

# A Salute to Small Business

Fall 2011

Greater Boston  
**Chamber**  
The Hub of Business  
[www.bostonchamber.com](http://www.bostonchamber.com)

Highlighting the winners of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce 2011 Small Business of the Year Awards



Small  
business  
of the year awards

## Paying Tribute to Our Winners

On **October 13**, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce will celebrate the contributions of small businesses throughout the region at its 27th Annual "Small Business of the Year Awards" luncheon. These awards honor the top 10 small and high growth businesses that demonstrate achievement in management, workplace excellence, product innovation, and social responsibility and have a commitment to growing here in Greater Boston.

### 2011 Small Business of the Year

- Little Sprouts

### Top Small Businesses of 2011

- Baystate Financial Services
- Burtons Grill
- Charles River Apparel
- Enzymatics
- Get in Shape for Women
- Hollister
- IdeaPaint
- Lupoli Companies
- WHERE, Inc.

**Emcee:** Mike Nikitas,  
NECN News and Business Anchor

**Date:** Thursday, October 13, 2011

**Time:** 11:45 a.m. Registration  
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.  
Lunch & Program

**Location:** The Colonnade Hotel

## State, Businesses Work Creatively to Succeed in Today's Economy

There's no denying these are difficult economic times, but the Massachusetts business sector has seen better growth than most states, and small businesses are the spark that will ignite future expansion.

"Small businesses are more nimble," explains Paul Guzzi, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce (GBCC). "They can look at market opportunities and respond quickly." Those quick response times may be one reason the state's economy is way ahead of the national average. At last count, gross domestic product (GDP) growth in metropolitan Boston was 4.8 percent, almost double the national GDP growth at 2.5 percent. Unemployment, while still high at 7.4 percent (August 2011), is significantly lower than the national rate of 9.1 percent.

"We have a deep bench," says Jim Klocke, executive vice president of the GBCC, acknowledging the great variety of businesses that make their home in the state. Eighty-six percent of those companies are small businesses—companies that employ 19 or fewer workers. Some of the best are represented in this year's Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Award honorees.

Guzzi sees the many colleges and universities in Massachusetts as contributing to the region's business energy. Many grads stick around to find work in the Boston area; some, like the Babson-alumni founders of IdeaPaint, one of this year's celebrated small companies, even start their own businesses.

Government, both state and federal, has also contributed to small business growth in the region. Thanks to \$560 million awarded to the Small Business Administration by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the small business lending market has become more flexible. The SBA approved 1,592 recovery loans totaling \$479 million in Massachusetts from February 2009 to March 2010, an increase of 93 percent in dollar volume compared to the two months just prior to the signing of the Recovery Act.

There has also been progress at the state level, especially in regard to tax reform for those who invest in start-up companies. "There is increased incentive for investors who finance new companies in the state," says Klocke. "Now, if you invest in a start-up for three years, any profits you take are taxed at 3 percent, a much lower rate of capital gains."

The state has also altered its tax policy regarding business losses. In the past, Massachusetts

investors were allowed to carry forward their business losses for only five years. The law has now been changed to allow a carry forward period of 20 years, which is much more competitive with other states. "This is especially important for the Commonwealth because we have so many high-tech companies that may well take years to return investor capital," says Klocke. The Chamber was a leading force in advocating for the carry-forward reform and start-up incentive as part of its public policy agenda.

The cooperation with government has been particularly encouraging to the business community. "I've been around for quite a number of years," says Guzzi, "and I think the relationship is stronger than at any time in the past. Both the Governor and the Legislature realize that job creation is key, and that the state must be ready to compete not only on a national level, but also globally."

Certainly, this year's small business winners reflect the variety of companies that support the regional economy. From biotech (Enzymatics) to financial services (Baystate), from education (Little Sprouts) to high tech (WHERE), from professional staffing (Hollister) to food service (Burtons Grill), there is strength in the diversity of this economy, which will see the state through to better times.

