

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 24, 2009

CONTACT
Melissa Britt
Program Manager
Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce
Phone: 678-957-4958
melissa@gwinnettchamber.org

GWINNETT CHAMBER ANNOUNCES TOP SMALL BUSINESSES AND NON-PROFITS OF THE YEAR

The Pinnacle Small Business Award Winners

redpepper – Dave McMullen - Overall Small Business Person of the Year and Small Business Person of the Year (10 - 99 employee category)

Dave McMullen and his partners knew from the beginning that they didn't want redpepper, a full-service advertising and strategic marketing agency, to specialize in anything – be it print or digital, banks or consumer goods. If anything, redpepper specializes in creativity – something that will never go out of style and is always on the forefront. That vision and hard work has paid off. Thanks to more than 98 percent growth in the past three years, redpepper has been ranked on the Inc. 5,000 list of fastest-growing private companies for the past two years; was named #14 on Catalyst Magazine's Top 25 Entrepreneurs; and in March Dave was named Atlanta Marketer of the Year by the American Marketing Association. In addition to participating in nearly a dozen local nonprofit and community service roles, redpepper also started a CreateAthon two years ago – a 24-hour marketing blitz during which marketing and creative services were provided to local non profits on a pro-bono basis. The result? Redpepper has provided more than \$200,000 in materials to 21 local non-profits that they otherwise could not afford.

Rocket IT – Matt Hyatt - Small Business Person of the Year (1 – 9 employees)

Persistence and dedication are two words to describe Rocket IT's successful climb. Starting his own company at age 25 with no money and a \$400 car, Matt Hyatt was born to be an entrepreneur. But it wasn't always easy...Matt had to endure sweeping changes in the industry that ruined many small businesses similar to his. Then the recession of 2001 hit, along with unpaid collections from his largest customer. Together, these tragic events would have bankrupted most entrepreneurs, but Matt refused to take that route by paying off his creditors and completely transformed the way he did business. Less than a decade later, Rocket IT has witnessed remarkable growth in a challenging industry, growing his technology support company from only himself to nine employees and increasing his net earnings by an amazing 132 percent in the past two years alone. During that time, he has also reinvested his resources to help the Foster's Children Foundation in Norcross, the Suwanee Business Alliance, Boy Scouts, 12Stone Church, and more.

Logical Choice Technologies – Cynthia Kaye - Small Business Person of the Year (100+ employee category)

When the dot-com bubble burst, Logical Choice struggled, but did not go out of business, unlike so many similar technology integration companies around the nation. Instead the company changed its diversified "go-to-market" strategy and began a rifle-like focus on becoming the best at "transforming traditional classrooms into engaging 21st century learning environments." This strategy has led to unthinkable growth and made Logical Choice the implementation partner of choice for the largest k12 district-wide interactive whiteboard transitions in the United States. Innovative thinking by CEO Cynthia Kaye also led to a feature on her company-wide profit sharing plan in Fortune Small Business Magazine this winter. Even in these difficult times, Logical Choice is still expanding with revenues topping \$65 million and net income tripling in 2008. Today, their new 48,000 corporate headquarters employs a 170-person staff and continues to grow.

Suwanee Family Dentistry, PC - Tina Heil, DMD

Realizing that in today's service-oriented environment there are many dentists in the area, Suwanee Family Dentistry Owner Tina Heil knows that in order for her business to thrive, she must be unique. Tina leads a team committed to forming personal relationships with their patients, while using the latest technology to provide the highest quality care. Tina and her staff periodically brainstorm new ways to surprise and delight their patients. From carnations on Valentine's Day to massage chairs and a flavored coffee bar in the reception area, Tina and her staff keep their patients smiling. It is these personal touches that have helped Tina's practice reach over \$1.6 million in revenue in 2008 while making their patients more comfortable and letting them know that Suwanee Family Dentistry cares about them as people, not just about their teeth.

Ackerman Security Systems - Jim Callahan

Ackerman Security Systems' commitment to the protection of life and property is in high demand. Their growth, evidenced by a 47 percent increase in revenue in the past three years, has been built on a foundation of excellent customer service and a work environment that rewards initiatives and fosters a family friendly environment. Their dedication can be seen through Ackerman's registered trademark on the phrase "The Sign of Real Security." This phrase is a component of their philosophy to offer a full life-safety program when meeting with potential clients. Their dedication and commitment can also be seen through their involvement with community service projects, including Clark Howard's Habitat for Humanity, Dream House for Kids, and Strike Our Leukemia and Lymphoma Radiothon. Combined with their excellent customer service, family friendly environment, and community activism, Ackerman has continued to experience double-digit growth despite a challenging economic climate.

