



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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Small Business Owners in the Falls Receive Wisconsin SBA 2006 Small Business Person of the Year Honorable Mention Award

Chippewa Falls: **John Walton and Rod Tegels**, owners of Advanced Laser Machining, Inc. in Chippewa Falls has received Honorable Mention in Wisconsin's SBA Small Business Person of the Year Awards for 2006.

Advanced Laser Machining (ALM) is a manufacturing firm specializing in high tech laser cutting and CNC punching mild steel, stainless steel and aluminum. The business was started in 1996 in a rather unique way. John and Rod had won a "Create Your Own Business Plan" contest that was sponsored by the Eau Claire Economic Development Corporation. As a result, they received financing that was instrumental in starting ALM and locating them in the Chippewa Valley Incubation Center.

ALM has shown steady growth from the start and by 1998, this growth prompted them to relocate from the Incubation Center to leasing a 17,000 square foot facility in the Chippewa Falls Riverside Industrial Park, their current location. In 2003, SBA was able to assist ALM purchase their facility and, in 2004, once again was of assistance when ALM expanded their facility to nearly double their size. This steady growth has resulted in twenty percent employment growth over the last five years.

In 1999, the metal fabrication industry experienced a downturn and the events of 9/11 adversely affected Advanced Laser when several of their major customers reduced or eliminated orders. John and Rod's response to overturn these obstacles was to diversify their customer base and continuing to invest in equipment and employee training.

The winner of this award is determined by the business's staying power, growth in number of employees, increase in sales and/or unit volume, current and past financial reports, innovativeness of product or service, response to adversity, and contributions to aid community-oriented projects. As reflected above, Advanced Laser Machining meets all this criteria.

John and Rod's work ethic is to give the consumer the best product available, the first time and every time, with no buts and no excuses. They are hard working, focused, resilient individuals with the ability to overcome obstacles, learn from them and make the proper adjustments to achieve success as well as supporting and adding to the economic development of their community. This is the success story of true entrepreneurs that exemplifies the American dream of owning your own business, being successful at it, and contributing to your community. SBA is proud to have been able to share in Advance Laser Machining's success!

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