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Fernando Rodriguez Honored as Central California 2008 Minority Small Business Champion of the Year

National Small Business Week April 21-25, 2008



Pictured: Fernando Rodriguez

Merced, CA – The Fresno District Office of the U. S. Small Business Administration has named Fernando Rodriguez as the 2008 Central California Minority Small Business Champion of the Year. Champion awards are presented by SBA as part of National Small Business Week celebrated nationally, April 21-25, 2008.

Rodriguez was selected for this prestigious award because of his outstanding advocacy efforts and commitment to support minorities in business entrepreneurship. Nominations for this award were solicited from throughout the 15-county Central California area.

Carlos G. Mendoza, District Director of the Fresno SBA Office, said, "Fernando is a role model for all minority owned businesses. Not only is he a tremendous asset as a mentor, but he is also a leader in our business community. We are honored to present Fernando Rodriguez with the Central California Minority Small Business Champion of the Year Award."

Upon hearing of his selection for the award, being a man of few words, Rodriguez said, "This is good and a great honor! I'm very happy that I have been able to accomplish so much."

As President of Carniceria Vallarta, Inc. located in Merced, Rodriguez is no stranger to the struggles of owning a small business. Operating a small meat market for many years Fernando saw the business potential of having a much larger store catering to the Hispanic population. Rodriguez contacted the Merced Alliance Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for business plan assistance. After working with the Alliance SBDC for several months a loan was secured which transformed a small market into a full fledged store. Today, the store employs 44 many of which are Hispanic youth living in Merced.

Fernando Rodriguez was nominated for the award by the Merced Alliance SBDC Director, Mike Souza. Souza said, "Mr. Rodriguez is an excellent business owner to work with, he is dedicated to making his business a success and works hard to obtain his goals. He is truly a role model for those wanting to achieve the American dream of owning their own business. But more than that Fernando is a wonderful person to know. It has been an honor to work with him, his family and staff."

Humbled by his business success Fernando has never forgotten his roots and looks for ways to assist others, through employment opportunities, mentoring other business owners and supporting many non-profit organizations. Rodriguez feels a responsibility to lead by example within the Hispanic community. Rodriguez was nominated for the City of Merced 2006 Small Business Employer of the Year and is a member of the Merced Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Minority Small Business Champion of the Year Award nominations are evaluated on the following criteria:

1. Volunteer efforts beyond business/professional responsibilities to advance minority small business interests within the community, state and/or nation.
2. Demonstrated efforts to improve conditions in the minority small business community as a whole, not solely for individual personal advancement.
3. Voluntary provision of professional services to the minority small business community in a legal, legislative, managerial or financial capacity.
4. Demonstrated accomplishments in advising minority small business groups of opportunities within the overall business community.
5. Other accomplishments demonstrating the nominee's merit as an effective advocate for minority small business interests.

This year marks the 45th annual proclamation by the President calling for the celebration of National Small Business Week. National Small Business Week recognizes outstanding small business owners for their personal achievements and contributions to the nation's economy.

The award presentation and reception for Fernando Rodriguez will be held at the Carniceria Vallarta on Friday, April 25 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. The business is located at 1010 16th Street in Merced. For additional information regarding the presentation ceremony please contact Melende Ward at (559) 487-5791, ext 143.

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