Allgood Pest Solutions - William "Perry" Tindol

In an industry with 19,000+ companies, Allgood Pest Solutions ranks among the top 2 percent in management excellence and differentiates itself from its competitors by being able to compete in all three industry segments, termite control, residential pest control and commercial pest, whereas other companies were only able to compete in one or two of these segments. Because of

-more-

the synergies of multilevel clients, in 17 short years, Allgood has grown from their first year revenues of nearly \$100,000 to their 2008 revenue figure of just over \$17 million and received several "Best OP" awards across the state and four in Gwinnett Magazine, including "Best Employer."

Bardi Mechanical/Bardi Heating & Air - Alex Bardi

Because Bardi is a versatile company offering innovative design and service solutions for all residential and commercial HVAC needs, they have discovered that they have grown to new heights. This growth required a unique management solution which was met with a growing, vibrant, diverse executive management team. Bardi's hard work, dedication and commitment to their customers have strengthened their relationships resulting in record revenue and profitability for 2008. They have chosen not to participate in the recession, with current sales contracted for this year totaling over nine times those of last year. To this success, Bardi honors their number one attribute, their team members.

Bartimaeus, Inc. - Dave Newman

Bartimaeus, a leading and respected Southeast provider in high quality window treatment products to the commercial and residential building industries, has an uncanny ability to continuously get the best from their employees in spite of the downfall of their customers and construction industry as a whole. Their ability to have a profitable 2008, with a 13.9 percent increase in revenue, may seem miraculous to some, but it has much to do with the people that Bartimaeus' employees and their talent in taking direction and turning projects into reality. Their ability to survive this housing crisis has certainly given them the potential to become even more of a remarkable success in the future.

Direct Technologies, Inc. - David Jacobson

Direct Technologies, Inc., one of the nation's premier letter shop service providers, is dedicated to developing long term partnerships by providing technology-based solutions for their customers with uncompromising customer service and the best operational support. It is this dedication to their customers that surely saw them through a difficult time in their company several years ago when one of their top customers declared bankruptcy just after Direct Technologies moved into a new facility. Along with cutting costs and operating conservatively, Direct Technologies communicated the situation to their partners and asked for cooperation. The classic "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger" experience had a happy ending with all vendors being paid and continued growth for the company. In fact, Direct Technologies, which earned over \$30 million in the past two years, was listed among the 5000 fastest growing private companies in America by Inc. magazine.

EC Electric, Inc. - Chris Kelleher

As the owner of EC Electric, Inc. for 18 years, Chris Kelleher has grown his company from two employees to 52 employees. Believing a company is only as strong as its employees, Chris places a high value on his workforce. He believes in this so much that in difficult economic times, Chris has searched for creative ways to ensure job security for his workforce, including cutting his own salary and benefits to protect his employees. Chris's empathy goes beyond just his workforce as he and his company have been involved in many charitable activities including Hands On Atlanta, Habitat for Humanity, Gwinnett County Public Schools and many more. EC Electric not only has a reputation of being an electrical contracting firm that provides superior service and completely satisfying their customers, but a company that is a good steward of the community in which it operates surely contributing to the companies' over \$7.3 million in revenue in 2008.

Foresite Group - William Brantner Aden

Since the company began in 2003, Foresite Group, a privately held, full-service civil engineering and consulting firm, has managed an average growth rate of 155 percent a year. Foresite President William Aden and his team take pride in this accomplishment and enjoy enhancing and developing the cities and communities where they live, work, and raise their families. William and his partners provide a unique, open work environment that supports their employees' creative ideas instead of stifling them. Foresite Group allows employees at all levels, with full support, to create their own client base, thus doing away with career ceilings and allowing employees to be client-focused. Providing an open work environment also allows the employees to enhance the community where they live and work by volunteering for organizations such as Gwinnett Citizens for

2009 SPLOST Renewal Committee, Gwinnett United in Drug Education, Georgia Recreation and Parks Authority, Children's Healthcare, and many more.

