

Chamber of Commerce bestows 2015 Business Alliance Awards

By RUTH LANGrang@the-review.com Published: October 21, 2015 3:00 AM



Review Photo/Kevin Graff Recipients recognized during the 18th annual Alliance Area Chamber of Commerce Business Alliance Awards luncheon held Tuesday in the University of Mount Union Hoover-Price Campus Center are, from left, Frank Minear, owner of Frank's Family Restaurant, Small Business of the Year; Mike Conny, founder of MAC Trailer, Spirit of Enterprise; and Pat Heddleston, vice president for business affairs and treasurer at the University of Mount Union, Large Business of the Year.

Frank's Family Restaurant, the University of Mount Union and Mike Conny were among those recognized Tuesday during the 18th annual Alliance Area Chamber of Commerce Business Alliance Awards luncheon held in the University of Mount Union Hoover-Price Campus Center.

The program recognizes companies and individuals who have demonstrated recent growth and commitment to the Alliance area.

Introducing the 2015 Small Business of the Year (fewer than 20 employees) recipient Frank's Family Restaurant, 2014 recipient Fred Cockrill, owner of Cockrill's Studio, said, "This year's winner opened in 2012 and has become a highly respected business run by a caring and friendly business owner."

"The business is clean and pleasant, the staff are very courteous, and the facility is very

family-oriented," a nominee said of Frank's. "During the past year, this business addressed the lack of a meeting place for businesses and general public by identifying a space that was under-utilized and remodeling it into a fully-serviced meeting room that's equipped with Wi-Fi, projectors, computers, and will seat up to 40 people."

Cockrill added that the business is community-oriented, hosting monthly community benefit dinners, and noted owner Frank Minear is active with First Church of God, the Alliance Salvation Army and the Alliance Historical Society.

Accepting the award, Minear thanked the Lord, his wife, his children, and his landlords, "who have not given up on me and who have really stood behind me and have really given me a facility to service the community." He also thanked the chamber and the community at large.

"Thanks to Alliance for helping me and helping Alliance be mine," he said.

Larry Haidet, general man-

ager at Lavery Automotive Sales and Service, introduced the 2015 Large Business of the Year (more than 20 employees) recipient, the University of Mount Union, which he said “has been a staple in the Alliance community for over 150 years now. The company’s numerous employees are highly involved in the com-

munity, including chamber committees, board events, Carnation Festival, the farmers market, One Book One Community, Artsin-Stark and many, many more that can’t be mentioned.”

“Today’s Large Business winner is truly a partner in the Alliance community, and one that works diligently for the better-

ment of the city and its residents,” Haidet continued, emphasizing that the institution contributes to the city’s local economy in several ways, investing in infrastructure improvements and sharing its 2,200 students as residents for eight months each year. He noted the university recently established the Investment Alliance



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Award, which awards the top eligible 15 Alliance High School students full-tuition scholarships, and a offers program that pairs students with executives from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to tackle real-world business problems.

“We kind of had a discussion amongst all the selectors trying to decide whether a univer-

sity should really be considered a large business, but the achievements shown in academics, athletics and architecture have proven that this year’s Large Business of 2015 is and should be the University of Mount Union,” he concluded.

Accepting the award on behalf of the university was Pat Heddleston, vice president for

business affairs and treasurer.

“We are incredibly humbled by this award. The community of Alliance has been so great to our university, and you are all great business partners,” he said. “Alliance is a community on the move, and we’re happy to be a small part of that.”

Attorney Randy Hunt, 2014 Spirit of Enterprise Award recipi-

ent, explained the individual award is presented to a business person who has demonstrated leadership in his or her industry or profession, developed and maintained strong employee relations, contributed and sustained service to community, and participated in chamber activities and programs.

“In my humble opinion, our recipient is the poster child for the American dream,” he said, introducing 2015 recipient Mike Conny, founder of MAC Trailer. Hunt said Conny started pursuing his dream in January 1992, when he borrowed \$8,000 and began repairing truck trailers out of a one-bay garage in Alliance.

“Through hard work, sacrifice, ingenuity, risk-taking and the efforts of many family members, friends, and employees, his dream has blossomed. Today, MAC Trailer and its affiliates and subsidiaries are the largest specialty trailer manufacturer in

the United States,” Hunt said of the company, which operates seven plants and has most recently invested over \$4 million in the former Terry’s Tire Town facility to create 300 jobs.

Hunt said Conny listens to his employees, offering wellness programs and encouraging them to get involved in the Alliance community through participation on several area boards, including Alliance Community Hospital, Rodman Public Library, the Greater Alliance Carnation Festival, Alliance Area Development and the Alliance Area Chamber of Commerce. The business annually hosts the Dump Hunger campaign to fill a dump trailer with canned goods for the Salvation Army pantry, he said, adding Conny has personally held leadership positions in the Alliance Shrine Club, Alliance Area Development and the Alliance Country Club.

Conny thanked his

family and the company’s 1,400 employees for their 22 years of support and others, including Hunt, Larry Pyers and retired Judge Robert Lavery, who were instrumental in his start-up.

“The city of Alliance, they’ve always supported MAC Trailer, from the day we started in a one-bay garage,” he said. “In our community we always find help. Everybody says you can’t find help. We’ve got over 1,000 employees here in a 25-mile circle. And it all comes from this community.”

The recipients also received congratulatory letters from Ohio Gov. John Kasich and Congressman Tim Ryan.

In addition, 61 Golden Spade awards were given to companies that are new to the community, under new ownership, have expanded or remodeled their facility and/or have added to their employee base in the Alliance area.

Major corporate

sponsors for Tuesday’s event were Consumers National Bank, Dustin Burgess Insurance Group (Nationwide Insurance), the University of Mount Union, HBK CPAs and Consultants, and MAC Trailer.

Sam’s Graphic Industries provided the engraved awards, and Williamsburg Press furnished printing services.

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