



THE BRITISH
CHAMBERS OF
COMMERCE



CHAMBER AWARDS 2006
Regional Winners Press Pack
West Midlands

The crème of the West Midlands businesses recognised by British Chambers of Commerce

BCC announces the regional winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 in the West Midlands

17th October 2006 – The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and Microsoft today announce the regional winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 in the West Midlands. Now in its third year the Chamber Awards was developed to recognise outstanding business achievement within the UK business community.

There are seven different categories of awards nationally and Accredited Chamber members were permitted to enter as many as they wished. The award categories and winners for the West Midlands are detailed below.

Award	Sponsor	Chamber	Winner	Nature of Business
Microsoft Award for Innovation Through Technology	Microsoft	Herefordshire and Worcestershire	Bioganix Ltd	Waste processing business
Business of the Year	Composite Legal Expenses	North Staffordshire	GSH Group Plc	Facilities and energy management Company
Most Promising New Business	BT	Herefordshire & Worcestershire	MilSys (UK) Ltd	Equipment supplier
Business Commitment to the Community	Westfield Heath	North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Hanley Economic Building Society	Building Society
Award for Skills and Workforce Development	The Telegraph Business Club	Shropshire	Lyreco UK Ltd	Office supplies company
Entrepreneur of the Year	Yorkshire Bank	Coventry and Warwickshire	Lee Cash and Hammish Stoddard The Peach Pub Company	Chain of public houses
Exporter of the Year	UK Trade & Investment	Birmingham & Herefordshire and Worcestershire	Surgicraft Ltd	Implant and medical device manufacturing company

--	--	--	--	--

NB: For more information on each of the different categories and winners please refer to relevant media alert below.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said:

“I am delighted the Chamber Awards provide an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the success of businesses across the country. Those who have got this far are already recognised as outstanding within their own regions and I congratulate them. It will be tough to pick the national winners from such a high calibre of regional winners.”

Each of the regional winners received a certificate and they will all now go through to the national round of judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000. This prize will be awarded to the company that the judges agree should win the overall Award for Outstanding Business Achievement courtesy of Microsoft. Last year this was won by Anthony Alan Foods Ltd from Barnsley Chamber of Commerce, South Yorkshire, which has the UK licence to manufacture cakes under the Weightwatchers brand. Using innovative and ground breaking technology, the company was able to produce a range of products that became instant market leaders and have remained so ever since. This is despite fierce competition from existing incumbents in the market, all of whom are household names.

Natalie Ayres, Microsoft’s Senior Director Small and Medium Solutions and Partners Group added;

“The standard of entries received for this year’s Chamber Awards has been incredibly high. We have been more than impressed by the commitment, enthusiasm and success of so many British companies. They all deserve recognition and reward for the contributions they make to their industries, to their customers and to the country. We wish all the winners the best of luck in the national judging.”

The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

ENDS

For further information or requests for interviews please contact;

Judy Osborn
Purple Rabbit (on behalf of the BCC)
Tel: 07834 60 20 30
Judy.osborn@purplerabbit.co.uk

Notes to the editors:

- The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is the authentic voice of British businesses.
- The BCC sits at the heart of a powerful nationwide network of Accredited Chambers of Commerce serving business across the UK, which employ over five million people.

About Microsoft

- Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realise their full potential.

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Microsoft announce the West Midlands winner of the Microsoft Award for Innovation through Technology

Bioganix Ltd, a member of the West Midlands Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the regional winner of the Microsoft Award for Innovation through Technology in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006. The business (a waste processing company) won the Microsoft-sponsored award for developing an alternative solution for disposing of food manufacturers' waste and eliminating the need for landfill. The founder of the company developed a method known as "in-vessel composting" (essentially rotary digesters which are filled with pre mixed waste material) and has cornered the market. The technology has met a growing and urgent need (new regulations has meant that food manufacturers and catering companies need a new solution for disposing of waste) and as a result the company has shown strong growth and an AIM Listing.

Natalie Ayres, Microsoft's Senior Director Small and Medium Solutions and Partners Group said; "In an ever more competitive market, businesses are on the hunt for anything that can give that all important competitive edge. The most innovative are looking closely at their technology investment to identify not just where they can streamline their business processes but how they might enhance or create products and services. We are proud to celebrate the best of these ideas."

Bioganix Ltd will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000. The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said;

"Technology now touches all businesses. It is often the difference between success and failure. Bioganix Ltd has made its technology investment work."

ENDS

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Composite Legal Expenses announce the West Midlands regional winner of the Business of the Year Award

GSH Group Plc, a member of North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has been announced as the regional winner of the Business of the Year Award in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006. The company (a facilities and energy management company) won the Composite Legal Expenses-sponsored award for demonstrating a very impressive track record, its international dimension and its range of clients. The judges were also very impressed by the focus on its' workforce in achieving customer focus and for its strong people development ethos.

John Mullin, Managing Director, Composite Legal Expenses, commented;

“This award is reserved for the very best businesses across the country. Congratulations to GSH Group Plc you join a very small and elite band of businesses that exemplify this pinnacle of achievement. In all areas of your business you illustrate a level of skill for all business people to learn from.”

GSH Group Plc will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000, courtesy of Microsoft. The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said;

“GSH Group Plc is a business that really stands out from the crowd. The competition was fierce. Making it to the short list is tough and winning is reserved for only the very best. Congratulations.”

ENDS

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and BT announce the West Midlands regional winner of the Most Promising New Business Award

MilSys Ltd, a member of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the regional winner of the Most Promising New Business Award in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006. The company (equipment what type of equipment supplier) won the BT-sponsored award for its innovative products (they provide things like shelters to the armed forces), its growth record (considerable international sales already in place) and also its impressive growth prospects. They were under no doubt that the company is destined to be very successful.