## 2011 SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR



## Plant Early, Grow Strong

*How a single mother changed early childhood education in Massachusetts*

Fearlessness is a good quality in an entrepreneur, says Susan Leger-Ferraro, 46, founder of Little Sprouts, the Lawrence-based group of child enrichment centers being recognized as the 2011 Small Business of the Year by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce.

Leger-Ferraro should know. Her scrappy determination to prove that quality and innovation in early childhood education can go hand in hand with best business practices has transformed her. She went from being a teenager taking care of six kids in a rented duplex to the CEO of a \$1 million-plus, multiple award-winning enterprise, serving more than 1,500 children in 13 locations across the state, with more in the pipeline.

Leger-Ferraro attributes her success to being "a bit of a rebel," and not being afraid to grab opportunities. She talked her way into a job at a pizza parlor at age 11, volunteered at Boston's Museum of Science, and interned in a public school kindergarten class as a high school student. At age 17, she opened her first daycare center, licensed for six children, in a rented apartment down the street from her parents' house in Methuen.

"Build equity," a counselor with the Small Business Association advised her. So after a year, she moved the business into her parents' house, "ate a lot of spaghetti" to save money, and plowed the profits into a down payment on a house of her own, where she opened the first Little Sprouts Learning Center in October 1984.



Entrepreneur Susan Leger-Ferraro, left, has won awards for improving early childhood literacy rates.

Leger-Ferraro's two young sons (she later fostered a third, older boy) were her "science project," she says, laughing. Over six years, as Little Sprouts grew to serve 37 children, and

added 14 employees, she ran a household and a school in different parts of the same house.

"Early education is not usually recognized as a business," says Leger-Ferraro, but she's proven

that the principles underpinning other successful enterprises can be equally applied to creating a nurturing, stimulating learning environment for young children.

Investment in people within the organization and commitment to consumer satisfaction are key, she says. Little Sprouts' teachers on average take 67 hours of in-house training per year, compared with the industry average of 18.

On the customer satisfaction front, says Leger-Ferraro, "It's all about parent engagement." She requires all her site directors to be available at drop-off time and pick-up time in every classroom once a week, to connect with parents and hear their concerns. That personal interaction is crucial, given the diversity of families served: at the last count, 56 cultures, 23 languages, and a wide range of social and economic backgrounds.

For its success in improving early childhood literacy rates, and helping close the education achievement gap between minorities and the majority population, Little Sprouts has received the "Preschool Centers of Excellence" award from the U.S. Department of Education for the past seven years.

For Leger-Ferraro, the overriding question is: How can we get this service to more children? In the short term, Little Sprouts is planning to open eight new schools in Greater Boston. She is also eyeing expansion beyond New England. California, the entrepreneur muses, would be "a good place to do education."

2011 TOP SMALL BUSINESSES

# Companies That Practice the Secrets of Success

*Innovation, community involvement distinguish winners*



Baystate employees team up to help a number of New England children's charities. Community service is part of the company's work ethic.

## BAYSTATE FINANCIAL SERVICES, LLC

"People first" strategy is client focused

Baystate Financial Services is one of New England's oldest and largest privately owned financial services firms. With more than 100 years of experience, the firm provides individuals and business owners with a broad range of financial products and services designed to be responsive to their specific risk profile and financial needs.

Baystate embraces a "people first" strategy and is committed to addressing the specific needs of its clients. Through these challenging economic times, the firm has guided, educated, and advised its clients so they can better protect their families and their future.

Baystate is also deeply committed to the community it serves and created the

Baystate Charitable Foundation in 1999 to support a number of New England children's charities. Since that time, the firm has helped more than 10,000 children in the Commonwealth, and the foundation hopes to raise an additional \$1 million to benefit youth organizations in the next five years. Each year, Baystate also honors one of its associates who demonstrates a dedication to community service outside of the financial services industry. The firm has been named one of the "Best Places to Work" by the Boston Business Journal and the Boston Globe.



## BURTONS GRILL

Where quality and service rule

Burtons Grill is a full-service restaurant company that specializes in contemporary American cuisine. With seven locations in three states and an additional location slated to open later this year, the Burtons team is passionate about providing individualized service to its customers while maintaining a positive work environment for nearly 700 employees.

