



News Release

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: March 2009
Release Number: 09-004

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Chris Bartlett, the President and Founder of Skaters Landing of North Haven, CT has been named the **U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) 2009 Connecticut Small Business Person of the Year**. Mr. Bartlett was nominated by Rose Bednarz-Luglio, Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies at Gateway Community College in New Haven, CT. From a home-based business in his parents' basement, with the help of three SBA loans, he has expanded Skater's Landing to include four sites, a fifth in the planning stage, a comprehensive e-commerce business and two associated businesses.

In Chris's early childhood, he had the dream of being a professional skater. He took lessons which led to a competitive career at the senior level. He achieved top rankings as US Figure Skating double gold medalist in freestyle and compulsory figures and International Skating Union Gold medalist in freestyle and figures. He then became a Linz Austria Skating Director and a "Disney On Ice" performer from 1986-90 on their World Tour.

Chris returned to Connecticut after over eleven years of being away and became head coach and director at two local facilities and began taking classes to develop sound business development skills. While directing the skating camps and studying, Chris realized the need for skating equipment services and products such as sharpening of skates. Chris started a skate sharpening business, named "A Cut Above the Rest," in a 120 square-foot space in the basement of his parents' home with equipment financed by \$2,000 from a friend.

In 1998 Chris moved his business to his first independent location in North Haven, CT which now serves as the flagship store and central office. He started with just an office in 1993 and by 1999 took over two more spaces in the same North Haven location to open a store and expand the office. He then opened the Boston store in 2001 which proved successful, so in 2005 Chris opened in Greenwich; in 2007 in West Hartford; and a 5th location in Portsmouth, New Hampshire is coming soon. During this expansion of retail stores, Chris also developed the full e-commerce line at www.skaterslanding.com.

The result in Chris's ventures have expanded from his parents' house to 4 physical locations with a fifth on the way, 14 employees to increase again with the added location, The support from SBA has also enabled Chris to expand into a full e-commerce site to serve every major organization in the ice skating industry. He also increased his SBA capital assistance to install a POS inventory system in 2007 to support sales which have climbed close to \$ 1,000,000 annually, from well below a quarter of that earlier this decade.

With the help of capital guaranteed by the SBA, Skaters Landing was able to expand, increase their number of employees and increase sales. The business has a team of highly trained

technicians that serve customers from four locations. The business has also branched into business development, speaking and educational engagements. Chris and Skaters Landing are involved with all major industry events, and Chris was chosen as an ice skate technician at five U.S. National championships, two World championships, and many other major skating events around the world.

Chris also launched Rink Management Solutions LLC in 2005 and Global Entertainment & Media LLC in 2008. Rink Management Solutions is engaged in providing consulting and hands on management for rink managers and skating facilities around the nation. Global Entertainment & Media operates SkateConnect.com, a World Skating Community. The site www.skateconnect.com is a social utility that connects members of the skating world.

Chris has been challenged numerous times in growing his business, but has risen with the occasions. Despite being laughed at by the Hockey industry, Chris knew the need was strong for figure skaters to have their own stores, products and services. He began Skaters Landing as an anti-stocking dealer as he couldn't afford the ongoing inventory costs, and creatively sold the concept as "custom orders" for each and every customer.

He has paid particular attention to the issue of employee development, recognizing that in a high touch, high end business, quality customer service is essential to survival and growth of the business. He has assembled a team of highly educated individuals who incorporates a wide range of skills, five languages, and the same dedication to the industry. During a particularly slow year he once extended the services of his staff to other industry players in an attempt to keep them fully employed.

Chris has been recognized on Fox News and covered in the Hartford Courant and Boston Magazine. 2008 marked the 10-year anniversary of the first independent location in North Haven. He works with every major organization in the industry (such as Disney on Ice) and continues to grow his business and the excellent reputation of the Skaters Landing name.

Skaters Landing and Chris regularly donate skates and services to inner city Washington DC programs. He is a member of the board of Skate for Joy, a nonprofit 501C(3) skating program based in Providence, RI, and Skaters Landing is a provider of new ice skates to figure skating in Harlem and New York City. Chris also speaks to business student groups and offers his time to advise young aspiring entrepreneurs.

Chris is an outstanding small business person who is committed to the growth of his business and the economic growth of Connecticut. It is a privilege to announce his selection as the SBA Small Business Person of the Year in Connecticut.

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