

It's a Clean Sweep to Success; Morris County Business Owner is Named SBA's 2004 NJ Minority Small Business Person of the Year

Let's a clean sweep to success for Tom Vazquez. It wasn't always that way. In fact, the owner of T.M. Enterprises will tell you that it was a lot of hard work when he and his wife Mary Ann started their small janitorial business from their kitchen table back in 1978.

Today, the hard work has finally paid off for Vazquez and his Wharton-based company as he was recently named the **U.S. Small Business Administration's 2004 New Jersey Minority Small Business Person of the Year.**

The announcement was made at Camp Kilmer in Edison, where Vazquez's company has performed a variety of services. In making the announcement, SBA New Jersey District Director James A. Kocsi said, that Vazquez was chosen for the award based on criteria that includes a company's **Overall Financial Strength; Growth in Sales and Profits; Growth in Number of Employees; and Participation in Community and Charitable Events.**

"After four years of service in the Air Force, I became a policeman for the Boonton Police Department," said Vazquez. "We had three children; you do what you need to do." So he borrowed a friend's carpet cleaner and started to market himself as a janitorial company.

He fondly remembers the company's very first job. "A local bank asked us to clean a small carpet in a walk-in closet," said Vazquez. "I'll tell you, we didn't know what we were doing. We put so much cleaning solution in the carpet machine that suds were everywhere. I literally was shoving suds back in the closet. But you know that carpet came out really clean and that's how we got started."

The bank was so pleased with the job they offered him more janitorial work in seven of its branches. While still balancing his fulltime job, Vazquez



It's a Clean Sweep to Success –Tom Vazquez, CEO of T.M. Enterprises of Wharton started a small janitorial company with his wife Mary Ann, from their kitchen table in 1978. With the help of SBA's 8(a) Program, Mr. Vazquez was able to grow his company from six employees to 70 employees. In addition to its janitorial services, T.M. Enterprises now provides its customers with construction and landscaping services. Since entering the 8(a) Program in 1997, the company has received 71 8(a) contracts for \$12.6 million.

enlisted his wife, aunt, sister and brother-in-law to help with the growing business.

Six months into the business, Vazquez realized that he had to hire an additional worker. By 1980, he had left the Boonton Police Department and put all his time and energy into the business. By 1990, the company had six employees with sales reaching \$340,000.

But it wasn't until 1997, when things really turned around for Vazquez and his company. "A friend of mine, who worked at Picatinny Arsenal, told me about the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) Program and said that it could lead to contracts with the federal government and that he would help me with the application," said Vazquez.

According to Kocsi, the 8(a) Program is designed to help socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to contract opportunities from the federal government. As a Hispanic American, Vazquez qualified to participate in the program. Participants of the program may receive sole-source contracts up to \$3 million for goods and services and \$5 million for manufacturing. Contracts higher than those amounts must be bid on competitively amongst 8(a) firms.

By 1998, Vazquez had his first contract at a U.S. Army Reserve Center at Camp Kilmer. But Vazquez credits SBA's Caroline Morton, his Business Opportunity Specialist, with helping him

turn his company around. "Caroline Morton sat down with us at our kitchen table, because I was still running the company from our home, and told us that if we wanted be successful we had to diversify, get bonding and find a equity line of credit," said Vazquez. "We took Caroline's advice to heart and I can tell you it is the basis of our company and our successes."

In addition to the janitorial services that it provides its customers, T.M. Enterprises expanded its services to include window cleaning, construction, interior and exterior painting, landscape construction, lawn and tree maintenance, and snow removal.

Diversification has certainly paid off for the company. Today, T.M. Enterprises employs over 70 people and has sales in excess of \$5 million. The company has 28 trucks and 27 have plows on them. Since becoming an SBA certified 8(a) Company, T.M Enterprises has received 71 contracts worth \$12.6 million.

Some of the company's government work includes a 500-700 linear foot boardwalk the company constructed over the Great Swamp in Morris County for the Department of the Interior. The company also landed a \$1.2 million job to install fencing around military installations including Camp Kilmer and Stewart Air Force Base.

"I am honored to be named SBA's 2004 New Jersey Minority Small Business Person of the Year," said Vazquez. "Right now I'm living the SBA dream. Our company would never be where it is today without the SBA 8(a) Program."

"Tom Vazquez is a true SBA success story and a prime example how the SBA can help a small business succeed," said Kocsi. "The SBA is committed to helping minority small business owners succeed more than ever."