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Chicago IT Firm Named National Minority Small Business of the Year at MED Week 2008 Conference

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WASHINGTON, Sept 05, 2008 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ -- New York Firm, EPA Director Also Honored, International Trade Workshop Featured at MED Week

George Burciaga, a 34-year old Latino entrepreneur and president of smarTECHS.net, Inc., was named today as Minority Small Business Person of the Year during the 26th Anniversary of the National Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week conference in Washington, D.C., announced U.S. Small Business Administration's Deputy Administrator Jovita Carranza.

The award-winning, Chicago-based IT firm has been recognized by Inc. Magazine as one of the fastest growing tech firms in the U.S. in 2007 and 2008 and tied for second runner-up of the SBA's 2008 National Small Business Person of the Year award during National Small Business Week in April.

Also recognized by SBA Deputy Administrator Carranza was Joan Yang, president of Rand & Jones Enterprises Company, Inc. of Buffalo, N.Y. Ms. Yang was the recipient of the 8(a) Graduate Firm of the Year Award.

Jeanette L. Brown, Director for the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency received the Administrator's Leadership Award for her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment on behalf of the nation's minority small business community.

"This is my second MED Week celebration since joining the SBA, and I'm honored to be part of this important event and to be surrounded by these extraordinary individuals and business leaders who have made significant contributions to our nation's economy and small business community," said SBA Deputy Administrator Carranza. "It is my hope that George and Joan and all small business owners apply the information on small business benefits of international trade and free-trade agreements to reach new heights and expand into global markets. I offer my sincere congratulations to all of the winners."

This morning's award presentation capped off a three-day celebration and a week-long recognition of minority entrepreneurship under this year's MED Week theme, "The Power of Strategic Alliances in the Global Economy." MED Week is an annual event co-hosted by the Minority Business Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce and the SBA. This afternoon will feature a joint SBA/MBDA international trade workshop, which will highlight the benefits to small businesses of free trade agreements.

In a proclamation this year, President George W. Bush urged all Americans to join together in honoring minority entrepreneurs across the country in appropriate observances.

This year's MED Week event featured other international trade forums including "Managing Global Strategic Relationships" and "Free Trade in the Global Economy" sessions, a White House Reception for award winners, a MED Week welcome reception, a business expo and trade show and a Meet Your White House breakfast with keynote address by Ambassador Susan C. Schwab, the U.S. Trade Representative. This afternoon's session also includes a Business-to-Business linkage forum where small businesses are paired with government agencies and private-sector companies to discuss potential contracting opportunities. MED Week will conclude with a closing awards ceremony gala this evening.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE WINNERS

National Minority Small Business Person of the Year

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George Burciaga, President, smarTECHS.net

Burciaga, who sold gum on the streets of Chicago's tough Pilsen neighborhood when he was 7 years old, started his one-man IT company, smarTECHS.net in 1998 in his two-bedroom apartment at age 23.

The IT firm started out offering custom full technology life-cycle solutions to investment banking and beverage companies. By 2002 the business had expanded to include IT services in the public sector, including the cities of Chicago and New Orleans. The company recorded revenues of \$2.6 million in 2006 and approximately \$8.8 million in contracts for 2008 and boasts thirteen employees.

National 8(a) Graduate of the Year

Joan Yang, President, Rand & Jones Enterprises Company, Inc.

R&J is a HUBZone-certified, woman-owned, small and disadvantaged full-service general construction firm and building materials supplier founded in 1985 by its CEO, Joan Yang. Yang is a graduate of SBA's 8(a) Business Development program -- a business development program that provides management and technical assistance, and assistance in identifying federal contracting opportunities to socially and economically disadvantaged businesses. She has built R&J into a \$15 million company.

R&J has completed more than \$70 million in construction projects, has expanded its portfolio to include real estate acquisition & development and is considered the contractor of choice for many local and federal agencies.

Administrator's Leadership Award

Jeanette L. Brown, Director for the

Office of Small Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

As the OSDBU Director, Brown is responsible for ensuring that small, disadvantaged and women-owned businesses receive their fair share of contracting opportunities. Her office develops policies to aid minority and women-owned firms with doing business with the EPA. Formerly a director of the SBA's 8 (a) Business Development program, Brown currently is responsible for internal training programs that will enhance the capabilities of socioeconomic firms and help them become more competitive and viable in the EPA procurement arena.

For more information visit the Web site at www.medweek.gov or to view the list of the 10 Regional Minority Small Business Persons of the Year Award recipients, visit SBA's Web page at www.sba.gov/medweek2008/index.html.

SOURCE U.S. Small Business Administration

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