

For Immediate Release

History made at 2013 ABEX Awards

- Saskatoon, SK, October 28, 2013 -

For the first time in the 30 year history of celebrating business excellence in Saskatchewan, two businesses received the Business of the Year Award at the annual ABEX Awards Dinner, held at TCU Place in Saskatoon October 26.

Humboldt's Diamonds of Detroit and Alliance Energy Ltd. of Regina shared the award, sponsored by the David Aplin Group. Diamonds of Detroit also won the award for Service sponsored by Canalta Hotels, and Alliance Energy took home the Community Involvement Award, sponsored by BHP Billiton.

"We are very proud to present the top ABEX prize to not one, but two excellent businesses this year," said Steve McLellan, CEO of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. "Our adjudication panel felt that both Diamonds of Detroit and Alliance Energy deserved this honour. Both businesses have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments, and have made a positive economic impact on their region and the province."

Alliance Energy is an electrical contractor and maintenance provider. The company is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

Diamonds of Detroit owner Michelle Bankowski has built her business' success around the innovative motto "quality comes in a burgundy box". She credited her high school principal in part with her success, for his advice to her that her future lay in business, rather than academics.

Approximately 800 people from across the province attended the event, which also saw Anderson Pump House inducted into the Saskatchewan Chamber Business Hall of Fame. Anderson Pump House, celebrating its 30th anniversary alongside the ABEX Awards is a provider of water system products, piping, valves, and plumbing-related products in the North Battleford and Prince Albert regions. This honour was presented by ABEX partner Conexus Credit Union.

In addition to the Business of the Year and Hall of Fame, 11 ABEX Awards for business excellence were presented from a finalist pool of 56.

“It is an honour to have 2013 Business Leader of the Year Ron Carson, and all of the other category finalists, in the room with us tonight. It shows the calibre of entrepreneurship that Saskatchewan has produced, and these individuals serve as an exceptional example of what can be achieved. We are grateful for their contribution to Saskatchewan’s business community,” McLellan said.

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2013 ABEX WINNERS

Aboriginal Business Partnership - Affinity Credit Union

Sponsored by SaskEnergy

Affinity Credit Union, one of the 15 largest credit unions in Canada, recognizes that Saskatchewan leads all provinces in the number of Aboriginal people residing within its boundaries. To better serve this demographic, Affinity created a First Nations District (2006) within its governance structure. Today nine First Nations actively participate in the management and development of the business. Two members of this council are elected to the Affinity Board of Directors and are able to influence their financial institution through the democratic process.

Scott Flavel, President
306.934.4081

Innovation - Superior Cabinets

Sponsored by Innovation Saskatchewan

Superior Cabinets is committed to transforming the customer experience by providing innovative product, design and service solutions to its customers. They celebrate innovative ideas and continuous product development driven by their most valued asset, their people. With a work environment that promotes creativity and a customer-first philosophy, Superior Cabinets are focused on a portfolio that offers value to their customers and enables them to remain leading edge and competitive. The inventive spirit of their staff, combined with the production capability of their manufacturing facility, allows Superior Cabinets to offer unique new products like Fusion to the kitchen cabinet market.

Scott Hodson, President
306.667.6000

Community Involvement - Alliance Energy

Sponsored by BHP Billiton

Alliance Energy began in 1913. The company started as Sun Electric opening as a storefront electrical supplier in Regina, and eventually branched out into commercial and service work. Today the company provides professional electrical contracting services to the Saskatchewan construction industry. As an employee owned business Alliance has built its reputation on integrity, professionalism, reliability and quality workmanship. The company believes that corporate involvement is essential to build strong and healthy communities. It encourages employee giving and volunteering, corporate giving and support of the environment. The management team has identified “community” as a major focus of operations, supplemented by a giving corporate culture.

Paul McLellan, CEO
306.721.6484

Environment - Shercom Industries Inc.

Sponsored by SaskWater

As Saskatchewan's only fully integrated tire recycler, Shercom's environmental solutions efforts are focused on removing hazardous scrap tires from the environment. Tires are collected in an efficient manner to reduce its carbon footprint and then processed into an environmentally friendly and usable form. Quality products that enhance customer experiences, their communities and the environment are manufactured from recycled tires. Shercom also performs researching and development toward new technologies for tire recycling and recycled rubber use in order to continue to create environmental solutions, and works toward developing global markets.

