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SBA Honors Emerging 200 Initiative Graduates - - Small Businesses Who Are Impacting Boston's Inner City

Boston – The U.S. Small Business Administration recognized 20 small businesses today in a graduation ceremony in Boston. The goal of the SBA Emerging 200 initiative, started last Spring, was to identify 200 inner-city businesses across the country that show a high potential for growth—and to provide them the network, resources and motivation required to build a sustainable business of size and scale within a designated inner-city geographic location.

Boston was selected to participate in the SBA's Emerging 200 Initiative (e200) and 20 businesses signed up. SBA selected Cambridge-based InnerCity Entrepreneurs to conduct the executive training aspect of SBA's Emerging 200 initiative, a jobs and growth stimulation effort targeting promising inner-city small businesses.

The CEOs and small business owners who have graduated from the program have produced a three-year strategic growth plan with benchmarks and performance targets. They were trained further to target their business strategies to accelerate growth, explore financing, diversify markets and expand their networking.

Jeff Andrade, Associate Administrator of the Office of Entrepreneurial Development in Washington, D.C. was on hand to present the e200 grads with their awards.

“SBA is investing in the e200 businesses so that they can invest in others,” said Andrade. “Small businesses drive our economy and keep our country vibrant, adaptable and competitive.”

The cornerstone of e200 in Boston was an in-depth 80 hour educational program, which ran from June through December, 2008, focusing on topics such as organization management, growth strategies and management, market development, and strategic planning. Graduating businesses recognized for completing the program include:

- A.J. Cleaning
- Ameri-Print Network, Inc.
- Audissey Guides
- Balloon City of Boston, Inc.
- Boston Green Building, Inc.
- Chan Insurance Agency, Inc.
- Cliff & Sons Electric Contractors, Inc.
- Cottonfield, LLC
- Fire Code Design LLC
- Fortunato & Associates
- Massachusetts Local Telephone Company, Inc.
- MSS Business Management, Inc.
- Onyx Spectrum Technology
- Peninsula of Boston, Inc.
- Rare Find Contracting, Inc.
- Signal Graphics
- tCognition, Inc.
- Thomas Construction Company, Inc.
- TummyToys
- Vici Slayman Associates, LLC

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The selection of Boston as an e200 city was a prestigious one. There were 23 cities nationwide that applied to take part in this initiative. Along with Boston, other e200 cities chosen included Albuquerque, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Des Moines, Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, and Philadelphia.

Adrienne R. Benton, President and CEO of Roxbury-based Onyx Spectrum Technology addressed her fellow graduates at the ceremony.

“e200 helped to re-energize me around all the *other* activities important to business such as, strategic planning, frequent goal setting and getting back to really reading and using financial reports – all things we know, but sometimes when you are the chief, cook and bottle washer, get lost in the shuffle,” said Benton.

Those partner organizations joining the SBA District Office to bring e200 to Boston were:

- The City of Boston
- The Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Boston
- The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) State Office
- The MSBDC Boston Regional Office/Minority Business Center

Participation in e200 was free to qualifying businesses. Criteria for participation included having been in business for a minimum of three years, \$400,000 or more in gross annual revenues, and a business location within the geographic boundaries defined by the SBA. Participation was limited to 200 businesses nationwide.

For more information on the program, contact the SBA in Boston at (617) 565-5590.

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