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Local entrepreneurs to compete at RCEDC anniversary event

Posted: Thursday, May 13, 2010 6:36 am

The Racine County Economic Development Corp.'s annual meeting celebration next week is free and open to the public. It is a great opportunity to hear more about local economic development initiatives, and network with hundreds of business and government leaders from throughout Racine County.

This year, RCEDC will celebrate its entrepreneurial history through a competition that includes the new ideas of local entrepreneurs.

Earlier this year, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Small Business Development Center and Racine County Workforce Development Center together initiated a green small business development program. The business plans are nearly complete, and the top five have been selected to present their ideas at our event and compete for a top prize of \$1,000.

The presentations will enable the community to learn more about these exciting new ideas that range from new food products to water recycling systems. While the judges have been selected from the local business community, the audience will be given an opportunity to make their own assessment of the potential for these businesses and compare the results to those of the judges.

In addition, Odinn Johnson, grandson of the late Sam Johnson, will present the Sam Johnson Volunteer of the Year award. This award has been provided to individuals and organizations since 1995 to recognize special and unique efforts to improve our community. This year's recipient is retiring Burlington Area School District superintendent Ron Jandura who has also served in a host of volunteer capacities including Gateway Technical College president.

Roger Caron, outgoing president of Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce, and Gil Bakke, former RCEDC and Racine County Board member from the Waterford area, will also receive awards for their economic development efforts.

Caron's contributions include serving as RAMAC president since 1992 as well as initiating programs including Young Professionals of Racine, Racine Technology Organization and Leadership Racine.

Bakke served the community as a member of the RCEDC board for nine years, as well as 12 years as an RCEDC Loan Committee member. He also served as president of the Village of Waterford, Wisconsin Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association and Tri-County Contractor's Association.

Finally, Racine County Executive Bill McReynolds will provide an overview of business and community development projects in 2009 which are expected to add jobs in the near future and improve the infrastructure for economic development.

RCEDC will also present plans for working with existing companies and attracting new ones over the next three years as we continue to emerge from the recession.

Come early and stay late, but don't miss your chance to attend this great event to be held Wednesday from 4:30-6 p.m. at Veteran's Terrace in Burlington. You can reserve your complimentary registration today by e-mailing RCEDC@RacineCountyEDC.org or calling (262) 898-7432. Seating is limited.

Gordy Kacala is the executive director of the Racine County Economic Development Corp.