

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Business Community Turns Out for Chamber Gala

LAPLACE – Business people throughout the river parishes came out in support of the Fifth Anniversary Gala of the River Region Chamber of Commerce on February 6, at the Hilton New Orleans Airport hotel. Over 200 business people attended the event.

“For our region, economic development has never been better. Even though we have seen some cut backs by local business due to the much grander impact nationwide and even internationally, we still know that we have some huge opportunities with new business and industry choosing to locate and expand here in our region.” - Rhonda Hotard, Chairman of the Board

Anytime business growth is mentioned, workforce development follows. The Executive Director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Tim Barfield delivered the keynote address and enlightened the audience about his plans for reforming workforce delivery. Several of the key elements to the reform agenda include the integration of workforce development programs and demand-driven service delivery responding to the needs of business and industry; and strengthening the roles of the Louisiana Community and Technical College systems.

Winners of this year’s business awards were presented to the following:

Large Business of the Year - Marathon Petroleum. The timing of such recognition couldn’t be more fitting as the company is undertaking a major expansion project that will create 200 permanent full-time positions and approximately 75 – 80 permanent full-time contract positions.

Small Business of the Year - Louisiana Federal Credit Union. Due to growth and expansion during 2008 the Credit Union increased from 58 to 63 employees. In addition to adding staff, they broke ground for their newest branch in Gramercy.

Community Leadership Award – Penny Freeman of Preferred Home Mortgage. Penny is actively involved in the community. Some of her involvement activities include serving the vestry and ladies Alter Guild of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, serving as the President for the Rotary LaPlace chapter, and serving on the Economic Development Council for St. John parish.

Shining Star – Matt Lundy, Rewarding Events & Incentives. Matt has served as a leader for his fellow Chamber Members since the fall of 2006. He provides many ideas for improving the workings of the Chamber and for increasing Member involvement.

The Public Policy Committee was awarded Committee of the Year on behalf of its successful representation on issues brought forth at the local, state and national levels.

Blaise Gravois, Gravois Construction was awarded Board Member of Year. Blaise has done a dynamic job in ensuring successful fundraisers and sponsorships to assist in the Chamber's operations.

Kim Bourgeois, Louisiana Federal Credit Union, and Nicole and Anthony Landreneau, Millermark Creations, received special appreciation awards for going above and beyond to help ensure the success of the Chamber and for dedicating countless hours of service.

The event was made possible by the following sponsors. Platinum: Aegis Construction, Dow – St. Charles Operations, Entergy, Shell – Norco Refinery, Valero – St. Charles Refinery. Gold: ADM Grain, Louisiana Federal Credit Union, Marathon Petroleum Company. Silver: Echo Ventures Inc., International Matex Tank Terminals, NP Stein CPA, St. Charles Printing. Bronze: Advent Communications, The Basketry, Quality Janitorial and Restoration Service, Reserve Telecommunications, Rewarding Events & Incentives, Subway in LaPlace, and Workforce Alliance.

About the River Region Chamber of Commerce

The River Region Chamber of Commerce's mission is to grow, strengthen, and unify businesses throughout St. Charles, St. James, and St. John parishes. Key principles of operation are to serve and represent all businesses in the River Region and to be supportive of other business development and community service organizations in the parish. The work of the Chamber is carried out by three staff people and the tireless efforts of a core group of dedicated volunteers. If you are interested in learning more about the Chamber or wish to become involved, please visit www.riverregionchamber.org or call 985-359-9777.

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