

New Jersey Small Business Development Centers Network Celebrates 2020 – 2021 Small Business Success

Recognizing Businesses That Have Redefined Success

December 17, 2021 (Newark, NJ) – The New Jersey Small Business Development Center Network (NJSBDC) held its 20th Annual Success Award ceremony honoring the 2020-2021 small business clients who worked to have their businesses thrive. The event took place December 10, 2021, at the Forsgate Country Club in Monroe Township, NJ, and featured notable speakers and guests such as keynote speaker **Brian Moran**, Founder, and CEO of SmallBusinessEdge. Special recognition was provided to Legislator of the Year, **Senator Nilsa I. Cruz-Pérez (NJ-5)**, and Community Partner of the Year, **Melanie Willoughby**, Executive Director of the NJ Business Action Center (NJBAC). The event was attended by leaders in the private sector, banking, higher education, government, Chambers of Commerce, and other economic development organizations, as well as small business owners, NJSBDC Advisory Board members, regional center directors, and consultants.

Primarily sponsored by Bank of America, PSE&G, PNC Bank, and in-kind sponsors NJ Business Magazine and Innovate+, the celebration, which was halted last year because the COVID-19 pandemic, was extended to include a total of twenty-six small business award recipients, thirteen from both 2020 and 2021. The recipients were recognized for their dedication, ingenuity, and unwillingness to relent to the negative economic effects of the pandemic.

Applauding their resilience, NJSBDC CEO & State Director **Kelly**

Brozyna said, *"Things have been rough for everyone for nearly two years now, and we were so happy to be able to come together as a community to celebrate the spirit of accomplishment and entrepreneurship by honoring the businesses who have survived and thrived during these turbulent times"*.

Reflecting on the importance of optimism, Ms. Brozyna added, *"This type of celebration was a beautiful way to cap off a year and usher in good energy for the year to come."*

Referencing his participation in this year's event, keynote speaker **Brian Moran** said that *"It was a privilege for me to speak at this year's ceremony. Recognizing and honoring the business accomplishments and tenacity of NJ's most resilient small business owners in 2020 and 2021 is something I was really looking forward to. They all had incredible stories that are inspiring, heart-warming, and worth sharing."*

The 2021 award recipients, nominated by their regional centers, are:

We Care Adult Care (Tracey Wolfman, Owner), Red Bank, NJ

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." is Tracey's mantra. Having to close down months during the pandemic was crushing, but Tracey would not give up and turned to **Brookdale SBDC** to help her with a positive post-pandemic outcome. Helping Monmouth County seniors once again, she shares that *"Anybody looking to go into business in Monmouth or Ocean Counties shouldn't even consider it without the insight or perspective of the Brookdale SBDC Team."*

Crossroads (Lee Frankel), Garwood, NJ

Crossroads, a Cajun-American food with over 100 craft beers and specialty drinks, was hit hard by the pandemic, but Lee is grateful to **NJSBDC at Kean University**, especially **Vanessa Schwartz**, assistant director, and **David Margulies**, former regional director, for helping him obtain CARES ACT funding and operational guidance. Lee shares his gratitude, stating, *"Thank you both so much for your support and guidance throughout the course of this pandemic. Without the help of the NJSBDC, I don't know how Crossroads would have survived."*

Mary Olson, LLC (Mary Olson), Jersey City, NJ

Mary Olson and her firm's reputation in "Brand Intelligence" has been a leader in framing and designing business brand assets from the luxury market to artificial intelligence. The 2020 pandemic almost brought her business to a halt. **NJSBDC at New Jersey City University** helped her obtain a \$12,388 PPP forgivable loan, \$7,500 in NJEDA Small Business Emergency- Phased Grants, and \$4,968 from the Jersey City EDC (JCEDC) CARES Act, which helped finance and develop new opportunities.



2020-2021 Small Business Awardees pose for a group picture at the NJSBDC's Annual Small Business Growth Success Awards celebration, Friday, December 10, 2021.

Edward's Violin Studio (Edward Obermueller), Morris Plains, NJ

Edward's Violin Studio creates a learning and character-building musical environment in which learners feel the magic of music. The loss of in-person instruction in 2020 left owner, Edward Obermueller, feeling "shut in by the pandemic, and shut out by the potential cost of upgrading my marketing efforts." **NJSBDC of Northwest Jersey** regional director, **Matt Wells**, helped Edward identify value proposition key points and reassess his marketing view. David feels that "Matt Wells was incredible to work with, probably the best consultant I have ever experienced." He also worked with marketing consultant **Chris Pichardo**, who Edwards states, "has been instrumental in helping to turn my website around. His patience and care with each detail so that everything is optimized, is truly remarkable". The center also helped Edward secure a PPP loan, critical in keeping the business open through 2021.

Hartmetrics (Michele Delgado), Ridgefield Park, NJ

Michele Delgado helps organizations enhance their work culture. She connected with **NJSBDC at Ramapo College of New Jersey** for marketing assistance. Michelle feels that staff, **Kathleen Cronin**, **Ryan Greff**, and consultant **Greg Markowitz**, and his intern team, were all incredibly supportive and efficient. The collective efforts resulted in a 20 percent client increase and a projected 30 percent increase by the end of 2021. She is "grateful for the efforts of the Ramapo College SBDC team, and I wish to thank **Regional Director Vincent Vicari** for helping me achieve these outcomes."

The Puppy Patch (Linda Wisniewski), Annandale, NJ

Linda Wisniewski turned her passion for dogs into a business, but not without challenges. She credits **NJSBDC at Raritan Valley Community College** regional director **Bill Harnden** and his team with helping give her confidence and an "attitude change." Linda shares that "Conversations were informative and inspiring, and the staff is always courteous and attentive." Although the pandemic became another challenge, the help of PPP loans helped Linda remain open.

