

December 10, 2009

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Manatee Economic Development Council Announces 2009 Excellence in Industry Award Winners for Manatee County

Bradenton, Florida – Five Manatee County businesses took home top honors at the 2009 Excellence in Industry Awards luncheon presented by the Economic Development Council, Manatee Chamber of Commerce (EDC) today at the Polo Grill in Lakewood Ranch. More than 325 business and community leaders attended the event, which celebrated the increasing diversity of Manatee County's economic base.

"This year's Excellence in Industry Awards highlight the diversity of businesses that call Manatee County home," said Jonathan Fleece, 2010 EDC chairman. "Providing a wide variety of products and services to a broad range of markets, the winners continue to excel through entrepreneurial skill, commitment to workforce development and technological innovation. Their success encourages all of us in the pursuit of greater economic diversity that will provide a brighter future for Manatee County's residents."

The EDC presented awards in five categories. The winners are:

- Business Expansion – DENTSPLY Raintree Essix Glenroe
- Entrepreneurship – MyUS.com
- Workforce – Vanguard Advanced Pharmacy Systems
- Innovation – Sleek Audio
- Exporting Excellence – Reftec International Systems, LLC

The awards luncheon was held in partnership with the Bradenton Herald and Port Manatee. Award sponsors included BB&T, Cadence Bank, CPA Associates, Suncoast Workforce Board and SunTrust Bank. The video sponsor was State College of Florida Manatee-Sarasota, and Moonlight Marketing provided graphic design services.

About the Award Winners

Business Expansion Award – DENTSPLY Raintree Essix Glenroe

When DENTSPLY integrated Raintree Essix, a \$10-million business, into Manatee County's Glenroe Technologies, business volume doubled. The local workforce increased by 35 percent, adding 41 new jobs. The company has reinvested 6 percent of total sales into capital improvements, expanding the company's Manatee County footprint to 16,000 sq. ft. DENTSPLY Raintree Essix Glenroe is a global leader in the dental market, consistently developing innovative new products that advance the practice of dentistry. DENTSPLY's core competency is the manufacturing of injection molding, extrusion and the thermo-forming of dental and orthodontic products. The company currently distributes its dental products in over 120 countries under some of the most well established brand names in the dental industry.

Entrepreneurship Award – MyUS.com

Winner of last year's Exporting Excellence Award, MyUS.com was the 2009 standout for Entrepreneurship. With a generous loan from his entrepreneurial mother, Eric Baird began pursuing his vision. He realized that U.S. merchants were missing out on sales through their inability to ship internationally. Potential international customers couldn't complete transactions because they lacked a U.S. mailing address. In 1997, Baird merged the two needs and created a business that keeps cash flowing both ways. As a provider of private U.S. mailing addresses, MyUS.com gives merchants instant access to international sales by handling all the customs paperwork and compliance issues. In 2008, *Inc.* magazine named MyUS.com one of America's

5,000 fastest growing companies. Since 1987, MyUS.com has handled more than 50,000 packages per month to over 200 countries and expanded its warehouse from 700 sq. ft. to more than 40,000 sq. ft.

Workforce Award – Vanguard Advanced Pharmacy Systems

Vanguard Advanced Pharmacy Systems specializes in the unique long-term care needs of retirement communities, working with assisted living facilities throughout Florida. With more than 15 years of experience, Vanguard is recognized as a pharmaceutical leader, providing a comprehensive range of services that meet and exceed state compliance standards. Vanguard believes its employees are the primary reason for the company's success story. Vanguard employees enjoy their workplace and participate in a long list of morale-boosting activities including spirit committees, potluck lunches and ice-cream socials. They have also unanimously embraced community activities by volunteering time and money to causes such as the American Heart Association, Breast Cancer Awareness and Juvenile Diabetes.

Innovation Award – Sleek Audio

Winner of *Popular Science* magazine's "Best of What's New Award" in 2008, Sleek Audio's SA6 earphones allow the wearer to experience music on a completely personalized and individual level. No two people hear audio exactly the same way so Sleek Audio created earphones with a "sound signature." Users manage high and low frequencies by changing between four treble port options and three bass port options to find just the right combination for their listening pleasure. Also created by Sleek is the world's first swivel detachable cable, allowing easier upgrades and a seamless transition from wired to wireless without degrading sound quality. Technology giants like Pioneer and Panasonic are already trying to mimic the design and the resulting international attention has enabled Sleek Audio to expand its operations to include two new directors and a lab engineer. This cutting edge technology was born in Manatee County.

Exporting Excellence Award – Reftec International Systems LLC

Reftec International manufactures and supplies the heating, ventilating and air conditioning industry with standard and customized refrigerant recovery, purge and chiller pressurizing equipment. Sixty-five percent of Reftec's sales are international, and export sales grew at double-digit rates for the last three years. Twenty five percent of parts are manufactured in Florida. Reftec is introducing customized chiller service products to land- and sea-based platforms. These chiller service tools can be found from casinos in Macau to cruise ships in the Mediterranean Sea.

About the EDC

The Economic Development Council, a division of the Manatee Chamber of Commerce, is the sole organization responsible for developing and implementing programs designed to attract new, high impact businesses and to assist in the retention and growth of targeted existing businesses in Manatee County. Information: www.ManateeEDC.com.

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