Forrestall, Galeano & Li CPA, LLC - Jeff Forrestall

Jeff Forrestall boasts that his company, Forrestall, Galeano & Li CPA, LLC is Gwinnett and rightfully so. Jeff's company is one of the oldest and largest firms in Gwinnett offering tax, consulting, accounting, auditing, and advisory and retirement plan services. The family business has grown with Gwinnett and added diversity to the staff as the county evolved enabling the company to offer services to the Asian, Hispanic and Russian markets. Forrestall, Galeano & Li's experience in the international market in the 80s and 90s led them to the belief that investing in strong employees with international business and language skills would be a key catalyst for growth in their future. Their innovative efforts paid off in 2008. The firm was named the "Best in Gwinnett" by Gwinnett Magazine; ranked as Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2nd fastest growing accounting firm in the region; and witnessed an incredible 117 percent increase in revenue last year.

Green Financial Resources, LLC - Roger S. Green

Roger Green with Green Financial Resources has been building his business one client at time since 1987 and is no stranger to
-more-

the Pinnacle Awards, where he has consistently scored among the Top 25 in four of the past five years. Even in the recent economic and stock market downturn, Green Financial Resources saw a nine percent increase in revenue in 2008 earning \$3.6 million. The tremendous results of Green's small firm have landed them on the Atlanta Business Chronicle list of the Top 20 Financial Planning and Advisory Firms as of October 2003 and they were listed on Barron's Top 100 Independent Advisor's list.

HealthCare Partners - Ruddy and Rhonda Polhill

At HealthCare Partners, a medical staffing firm, the creativity and imagination of their people sets them apart from other staffing firms. In 2003, Healthcare Partners had to change their entire business model to respond to changes in the market and to prepare to scale up. Although they held on to their "family" culture and the value placed on their people, some didn't survive. Healthcare Partners had to mature as business leaders for the greater good of the company. It turned out to be the right decision as HealthCare Partners came back stronger than ever with a 59 percent increase in revenue in 2008.

Kart's Enterprises, Inc. d/b/a Kart's Landscape Services - Gary Kart

Gary Kart, president and owner of Kart's Landscape Services, has grown his company from \$14,000 to over \$1 million in the 20 years that he has been in business. Kart's has been able to achieve this success because of Gary's ability to "think outside of the box" and by not being "shy of good old fashioned hard work." Most notable of his achievements, was being the first company to use box vans as route vehicles in the landscape industry, resulting in a decrease in the volume of lost and stolen equipment and the extension of equipment life.

LW Scientific, Inc. - Ernie Tai and Lee Wan

Ernie Tai and Lee Wan have had the pleasure of leading their team at LW Scientific, Inc. to bring leading edge products in the world of TB diagnosis where close to two million people annually are killed by the disease. Their work has been featured in collaborative efforts with top organizations such as the World Health Organization, CDC, various universities, and ministries of health. These are just a few examples of the impact and success of LW Scientific, a multi-million dollar firm engaged in design, product development, manufacture, and distribution of lab equipment. Earning 17.5 million over the past three years has enabled the company to reach beyond their products to make an impact on the world around them by teaching financial and entrepreneurial principles as a missions project in third world countries, helping underprivileged economies and individuals to advance.

Mathias Corporation - Dave Heydinger

Mathias Corporation provides more than just the construction services of most general contractors, providing development planning, financial analysis, design assistance and much more. Dave Heydinger, owner of Mathias Corporation, has many accomplishments to be proud of, but most notable was his company's commitment to protecting and keeping his employees during the commercial sector slump of 2004-05. Perhaps even more amazing is the fact that every project in Mathias' history has been completed on time and to the complete satisfaction of the client. As a result the company has benefited by having the very best people in the business and the least turnover, surely contributing to nearly doubling their revenue to more than \$31 million in revenue in the past two years.

North American Bioproducts Corporation - Kevin E. Dailey

North American Bioproducts Corporation, which produces quality fermentation products for fuel, beverage, and industrial alcohol producers, was founded in 2001 by Kevin Dailey who has grown his business from one to 21 employees. In those eight years, North American Bioproducts' market share has increased to 34 percent of the attainable market for antimicrobials and 41 percent of the attainable market for yeast products. Through their market shares and by selling products to over 50 percent of the operating market, North American Bioproducts has emerged as an industry leader against many larger companies.

