



# *News Release*

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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## ***SBA Honors Outstanding Disaster Recovery Efforts***

**WASHINGTON** – A Maine town manager who knocked on doors to encourage at-risk residents to evacuate as floodwaters rose, two Massachusetts business owners who not only rebuilt after a flood but expanded their company, and a mother of four in Indiana who recruited 70 volunteers and set up disaster relief centers were each presented with Phoenix Awards today during the U.S. Small Business Administration's *National Small Business Week 2009* in Washington, D.C.

The awards were given this afternoon during a luncheon at the Mandarin Oriental hotel.

"These individuals displayed tremendous courage and resourcefulness in the midst of the several devastating disasters," said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. "The Phoenix Award acknowledges their heroic efforts, and is a token of appreciation for their contributions to the recovery of their communities."

**Fort Kent Town Manager Donald Guimond** received the Phoenix Award for *Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Public Official*. Heavy spring rains washed away the winter's 200 inches of snow in Maine's Aroostook County, causing the St. John and Fish rivers to rise beyond the 25-foot flood stage on May 1, 2008. Guimond took proactive steps to hasten the evacuation of at-risk areas as city workers built temporary dikes. Once the town was out of danger, Guimond gave disaster survivors timely information about recovery resources, serving as the link between the townspeople and agencies providing assistance. He guided Fort Kent through a historic disaster by functioning as a calm and capable leader in the midst of a stressful and dangerous situation.

**Juan and Luis Yépez, President and Vice President of Mainstream Global** of Lawrence, Massachusetts, received the Phoenix Award for *Small Business Disaster Recovery*. While on a European business trip in May 2006, the Yépez brothers learned that the Merrimack River was flooding. When they returned the brothers were stunned to find their 100,000 square-foot plant awash in sewage, water and debris from ruined inventory and \$370,000 worth of computer equipment. Although the pair kept their 12 employees on the payroll as part of the "recovery team," the company was not fully operational for several weeks and they were losing money. An SBA disaster loan kept the business from folding, and Mainstream Global not only recovered but grew to a staff of 32, with annual sales exceeding \$8 million.

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**Amanda Baltensberger** of Munster, Indiana received the Phoenix Award for her *Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Volunteer*. Heavy rains last September caused the Little Calumet River to overflow in Munster, damaging 1,200 homes, many with eight feet of sewage water filling entire basements. Once the floodwaters receded Baltensberger—a mother of four, college student and co-owner of a printing business—borrowed a golf cart, grabbed her best friend and prepared meals to deliver to the dazed disaster survivors.

In the days that followed, she enlisted 70 volunteers and set up relief centers using borrowed tents and picnic tables. The centers became clearinghouses for recovery information, meals, cleaning supplies and moral support. Weeks later, she threw a block party—complete with live music, food and games for the kids—to uplift the town’s spirits. She also created an “adopt-a-family” program, where local volunteers checked up on and supported those still struggling to recover after the disaster.

Since 1998, the SBA has presented Phoenix Awards to business owners, public officials and volunteers who displayed selflessness, ingenuity and tenacity in the aftermath of a disaster, while contributing to the rebuilding of their communities.

The SBA makes low-interest, taxpayer-backed disaster loans to homeowners, renters, businesses and non-profit organizations of all sizes. More information about the disaster assistance program is available at [www.sba.gov/disasterassistance](http://www.sba.gov/disasterassistance).

For more information about National Small Business Week, visit [www.sba.gov/sbw](http://www.sba.gov/sbw).

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