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WEEKEND EDITION

2010 EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS AWARDS

The best of the best

Chamber hands out 6 honors

The Excellence in Business Awards, an annual tradition started by the Newport County Chamber of Commerce four years ago, will continue this year with six awards to be presented during a breakfast on Friday.

This year's winners were selected from nominations in six categories, including a new addition this year, micro-business, along with large and small business, nonprofit, woman- or minority-owned business and entrepreneur of the year.

A selection committee made up of chamber committee volunteers and previous award recipients reviewed nominations in each of the six categories. The micro-business category was developed at the request of very small businesses that belong to the chamber, according to Jody Sullivan, the chamber's executive director; only businesses with three or fewer employees were eligible.

"What makes Newport County such a special place is the incredible diversity of our business community," Sullivan said.

"Each of these businesses exemplifies excellence in their categories and each are actively investing in our local community and economy.

"We are proud to have them as members and to be able to recognize their accomplishments."

Business innovation, customer service, growth, industry leadership, community service and other local, regional and national recognition were among the factors weighed by the committee.

The winners of the third annual Excellence in Business Awards are:

Micro-business: Green Envy Eco-Boutique, 223 Goddard Row, Newport.

Small business: Newport Prescription Center, 289 Broadway, Newport.

Large business: People's Credit Union, 858 West Main Road, Middletown.

Woman-owned business: Bright Ideas Early Childhood Center, 1272 West Main Road, Middletown.

Not-for-Profit: Child & Family, 31 John Clarke Road, Middletown.

Entrepreneur of the Year: Nick Liuzza, Linear Title & Closing Ltd., 127 John Clarke Road, Middletown.

Highlights from each of the winning nominations, provided by the chamber, follow.

WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

BRIGHT IDEAS EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER



David Hansen ♦ Daily News staff

Maureen Kielbasa, owner of the Bright Ideas Early Childhood Center in Middletown, is joined by some of her students.

In 1991, the Bright Ideas Early Childhood Center in Middletown was opened by Maureen Greichen Kielbasa, who left a position as a speech and language pathologist to start the program. The center has been operating successfully ever since and was nationally accredited for 12 years.

It is known for excellence in both early childhood education and customer service. The preschool, recognizing the needs of its customers, never has closed for snow days, has maintained small classes with outstanding staff, has a strong and current academic curriculum and has continued to respond to the suggestions of its clientele.

Bright Ideas has been a sponsor of local soccer, basketball and baseball teams in the community. The school and faculty are active in local organizations such as the Aquidneck Collaborative for Education and the Portsmouth Public Education Foundation. The faculty and parents of Bright Ideas have an investment in charitable organ-

izations such as the Rhode Island Food Bank, the Ronald McDonald house and most recently, Making Strides for Cystic Fibrosis.

Kielbasa considers her best asset to be her faculty. Many have been with her since she opened and all of her 29 employees are creative, enthusiastic and dedicated to the best education for young children.

The early childhood center recently instituted a new Web site that allows all its newsletters, handbooks, calendars and notices to be accessed online, better meeting the needs of families who require immediate access to events and notices from the school.

An emergency notification system allows Bright Ideas to notify every family of a possible emergency in less than two minutes. Improvements such as this as well as improvements in their facilities and increased opportunities for professional development for its teachers have been instrumental in maintaining a quality and successful early childhood center.