

Press Release

HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Office of Economic Development



PUBLIC SAFETY

“Ensuring a Safe
Harford”

EDUCATION

“Preparing Now,
Building for the Future”

EFFICIENCY IN GOVERNMENT

“Governing Smarter”

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

“Growing and Sustaining
Harford’s Prosperity”

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

“Protecting Our
Environment”

QUALITY LIVING

“Safeguarding What is
Important to Harford
County Citizens”

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Media Contact: James Richardson, Director

Office of Economic Development at 410-638-3059

Local Businesses Awarded Top Honors for Excellence

(Bel Air, MD – April 7, 2009) - - The University of Maryland and the University of Baltimore have announced their business award winners and Harford County is proud to have three businesses represented among the winners.

Jim Richardson, Director of Economic Development, stated that “Each year Harford County businesses have been well represented at various regional awards. We are proud of the work and dedication of these business people who have elevated their services and products to be honored by these distinguished organizations.”

Two Harford County businesses have been awarded the prestigious Maryland Quality Award – Gold by the 2008 University of Maryland’s Maryland Performance Excellence Awards Program, in conjunction with U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski and Benjamin Cardin. These awards honor role-model organizations that successfully implement systematic processes for continuous improvement and achieving outstanding results.

Award recipients are rigorously evaluated by an independent board of examiners using the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, measuring leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, measurement, analysis and knowledge management, workforce focus, process management and results. Given since 1983, the Maryland Quality Awards foster measurable, continuous improvement that drives results, creating successful organizations that strengthen the Maryland economy.

Maryland Quality Award – Gold winner, Harford County’s Custom Direct, is a market leader in direct-to-consumer personalized printed products, security and fraud protection, financial documents, fulfillment items, phone support and direct marketing services. With a vision to become a world-class organization with \$250 million in revenue with less than 50 percent from checks, Custom Direct has adopted the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence and LEAN principles to create a culture of excellence for its more than 460 associates, located in Maryland and Arkansas. Custom Direct was established in 1993 and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Edgestone Capital Fund III.

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Upper Chesapeake Health, a community-based, two-hospital, not-for-profit health system, was the other Harford County winner of the Maryland Quality Award-Gold. Since 1912, Upper Chesapeake has served more than three generations of patients with high quality health care. It owns and operates Upper Chesapeake Medical Center and Harford Memorial Hospital. With its core values of excellence, compassion, integrity, respect, responsibility and trust, Upper Chesapeake operates in a Culture of Excellence model. Nearly 3,000 staff and 800 volunteers work as a team to serve the area healthcare needs.

The University of Baltimore will be presenting their Distinguished Entrepreneur Awards-Visions Delivered on April 30, 2009 and Harford County is home to one of the seven award winners – Hollis Thomases, President and CEO of Web Ad.vantage, Inc. The Distinguished Entrepreneur award recognizes the outstanding achievements of a graduate of the University of Baltimore who has started or grown a local business, and whose entrepreneurial activity and altruistic behavior are widely admired in the metropolitan business community.

Located in Havre de Grace, Hollis Thomases previously was awarded the 2007 SBA Small Business Person of the Year. With more than 19 years in the sales and marketing industry, Ms. Thomases through her articles, speaking engagements, panel participation and other public relations efforts and appearances stands as one of the industry's most pragmatic and insightful authorities on Internet marketing today.

Harford County Executive, David R. Craig, and the Office of Economic Development honor all Harford County businesses during Business Appreciation Week, scheduled for September 21st through the 25th in 2009. "Business Appreciation Week is a time to thank our business partners, who are critical to the overall well being of Harford County and Harford County Government," stated County Executive Craig.