

Jeanna Sellmeyer named National Small Business of the Year

A small business owner from Oklahoma City who battled a brain tumor and overcame challenges generated by 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina to lead her environmental remediation firm to success was today named *National Small Business Person of the Year*.

SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills made the announcement here during ceremonies at the U.S. Small Business Administration's celebration of National Small Business Week 2009.

"Jeanna Sellmeyer is a perfect example of the grit and determination it takes to become a highly successful entrepreneur in America today," said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. "Hers is a story of beating the odds and coming back on top, surviving daunting obstacles to lead her environmental remediation firm and its 100 employees to a leadership position in her industry."

"In doing so, Jeanna demonstrates the qualities that make small businesses such a powerful force in the American economy, and in their communities," said Mills.

The National Small Business Person of the Year and runners-up were selected from among the 53 state small business winners, including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam, who are being honored this week in Washington, D.C, as part of National Small Business Week. The awards were announced at today's National Awards Dinner, sponsored by Sam's Club at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

The top winner, Jeanna Sellmeyer, 43, has led her company, the ASSET Group, Inc., to become one of the region's most successful federal construction and remediation contractors with just under 100 employees, more than \$45 million in revenues, and project locations from California to Florida.

An Oklahoma native, Sellmeyer founded ASSET in 1990 in California as an environmental remediation firm, providing asbestos, lead-based paint, hazardous materials and mold remediation services to private and commercial clients. While there, Sellmeyer was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Overcoming the disease gave her a new sense of purpose and made her determined to expand the business through construction and federal contracting.

In 1999, the company became 8(a) certified as a minority- and woman-owned small business. On Sept. 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington brought negotiations on the company's first federal contract to a halt, but a move to a newly established HUBZone back home in Oklahoma City led to new contract opportunities.

The company was well on its way when Hurricane Katrina struck and forced ASSET to reshape its vision. With new challenges came new opportunities, and the company was called upon to provide emergency services, including construction and remediation to FEMA, GSA and other federal agencies. In three days, the company hired 200 employees, deployed them to Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, and proceeded to complete \$13 million in aid contracts.