The company is a leader in the areas of food safety and sanitation, uses only fresh ingredients, and requires allergy training for all staff members. Burtons also offers customized menu options, including gluten-free and vegetarian selections, at all locations.

Burtons Grill encourages ongoing educational opportunities for all employees and commits itself to philanthropic engagement by supporting local agriculture and farming. It provides financial assistance and volunteers for dozens of local charities each year, and donates free meals for organizations in need.

As Burtons continues to expand, it plans to add jobs at both the restaurant and corporate levels and to fill management positions by



Going the extra mile for their customers and employees are (l-r) President and CEO Kevin Harron, Vice President Patrick Gordon, and COO Kevin Rowell.

promoting employees from within. In 2010, the company was named one of the "100 Top Places to Work" by the Boston Globe.



## CHARLES RIVER APPAREL

Maker of active wear extraordinaire

Charles River Apparel (CRA) is a leading manufacturer of innovative active wear for a variety of markets, offering performance active wear for the entire family. Since its inception in 1983, the company has been recognized for the quality, style, and value of its apparel, as well as its high level of customer service.

Today, CRA employs more than 70 people with products available at more than 13,000 distributors nationwide. In the summer of 2011, the company opened its first retail store in Sharon.

CRA is a business "run by family and powered by teamwork." The company has been nationally recognized for its philanthropic work on behalf of cancer research, and in 2008, CRA launched its "Be Pink Proud" line of clothing designed to support breast cancer research by donating portions of the line's sales to nonprofit research facilities.

As the company continues to grow and expand, it has turned to social media avenues like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to



Barry Lipsett, owner and president, hand delivers ice cream to the staff on a hot July day to thank them for their hard work. He typically does this every summer.

engage its customers. Over the next five years, CRA hopes to further increase its brand recognition with the public and continue to build brand loyalty.



## ENZYMATICS

A player in the field of DNA research

Enzymatics is an independent manufacturer of molecular biology enzymes that uses a unique, quality oriented, and customer-focused approach to protein production.

The company was founded in 2006 to specifically address the needs of commercial health care and life sciences entities engaged in the development, manufacture, and distribution of platforms dedicated to nucleic acid

identification (DNA strands). Since that time, Enzymatics has grown from a company of 4 employees to one with more than 45 employees today.

Enzymatics also has a direct impact on the civic community. Headquartered in Beverly, the company partners with local businesses like Green Meadow Farm to provide organic lunches for its team members and gain exposure for the farm.

As part of its effort to support local organizations that align with its values, Enzymatics' president, Christopher Benoit, is assisting Endicott College in the development of its life sciences program by sharing his personal insight and expertise. In addition, Enzymatics is working to better control its environmental footprint by expanding its recycling program, promoting bicycle and public transport commuting, and working with utility providers on alternative energy options.



The brains behind this biotech success story: (l-r) Enzymatics co-founder Christopher Benoit, Scientific Advisory Board Chairman and Professor George Church, Enzymatics Board Chairman Ian Ratcliffe, and Co-founder Stephen Picone.



Specializing in affordable, small group training, the company offers a comprehensive fitness program to help women achieve.

## GET IN SHAPE FOR WOMEN

The goal is body and life transformation

Get in Shape for Women is a fitness facility designed specifically for women who share one common goal—achieving body and life transformation. The facility specializes in affordable, small group personal training and employs its own comprehensive Body Transformation Program to help women achieve their goals.

Get in Shape for Women currently has nearly 200 employees and 73 franchised locations in 14 states, with an additional 30 locations in development. The company hopes to grow to 5,000 worldwide locations by 2030.

Get in Shape for Women is engaged in the community and committed to environmental responsibility. The company supports a broad

range of philanthropic activities such as charitable 5K races, the Relay for Life, and the Avon Breast Cancer Walk.

