

Chamber recognizes Fredericksburg Region's business leaders at Annual Gala

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FREDERICKSBURG – The Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce honored area business owners for their business successes, entrepreneurial spirit and community commitment during its Jan. 28 annual awards banquet and gala.

First Choice Better Homes and Land, L.C. won the **Small Business of the Year Award** for a company with 15 or fewer employees. Owner Ann Black founded this real-estate brokerage two decades ago with the goal of running a hometown real estate company that offers its customers first-rate service. Despite the ongoing recession and a location surrounded by a significant road construction project, in 2009 she constructed a new 7,200 square-foot office on Bragg Road and fully expanded her business, to include bringing on additional employees. Ann and her team established a Community Outreach Fund to match the funds which agents systematically contribute from each settlement. Ann and her team support many local nonprofits with both funds and volunteer hours. She says, “We are a small company with a BIG heart!” and her company’s actions over many years of service prove that this is true.

Spotsylvania Regional Medical Center won the **Large Business of the Year Award** for a company with more than 15 employees. Since opening its doors in 2010, it has hired nearly 500 workers who help provide a wide array of inpatient and outpatient medical services. Additionally it pays roughly \$1.5 million in local taxes annually and provided nearly \$1.2 million in charity care to uninsured and underinsured patients in 2010. The hospital acquired Joint Commission status within one week of opening; in addition, the hospital has consistently been ranked in the top 10 percent of all 166 HCA hospitals for patient satisfaction and #1 in the Capital Division. Even before opening the hospital was active in the community, joining the Chamber more than five years ago and committing to the organization’s Trailblazer program since 2009. In addition, they have made significant financial contributions to Germanna Community College, the Rappahannock United Way, and many other nonprofit organizations throughout the region.

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Leigh Anne Van Doren, founder and publisher of **Fredericksburg Parent and Family Magazine**, accepted the Chamber's **Entrepreneur of the Year Award**, which recognizes innovative business owners and individuals who spot a market niche and seize the opportunity to fill it. Leigh Anne started the magazine 10 years ago to offer advice and tips to parents on everything from education and healthcare to the arts and family friendly entertainment. Despite the recent recession, she and her team have turned the magazine into a full glossy color publication. In addition to the monthly magazine and its website, FPM produces several special events throughout the year to support area families. In 2010 Leigh Anne successfully obtained grant funding to implement Science Saturday events which are geared to providing educational opportunities for young girls to become involved in science. She has served in several leadership roles with the Fredericksburg Area Service League, founded a Girl Scouts Daisy troop at Lighthouse Academy and is a current Fellow in the 2011 Leadership Fredericksburg program.

The Chamber presented two new **Economic Impact Awards**, which were created to recognize projects that have successfully been developed with an eye on revitalizing surround areas at the same time. The first went to the **Courtyard by Marriott Fredericksburg Historic District**. The hotel's owners were thanked for having the vision to bring a nationally recognized brand to the historic district, creating new vitality downtown and for the region.

The second went to the **University of Mary Washington Foundation** for its new **Eagle Village** project. Simply tasked with providing modern student residences to meet the University's needs, the Foundation recognized an opportunity to lead the way for the urban renewal and revitalization of the aging U.S. Route 1 corridor. They developed an outstanding retail and office complex that creates a strong connection between the University community and the local residents which will continue to expand into walking trails and additional upgrades in the next phases of the project.

Congressman Rob Wittman presented the **Prince B. Woodard Leadership Award** to **Tom Bricken**, an attorney with Sands Anderson PC. The award is presented to a person who has provided our community with extraordinary service over the years through dedication, leadership, ethics and example. Active in our community for decades, Tom worked tirelessly with others to help make the Stafford Regional Airport a reality. He has served as legal counsel on many boards through the years, including the King George EDA, the Fredericksburg Regional Alliance, the Fredericksburg Country Club, and the Archdiocese of Arlington. He is a past president of the Fredericksburg Rotary Club, an active board member with the Community Foundation of the Rappahannock River Region, a former member of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce board of directors, and a past chairman of the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber's board of directors. He currently serves on the Chamber's Finance Committee and Chamber Enterprises board of directors. Many will fondly remember his time as co-anchor with Joe Wilson on the local television program "Rappahannock Review" which featured local leaders engaged in lively, healthy debates on state and local issues.

BB&T served as the 2011 Annual Awards and Gala's **Title Sponsor**.

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