



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

## **PRESS OFFICE**

---

**Release Date:** May 5, 2004

**Contact:** Cecelia Taylor (202) 401-3059

**Release Number:** 04-30

**Internet Address:** <http://www.sba.gov/news/indexheadline.html>

### **SBA to Mark National Small Business Week, Honor Nation's Small Business Leaders at SBA Expo '04 in Orlando: May 19-21**

#### ***Event Will Include Contracting Opportunities, Business Sessions, Exhibit Hall***

**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Small Business Administration will host a gathering of America's top entrepreneurs to celebrate the strength and vitality of the nation's small business sector and honor the National Small Business Person of the Year for 2004 during ceremonies planned for mid-May in Orlando, Fla.

"The spirit of entrepreneurship is the spirit of America, and it has added incredible strength to our national fabric," said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "SBA Expo '04 will honor America's small business owners and their contributions to our economy and our country. It will also be an opportunity for small business owners from across the country to gather together, learn from each other, compete for contracts, and participate in three full days of events that can help them grow their own businesses. I hope that small business owners from across the country take advantage of this tremendous opportunity and join us in Orlando in May."

The annual celebration honoring the nation's leading small business entrepreneurs will be held in Orlando, Fla., May 19-21, 2004, at the Orange County Convention Center. SBA Expo '04, co-sponsored by SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business," will offer countless opportunities to meet and network with key representatives from Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, trade associations, and other small businesses nationwide.

Interested small business owners, business organizations, exhibitors and other individuals may now register for *SBA Expo '04* online at [www.sba.gov/50](http://www.sba.gov/50). The Web site includes a complete schedule of events.

One major Expo highlight will be the announcement of the National Small Business Person of the Year and runners-up, to be selected from among individual state winners. The state winners represent a diverse cross section of America, and their businesses range from hatmakers and medallion minters to electronics manufacturers and robotic aircraft builders.

One of the highlights for small business owners who attend will be a two-day session of Business Matchmaking, a value-added feature to SBA Expo '04. Business Matchmaking, produced under a cooperative agreement with the HP Foundation, is a unique new way for small business owners to land government contracts. Business Matchmaking sessions are held across the country. At each one, small

business owners schedule one-on-one meetings with buyers from all levels of government and large corporations. Since Business Matchmaking was launched last year, more than 4,000 small businesses have participated in 16,000 one-on-one meetings.

-- more --

04-xx/Page Two

This year's celebration – part of the SBA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary observance – also will include a trade show, informative business sessions and a town hall featuring Ken and Daria Dolan, hosts of CNNfn's *Dolans Unscripted*. Some of the speakers participating will be Commerce Secretary Donald Evans, astronaut Buzz Aldrin, and other corporate and trade association leaders.

Another special feature of the conference will be induction of several companies into the SBA's "Hall of Fame," which honors successful companies that got started with the help of SBA-backed financing.

The SBA will present awards and honors to a number of individuals and organizations including:

- Individuals who have distinguished themselves by their support for minority, women and veteran-owned small businesses.
- The Champion Awards, recognizing 10 small businesses or individuals for their unique and outstanding achievements on behalf of small business.
- The Celebrating Women in Business Award.
- The Phoenix Awards, which recognizes a public official, a business owner and a volunteer whose efforts have enabled their businesses or communities to recover successfully from a disaster.
- Export Lenders of the Year, honoring two financial institutions for their efforts in financing small business exporters.
- The *Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence*, recognizing large prime contractors that have excelled in their utilization of small businesses as suppliers and subcontractors.
- The *Gold Star Award*, recognizing the exemplary performance of federal personnel who carry out the aggressive goals and strategic initiatives that help ensure a role for small business in the federal marketplace.
- The *Frances Perkins Vanguard Award*, honoring government and industry for excellence in the use of women-owned small businesses as prime contractors and subcontractors.
- The *Small Business Prime Contractor and Small Business Subcontractor of the Year*, honoring small businesses that have provided the government and industry with outstanding goods and services either as prime contractors or as subcontractors.

###