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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE » ANNUAL SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS LUNCHEON

At the Pinnacle

Ann Cherry receives Pinnacle Award as Chamber honors businesses, members

By Jennifer Cannon

ENC Media Group

More than 100 people packed the banquet rooms at King's Restaurant Thursday for the annual Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce Small Business Awards luncheon and Rotary meeting. Each year the chamber recognizes a woman in the community who has demonstrated excellence, creativity and initiative in her profession, valuable service by contributing time and energy to improve the quality of life in her community and who assists others in reaching their full leadership potential. Last year's Pinnacle recipient, Judy Jones, presented the 2016 Pinnacle of Achievement Award to Ann Cherry of Carolina Junior Cotillions.

"I'm just so grateful to Lenoir County for all the years of support they have shown our little business," Cherry said. "I'm also so grateful for all the wonderful young people that I've had the privilege of sharing time with and watching grow up. I'm also so grateful for all the young men and women that worked with us to help us make this happen."

The president of Sycamore Farms, Alton Roberson, presented the 2016 Small Business Award to David Mills and Don Mills of Mills International, Inc.

"We'll have been in business for 50 years in June," Manager Jessica Mills Starling said, "and we've worked really hard to get things where they are. Thank goodness the community still supports our farmers and we're looking forward to the future."

Jim Dobbins, vice president of human resources at UNC Lenoir Health Care, presented the 2016 Minority Business Award to Dr. De Shonta King of Women's Healthcare of Eastern Carolina.

King was moved to tears during her speech.

"I want to thank God for all he's continuing to do for me and all the success that he's given to us and I want to thank my husband and my son for all their tremendous efforts to give me strength," King said.

Greg Hannibal, the director of the Small Business Center at Lenoir Community College, awarded the 2016 Microenterprise Award to Darlene Ward of Byrd's Café.

Ward was unable to attend the ceremony due to a medical reason so her sister, Barbara Stepps, accepted the award for her.

"I'm honored to accept this award for her," Stepps said. "She has worked extremely hard to get where she is and her family is extremely proud of her. She gives every employee a chance to thrive and she's very supportive of her employees. She loves her customers and she loves what she does."

Laurel Molloy, the chief nursing officer for UNC Lenoir Health Care, presented Geraldine Taylor with the 2016 Administrative Professional of the Year Award.

"To me, this means people are appreciative of what you do when you try to help people," Taylor said. "I have really enjoyed doing my job that I've been doing for almost 37 years now. It makes you feel good when people appreciate you."

Chamber of Commerce President Laura Lee Sylvester said she enjoys the event every year.

"The Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce works diligently all year long to help our business community but there's nothing that pleases me more than having the opportunity to publicly recognize certain individuals and businesses in our community for the hard work that they do," Sylvester said. "Our community prospers because of our small businesses and many of our community-minded individuals."

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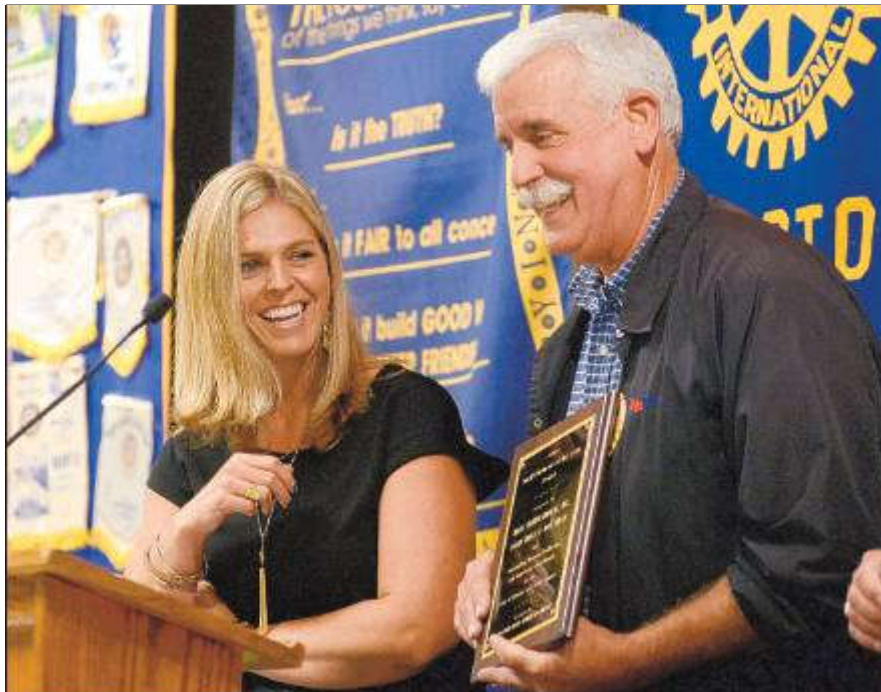
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After being announced the winner of the 2016 Pinnacle of Achievement Award, Ann Cherry embraces last year's recipient, Judy Jones. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



Dr. De Shonta King, of Women's Healthcare of Eastern Carolina, emotionally accepts the 2016 Minority Business of the Year Award from the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce during Thursday's Rotary meeting at King's. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



Don Mills and Jessica Mills Starling accept the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber of Commerce 2016 Small Business of the year Award at a ceremony during Thursday's Rotary meeting in Kinston. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press



Geraldine Taylor smiles as she is awarded the 2016 Administrative Professional of the Year at the Kinston-Lenoir County Chamber small business awards on Thursday. Photo by Zach Frailey / The Free Press