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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Pennsylvania SBDC Clients and Shippensburg University SBDC Earn SBA Awards during National Small Business Week 2017

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. – The [Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) are proud to announce that four small businesses and the Shippensburg University SBDC have been honored with awards from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) during National Small Business Week, April 28 - May 6, 2017.

Each of the four Pennsylvania companies worked with their local SBDC to grow their business and have been successful in expanding into new markets, hiring new employees, or securing capital to grow their enterprises. Pennsylvania's SBA National Small Business Week award winners are as follows:

2017 National Exporter of the Year Award

Rose Morris, President and Inventor of The Safety Sleeper, Abram's Bed LLC

Abram's Bed LLC, doing business as The Safety Sleeper™, has been named Small Business Exporter of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Pittsburgh-based company was officially recognized by SBA Administrator Linda McMahon on May 1, during a luncheon held at the U.S. Institute of Peace, in Washington, D.C. A mother of three, Morris struggled with finding solutions to protect her middle son Abram, who is on the autism spectrum, as he faced nights of fitful and erratic sleep. Her determination to help her then toddler-aged son lead a healthy life was the inspiration to invent The Safety Sleeper™, a lightweight tent-like structure that is placed on top of the bed, and includes padding and an air mattress.

Morris established Abram's Bed LLC in 2009. The business grew, thanks to counseling from the local Women's Business Center, SCORE and the Duquesne University SBDC. The Safety Sleeper™ underwent design modifications done by engineering students at the University of Pittsburgh, and now offers additional features such as an extra safety zipper system, an enclosed mattress to protect against entrapment, fire retardant material, stabilizing straps to prevent tipping, and frame pads. By 2016, the company had reached the \$1 million sales mark. The Safety Sleeper™ is now exported to 12 countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

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SBDC Locations

Bucknell University

Clarion University

Duquesne University

Gannon University

Indiana University
of Pennsylvania

Kutztown University
of Pennsylvania

Lehigh University

Lock Haven University

Penn State University

Saint Francis University

Saint Vincent College

Shippensburg University

Temple University

University of Pittsburgh

University of Scranton

The Wharton School,
University of Pennsylvania

Widener University

Wilkes University

Eastern Pennsylvania 2017 Small Business Person of the Year Award

Elvin Stoltzfus, President, Pik Rite

Pik Rite, Inc. designs and manufactures innovative, quality-built vegetable harvesters, agricultural manure spreaders, commercial waste handling and specialized vacuum tanks, dump bodies and debris collectors. Pik Rite equipment is customized to meet the needs of many industries including farming, commercial waste hauling, gas drilling, construction, and municipal waste, and is used domestically and exported to 26 countries. The firm's humble operation began in a small garage in 1986 and following three phases of development, it is currently utilizing 60,000 sq. ft. of space at its original manufacturing location in Lewisburg, PA. Dealerships throughout North America and representation abroad have contributed greatly to the firm's growth in sales. In addition to numerous vegetable harvester dealers, there are 225 spreader dealers and 52 tank dealers representing the company.

The SBDC's relationship with Elvin and his company is a long one; dating back over 15 years, when Pik Rite worked with the SBDC and two mechanical engineering professors from Bucknell in a design and development project on a new vegetable harvester. In the years since then, Pik Rite has engaged Bucknell University SBDC's specialty Engineering Development Services, as well as the SBDC's Environmental Management Assistance Program (EMAP) numerous times as they've continued to innovate and grow. Bucknell SBDC also helped with resources ranging from SBDC engineering staff and student consultants, to class-based projects featuring computer aided design (CAD) and structural finite-element analysis (FEA), including a year-long product design, prototyping, and testing engagement undertaken by a team of mechanical engineering students as their Capstone Senior Design Project.

"I believe strongly that if I can lead my team to be people of integrity then good things will happen, not just for the finances of the business but more importantly that it will have a positive impact in the lives of our employees, our customers, the community, and the families within it. Building a quality product is the number one goal and along with that comes the commitment to build long-lasting relationships with our customers. When offering products and services, the goal is to simplify life for our customers. The team listens to the end-user for ideas to incorporate into the product, which is what the customer is purchasing," Stoltzfus said.

Eastern Pennsylvania 2017 Entrepreneurial Success of the Year Award

Terry Weaver, President, USA Gypsum

Kutztown University SBDC has worked with USA Gypsum for nearly 17 years – since the company's early history, just beyond the start-up stage, through a major expansion and finally relocation to a new, \$3 million, 33,000 sq. ft. plant in 2015. The new facility features new sorting and packaging equipment just a half mile from the previous plant location.