Shane Olson, President
306.933.0600

Export - Bioriginal Food & Science Corp.

Sponsored by Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership

Bioriginal has grown to be a global leader in delivering omega solutions to the food and nutraceutical industries, exporting both locally grown and globally sourced omega ingredients, such as flaxseeds, coconut and krill oil. Bioriginal remains headquartered in Saskatchewan, with offices and facilities in Canada, United States, Europe, South America and Asia. Exports are the backbone of Bioriginal's business, with 87 per cent of total sales outside Canada, and 99.5 per cent of total sales exported outside of Saskatchewan.

Joe Vidal, President
306.975.1166

Growth and Expansion - Wilhelm Construction Services, Inc.

Sponsored by PFM Capital Inc.

Wilhelm Construction Services Inc. (WCSI) is Estevan's first and exclusive design-build construction firm. Originating with only two employees in 2007, WCSI has since grown to operate with a staff of 29 people, including site supervisors, project coordinators, designers, technologists, accountants, carpenters and labourers. Providing expertise in industrial, commercial and residential construction and design, WCSI offers a substantial array of project opportunities. With over \$20M in completed projects in the last five years, and with a growing team of qualified and professional employees, WCSI is equipped to manage an increasingly wide variety and scale of construction projects from concept to completion.

Nathan E. Wilhelm, President
306.637.3230

Marketing - Prairie's Edge Development Corp.

Sponsored by Handy Special Events

Prairie's Edge Development Corporation creates family-friendly lakeside subdivisions that provide titled, serviced properties for the construction of cabins, year-round homes and recreational vehicles. The company is currently focused on their popular 50 lot lakefront subdivision, Water's Edge at Lucien, and the release of 14 new lakeside acreage properties. With the construction of a private inland marina and boat launch and soon-to-be-released titled, serviced RV properties complemented by ample public parks and green spaces, there is something for everyone to enjoy at Water's Edge.

Lorraine Forster, President
306.231.4630

New Venture - LB Distillers

Sponsored by The Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy

LB Distillers is Saskatchewan's premium micro distillery (not to be confused with the big boys at your liquor store), located in the heart of the prairies, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The distillery was founded by three fun flatlanders determined to make the best spirits using the highest quality ingredients. After years of getting things perfect they finally opened the doors in May 2012.

LB handcrafts spirits, liqueurs and cocktail bitters using old world methods, along with traditional (and not so traditional) recipes. Their passion is bottling the finest liqueurs and spirits, with a commitment to a vision of quality over quantity and nothing is bottled until it is over-proof awesome.

Cary Bowman, President
306.979.7280

Service - Diamonds of Detroit

Sponsored by Canalta Hotels

In 1985 Diamonds of Detroit was established, and since then the company has created a history of growth by delivering exceptional customer service through exceeding customers' expectations. Its mission statement "Create an ultimate buying experience with integrity and professionalism that will result in a lifelong customer" is its cornerstone. Commitment, dedication and the resolution to deliver exceptional customer service one customer at a time underline the company's never-ending journey to excellence. There are no quick fixes to service - they just don't exist. The Diamonds of Detroit's signature burgundy box has become an icon symbolizing quality craftsmanship and superior customer service.

Michelle Bankowski, President
306.682.4130

Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award - Kelly Burns/KDB Investments Inc.

Sponsored by Cameco

KDB Investments started with two hotdog carts in 2003. In 2005, Kelly brought the Mongolie Grill to Regina, and in 2008 he started The Hub Sports Bar. In 2011, he opened the first Browns Socialhouse out of B. C. and since then, he has opened other locations in Regina, Saskatoon, and Vancouver and Vernon B.C. He has acquired the rights to a 10-store multi unit deal throughout Saskatchewan and a 10 store multi unit deal in Winnipeg. Kelly is the largest franchisee for Browns in less than two years, and has new stores in Moose Jaw and Yorkton to be completed in 2013.

Kelly Burns, President
306.536.9980