JEDCO Announces 2013 Business Award Winners

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(Avondale, La) – As the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) looks back on its most successful year to-date, it also recognizes the businesses, men and women who have helped to shape Jefferson Parish’s continued achievements. On Thursday, JEDCO announced the recipients of its 2013 business award winners at the JEDCO Annual Luncheon in front of hundreds of Jefferson Parish business and community leaders.

This year, JEDCO’s Small Business Award went to Kajun Kettle Foods, Inc. The local food manufacturer has been in business in Jefferson Parish for 32 years. In 2013, the company boasted 34 employees and a 20-percent increase in sales growth. The company continues to introduce their products into undeveloped markets, both in Louisiana and five adjoining states. Over the years, Kajun Kettle has been dedicated to improving the community. The company donated over $1.8 million to local charities and serves as an Emergency Feeder for the State of Louisiana, assisting in the aftermath of a catastrophic event.

Mitch Theriot and the Jefferson Parish Drainage Department earned the JEDCO Business Retention and Expansion Award. A local metal fabrication company expressed concerns about the erosion of a parish ditch that runs adjacent to the rear property line. The company feared the ditch erosion would compromise the stability of a fence that protects its property and investments. The JEDCO Economic Development Services team reached out to the parish Drainage Department. The response was immediate. Within three weeks, the problem was solved. This is one of many situations where the Drainage Department responded with a sense of urgency and professionalism. The work of this department instills confidence throughout the parish and provides proof as to why Jefferson remains an ideal place live and do business.

Billy Bosch, the founder of Be Well Nutrition, Inc., won JEDCO’s first-ever Innovator of the Year Award. Billy’s company, which manufactures healthy, on-the-go beverages for the busy person, has experienced a very successful year. Be Well Nutrition, Inc. won JEDCO’s Cordina Challenge, a Jefferson Parish-based pitch competition for local entrepreneurs, during the 2013 New Orleans Entrepreneur Week. Billy’s pitch earned him top prize, more than $50,000 in direct capital and in-kind services. This year, Be Well Nutrition, Inc. launched two flavors of the company’s product, ICONIC, and won three pitch competitions. The ICONIC team plans to launch a third flavor next year and hopes to continue successfully growing within the regional market.

JEDCO’s 2013 Chairman of the Board, Stan Salatue, presented Kenner Mayor Michael Yenni with the JEDCO Chairman’s Champion Award. Mayor Yenni has played an important role in moving the City of Kenner into the future. He spearheaded the creation of the Kenner 2030 Strategic Plan for a Prosperous Future, the city’s first comprehensive economic development strategy. With a focus on revitalizing Rivertown, Kenner’s 16-block historic district, Mayor Yenni obtained the state’s “Cultural District” designation for the area and marketed the city-owned properties to land a new Office of Motor Vehicles. Mayor Yenni continued a long-term engagement with JEDCO for economic development activities intended to create and retain jobs, while also attracting private investment. He has proactively targeted companies, such as the Coconut Beach sand volleyball complex, to grow Kenner’s business base and desirability.

“This group of award winners highlights the strength, talents and dedication to business found within Jefferson Parish,” says JEDCO Executive Director Jerry Bologna. “These men and women, recognized for their achievements, play a vital role in the prosperity of our community. Not only do they work to increase the economic vitality of our region, but they continue to give back and make positive change as we move into the future. We are so grateful for the contributions they have made to this community.”

The JEDCO Luncheon provides an opportunity for the organization to recognize and show support of Jefferson Parish businesses, while also highlighting the year’s economic successes. This year the event was held at the Hilton New Orleans Airport on Airline Highway.
JEDCO proactively influences the economy through the retention and creation of quality jobs, entrepreneurship and investment in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.