

Selkirk Biz hands out hardware at second annual awards

By Donna Maxwell

It's hard to top a night filled with good company, fine food and drink and the ambiance offered at Selkirk Golf and Country Club.

But last Thursday night five businesses enjoyed all that plus the recognition of their peers when they each took home a Selkirk Biz Business Award.

It's the second year for the awards and a total of 13 businesses were nominated in five categories – Woman Entrepreneur of the Year, Community Spirit, Customer Service, New Business of the Year and Business of the Year.

Master of Ceremonies Jean Oliver and Selkirk Biz president Connie Rapko welcomed everyone to the event and Ecole Selkirk Junior High student Abigail Curle sang a terrific O Canada.

Stan Halbesma, owner of Harry's Foods in St. Andrews, won the Business of the Year Award.

Halbesma was unable to attend due to a family matter, but had Selkirk Record owner Brett Mitchell accept the award on his behalf.

Halbesma sent an e-mail to The Record Tuesday morning expressing his thoughts on the award.

"I am very humbled to have my business recognized with such a prestigious award," Halbesma wrote.

"Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my staff, who without their dedication and hard work, this award would not be possible. It's because of their attention to our valued customers that I have the time to be involved within the community.



SELKIRK RECORD PHOTO BY DONNA MAXWELL

Award winners, left to right, Sternat, Shelemy, Feeke and Mitchell.

"I began my career in the grocery industry in 1975 and I am so fortunate that I still look forward to going to work everyday. I still embrace the challenges and enjoy interacting with my customers and friends. The grocery industry is going through some big changes these days but I look forward to facing those challenges head on and continue to work hard to earn the support of the Tri-S community.

"I would like to acknowledge my peers within the Tri S community. I know many of these businesses are deserving of awards themselves. The contributions these businesses make

everyday and the people who live in the Tri-S area are the reason that this area is such an awesome place to live and raise our families.

"Life can deliver unexpected challenges sometimes but with the support of loved ones, great friends and a supportive community we can overcome. Be thankful for the blessings we have and share these blessings with the ones who have less."

Mary Jane Feeke, owner of Benjamin's Gourmet Foods, was named the Woman Entrepreneur of the Year and presented the award by Colleen Allan, president of the sponsoring Sel-

kirk and District Business and Professional Women.

"I'm very honoured to receive this award," Feeke said.

"When I opened Benjamin's 14 years ago I really would never have guessed that it would have blossomed into the business that it is today."

Feeke praised her family and amazing staff and credited them with helping "to brand Benjamin's across the province.

"It's something I'm very proud (of) to be a part of Selkirk and to be a des-

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tinuation in Selkirk."

The Community Spirit Award, sponsored by the Selkirk and District Community Learning Centre, was presented to Brett Mitchell, owner of The Selkirk Record.

Joe Smolinski presented the award.

Mitchell said for him, the people of Selkirk help define community and their commitment to each other and to local businesses and charities reinforces that feeling of community.

"The circle of people in this community is strong and week after week we are very excited to tell our community stories about all of the great people doing these generous things to make it better," Mitchell said.

He thanked his family for their support and The Record's "passionate team", who collaborate to bring the paper to Tri-S doorsteps every week.

The Customer Service Award was presented to Rosanna Sternat, owner of Rosanna Sternat CGA.

Sternat thanked her staff - Peggy Gerein, Brenda Prychitko and Leslie Grandmont - for their dedication, and she thanked their families as well as her own for their understanding of their commitment to their jobs.

She was thrilled with the award.

"Having the firm be recognized for customer service is a continuous goal that we have been striving for by giving our customers the best possible service, expertise and quality work that we can," she said.

Sternat demonstrated why her businesses was selected for its customer service with the words she chose to explain their philosophy.

"To us success in business happens as much outside of the financial statements as it does within," she said.

"It happens over a cup of coffee, over a chance meeting in the elevator or in the grocery store. It's in the emotional connections that we make with one another as human beings.

"Business is not just about capital, it's about our connection, it's names not only numbers, it's faces not just financials."

The New Business of the Year Award, new this year, went to Shelemy Arborist Services and owner Guy Shelemy.

Shelemy said it had been a tough year for him due to a personal loss and he thanked the Chamber and his clients for their continued support.

He said his business has really started to find its way and he credits his clients for sticking with him and for their word-of-mouth support they've offered.

"I always thought that if I worked with trees the trees would speak for themselves."

Other businesses nominated for awards were REP4 Technologies, George's Auto Electric, Tim Hortons Main and Manitoba locations, Red Bomb, Sunova Credit Union and Big Dollar.