Premier Immediate Care - Dr. Philip Henderson

Dr. Philip Henderson, owner of the urgent care practice Premier Immediate Care, has taken one of the toughest years in the American economy and said, "How can I help?" He has responded to his customers who are experiencing economic hardship and job loss by lowering prices for self-pay patients and partnering with national non-profits such as Sister 2 Sister to provide low to no-cost health screenings to patients in need and at risk for heart disease. Dr. Henderson also uses the profit they do have to give back to the community to strengthen the high school sports teams, churches, and non-profits. Believing that small business is more than just maintaining a healthy bottom line, Dr. Henderson has served over 60,000 patients and increased his revenue by almost six percent in 2008.

Pro Care Emergency Medical Service - Tony Thrash

As owner of the licensed ambulance service Pro Care Emergency Medical Service, Tony Thrash knows that all ambulance services are issued the same license from the state of Georgia, they all use basically the same equipment, and they all use emergency medical technicians and paramedics. Pro Care sets itself apart from the rest by customizing its service to meet the exact needs of the clients they service. All hospitals and skilled nursing facilities have different needs based on size and specialty. Pro Care meets with each facility on a personal basis to creatively formulate their service to meet the exact need of the client. Because Pro Care set their company apart from the competition, they have continued to grow and expand with four new ambulances, a new building, and a recorded revenue of over \$9.4 million in 2008.

-more-

Renova Technology, Inc. - Jonathan Pine

Jonathan Pine started Renova Technology, a repair services and reverse logistics company, with nothing and grew it organically over a period of 12 years, with no debt. While weathering major financial obstacles, major market changes and extreme foreign competition, Jonathan remained focused on constantly improving his business of repairing circuit boards and complex electronics. Thanks to this dedication, Renova has emerged as one of the most highly reputed board-level repair facilities in the industry earning over \$3.6 million in 2008. And, as a result of their operations, tons of circuit boards are repaired annually rather than becoming e-waste which continues to choke the environment.

Richardson Technology Systems, Inc. - Joseph Ciotti

In the ever evolving world of technology, the most difficult business hurdle in the life of Richardson Technology Systems has been the ability to constantly stay ahead of the curve as the leading technology solution integrator for education and health care in the state of Georgia for the past 40 years. The key to Richardson's business success and earning of \$6.3 million in the past three years has been establishing a solid reputation for exceptional client service and retaining the most knowledgeable, experienced, and results-oriented team of professionals in the industry. In fact, Richardson has more Certified Electronics Systems Technicians than any other competitor in the country. It is these same expert technicians that have helped Georgia school systems to obtain more than \$15 million in federal funding for integrated technology solutions installed by Richardson Technology Systems.

SBX Technologies, LLC - Alex Silva and Brett Burgess

Since SBX was established in Gwinnett County in 2003, it has steadily grown every year. Even in 2009 the environmental, engineering, and civil construction firm is expected to have its best year in a period of overall weak economic times. The current growth, which reached revenue levels of over \$1.8 million in 2008, of SBX is due to careful planning and developing a niche market by focusing on clients with projects that were not going to be affected by the current economic downturn. This approach has enabled SBX to track and obtain contracts with very little and in some cases no competition.

Tanya Andrews Tate & Associates - Tanya A. Tate

At just 33 years of age, Tanya Tate started her own law firm and quickly realized that she was a little fish in a very big pond with nothing setting apart her firm, Tanya Andrews Tate & Associates, from any other law practice. After much thought and self-examination, Tanya decided to expand upon her extensive employment law experience and create a niche in Gwinnett. Tanya decided to serve a specialized market by creating a boutique employment law firm. By marketing her company in this manner, Tanya and her employees were able to more easily generate new business on their own while greatly enhancing their attorney referral base. By transforming her company to a big fish in a small pond, Tanya was able to increase revenue by 60 percent over the past four years, add multiple employees, and contribute in a meaningful way to the community.

VeriStor Systems, Inc. - Ashby Lincoln

VeriStor Systems has set itself apart from the competitors by finding the best storage products for each customer rather than selecting only a few products to push on every customer. Their dedication to their customers can be seen in their revenue, which essentially doubled in three years, growing from \$5 million in 2006 to more than \$11 million in 2008. Their commitment to the community and to their 22 employees is remarkable. VeriStor Systems has become a permanent fixture in the Southeastern data storage market while creating a strong corporate culture that they are extremely dedicated to maintaining for many years to come.