Residential Rental Homes, LLC (Daniel Ballerini), Moorestown, NJ

Daniel Ballerini's real estate investment business purchases and rehabilitates distressed residential properties for renting and fixes and flips. **NJSBDC at Rutgers University–Camden** has assisted Dan with operational and organizational counseling. Dan said that "The SBDC at Rutgers, Camden is an amazing resource. I have leaned on the SBDC numerous times as challenges have presented themselves while growing my business", adding that "The SBDC has been a great resource along the way, and I highly recommend that all local business owners utilize their services."

Cedar Hill Preparatory School (Nandini Menon), Somerset, NJ

Cedar Hill Preparatory School has garnered a reputation for excellence in the region. It has taken advantage of **NJSBDC at Rutgers University–New Brunswick's** guidance and service since 2014. In 2021 the center provided guidance and support in evaluating loan options and was instrumental in helping chart future goals for the school, which include moving forward with its acquisition of the farmland needed to expand STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) and recreational programs and move forward with its continued vision.

Golden Tropics (Carlos and Alicia Favaro), Orange, NJ

Golden Tropics manufactures, wholesales, and exports West African food products, grossing \$5 million in annual earnings. **NJSBDC at Rutgers-Newark** assisted in acquiring a 62,000-sq. ft. facility and is helping with private label expansion and acquiring a location in Newark. The company also obtained \$65,000 in financing from the SBA's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and \$150,000 from an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL), enabling the hire of four new employees. Carlos says, "The SBDC has given us so many insights about business management, international trading, and available business resources and programs."

Christine Willard Balance Expert For Busy Lives, LLC (Christine A. Willard), Ventnor, NJ

Christine A. Willard provides services that empower professionals and contacted **NJSBDC at Stockton University** to help grow the business she runs today, but 2020 catalyzed Christine to pivot. The **NJSBDC at Stockton University's** director and management consultant taught her marketing strategies, avenues for financing and helped leverage her network. Christine shifted her client empowerment to help them navigate the pandemic world. Her business has persevered and prospered.

La Cabana Bakeshop & Restaurant (Marjorie Rodriguez), Trenton, NJ

Marjorie Rodriguez was determined to pursue her passions: baking and cooking, but faced challenges. **NJSBDC at The College of New Jersey** center director, **Lilian Mauro**, empowered Marjorie with countless business information and loan options, helping her reach her dream but the pandemic forced a shutdown, but weeks later, it reopened with contact-free strategies. The SBDC also introduced Marjorie to several lenders, resulting in a \$265,000 loan used to buy the property.

Battinelli Landscaping (Tony and Allison Battinelli), Hewitt, NJ

Tony Battinelli and his wife, **Allison Battinelli**, owners of the award-winning, family-owned, and operated landscape design and build company, met consultant **Jim Palumbo** at **NJSBDC William Paterson University** in 2020. Jim assisted with an SBA 504 loan application and suggested they work with local banks, which resulted in a close to \$5 million dollar loan.

Maestro Technologies, Inc. (Kamal Bathla), Trenton, NJ

Maestro Technologies, Inc. delivers transformative technology that empowers clients to achieve business goals. In 2020 **NJSBDC** began assisting on how to bid for public and government contracting opportunities. Counseling with the procurement program consultant, **Andy Bennett**, resulted in enhanced branding to facilitate proposals requests which won six bids, created new jobs, and increased its 2021 sales.

The 2020 NJSBDC Success Awardee listing was revealed in a December 2020 [press release](#). For a complete review of all of the 2020 and 2021 NJSBDC Success Awardee profiles and accomplishments, go to <https://njsbdc.com/success-awardees-2020-2021>.

In addition to having spotlighted the businesses, the event also culminated the NJSBDC's yearly efforts to assist with all possible support and resources, reminding the business community that it does not stand alone because the NJSBDC network is there to help in all twenty-one of New Jersey's counties. With its capabilities and resources, the NJSBDC will continue to provide entrepreneurs the aid needed to create and expand businesses that boost economic development throughout the state. NJSBDC's November 2021 data reveal notable impact data, such as 9,691 one-on-one counseling hours, totaling 22,312 hours; 1,479 training sessions; 34,171 supported jobs, facilitated 1999,283 in loans and grants, resulting in \$126,119,803 NJ sale tax revenue generated. The organization noted that this data summarizes their work, but the business owners and their businesses experience real evidence of the quality of work performed. It is their journeys and thoughts that trumpet a mutual success.

For more information or questions about NJSBDC's 2020-2021 NJSBDC Success Awards Ceremony or the NJSBDC network, please contact Shy Hopkins at shyekah@business.rutgers.edu.

About America's SBDC New Jersey (NJSBDC)

The New Jersey Small Business Development Centers network, one of the first national pilot projects, has provided comprehensive services and programs for small business in New Jersey for 37 years. SBDC business staff, business consultants and experts help businesses expand their operations, manage their growth, or start new ventures. The network is equipped to help small business owners and entrepreneurs develop business plans, find financing, accounting and financial analysis, identify new markets, initiate marketing strategies, find procurement and international trade opportunities, learn green sustainability practices, commercialize technology and develop an e-commerce presence. This non-profit network is a federal-state educational partnership, leveraging funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the N.J. Business Action Center, the 12 educational host institutions, private sponsorships and additional private/public grants; and has approximately 1,000 centers and satellite offices serving small businesses and generating economic development across the country. The NJSBDC Headquarters, located at the Rutgers Business School in Newark, NJ, oversees the network, an accredited member of America's SBDC. Visit www.njsbdc.com.

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