

My Chef snags national honor

Local husband and wife team receives award from U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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In its 17th year of business, My Chef Catering has truly hit its stride.

That is, if accolades and awards are any gauge.

The Naperville company, owned by Bill and Karen Garlough, has long been a team effort both inside and out, many community members will tell you.

The latest hats off to My Chef came Monday, when the company learned it's one of two in the state to win a first-of-its kind excellence award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

In all, 60 businesses across the country won the organization's new Blue Ribbon Small Business Award. Winners were announced Monday for the inaugural award, aimed at recognizing the most successful and well-rounded small firms.

"Small businesses are so integral to the economy as a whole and to the chamber's mission," said Jana Cary, a chamber spokeswoman. "We realized we were missing a valuable opportunity to recognize them."

Selected businesses stood out in several categories, including financial performance, staff training and motivation, and community involvement.

"We are very flattered," said Bill Garlough. "It's such a satisfying feeling."

The 17-year-old company's community involvement includes donations of time and/or supplies to Naperville CARES through Cuisine for a Cause; The Naperville Jaycees through Oktoberfest; Fox Valley Hospice; Little Friends Inc.; and Hesed House in Aurora.

Besides My Chef's charity work, Garlough said he's most proud of the fact his employees truly enjoy their jobs.

"We have good retention because we do take care of our people properly with good benefits and a 401K," he said.

U.S. chamber officials declined to say exactly how many businesses were suggested for the award.

“Way fewer than 50 percent (of applicants) received awards,” Cary said.

The “Blue Ribbon” award is part of a larger selection process to name the group’s first Small Business of the Year. One finalist “Blue Ribbon” winner from each of seven regions across the country will be named on March 15.

Jeanne Buddingh, of Buddingh & Associates Inc., nominated the Garloughs. Buddingh is a friend of the couple who also does marketing work for them.

“It’s really kind of a coup that they’ve gotten this notoriety,” Buddingh said. “It’s an awesome business that gives back to the community and does so many great things.”

The U.S. Chamber represents more than three million businesses and organizations. The other “Blue Ribbon” winner from Illinois is Financial Plus Credit Union in Ottawa.
