



News Release

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Five Women Business Owners Recognized as Tops in the Nation

WASHINGTON – U.S. Small Business Administration Deputy Administrator Melanie Sabelhaus announced today five outstanding women entrepreneurs who will be recognized as the top women in small business in 2005. The women will receive their awards at *SBA Expo '05* in Washington, D.C., during National Small Business Week, April 26-28.

“I am so excited to introduce you to five fabulous women entrepreneurs,” said Sabelhaus. “These ladies will leave no doubt in anyone’s mind that women are the economic powerhouse of the 21st century. They are innovators and job creators and they make clear why women are the fastest growing segment of our economy.”

The five winners of the SBA Outstanding Women of the Year Award are Daisy Gallagher of Stroudsburg, PA; Edna Lopez of Albuquerque, NM; Doreen Marks of Lyons Falls, NY; Sylvia Medina of Idaho Falls, ID; and Jean Thiel of West Bend, WI. A short bio of each and their business follows.

The judging was based on the following criteria: staying power, growth in number of employees, increase in sales and/or unit volume, current and past financial reports, innovativeness of product or service offered, response to adversity, and contributions to aid community-oriented projects.

Each of these women will formally receive their award as part of National Small Business Week at SBA Expo '05. The expo is a dynamic three-day affair that brings together current and hopeful small business owners, corporations, trade associations, federal government employees, and community leaders. Attendees participate in an array of events designed to enhance opportunities for entrepreneurs through valuable networking possibilities, unique educational information, and unparalleled inspiration.

Daisy Gallagher, Stroudsburg, PA
Chief Operating Officer
Gallagher & Gallagher, Inc.

Edna Lopez, Albuquerque, NM
President & CEO
COMPA Industries, Inc.

Doreen Marks, Lyons Falls, NY
President
Otis Products, Inc.
dba/Otis Technology, Inc.

Sylvia Medina, Idaho Falls, ID
President
North Wind, Inc.

Jean Thiel, West Bend, WI
President
Belonger Corporation

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Outstanding Women of the Year Award Winners

Daisy Gallagher

In 1999, nine years after starting her advertising and PR firm, Daisy Gallagher and her company became the first small business in Pennsylvania to be awarded federal supplier status under the General Services Administration's schedule for Advertising and Integrated Marketing Solutions. This allowed the company, which had expanded to a New York City location, to open offices in Washington, D.C., and Scranton, Penn. Gallagher's clients include the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection agency. Gallagher credits her success to advice she received from the SBA and SCORE. Since 2002 the firm's gross income has increased 35 percent each year.

Edna Lopez

COMPA Industries Inc. has provided personnel staffing services to federal, state and local governments as well as private industry for the past 17 years. The company, founded by her late husband Rene Lopez in 1966, bases its success on investing in the talents of its employees, and analyzing its customers' operations to find the right people to fit customers' staffing needs. Edna has been president and CEO of the company since 1996.

Doreen Marks

Doreen Marks developed a prototype for a portable gun cleaning kit at age 16. The prototype led to the birth of Otis Products, initially operated by Doreen, her parents and her siblings. Doreen's idea was patented, and in the years since Otis has created 180 products, earning more than 30 patents. Otis Products is considered the leading manufacturer of firearms maintenance systems. Sales have grown to more than \$10.7 million in 2004. The company is HUBZone Certified and has been awarded several large federal contracts.

Sylvia Medina

Under Sylvia Medina's leadership, North Wind has become a leader in environmental engineering and construction. With a staff of over 200, including engineers, environmental scientists and geographical information specialists, the company provides consulting solutions ranging from drilling and excavations operations to serving as a link to universities researching solutions to water pollution. The company's net income has averaged increases of 45 percent over the last three years, with \$23 million in earnings in 2004.

Jean Thiel

In 2000, Jean Thiel started Wisconsin's only woman-owned and American Indian-owned mechanical contracting company. The firm received 8(a) certification from the SBA in its first year as well as SBA-backed financing and bonding. From three owner-operators, one employee and four customers, the company has grown to 27 employees and over 200 customers. The company owes much of its success to Jean's relentless pursuit of projects and customers, and her unwillingness to take "no" for an answer.