



PRESS RELEASE

The Kent County Chamber of Commerce

Contact: Cindy Genter

Date: February 2, 2007

Photo left: Jim Gillespie & Todd Gillespie, Gillespie & Son

Chestertown, MD - The Kent County Chamber of Commerce held its Thirty-Eighth Annual Awards Banquet on Saturday, February 2, 2007 at the Chester River Yacht and Country Club. At the annual event, the Chamber presented awards for the Large and Small Business of the Year; the 2007 Community Service Award and the 2007 Business Person of the Year.

Gillespie and Son, Inc., locally owned and operated since 1922, won the *Large Business of the Year Award*. Gillespie currently employs about 100 people and they have a long history of employee retention, with many employees having worked there for 20 years or more. In the 1990s Gillespie expanded into pre-cast concrete products. Strong growth drove Gillespie to separate the pre-cast operation into its own division in 2004 and created the 2007 expansion of their Chestertown facility.

The Small Business of the Year award went to WCTR Radio. Purchased by Dick Gelfman in May 2004, WCTR has become a leading source for local information throughout Kent and Queen Anne's counties. The station's focus is local broadcasting with local advertising sponsors. Shows like Today on the Shore, Talk of the Town, and Emerging combine with Public Service Announcements and live broadcasts at local events to increase their listening audience. In 2007, WCTR sponsored Party in the Pack and they hope to make this a growing annual event in Chestertown.

The Rock Hall Tricentennial Committee won the Community Service award for 2007. Formed in July 2006 to plan, advertise and execute the events of the 300th birthday of the Town of Rock Hall, this committee of volunteers was led by Rock Hall Mayor, Jay Jacobs, and met bi-weekly for a year-and-a-half. The anniversary posters and clothing the Committee created funded the many events throughout the year including: the Birthday Weekend in August, Chicken-Neckers Appreciation Days in September, the Oyster Festival in October and the Boat Parade in December. These events brought more than 20,000 visitors for Rock Hall during the year, many of them first time visitors to the town. As a result of the Tricentennial events and promotion, Rock Hall businesses reported an average increase in revenues of 5-10% for the year. Mayor Jacobs and his wife Dawn accepted the award on behalf of the Committee.

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The 2007 Business Person of the Year award went to Jack Steinmetz. Since starting his job in May 2006, Steinmetz has made a significant impact on the business environment in Kent County. He has worked with government organizations at local, regional and state levels to support and encourage business growth and to remove barriers for economic prosperity. In Kent County he leads the initiative to find and help fund farmers who will plant grapes in support of our developing wineries program. He started the "location library" to encourage film producers to choose Kent County for movie shoots. And, he is a partner in the coalition to repeal the new tax on computer services in Maryland. But what sets him apart from other Economic Development Directors is his devotion to local businesses. He takes a personal interest in businesses in the county, stopping in to chat with owners and to offer advice that comes from his more than 20 years as a bank executive. When Chestertown Foods recently announced their closing, he stepped in to try to find a company who would take over operations at the facility.

The awards were prints of an original watercolor by local artist Debbie Brown, mounted and framed by The Finishing Touch in Chestertown.

In addition to recognizing these successful business and leaders, the Kent County Chamber of Commerce thanked outgoing Board of Directors members Dale Clark, Libby Creighton and Michael Harvey, and welcomed new members who joined us at the January Board meeting. Kent County Chamber of Commerce officers for 2007 are Georg Jean Zimmerman, President; Ken Collins, Vice President; and Doug Camp, Treasurer.