

# The Post and Courier

## Chamber gives nod to fast-growing companies

Monday, November 15, 2010

At its annual summit last week at Wild Dunes Resort, the S.C. Chamber of Commerce announced the state's 25 fastest growing companies — and Charleston-area businesses accounted for more than a third, including two of the top three spots.

Wild Creations of Myrtle Beach topped the list followed by Pegasus Steel of Goose Creek and government contractor Barling Bay in Charleston, respectively.

Other Lowcountry businesses recognized for their rapid growth were: Levelwing Media of Mount Pleasant, No. 5.; Lindbergh & Associates of North Charleston, No. 8; Nason Medical Center of North Charleston, No. 10; International Public Works of Charleston, No. 12; Vapor Apparel of North Charleston, No. 18; Sabal Homes of Mount Pleasant, No. 19th; and eGroup Inc. of Mount Pleasant, No. 22.

To be eligible, businesses had to be operating for more than three years, have more than \$3 million in annual revenue and be headquartered in South Carolina. The Columbia-based group is the state's largest pro-business trade group.

### Changing chairs

Chairmanship of the S.C. Aquarium's board of directors changed hands last week from real estate development chief executive Hilton Smith to Ken Seeger, president of MeadWestvaco Corp.'s Community Development and Land Management Group.

Seeger joined the board a year ago. Meadwestvaco helped purchased the aquarium's albino alligator from the Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, Fla., for \$10,000 earlier this year.

The attraction's vice chairman position also turned over from Robert Macdonald, director emeritus of the Museum of the City of New York, to Sheila Hodges, an 11-year volunteer who works primarily with the touch tank and Ollie's Trading Post exhibits.



File

Tony Deering is CEO of Pegasus Steel, which has grown from about a dozen to 150 employees in the past three years.

The new board takes effect as the aquarium begins developing a master plan for the next decade with Massachusetts-based Cambridge Seven Associates , a firm whose portfolio of past projects includes the Tennessee Aquarium and the New England Aquarium.

The planning process should take about six months and cost \$200,000.

### **Bright ideas**

Newberry County resident Charlie Banks had a bright idea and it won him \$5,000.

Banks developed a new method of manufacturing structural insulated panels that is faster, leaner and more affordable.

For his efforts, he won the grand prize from among 300 entries across the state during the recent

New Ideas SC Contest as part of the ThinkTEC Innovation Summit in Charleston. In addition to the money, Banks picked up a scholarship to a FastTrac entrepreneurial training program and a dream team of mentors to help him cultivate the idea over the next year.

Based on the idea's viability, innovation/vision and profit/revenue potential, winners were announced in five categories and received \$2,500 and a scholarship to FastTrac.

Banks won the engineering division.

Other winners were: Istvan Bogna of Greenville County in bio-science for a device that makes it easier to develop a scar tissue track for dialysis; Robert Horner of Charleston

County in environmental sustainability for a process that uses waste heat produced by power plants to dry bio-solids from nearby public wastewater utilities. These bio-solids can then be used/burned to produce energy as an alternative to coal and other fossil fuels; Gordon Jones of Aiken County in information technology/software for a website that will give first responders real time information on the emergency they are responding to based on data/videos submitted by the public; Lauri McLeland of Darlington County in the wildcard division for 'Speedway Plays,' a play mat for children to play on with their favorite toy cars.

Five \$1,000 honorable mention prizes were also awarded in each category.

### **Dockside chats**

Last year's State of the Port address proved a tough act to follow.

State Ports Authority chief executive Jim Newsome, not even two months into his new job at the time, announced at the annual Propeller Club of Charleston event during his formal introduction to the maritime community that the world's largest container carrier had reversed its decision to withdraw its local service.

A record 550 people came out for the \$95-a-plate dinner held at the SPA's cruise terminal off Concord Street. The address reflected exponential cargo declines that took Charleston back to decade-old volume levels, but the crowd came to celebrate the new contract between the agency and Denmark-based Maersk Line that runs through the end of 2014.

This year's address takes place Tuesday night at the Charleston Marriott

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