



News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Billings Husband/Wife Team to Receive SBA's Entrepreneurial Success Award

HELENA, MT – SBA Montana District Director Michelle Johnston announced today that Frederick H. (Rick) & Nicki L. Larson, President & Vice President of Employee Benefit Management Services, Inc. of Billings, have been chosen to receive SBA's 2004 Entrepreneurial Success Award. The Larsons will be honored along with an outstanding cast of entrepreneurs and advocates at SBA's Annual Small Business Week Awards Luncheon at Missoula's Doubletree Inn on May 7th.

What began as an idea from an article in a trade magazine has today evolved into a multi-million dollar corporation in Billings, MT. In 1980, Rick Larson co-founded Computer Claims Administration, Inc., (later renamed Employee Benefit Management Services, Inc. (EBMS)) to administer a self-funded health insurance plan he had designed for a Montana manufacturer – thus launching one of the nation's first and most successful Third Party Administrator companies.

When the Larson's started EBMS, Rick quit his job with an independent insurance agency, but Nicki continued her employment as a dental assistant in order to support their family. In 1980, they had 2 employees. In 1983, Nicki was able to quit her outside employment and by 1997, when the company applied for and received an SBA 504 Loan to build a new facility; they had grown to a total of 79 employees. Today, EBMS employs 237 people, primarily in Billings, MT and sales have increased an astonishing 753% since the company's inception.

The services provided by EBMS have also kept up with the company's growth in sales and number of employees. Today, EBMS provides not only a claims payment service, but also a claims management service that integrates a team approach for plan management. These teams consist of a registered nurse, a licensed practical nurse, claims analyst, claims supervisor, eligibility administrator and a dedicated account representative. This team approach assures that clients receive timely, reliable answers to everyone associated with the health benefit plan. In addition to acting as a third party administrator for self-funded health programs, EBMS has expanded their product line to include provider services, pharmaceutical benefit management services, on-line services, regulatory compliance services and pension administration.

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Entrepreneurial Success

The company has experienced phenomenal growth and a reputation with their clients as being the best by continuing to implement innovative programs that not only provide cost savings, but also increased plan participant satisfaction. EBMS is headquartered in Billings, MT and has two satellite offices in Salt Lake City, UT and Portland, OR.

Kristi Summers, Vice President at First Interstate Bank in Billings nominated Rick & Nicki Larson of EMBS, Inc. Other award winners being honored include: William Woody of Nightingale Nursing Services, Inc. of Missoula – Montana Small Business Person of the Year; Jack Morgenstern of Century Companies, Inc. of Lewistown – First Runner-up Small Business Person of the Year; Jennifer Keck of Big Sky Travel Nurses, Inc. in Conrad – Woman owned Business of the Year; Ryan Deskins of R&R Pressure Washing of East Helena – SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year; Kim Wild of TowHaul Corporation, dba Smith Equipment USA of Belgrade – National Small Business Exporter of the Year; Mandi Luce-Heinle and Sarah Ann Hamlen of Innovative Marketing Solutions, LLC of Hathaway – Main Street Business of the Year; Jerry Sullivan of Flint Creek Valley Bank in Philipsburg – Financial Services Advocate of the Year; Sheryle Shandy of Billings Food Bank & Montana Harvest Kitchens/Montana Harvest Gift Boutique in Billings – Home-Based Business Advocate of the Year; Flathead Business Journal of Kalispell – Small Business Journalist of the Year; Craig Smith of the Fort Peck Community College in Poplar – Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year; Joe Fletcher of the Great Falls Job Service Workforce Center – Veteran Small Business Advocate of the Year; and Joy Ott of Wells Fargo Bank Montana, N.A. in Billings – Women in Business Advocate of the Year.

For more information on SBA programs and services, contact the Montana SBA District office at (406) 441-1081 or log onto www.sba.gov/mt.

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