Get in Shape for Women also gives all clients a reusable water bottle and grocery bag, and all Massachusetts franchise owners will acquire new, fuel-efficient company vehicles. In 2011, the company was recognized as one of the top 100 "Fastest Growing Franchises" by Entrepreneur Magazine.



## HOLLISTER

Staffing firm provides vital jobs service

Founded in 1988 by 26-year-old Kip Hollister, Hollister is a premier relationship-based staffing firm focused on connecting Massachusetts' opportunities with talent. A bridge that connects professionals with jobs in Massachusetts and companies with the best employees, Hollister currently places candidates on a temporary and permanent basis in the following areas: accounting and finance, administrative, creative and marketing, technology, and sales.

The firm is built on an entrepreneurial spirit and now uses an innovative social media recruitment platform that allows it to access a wider network of talent.

At Hollister, the business model is all about leadership, mentoring, values, and relationships, with a focus on open communication and taking a "one size does not fit all" approach to its clients. The firm recognizes the need to strengthen the region's workforce, and has partnered with local workforce development and education-focused nonprofit organizations to ensure that New England attracts, retains, and develops its talent.

Since 2006, Hollister has supported Everybody Wins Metro Boston, an early



Hollister is a bridge that uses innovation to connect companies with the employees they need—and visa versa.

childhood literacy and mentoring program, by donating office space and volunteer hours. In the next five years, Hollister plans to make its top-earning technology division the firm's first national division.



# Chamber Plays Matchmaker

*Intern Connect Program brings students, businesses together*

**E**mily Dahlgaard isn't just any intern. She's an intern's intern. The 21-year-old senior at Northeastern University is getting a behind-the-scenes look at internships while working as an intern for a Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce program that links local businesses to students just starting their careers.

"Working with the Chamber's Intern Connect Program has helped me see both sides of an internship," says Dahlgaard, a psychology and linguistics major who researches and writes articles about the benefits of internships for the program's website.

All that research and writing has taught her a thing or two. Not only has she learned about Boston, the city's business community, and the Chamber during her internship, she's also learned about herself. "I've learned about

Erin Trabucco, policy advisor with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, says the idea for the program was an outgrowth of a study on student retention conducted by the Chamber and Mercer in partnership with Boston's Federal Reserve Bank. "We saw that we weren't keeping graduates at the rate they were in other states," Ken Montgomery, first vice president and chief operating officer at the Federal Reserve in Boston, says of the study. "We're competing nationally for this talent. The question was, how do we introduce these students to some of the great institutions we have in the area? We thought this internship program would be a great way."

Starting with a soft launch this spring on a platform powered by online recruiter Experience.com, the Chamber Intern Connect site quickly attracted about 230 applicants and 67 businesses. The rest of the program is currently rolling out and includes enhanced features, says Trabucco. "We really want to make this a win-win situation for both businesses and students," she explains, noting that companies get a chance to connect with a fresh pool of talent while students get the work experience they need to market themselves as employees.

Boston businesses are taking notice. Rachael Vingsness, human resource manager with Jack Morton Worldwide, an experimental marketing company, says the program is already generating some excitement in her company, which usually hires between four and six interns each summer. "It's going to be a great resource



*The Chamber expects the Intern Connect Program website to become the premier "go to" resource for students and companies.*

for finding qualified interns in the Boston area," says Vingsness, who started her career as an intern as well. "It will also strengthen Boston's economic growth by keeping really bright, educated, and talented candidates within our region."

You don't have to convince Dahlgaard of that. "Interns are great for companies. They're young, fresh eyes, who are willing to learn—who want to learn," she says. "That kind of enthusiasm is great for a work environment." And for student job hunters. Chamber Intern Connect can be found at [intern.bostonchamber.com](http://intern.bostonchamber.com).

**"Interns are great for companies. They're young, fresh eyes, who are willing to learn—who want to learn."**

my interests and what I want to do with my future, which is one of the important things about an internship," says Dahlgaard, who has developed a newfound interest in public policy as a result of her Chamber job.

