

## **San Francisco District Office Announces Small Business Week Award Winners**

The U.S. Small Business Administration's San Francisco District office will recognize the efforts of an outstanding entrepreneur, a long time family owned business and two advocates for the Northern California business community at a gala event in San Francisco's City Hall on May 12 as part of the Bay Area celebration of Small Business Week.

### **Small Business of the Year**

SBA will present their Small Business of the Year award to San Francisco based Sugar Bowl Bakery. The award will be received by Andrew Ly, President/CEO of Sugar Bowl. Ly and his brothers fled Vietnam by boat and spent time in a refugee center in Malaysia before arriving in San Francisco in 1979 with \$1 in his pocket. Today, Sugar Bowl Bakery – the business he and his four brothers purchased in 1984 - is the largest manufacturer of bakery goods in San Francisco with sales of \$42 million last year.

The Ly's journey to San Francisco was difficult and hazardous. After failing three times to escape their native country, they finally succeeded by building a boat and sailing across the South China Sea with dozens of other refugees taking their chances with storms, pirates and the Malaysian Navy. After spending months in a refugee camp, the family was able to reunite in the U.S. by 1982. From the start, their goal was to work whenever they could until they saved enough to buy their own business.

"Throughout the years, they have struggled and had to overcome many obstacles. They had to learn English as well as understanding the American business world. They had to learn how to expand our business, how to build capital, and how to invest in more equipment and quality staff," said Mark Quinn, District Director of SBA's San Francisco office.

For years, the original Sugar Bowl Bakery was a fixture in San Francisco's Richmond district. In 1984, the Ly brothers pooled their savings of \$40,000 and bought the bakery on Balboa Street. At the time, annual sales of the company were \$150,000 with 4 employees. Today Sugar Bowl Bakery has 350 employees at seven locations and will gross almost \$42,000,000 of revenue. Since 1984, Sugar Bowl and been able to grow by 10-20% each year.

Over time, the company has expanded operations to include two retail outlets; food service, wedding cake and frozen divisions; and a retail product line. COSTCO is a major buyer of Sugar Bowl products and sells their bakery items throughout the U.S., Canada, Japan and Taiwan. Trader Joe's (under private label), Safeway and all of their divisions, Target and Sam's club are also long time buyers. Sugar Bowl is also the predominant supplier of bakery goods to most of the Bay Area's hotels and hospitals.

Sugar Bowl Bakery is a generous supporter of community organizations including: the COSTCO Scholarship Fund which grants four year scholarships to economically disadvantaged students of color.

### **Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned Business of the Year**

Rick Karp of Cole Hardware will receive the Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned Business of the Year award for 2008, an award honoring a family-owned and operated business which has been passed on from one generation to another. Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Karp family purchasing Cole Hardware, located in San Francisco's Cole Valley since the 1920s.

"It's rare to find a business that has both stability and an interest in growing, but that's what makes Cole Hardware so outstanding," said Quinn. The company has expanded out of Cole Valley into the Mission / Bernal Heights, SOMA and Russian Hill neighborhoods since the Karp family bought it.

Cole Hardware was the first certified green business hardware company in the US and is certified as a green business with the San Francisco Department of the Environment.

Dave Karp purchased Cole Hardware in 1959 and passed the title of President on to his son Rick in 1981. The younger Karp is a founding member of the San Francisco Locally Owned Merchant Alliance. Rick Karp's children, Adriana and David Karp have both worked in the business. After graduating from high school, David Karp interned writing Cole Hardware's emergency action plan. "It's that kind of intergenerational involvement that we hope this award encourages," said Quinn.

### **Financial Business Champion**

SBA will also present the Financial Business Champion award to Emily Gasner, Program Director of TMC Development Working Solutions. The award recognizes individuals who assist small businesses through advocacy efforts to increase the usefulness and availability of financial services.

Gasner was selected for her work providing financial and technical assistance as well as education to underserved micro and small businesses. Her efforts working with these companies have allowed them obtain \$1.9 million in loans through the SBA Community Express loan program. The loans ranged from \$100,000 to \$250,000 and were specifically for women or minority owned businesses and entrepreneurs located in low and moderate income neighborhoods.

Gasner also developed a technical assistance program for start-up businesses with limited access to traditional financing. Investments from local banks she solicited created a \$760,000 revolving microloan fund which Working Solutions uses to make microloans of \$5,000 to \$25,000 with a low, fixed interest rate.

### **Minority Business Champion**

Also, SBA will also present their Minority Business Champion award to Legal Services for Entrepreneurs, an economic justice project of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. In operation since 1997, LSE provides free legal assistance to low income individuals, including women and people of color, who want to start or develop their for-profit business as well as businesses committed to investing in economically distressed communities.

“LSE’s short term goals revolve around providing quality pro bono legal services. LSE also hopes to increase our clients understanding of legal issues, and to help clients feel more confident about running their businesses because of legal services they’ve received,” said Helen Smolinski, LSE Director.

“LSE is essentially a program about access. We hope that by providing access to a broader community of legal and business professionals a community traditionally out of reach for many of our clients, we are expanding our clients’ networks and empowering them to succeed.”

Since its inception, LSE has provided legal services to nearly 1,000 clients. Typically, 75 percent of their clients are low income, and in 2006, 60 percent were women and 30 percent were limited English speakers.

All four awards will be presented by the SBA at the gala Flavors of San Francisco event which kicks off Small Business Week in San Francisco on May 12 at City Hall. Registration and more information are available at [www.acteva.com/go/sfsbw](http://www.acteva.com/go/sfsbw).

###

Contact Information:

Gary Marshall  
Business Development Specialist  
(415) 744 6771  
Gary.marshall@sba.gov

Small Business Person of the Year  
Andrew Ly  
President/CEO  
Sugar Bowl Bakery  
300 Toland St  
San Francisco, CA 94124  
415 824 3592  
andrew\_ly@sugarbowlbakery.com

Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned Business of the Year  
Rick Karp  
Cole Hardware  
956 Cole St.  
San Francisco CA 94117  
415 753 2653 ext. 5  
rick@colehardware.com

Financial Services Champion of the Year  
Emily Gasner  
Working Solutions  
611 Front St.  
San Francisco CA 94111  
415 477 8415  
Emily@tmcworkingsolutions.org

Minority Small Business Champion of the Year  
Helen Smolinski  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights  
131 Steuart St. #400, SF, CA 94105  
415-543-9444 x217  
helen@lccr.com