



The Community Impact Right Stuff Awards were initiated at the first Community Needs – Building Resources for Tomorrow Conference which was held in Huntsville, Alabama, home to the U. S. Space and Rocket Center - and U S Space Camp. Our Right Stuff award is modeled after a very unique and special award that is given to an individual crew member at the end of the mission competitions of Space Camp. The leadership of the Center chooses an individual based on their observations of all of the crew members from each of the multiple crews at the camp—no position is too small to be considered for this award. To be chosen, a crewmember must demonstrate a steadfast commitment to mission, a willingness and competence in creating a cooperative environment and this person must be willing to step aside to let others step up – if this is what it will take to have a successful mission. In short, a person with the right stuff is a silent leader, dedicated to bringing the team together to creatively solve the problems ahead of them in an efficient, effective and timely fashion.

Our choice of New Orleans and Preservation Hall also speaks to the “Right Stuff” – this historic city and this historic music hall that highlights it – represents the prime aspects targeted by the awards committee as demonstrated by the commitment to rebirth demonstrated by the City’s recovery efforts. The symbol used for the conference logo, the Fleur de Lis, is the symbol that is used throughout the city to evoke their effort to undertake this mission of rebirth - the vision, commitment and fortitude and this symbol

is the same symbol chosen for the impact awards this year – It represents the capacity for great accomplishment when coordinated in a cooperative and concerted effort to bring about effective change to improve the lives of residents here and throughout our nation.

Competitors for the Community Impact Right Stuff Awards are asked to show much the same types of capacities. Entities that have been able to bring together multiple stakeholders, resources and talent pools to creatively and effectively fund developments that strive to meet known needs in their communities clearly are demonstrating the Right Stuff – doing what it takes to be the silent – or sometimes the loud leaders – to bring renewal to our nation’s disinvested neighborhoods.

There were a number of truly wonderful projects submitted for the award this year, and I urge you to read through the Best Practices book, please take the time to congratulate all of the entities who submitted, as they all deserve acknowledgement for the work they are doing to help affect positive change. Trying to narrow the field down to just a few candidates was very difficult, as I am sure you will note once you begin to read about the efforts to create positive impact that these groups diligently worked on.

One project of particular note was completed in a non-metropolitan county as a direct response to the impact of the hurricanes.

Our first recipients include an entity that has been working in the field of community development for 40 years. Their mission is to assist in the elimination of rural poverty,

using public and private programs to support their programs which are focused on both short and long-term improvement strategies. On September 7, 2005 they received a call from their sister agency, the Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Worker Opportunities, or MDCF, located in Clarksdale notifying them of the widespread devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The impact was so harsh that MDCF was receiving over 125 calls for relief in a single day.

Portable Practical Education Preparation, Inc. or PPEP organized the help of 900 high school students and assistance from the League of Latin American Citizens and World Care to deliver roughly 1.5 million pounds of relief supplies. This type of system needed a very large space to be able to work from. PPEP helped to arrange space with the Clarksdale Chamber of Commerce and donated a six passenger van and 5 computers to the effort. After the first waive was complete, PPEP helped to arrange the financing necessary for MDCF to purchase the 55,000 SF building. Since that time, over 500 tons of relief and recovery supplies have been collected, warehoused and distributed from this site. Will Mr. Ballesteros and Mr. Winters please come up and accept this certificate of merit commemorating PPEP's and MDCF's achievements?

Understanding what it takes to make a 'stable table' to support a community is a fundamental element in community development. The four primary legs must be well served to have sustainable growth, infrastructure, housing, business and residents all tie together to create the force that drives community balance. Our next recipient demonstrates true cognizance of this concept. They developed a mixed-use project

incorporating for sale units, rental units and retail and office space. The new commercial space provided 155 new permanent positions and the new homeownership opportunities are projected to create in excess of \$20 million of wealth creation over time. This project also supports an educational facility, a necessary base of our overall economy by providing affordable housing units for students. Working in concert with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and Jackson University, MuniStrategies was able to achieve a vision of lasting impact for this community. Will Alan Lange from MuniStrategies please join me and accept this award for their achievements in funding University Park of Jackson?

When an entity is able to achieve support from a myriad of commercial lenders to support its efforts to fund disadvantaged businesses throughout its statewide territory, it is clear that its leadership, mission and vision are both clearly articulated and respected in its capacity to execute. The Texas Mezzanine Fund is this type of entity. The faith invested in them by the local banks is clearly supported by the early seed funding of Joy Foods. Their work with this minority entrepreneur helped to create a dominant employer in an area where jobs were definitively needed. From initial growth of 20 jobs, to growth of 200 jobs, TMF's program elevated this company and its community to new heights of economic sustainability. Please help us celebrate their achievement. Would Victor Elmore please join me? I would like to present this check for \$250 to TMF in recognition of their outstanding achievements – and congratulate Texas Mezzanine Fund on their continuing efforts to grow small businesses throughout the State of Texas.

Sometimes it takes a truly creative frame of mind and a courageous spirit to take the lead in economic development efforts. Our final recipient of the evening truly exemplifies this type of pioneering spirit. Most of the country is focused on the high costs of energy, both in terms of cash and the overall environment. This entity is seeking ways to create jobs, develop clean energy and to deliver that energy at lower costs to its residents. The Louisiana Gasification Facility is a seed-stage minority owned renewable energy company that is developing an innovative green-certified waste to energy plant in New Orleans. The plant will convert solid waste from the City into more affordable “green-energy”

The project received \$1MM in seed funding from ReBirth, which will eventually support total project costs in excess of \$450 million – creating 83 pre-development positions and 55 ongoing operational positions; converting solid waste to energy that would otherwise go into landfills, and produce power at a cost that is lower than existing sources benefiting LIC residents currently suffering from higher post-Katrina energy costs.

Please join me in congratulating ReBirth Capital, LLC on their exceptional achievement in the field of community development – Cliff and Jeremy will you please accept this check for \$1000 dollars to support ReBirth’s continued work and this award as an ongoing symbol of the quality work that your organization performs on a daily basis.

Thank you all for coming – Please enjoy the band and the refreshments, I look forward to sharing this time with you – and to seeing you at the sessions tomorrow.