USA Gypsum is a national leader in cost-effective gypsum drywall waste recycling, creating quality gypsum products for agricultural and industry use through drywall recycling. USA Gypsum recycles drywall scraps for beneficial use as gypsum bedding, poultry litter amendments, gypsum lawn fertilizer, and other agricultural gypsum products to industrial businesses, landscapers, and farmers. Using reclaimed gypsum-based products is a natural way to improve soil, water, and air quality and keeps that material out of landfills.

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“It’s an honor to win this award. USA Gypsum has relied on the services of the Kutztown University SBDC and Lancaster SCORE from the start of the new business in to the present. Kutztown University SBDC has assisted in business and marketing plans, review of new packaging and labeling, exports to Canada, SEO analysis, even reviewing PowerPoint presentations for industry and government and student intern research of markets and various grants for exporting, pollution prevention and energy efficiency. Both the SBDC and SCORE are assisting in developing ideas for succession planning,” Weaver said. “Various SCORE advisors – Lou Davenport in particular – have advised me about financial presentation and analysis, business planning and expansion, permitting and issues related to environment compliance. SCORE has also helped me with professional service networking as well as various equipment and technical advisors.”

Western Pennsylvania Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award

BreAnna Liberto, Clarion Center for the Arts

BreAnna Liberto has created Clarion Center for the Arts (CCA) that provides an art education experience dedicated to empowering students to be proud of who they are and to use their gift of art to make a difference in their communities. The Center offers classes in dance, music and theatre in an emotionally safe environment that nurtures creativity and self-expression. BreAnna’s mission for CCA is to partner with families in nurturing aspiring artists to grow into compassionate, confident and creative young leaders they are capable of becoming by providing quality instruction of dance, music, and theatre in a safe, professional and fun environment, fostering discipline and a love for the arts.

CCA received business consulting assistance from the Clarion University Small Business Development Center. More specifically the SBDC assisted with the development of a business plan, financial analysis, and market and industry research. The SBDC also worked closely with BreAnna on her well attended grand opening, which included comments from the Clarion University President and Provost, Senator Scott Hutchinson, Representative Donna Oberlander, Northwest PA Regional Planning and Development Commission Director, Clarion County Commissioners, Clarion Area Chamber of Business and Industry Director, SBDC Director and Assistant Director, and BreAnna's personal and professional mentors.

Small Business Development Center Excellence and Innovation Award

Michael Unruh, Director, Shippensburg University SBDC

The Shippensburg University SBDC provides no-cost confidential consulting and low cost training to small business owners and potential entrepreneurs in Adams, Cumberland, Franklin and York counties as a member of the Pennsylvania SBDC network. In the past three years the Shippensburg SBDC has also served clients, the region and the university through innovative programs including participation in a panel presentation as part of the “Go-No Go” SCORE workshop series and “Open for Business In York County: 5 Things Your Need to Do First,” an event to introduce technical assistance providers to entrepreneurs currently exploring opening a new business. Additionally, SBDC business consultants routinely present modules of the Boots to Business program offered in Carlisle.

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Here are just a few of the businesses who have benefitted from the work of the Shippensburg SBDC team:

- John and Noemi Halbrecht personify the definition of the growing ranks of encore entrepreneurs. Recently concluding professional careers, they “retired” into winemaking. Noemi attended “First Step” and “Business Planning” workshops she describes as “providing guidance on business planning, regulations and registration, and resources available to the attendees.” She also utilized the SBDC’s consulting assistance for guidance in the management of financial and inventory processes, and in building brand awareness and marketing their wines.
- Woman-owned business client, Sarah Lorei, is a dentist who the SBDC worked with to start her own dental practice in Enola, PA. Much of the consulting assistance was provided in 2014, including market research, business plan development and financial projections development. Dr. Lorei ultimately secured an SBA-guaranteed loan and opened the doors to her new business in May 2015.
- Benjamin Brown, a service disabled veteran who served in the Air Force and as a police officer, had achieved his Federal Firearms Certification in pursuing his interest in firearms and firearms safety, and had started an online firearms business. He began working with the SBDC in 2012 and in 2015 the SBDC’s consulting assistance helped him to understand zoning issues, and develop a business plan with financial projections that resulted in an SBA-backed loan to open a retail location.

About Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

The Pennsylvania SBDC network is the only statewide, nationally accredited program that provides high quality one-on-one consulting, training and information resources to empower new and existing businesses. SBDC consultants work with entrepreneurs in confidential, individualized sessions to help them with a range of business issues including testing a new business proposition, shaping a business plan, investigating funding opportunities, and much more. The SBDC program is a public/private partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and 18 universities and colleges across the Commonwealth. For more information on the Pennsylvania SBDC services and impact, please visit www.pasbdc.org.

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