

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 20, 2020

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AWB Honors Outstanding Washington Employers

Special event recognizes thriving workplaces, community service and entrepreneurs

OLYMPIA — The Association of Washington Business presented its top awards to nine employers Thursday at the annual Evening of Excellence.

The event, sponsored by Banner Bank, was presented as a live online broadcast from AWB's studios in Olympia. The program celebrated the innovations of the private sector in a challenging year.

Family-owned firms, businesses that support veterans and employers that have successfully adapted to the pandemic were among those honored.

"Washington employers continue to create jobs and innovative solutions that support our state during the coronavirus pandemic," AWB President Kris Johnson said. "Employers have kept our supply chains open, switched their operations to make personal protective equipment, and set good examples of safe operations during the outbreak. This is our chance to say thank you."

Each of the nine award categories listed below align with AWB's mission and vision.

For high-resolution photos of this year's Evening of Excellence, please contact AWB's Brian Mittge at BrianM@awb.org.

Employer of the Year: Recognizes an employer that has implemented innovative job retention, creation, benefits, and/or compensation plans that foster a thriving work environment.

Winner: CM Heating of Everett is making a name for itself in the North Sound. Started in 1983 as a one-person chimney sweep operation, they're now a top-rated HVAC company with numerous accolades from the likes of Inc.com and the American Business Awards. Employees enjoy four-day work weeks, paid training, fun team and travel rewards – which all leads to very happy customers. They promise “there’s no beating CM Heating” – and with a long list of quality and satisfaction guarantees, they keep that promise.

Finalists:
Big Time Brewery
Dick's Drive-In

Entrepreneur of the Year: Given to an entrepreneur whose business is less than five years-old and has made a significant impact in their industry.

Winner: Vaagen Timbers is a leader in cross-laminated timber technology. The company specializes in harvesting small logs from forest restoration activities that would not normally be useful in standard timber practices. This process creates large but lightweight, aesthetic beams that are cost-effective, strong and easy to assemble. Vaagen Timbers is creating the construction products of tomorrow – today.

Finalists:

Airborne Motorworks

Humming Hemp

(New this year) Excellence in Washington Family-Owned Business: Given to a family-owned business that is setting the standard for excellence and success by growing the business, serving their communities and paying close attention to the personal touch in customer service.

Winner: Spokane Valley's **Dishman Dodge Ram Chrysler Jeep** is a remarkable family story. Founder Mark Hollenback first purchased what would be the foundation of this family-owned dealership in 1964. The franchise grew through numerous acquisitions, and in 1996, Mark's daughter Marti took over the company. Her sons, Mark and Matt, are now in charge of the dealership and a fourth generation, Cadee, has joined in as a dealership spokesperson. In all, Dishman has had 13 family members on staff, and provides jobs for more than 100 people in the Inland Empire.

Finalists:

Big Time Brewery

JT Painting Company

(New this year) Washington Veterans and Families Award: Recognizing employers who have developed and applied hiring and retention best practices for addressing the employment challenges faced by veterans, transitioning service members and military spouses.

Winner: Nine9Line Veterans Services began its journey in 2012 as The Veterans Resource Fair. The goal was to reverse a rise in chronic homelessness, hunger, mental health issues and lack of access to services among veterans. Federal and local support continued to grow, and in 2016, Nine9Line was officially born and relocated to Tacoma. Today they serve more than 5,000 veterans annually through four separate programs: a resource fair, peer support and transition, an outdoor activities track, and a mental health course for veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Finalists:

Service 2 Software

Washington River Protection Solutions

(New this year) Washington Resiliency Award: Recognizing an employer that has shown resilience and determination overcoming difficult obstacles and demonstrates leadership in carrying out initiatives addressing safety, community resiliency, or financial threats related to an emerging, immediate or long-term community crisis, while considering the varying needs of all residents of the region.

Winner: When facing the biggest drop in ticket sales in the history of aviation, **Alaska Airlines** developed a three-part plan to get through the pandemic. This included implementing their Next-Level Care program to maintain the health and safety of their employees and guests, reducing costs and capacity to ensure long-term survival, and through it all, maintaining the high level of excellence that customers have come to expect. In the second quarter of this year, Alaska returned 43 jets back into service, and reinstated all Horizon Air and Skywest Airlines aircraft.

Finalists:

Kaas Tailored

U.S. Martial Arts Center

Leading Environmental Practices Award: Recognizes a business that has put a priority on environmental improvement, education or outreach to its business sector and/or community.

Winner: Cedar Grove produces some of the most sought-after organic compost in the region. With processing facilities in Maple Valley and Everett, the company is responsible for recycling approximately 400,000 tons of organic material annually, keeping those materials out of the landfill where they would generate ozone-depleting methane gas. Cedar Grove products have earned industry-best certifications for quality, safety and performance.

Finalists:

Nucor Steel Seattle

PAC Worldwide

Washington Achieve Award: Recognizes a business that has excelled in creating, implementing or supporting a high-caliber education and/or workforce development system aligned with closing the employment gap.

Winner: Wagstaff, Inc., in the Spokane Valley has been a leader in education and workforce development for years. Collaborations with Eastern Washington University, Washington State University and the Community Colleges of Spokane have led to hundreds of internships and jobs in engineering, welding and machining. And recently, Wagstaff increased its K-12 engagement, with increased career technical education and business partnerships, middle school grants, after-school programs, scholarships, and their upcoming production and manufacturing academy.

Finalists:

Child Care Aware of Washington

Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Office of STEM Education

Washington Connect Award: Recognizes a business whose products and/or services have positively impacted the way in which Washington employers and communities are connected to each other and the world.

Winner: For nearly 20 years, Auburn's **Skills Inc.** has helped connect at-risk youth with a diploma and a better chance at a career. Their Aerospace Internship Program offers students with learning disabilities career and technical education credits for their work in applied math, reading comprehension and work readiness, while guiding them to apply their knowledge in actual aerospace manufacturing and production environments. Participants have achieved a remarkable 95% high school graduation rate.

Finalists:
SiteCrafting
UPS

Washington Advance Award: Recognizes a business that has had a significant cause-oriented impact in its sector and/or community and contributed to the advancement of the economy.

Winner: Few organizations have done more to advance the call for quality, affordable child care in all corners of our state than **Child Care Aware of Washington**. For years, they've provided strong research to support this need. As the pandemic hit, the organization helped keep centers open by raising \$600,000 for hard-to-find supplies. And a true testament to this expertise came when the organization expanded its operation to serve as the statewide Child Care Covid-19 Communications, Response and Referral Center.

Finalists:
Kaiser Permanente Washington
Lacey MakerSpace

AWB also formally presented its Legislator of the Year Award, which was previously announced in June, and recognized Washington's outstanding manufacturers, who received awards last month during AWB's annual celebration of manufacturers.

Legislator of the Year: Sen. Mark Mullet, D-Issaquah

Manufacturer of the Year: Hobart Machined Products

Manufacturing Excellence Award for Operational Excellence: GM Nameplate

Manufacturing Excellence Award for Green Manufacturing:
Yakima Chief Hops

Manufacturing Excellence Award for Innovation: Novolex

About the Association of Washington Business

Formed in 1904, the Association of Washington Business is Washington's oldest and largest statewide business association, and includes more than 7,900 members representing 700,000 employees. AWB serves as both the state's chamber of commerce and the manufacturing and technology association. While its membership includes major employers like Boeing and Microsoft, 92 percent of AWB members employ fewer than 100 people. More than half of AWB's members employ fewer than 10. For more about AWB, visit www.awb.org.