were given for 2009:

Entrepreneurial Vision

Jeff Asbach and Scott Asbach - Hometown Focus



A start-up business venture of Hometown Media Partners LLC, Hometown Focus is a multimedia grassroots community journalism project that provides a communication venue for individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses. Founded in January 2007 they have eight full-time employees. Jeff and Scott are both involved in all facets of the daily operation of Hometown Focus. The first interactive website went online in 2008 and a weekly print publication was launched just a few months later. Community engagement has expanded to include more than 246 contributors from more than 35 communities and it continues to grow. Its financial success is measured in terms of the good jobs and secure future it provides employees, as well as its contribution to the economic and social well-being of the region.

Entrepreneurial Achievement

Larry Lehtinen - Magnetation, Inc.

Under the leadership of Larry, in one year, Magnetation, Inc. took a concept to commercial reality and introduced a new segment to the iron ore industry of Minnesota. This proven new branch of mineral processing technology has significant strategic ramifications for the iron resources of Minnesota and the potential to be applied globally. As CEO and chairman of the board of directors, Larry is involved in all aspects of the business. Although the company has been making commercial shipments for just a short time, it is already expecting to generate enough income to allow doubling of plant capacity within a year.



Corporation engaged in the production of high purity iron oxide concentrates for sale to the iron/steel, oil and gas drilling, construction, water treatment chemical, glass bottle manufacturing, and coal industries.

2009 Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Success Awards Nominees

Micro Entrepreneur

[Ablaze Custom Cleaning, LLC, Don Liimatainen Jr., Cloquet](#)
[Ardy Nurmi-Wilberg Consulting - Ardy Nurmi-Wilberg , Virginia](#)
[CMRA, LLC - Beth Wentzlaff , Duluth](#)
[Magic Box Photography - Chelsea Morgan , Duluth](#)
[Sawtooth Solutions - Jeff Ryan , Duluth](#)

CONTINUE ---

Emerging Entrepreneur

AMI Consulting Engineers, PA - Craig Jouppi and Chad W. Scott , Duluth
eco - Julie A. McDonnell, Duluth
Exodus Machines, inc. - Bruce Bacon , Superior
Monaco Air Duluth - Don Monaco , Duluth
Portable Bore Repair & Welding, Inc. - John and Kim Anderson , Superior
ShipRock Management Inc. - Andy Weyrauch, Blake Shippee, Justin Galzki, Duluth
Woodland Wireless Inc. - John Kinnunen and Walter Koski , Virginia

Established Entrepreneur

AJ's Lawncare & Landscaping, Inc. - Andrew Jutila and Dale Anderson , Duluth
Beaner's Central - Jason Wussow , Duluth
Cabinet Corner & Home Center, LLC - Mary Ann Olson , Grand Rapids
Food Farm - John and Jane Fisher-Merritt , Wrenshall
Golden Oaks Inc - Laura and Paul Lokken , Hermantown
Lutsen Lodging Co. - Mike Larson , Lutsen
Mother Nature & Company Florist & Greenhouse - Paul and Sarah Carpenter, Saginaw
Offices of Simon & Guthrie - Michelle Simon , Duluth
Pro Print, Inc. - Creston Dorothy and Scott Cooke , Duluth
Udeen Trucking - Robin Cich , Superior
Wildfire Sprinkler, Inc. - George Carlson , Grand Marais
Wine Creations - Chris Vatne , Duluth
World Block, Inc. - Dan Stocke and Rod Johnson, Duluth

Mature Entrepreneur

J.M. Auto Service - John Meglen, Eveleth
Positively 3rd Street Cooperative Bakery - Andrea Wood, Michael Latsch (worker-owned business), Duluth
Rabe's Supply, Inc. DBA Toner Planet - Dennis and Mary Rabe , Hibbing
Schemmer's Cleaning Services - Roger N. Schemmer , Two Harbors
Super 8 Motel - Bill Aho , Eveleth
Uncle Loui's Café - Penny Briddell , Duluth

Innovative

Clearly Superior, Inc. - Doug Stetzer and James Colborn , Superior
GeaCom, Inc. - Chris Butler and Mat Johnson , Duluth
SwimCreative - Patrice Bradley , Duluth

