



NEWS RELEASE

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HAWAII ENTREPRENEUR IS NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR

Wisconsin, California and North Carolina Are Runners-Up

WASHINGTON – The owner of a sandwich and bakery business from Honolulu, Hawaii, was named *National Small Business Person of the Year*. At National Small Business Week ceremonies today, **Thanh Lam, president of Ba-Le, Inc. & Db a Ba-Le Sandwich & Bakery**, was named winner of the 39th annual entrepreneurial award.

Mr. Lam was selected from among the state Small Business Persons of the Year representing the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. Mr. Lam is a successful retailer of Vietnamese-style sandwiches, pastries and noodle dishes, and a wholesaler of baked goods and deli sandwiches to airlines, food caterers, hotels, supermarkets and restaurants throughout Hawaii. The company is expanding internationally.

“Thanh Lam is a true example of entrepreneurial success and of achieving the American dream,” said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. **“Resourcefulness and creativity have been key to his success. Small business must be innovative in securing their niche in a competitive market, and Thanh has clearly done that with his business.”**

The **first runner-up** this year in the national competition is **Mary Jurmain, president and CEO, BTIO Educational Products, Inc.**, a provider of parenting educational products in Eau Claire, Wis. Second runner-up is **Belinda Guadarrama, president and CEO, GC Micro Corporation**, a supplier of computer hardware and software products in Novato, Calif. The Third runner-up is **Mildred Council, president of Mama Dip’s Country Kitchen** in Chapel Hill, N.C.

The national small business awards are a highlight of SBA’s National Small Business Week celebration, May 6-8. National Small Business Week, now in its 39th year, honors the contributions of the nation’s small business owners. The winners are selected on their record of stability, growth in employment and sales, financial condition, innovation, response to adversity, and community service.

When he arrived in the United States from a Malaysian refugee camp in 1979, Mr. Lam had little money and only minimal knowledge of English. By December 1984, he opened the

first Ba-Le sandwich shop. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Lam was also baking and selling his own bread. In 1986, after securing an SBA-guaranteed loan to refurbish the equipment, Mr. Lam's business truly began to flourish. In 1996, he began offering catering services and moved operations to a 15,000 square-foot warehouse. By 1999, Mr. Lam's satisfied customers included the Hilton and Sheraton hotel chains, as well as such airlines as Continental, Japan Airlines, Delta, American, United, China Airlines and Air New Zealand. Mr. Lam also produces fresh pizza dough for Papa John's in Hawaii. The business is expanding to Japan and China.

Ms. Jurmain's Baby Think It Over® infant simulator and accompanying program materials have evolved into a comprehensive parenting education program. The Baby Think It Over® program teaches teenagers about the responsibilities of parenting in an effort to help reduce the alarming rate of teenage pregnancy. More than one million teens have gone through the program. BTIO Educational Products, Inc. is also seeing a continually growing presence internationally with direct sales in Canada, and distributors in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and Japan.

In 1986, **Ms. Guadarrama** started GC Micro with two employees. By the end of GC Micro's first year, the small business reported revenue of \$209,000. Today, GC Micro is one of the nation's leading suppliers of computer hardware and software products to the defense and aerospace industries. The company employs 28 and enjoyed sales last year of \$34 million. Through sheer determination and a passion of service to the customer, Ms. Guadarrama overcame the perception that a minority woman could not belong in the technology field or in marketing to defense-related contractors.

In 1976, **Ms. Council** opened a restaurant with only \$64 in cash and a reputation as a good cook. What began as an 18-seat restaurant has now become a Chapel Hill institution. Ms. Council became a self-taught restaurateur by taking business classes and attending workshops and seminars. Mama Dip's Country Kitchen is now a successful and profitable business operation with a 200 percent increase over the previous location. Ms. Council has written a cookbook and appeared on national television cooking shows.

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*Additional Information on **National Small Business Week 2002** is available at <http://smallbusinesssuccess.sba.gov/>.*

For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA or TDD 704-344-6640. Also, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.

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