Andrew McGregor, Head of Marketing & Strategy at BT Business, commented;

“Starting a new business is daunting enough, but to take it successfully through its’ first few years needs courage, talent and tenacity. BT is delighted to recognise this success and applauds those entrepreneurs for their determination and achievement.”

MilSys Ltd will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000, courtesy of Microsoft. The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC, said;

“Success in business is always the result of very hard work on the part of the founders. MilSys Ltd is an inspiration to all of us in business.”

ENDS

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Westfield Health announce the West Midlands regional winner of the Business Commitment to the Community Award

Hanley Economic Building Society, a member of North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has been announced as the regional winner of the Business Commitment to the Community Award in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006. The company (a building society) won the Westfield Health-sponsored award for the huge scale and depth of their commitment to local people, the environment and the disabled. They work in partnership with Stoke-on-Trent Greensteps projects which funds local environment issues such as river cleansing and tree planting. The company also acts as mentors to the Prince's Youth Trust's start-up businesses, as well as sponsoring education rooms at the new Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

Jill Davies, Executive Director, Sales and Marketing, Westfield Health said;

“For many businesses the contribution they make to their community stops at the payment of taxes or salaries to employees. The winner of this award sees its role in much broader terms. It shows us that seeking to improve the communities in which you operate is not just a moral obligation but a business opportunity too.”

Hanley Economic Building Society will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000, courtesy of Microsoft. The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said;

“Business has always been the economic backbone of our society but now many of us want to go much further than this. The winner of this award shows us how you can combine your business objectives with a desire to positively impact your local community.”

ENDS

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and the Telegraph Business Club announce the West Midlands regional winner of the Award for Skills and Workforce Development

Lyreco UK Ltd, a member of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the regional winner of the Award for Skills and Workforce Development in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006. The organisation (an office supplies company) won the Telegraph Business Club-sponsored award because the judges were impressed by the company's strong commitment to reinforcing the link between skills development and the bottom line. The company has an eight person team responsible for training. The model they follow is unusual as the trainers are not professional trainers but the people who have previously been successful in the job role that they now train others to do. They are themselves trained to do an NVQ or a certificate in training and then after 2-3 years promoted into bigger jobs within the company.

"Every week the Business Club page in the Daily Telegraph reveals the 'Secrets of Success' of an exceptionally talented entrepreneur," says David Sumner Smith, programme director of the Telegraph Business Club. "And in the vast majority of cases that 'secret' relates directly to the performance of their staff team. The winner of this award provides another strong reminder of the positive impact on business performance resulting from investment in the development of your workforce's skills."

Lyreco UK Ltd will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000, courtesy of Microsoft. The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said,

"The BCC has long been an advocate of the importance of investing in the skills development of your workforce. A strategic skills and workforce development programme will be one of the most effective investments any business can make. The winner of this award sets a standard we should aspire to."

ENDS

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and Yorkshire announce the West Midlands regional winner of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Lee Cash and Hammish Stoddard (The Peach Pub Company) members of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce have been announced as the regional winners of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006.

Lee and Hammish won the Yorkshire Bank sponsored award for developing a fast growing and award winning business focussing on quality and the personal touch in a crowded market. The six pubs they own are all individually restored and have their own unique charm, as well as quality food and drink. The judges were also impressed by the strong people focus within the business and their ability to inject fun into the development and growth of their staff.

Brian Colquhoun, Head of Integrated Financial Solutions, Yorkshire bank said,

“Just as they say there is a novel in us all, everyone thinks they can spot a business opportunity and create a successful company. This is not true. Entrepreneurs are rare. This award recognises the achievements of the best.”

Lee and Hammish will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000, courtesy of Microsoft. The National Winners of the Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said,

“Entrepreneurs are the pioneers of the modern age. They take risks. They spot opportunities when most of us see barriers. The finalists of this award are members of an all too small elite club in this country.”

ENDS

MEDIA ALERT:

BCC and UK Trade & Investment announce the West Midlands winner of the Exporter of the Year Award

Surgicraft, a member of both the Birmingham and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, has been announced as the regional winner of the Exporter of the Year Award in the West Midlands for the Chamber Awards 2006. The organisation (an orthopaedic implant and medical device company) won the UK Trade & Investment sponsored award for becoming a recognised brand in the world's largest spinal implant device market in just one year. They have given some big companies in the US a huge surprise and are doing well in an impressive number of other markets.

Andrew Cahn, Chief Executive of UK Trade & Investment commented:

"I am delighted that UK Trade & Investment is sponsoring this award, and congratulate Surgicraft on becoming regional winner for the West Midlands region. Exporters like Surgicraft make a crucial contribution to the economy and it is good to see them receiving recognition for this. I wish them all the best in the national competition.

Surgicraft will now go through to national judging and the chance to win the top prize of £25,000, courtesy of Microsoft. The National Winners of Chamber Awards 2006 will be announced at a Gala Dinner at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, London on the 23rd November 2006.

Peter Mileham, President of the BCC said,

"Making a success of your business in your local community or the UK is tough enough – extending that into international markets takes courage and skill. Congratulations to Surgicraft. Export markets are all too often an untapped business opportunity. You have shown what can be achieved."

ENDS

Note to the editor:

UK Trade & Investment is the lead government organisation that provides support for UK companies looking to develop international business. It also provides support for overseas companies wishing to invest in the UK. UK Trade & Investment has a wide range of services, backed-up by a network of trade advisors around the UK and worldwide who can provide market intelligence, advice on regulations, sales leads, and financial and practical support.