



Georgia Office

Press Release

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Sheree Mitchell, President & CEO of Growing Room Inc., Is Georgia's 2004 Small Business Person of the Year

--Her Company Has Grown to Four Childcare Centers in Columbus--

COLUMBUS, Ga.—Sheree Mitchell, a successful business and community leader, has been selected the 2004 Small Business Person of the Year in Georgia by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Sheree received her SBA award today at a luncheon hosted by the Georgia Lenders Quality Circle. The event was held at the Cobb Galleria Centre. She was nominated for her statewide award by the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center in Columbus.

Established in 1989 with the use of an SBA 504 development loan, Sheree's Growing Room Inc. childcare business is a phenomenal success story. Surpassing even her expectations, her company's four centers care for more than 850 children, employ over 170 people, and will generate nearly \$4.9 million in revenues this year.

A registered nurse, Sheree was awarded the management contract in 2002 for two AFLAC on-site childcare centers. In a couple of months following the contract, enrollment was up 25 percent as a result of the improved quality of service her company brought to the company's day-care centers.

"Sheree is a wonderful example of great entrepreneurship combined with a great sense of civic responsibility," said Terri L. Denison, SBA Georgia District Director. "We feel truly honored to have her as our Small Business Person of the Year."

Sheree has been active with the Columbus Chamber of Commerce for many years and is serving as Vice-Chairman of the organization in 2004. In other community service, she is a member of the Rotary Club of Columbus and serves on the Board of United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley as well as the local Girl Scouts and Better Business Bureau.

Another important community project for Sheree was the opening of the Columbus Business One Stop Shop (BOSS) in May 2002. She served on the steering committee for the facility and donated seed money to help bring BOSS to reality.

Sheree is respected throughout the state by the day-care industry. In addition to being a volunteer mentor to day-care start-ups, she has served on the Pre-K Peer Review Committee for the Office of

School Readiness. The office is the state regulatory body for childcare in Georgia. One of only six people on the committee, Sheree has worked to ensure high standards are met in all of Georgia's Pre-K programs.

In 1998, Sheree received the prestigious "Blue Chip" Award from Mass-Mutual, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Nation's Business Magazine, a publication of the U.S. Chamber. This national award recognizes one business per-state that has triumphed over adversity.

As Michael Gaymon, President & CEO of the Columbus Chamber puts it: "Sheree is a go-to type person...She will confront the challenges, work to find the solutions and stay the course until the results are reached."

Sheree is a graduate of the Columbus State University's professional nursing program. She worked in the Columbus medical community as a pediatric nurse and nurse manager for more than 15 years before starting her own business. A graduate of Leadership Columbus, Sheree is married to William P. Mitchell and has one married son.

Expo '04, the SBA's national small business conference, will be held in Orlando on May 19-21. For more information, please go to www.sba.gov/50/Expo 2004.

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