

Grant winners, Champs honoured by Chamber of Commerce

Local small businesses will be able to reach the next levels of their growth plans thanks to new grant funding from the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

At the Chamber's recent Business Excellence Awards, Chamber President & CEO Sandra Ferri announced the winners of the Rise Up and Business Grants, two initiatives introduced by the organization this year.

The RiseUp Grant is awarded to two for-profit companies that have been in business for two years or less and have generated annual profits of \$50,000 or under.

"You must be in the start-up stage and been in business for less than two years and have a real plan on how the funds will be used," said Ferri.

This inaugural recipient of the RiseUp grants were Reach Indoor Climbing and Studio Bokeh.

The next category, ScaleUp, recognizes for-profit businesses with a revenue generation of between \$50,000 and \$200,000, with at least one employee or contract equivalent and a "clear mission or purpose and a clear plan on how the funds will be used."

This year's recipients were Beverage Marketing and Paris Calling Patisserie.

"We received over 40 applications for the business grants," said Ferri. "They were shortlisted based on the merits of their applications and a committee of Chamber members and business leaders interviewed the shortlisted businesses and voted on them."

In addition to the businesses and non-profits recognized during the Business Excellence Awards, it was also a time to salute some of the unsung heroes that help the Chamber fulfil its mandate.

This year's Chamber Champion award went to volunteer Paul Martin.

The Chamber Champion Award goes to an individual or business who goes above and beyond supporting the chamber. This year's recipient is a volunteer like no other, and although most of you have not met him in person, you've likely talked to him on the phone, and I would guess he has probably called all 570 members that we have," said Ferri. "This gentleman arrived on the Chamber's doorstep about five years ago and simply offered to volunteer. He was familiar with Chambers and had been involved with them out east where he was a general manager in the hotel industry. He and his wife, along with their two boys, settled in Aurora many years ago and once he retired, he was looking for ways to fill his days to volunteer within his community.

"Paul Martin has been volunteering with the Chamber on a regular basis. He is usually one of the first to put up his hand when we need help at our events and he spends one afternoon a week at the Chamber phoning members with a courtesy call asking if we can help them in any way, reminding them to sign up for events and updates.

"Paul, we're so grateful that you showed up at our door five years ago."

Addressing the business owners and community leaders in the room, Ferri added: "It is so exciting to be here celebrating the amazing businesses in Aurora. We celebrated the businesses that were nominated, but we also celebrated four up and coming businesses that were given \$2,500 each from the Chamber as part of the StartUp and RiseUp grants, to help move their businesses along the success trajectory. All in all, it was one of our best celebrations of business excellence yet."

By Brock Weir
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