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Award winners: “The keys to our success...”

by Margo Ashmore (abridged)

Taking a chance on people or circumstances that others wouldn't, hard work, loyalty – these are among the characteristics Northeast's most honored business people exhibit, according to their Northeast Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce nominators, and in their own words. The Chamber and the East Minneapolis Exchange Club teamed up to give several awards Oct. 28, filling the banquet hall at the Aveda Institute.

Let's listen in:

Commander Bryan Schaefer of the Second Precinct honored Officer Jeff Benfit as 2009 Officer of the Year, an award that originates with the Exchange Club. He lauded Benfit's efforts to save a drowning man; The Exchange Club's Book of Golden Deeds Award went to Walt Sentyrz of the market and liquor store at 1612 2nd St. NE that bear his family's name. Vice President of the Exchange, Tom Siwek said Walt “embraces the Northeast way. He inspires by doing the right thing.”

Orest Kramarczuk accepted one of the awards for Small Business of the Year.

Secrets to their success: excellent customer service, preparing food from scratch, and letting their passion show.

iDream.tv is the other Small Business of the Year. Three



A large team for a small business, clients, friends and family gather to support iDream.tv. FRONT ROW: Mary Jamin Maguire/Adler Center for Family & Community, Eva Grooms/Savvy Office Solutions, Edie French/iDream.tv, Huda Farah/HEAL Institute, Nancy Pryzmus/Birchknoll Enterprise BACK ROW: Marge Ostroushko/The Promised Land CPB, Julie Kistler/iDream.tv, Lois Sonstegard/Whirl-a-Style, L.J.L. Inc., Jean Greener/Presbyterian Homes & Services, Arthur French, Sally French, Coleen Kosloski/Minneapolis Public Schools, Paul Auguston/iDream.tv

secrets to their success: Careful, balanced investment in technology and people, good employees, and partnerships. Leslie Watson, in her introduction, talked about all the education, arts and non-profit promotional videos that the production company has done. Co-founder Edie French said, “and a fourth secret to success, membership in the Chamber.” She asked her partner in life and business, Paul Auguston, to accept the award.

He joshed, “it should be a micro-business award. I have it all on this flash drive.” He reflected that “we will make it through tough times again” and thanked the Pohlad Family Foundation for helping them get started.

The Mid-Size Business Award went to AccessAbility, “saving our community millions of dollars a year” and “one of the most incred-

ible organizations I've worked with,” according to introducer Edie French.

Barbara Arnold, president, said they combine the best practices of a social service agency, with business acumen. AccessAbility works with people who want to work, but because of personal challenges, need more support to be successful.

RSP Architects, the Big Business of the Year Award Winner, “keeps the Northeast coffee shops in business,” said Adam Johnson, an owner of Pop-A-Lock. Their keys to success: “diversity, honesty, transparency and creativity.”



Ruth Ann Weiss, President's Award recipient

Two other Chamber of Commerce honorees: The President's Awards went to Darin Zielsdorf and Ruth Ann Weiss.

Chamber President Laura Mullen sent a live video message via satellite from New York to wish Zielsdorf well. (engineered by iDream.tv)

Ruth Ann Weiss, recently retired from East Side Neighborhood Service (ESNS) and the Chamber board, said “Northeast has a magnetism, sparking loyalty and spirit.”

Then she gave a pitch for chamber membership, “the ROI, return on investment,” is well worth it. www.northeastminneapolischamber.org.



Barbara Arnold, President AccessAbility, inc.



Paul Auguston, Artistic Director, and Edie French, President/CEO accept the Small Business of the Year Award for iDream.tv

