

June 11, 2007

Small Business Development Center Counselor and Two Businesses Receive Accolades

CANTON – A SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center (SBDC) business advisor and two of the businesses the agency works with have won prestigious business awards.



ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY CHAMBER AWARDED - The St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, under the direction of Karen M. St. Hilaire, was selected as the 2007 Home-Based Business Champion for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Syracuse District. Pictured are (l to r) SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center Director Dale Rice, St. Hilaire, and SBA Syracuse District Director BJ Paprocki.

Business Advisor Michelle Collins' counseling has helped women entrepreneurs and young business people from across the North Country, and now, has earned her a Lead by Example Award through the New York State SBDC. Additionally, the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, under the direction of Karen M. St. Hilaire, was selected as the 2007 Home-Based

Business Champion for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Region II, and Sandy Maine, founder of SunFeather Natural Soap Company in Parishville received the Small Business

Excellence Award also through the SBA.

"Michelle has become the 'go to' person in Saint Lawrence County for women in business," said Canton SBDC Director Dale Rice.

“She has been a mentor to many women entrepreneurs and has reached out to many more with her roundtable meetings and through the recent Women in Business Conference.”

Collins has developed training events for existing business owners to assist in their ever changing business needs. She is an avid writer, and lends her talents for local organizations and for Absolutely Business magazine. She

is a board member of the Norfolk-Norwood Minor Hockey Association and the SunFeather Soap Foundation, which was started to help raise funds to make it easier for

small businesses to get started in the area. “Michelle created the strategic plan for the foundation and is instrumental in keeping the foundation on task,” Rice pointed out.

While all the initiatives the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce spearheads are for the benefit and improvement of the small business environment, one particular chamber effort has resulted in positive outcomes for home-based businesses specifically. The chamber’s Northern Adirondack Trading Cooperative (NATC) has served nearly 100 home based businesses with training and business development assistance. The program has gained wide recognition for its success in successfully bringing the area’s cottage industry into the world of e-commerce.

The NATC initiative was endorsed by U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and Assemblywoman Deirdre Scozzafava.



COLLINS LAUDED –SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Business Advisor Michelle Collins has earned a Lead by Example Award through the New York State SBDC. Pictured are (l to r) Business Advisor Julie Williams, Canton SBDC Director Dale Rice, Collins, SBDC Office Manager Linda LaParr, and SBA Region II Administrator William Manger.



"I am so pleased that the St Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce is being recognized again for this incredible initiative. What started as a great idea has now become an engine of growth and employment," said Clinton. "Our purpose was to combine the buying and selling power of eBay with the principles of micro enterprise to create employment and wealth in the North Country and now we are seeing the fruits of our labor across the state and beyond. We wanted to create a global marketplace for local products and thanks to the incredible work of Karen St Hilaire, the St Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce and everyone involved in this project, we continue to see incredible results. Not only are our local companies competing on the global stage, this initiative is creating jobs and providing the essential infrastructure to help the trend continue."



SUNFEATHER DECORATED - SunFeather Natural Soap Company Owner and CEO Sandy Maine of Parishville received the Small Business Excellence Award through the Small Business Administration (SBA). Pictured are (l to r) New York Business Development Corporation President and CEO Patrick J. McKrell, Maine, Sandy's daughter Clara Maine, SUNY Canton Small Business Development Center Business Advisor Michelle Collins; and SBA Syracuse District Director BJ Paprocki.

of the accomplishments of these two women."

SunFeather Natural Soap Company has been making artisan body care products for over 26 years. The business began with a \$15 investment in Sandy Maine's farm house kitchen and SunFeather is now a thriving wholesale and retail business that markets 4,000 pounds of soap weekly.

The company enjoys immense web traffic, owns affiliate bath and beauty stores and has received international acclaim.

"Both of the local honorees are guiding examples of what it takes to make business thrive in northern New York," said Rice. "St. Lawrence County should be proud



Mrs. Maine's efforts also extend to fostering other micro business enterprises. She routinely consults with soap makers who are working to grow their businesses. Recently, Maine formed the SunFeather Foundation which will soon offer micro-business loans to economically and educationally challenged entrepreneurs. The Foundation is funded by private contributions and services are administered by a non-profit board. All micro-loan recipients receive business guidance from SunFeather management and employees.

SUNY Canton offers a wide variety of career-driven bachelor's, associate, and certificate programs, as well as three master's degrees in conjunction with SUNYIT, Utica. Most of SUNY Canton's new four-year programs are designed so students can take them on-campus, online, or both. SUNY Canton OnLine features more than 65 courses online each semester. The college is moving to a four-year athletic program beginning in the Fall 2007 semester.

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