Finding the perfect internship, however, can be problematic. That's where the Chamber's Intern Connect Program comes in. Launched in May as a free service for all students and Chamber members, the Intern Connect Program is designed to help retain the region's skilled and talented college graduates by promoting internships that benefit both students and participating businesses. These work-based experiences foster stronger ties between students and the Greater Boston region. The Chamber expects the website to become the premier "go to" resource for students and companies looking to fill internship positions.

## 2011 TOP SMALL BUSINESSES (continued)

### IDEAPAIN

Making "chalkboards" for the modern age

**C**reated by two Babson College undergraduate students, IdeaPaint is a single-coat, roller-applied paint that can transform any paintable surface into a high-performance dry-erase writing platform. This product creates dynamic, 360-degree work and learning environments within corporate, educational, and home settings. IdeaPaint is particularly transformative for schools, where it can resurface worn-out chalkboards and whiteboards at tremendous cost savings.

The only product of its kind, IdeaPaint is the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly whiteboard option on the market. Currently, the company has more than 50,000 successful installations and has expanded into the international marketplace, with products now sold in 20 countries. In 2010, IdeaPaint entered the mass-retail marketplace and is now available at Lowe's Home Improvement stores nationwide.

IdeaPaint's management believes in supporting the spirit of innovation and uses a "flat" organizational structure where all employees contribute to virtually every facet of the business. They also support local communities by donating their product to countless schools across the country. By converting schools' worn-out whiteboards instead of replacing them, IdeaPaint prevents chalkboards from ending up in landfills. To commemorate Earth Day 2011, the company committed to giving away up to a million square feet of product to schools across the nation.



*IdeaPaint transforms any paintable surface into a high performance, dry-erase writing platform.*

### LUPOLI COMPANIES

The go-to place for pizza and more

**L**upoli Companies is the family-run, parent company of Sal's Pizza and Wholesale Divisions, Mary's Pasta & Sandwiches, Salvatore's Restaurants, and Riverwalk Properties. Sal's Pizza is the largest manufacturer of fresh pizza in New England, with more than 40 restaurants in 5 states, and Salvatore's Restaurant and Mary's Pasta & Sandwiches have locations throughout Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Lupoli Companies also has a 35,000 square foot commissary that prepares food for wholesale distribution to grocery stores and local colleges and schools.

In addition to its restaurant empire, Lupoli owns and operates the Riverwalk Properties in Lawrence. Since acquiring the space in 2003, the family has renovated 1.2 million square feet of office and retail space that is now home to more than 200 companies and 2,000 employees. This has truly changed the complexion of the city and revitalized broad economic growth.

Lupoli Companies has nearly 450 full-time employees, and the Sal's Pizza brand has developed a franchise structure that has facilitated the development of



*Lupoli employees share the company's commitment to giving back and spend many hours doing charitable and community service.*

more than 28 franchise owners nationwide. The company is also committed to giving back to the local community. Lupoli supports hundreds of organizations and has established the Lawrence Citizenship Initiative, which helps legal immigrants become naturalized citizens.



### WHERE, INC.

Ads, apps, and ingenuity

**W**HERE, Inc. is North America's leading location media company. This innovative enterprise has a dynamic business model with three components: the WHERE app, WHERE Ads, and Merchant Services. The company's mobile application delivers recommendations to users for the best restaurants, bars, and activities, based on their location.

Its success attracting more than four million users led to the launch of WHERE Ads, which has become a trusted source of mobile advertising for companies such as Pandora, AccuWeather, Gap, and McDonald's. WHERE Ads now reaches more than 50 million mobile users. Finally, the company added WHERE's Merchant Services to help small businesses establish a mobile presence and target customers based on their specific location.

WHERE's 140 employees are very involved in Boston's innovation scene, and the management team encourages all employees to attend networking and educational events to enrich their professional development.

The company strongly supports Northeastern University's co-op program as an opportunity to further the professional education of Boston's youth, especially in the area of mobile advertising. In April 2011, WHERE was acquired by eBay to enhance its position in local and mobile commerce, but the company remains committed to growth in this region.



*WHERE employees put the same innovation and energy into their philanthropic activities as they do into their media products.*

