



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

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Colorado's Best Entrepreneurs and Small Business Champions Announced by the SBA

Denver – Shawnee Huckstep, CEO/Co-Founder of *TechWise* has been named the U.S. Small Business Administration's Colorado Small Business Person of the Year for 2008. Ms. Huckstep is one of 12 entrepreneurs nominated for this award. *TechWise* is a Colorado Springs-based professional services company that provides information technology support and consulting, educational program development, professional engineering services, and an array other technical services to clients across the world. In 2002, Shawnee was selection by the *Colorado Springs Business Journal* as one of the Top 25 Dynamic Women in Business. In 2004, *TechWise* began supporting the federal government by providing Military Operational Training and Exercise Support, Military Operational Support, and staff augmentation. In four years, *TechWise* has trained over 25,000 soldiers in support of a variety of missions. As a contributor to Descendants of the Freedman, Shawnee is of Native American heritage and has always been an enthusiastic advocate for native rights and culture. *TechWise* is a current participant in the SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program, and received an SBA guaranteed loan in 2001 which provided needed working capital to the business.

The Six other Colorado Small Business award winners include:

1. Minority Small Business Champion Award winner

Richard Lewis, President and CEO of RTL Networks, Inc. is this year's Minority Small Business Champion Award winner. Richard has been active in the minority small business community as a member of both the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and the Colorado Black Chamber of Commerce. RTL Networks is based in Denver.

2. Financial Services Champion Award

William C. Bacon is this year's Financial Services Champion Award winner. Mr. Bacon is the Executive Director of the Community Economic Development Company of Colorado – an SBA Certified Development Company that specializes in 504 Economic Development loans. Mr. Bacon has been instrumental in promoting the SBA's 504 Economic Development Loan program to Colorado's small business community. CEDCO is based in Denver.

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3. Small Business Journalist of the Year

Group Award - The Colorado Springs Business Journal is our Small Business Journalist of the Year winner. The CSBJ has been very proactive in promoting small business issues in El Paso County and the Colorado Springs area.

4. Women in Business Champion Award winner

Group Award – Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce, is our Women in Business Champion Award winner. The CWCC has played a prominent role in advocating for women’s business issues throughout the State of Colorado. The CWCC is based in Denver. **The CWCC was also named the Region VIII Women in Business Champion of the Year winner.**

5. Veteran Small Business Champion Award winner

Reggie Selby, 21st USAF Space Wing Small Business Specialist, is our Veteran Small Business Champion Award Winner. Mr. Selby has played a proactive role in making sure that small businesses receive their fair share of federal contracts at Peterson AFB in Colorado Springs.

Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award Winner

James Graff, Co-owner of Graff Turf Farms, is our Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award winner. At age 30, James runs a family-owned turf farm in Fort Morgan, CO. Graff Turf Farms is known for providing all of the turf for both Coors Field and INVESCO Field in Denver. Under James’ leadership, the business has become one of the largest turf providers in the Rocky Mountain region.

“I am thrilled that we have such a dynamic cross section of winners representing Colorado this year. Shawnee Huckstep is a perfect example of the ingenuity and innovation that small firms possess here in Colorado and the nation. All of our award winners represent the best of this state’s entrepreneurs and advocates,” **said Steven Muhlhauser, SBA’s acting Colorado District Director.** “I especially want to congratulate the Colorado Women’s Chamber of Commerce for being named our Regional Women in Business Champion Award winner. The women’s chamber has been a tremendous supporter of both the SBA and the small business community.” Region VIII encompasses the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

There are over 25 million small firms in America today -- creating 100 percent of all new net jobs; generating 50 percent of the private, nonfarm gross domestic product (GDP); and generate more than 57 percent of all sales in the country. Over 97 percent of all firms in Colorado are considered small – representing more than 400,000 businesses statewide. **For individual contact information on winners, call Chris Chavez at 303-844-0501.**

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