



NEWS RELEASE

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Eleven Milwaukee Area Small Businesses Grow Their Companies from the Classroom Up

MILWAUKEE, WI – The U.S. Small Business Administration honored the participants in its *Emerging 200* Initiative (*e200*) at a graduation ceremony held on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 at the Milwaukee Sewerage District. Earlier this year SBA's *e200* program identified 200 inner-city businesses across the nation that demonstrated a high potential for growth. It then provided these small businesses with a free, six-month course of in-depth business education focused on areas such as organization management, growth strategies and management, market development and strategic planning.

In Milwaukee, one of 15 cities nationwide participating in the program, eleven small businesses were selected to attend 13 three-hour training sessions. They are the second graduating class from Milwaukee, which was one of the 10 cities initially selected.

“We were proud, along with our co-sponsors, to bring the Emerging 200 Initiative and its MBA boot camp to Milwaukee businesses,” said Eric Ness, SBA's Wisconsin District Director. “The Class of 2009 brought great enthusiasm, and commitment to the program and they invested their time in learning, building, and working on their businesses. The businesses came out with a growth plan that they stated was well worth the investment and gives them the road map to get to the next level. The Milwaukee economy will be greatly benefited by these businesses success.”

SBA launched the Emerging 200 initiative to identify and support inner-city small businesses that have substantial potential for growth and provides them with executive level MBA-like training, networking, and other resources necessary for success. The initiative's goal is to identify high potential, established inner-city businesses and provide them with the network and resources to develop long-term growth strategies to achieve size and scale. The 2009 program utilized the 'Streetwise' MBA program, developed by InnerCity Entrepreneurs of Boston. The instructor was Gene Wright, owner of Wright Innovation who is also an instructor at MSOE & UW-Milwaukee.

The graduates of the program are:

- *Sirrah Construction & Co. LLC, James Harris*
- *Comcentia, Dele Ojelabi*
- *Pinnacle Workspace Solutions, Fred Jackson II*
- *White Glove Environmental, London Thomas*
- *The Kopfmann Co., Inc., Robert Kopfmann*
- *GSI General, Inc., Benjamin Clark*
- *United Landscape & Snow Plowing, Inc., Linda Swift*
- *South Star, Inc., Eric Johnson*
- *Aleco Machinery Sales, Inc., Alex Hawley*
- *Absolute Technology Law group, LLC., Jill Gilbert Welytok*
- *H2D, Inc., Allan Haas*

Participants were asked to respond to the question *‘What lessons/tools from your e200 training have you applied to the benefit of your business?’* Listed below are a few comments received.

- “I learned the ratios through school, but I never ran my business with them; I do now,” from Eric Johnson, South Star, Inc.
- “I learned to dig deeper into my financials; they aren’t something I just stick in a drawer. This had made all the difference for the business,” says Bob Kopfmann, The Kopfmann Co., Inc.
- “I have started managing by the numbers,” states London Thomas, White Glove Environmental.

SBA recognizes the value of this opportunity to Milwaukee, and along with the valued members of our community supporters.

Cosponsors for e200 program in Milwaukee were:

- City of Milwaukee, Department of City Development
- WI Women’s Business Initiative Corporation
- Manpower
- Greater Milwaukee Committee
- Small Business Development Center, UW-Milwaukee
- SCORE
- Milwaukee Urban Entrepreneur Partnership
- Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewerage District
- WI Department of Commerce, Bureau of Minority Business Development

In 2010, SBA will continue e200 with an emphasis on Native American business owners from the Milwaukee area. SBA looks forward to working with our coalition and valued partners to this effort.

For more information on the e200 Program or any of the SBA programs and services visit www.sba.gov/e200/index.html. To contact SBA in Milwaukee call (414) 297-1099 or visit our website at www.sba.gov/wi

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