



NEWS RELEASE

SAN DIEGO DISTRICT

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San Diego SBA Announces Local Small Business Week Awardees

SAN DIEGO / IMPERIAL – Today the U.S. Small Business Administration's [San Diego District Office](#) is celebrating its Small Business Persons of the Year and 15 additional honorees as it prepares for [National Small Business Week](#), which will take place May 4-10, 2025. Along with awards ceremonies, the week will include a national small business roadshow with [SBA Administrator Kelly Loeffler](#), a two-day virtual summit, community events and educational sessions about manufacturing, digital marketing, cybersecurity and cryptocurrency, as well as online business resources and renowned speakers.

"National Small Business Week honors the hard work and dedication that small business owners pour into their business and communities," said SBA Pacific Regional Administrator Steven Snow. "We recognize their resilience, ingenuity, and creativity, which make local neighborhoods vibrant places to live and work."

The SBA San Diego District Office is recognizing **Philip Smith, CEO, and Jack Rubidoux, Director Site Operation of HKM Enterprises, Inc. dba Adaptive Launch Solutions (ALS)**, as its **Small Business Persons of the Year** awardees, for their impact and economic contributions. Philip Smith and Jack Rubidoux both have extensive experience in the aerospace launch industry, which has helped them grow ALS, a company specializing in providing launch integration services for satellite missions, from a modest, garage-based operation to a substantial 12,000-square-foot facility, with an office, a high bay, and a clean room environment. ALS has also invested in its human capital increasing staff to 22 to support the scaling of operations and readiness for future opportunities.

Philip and his team have and continue to utilize SBA assistance programs. They have engaged extensively with the [Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\)](#) for counseling, and support in the areas of government contracting, and financing. Recently, they have also become a

participant in SBA's [8\(a\) Business Development Program](#), to support the expansion of their federal contracting efforts.

ALS and its CEO, Philip Smith are actively engaged in a variety of community and charitable initiatives, such as sponsoring a FIRST Robotics Lego League team, fostering interest in STEM among young students, offering internships to students from UC San Diego, and MiraCosta College, funding an engineering scholarship, as well as volunteering and donating to local hunger relief efforts.

ALS was nominated by Cheryl Brown, Director, North San Diego SBDC

At a local ceremony on May 9, 2025, SBA's San Diego District Office will celebrate the Adaptive Launch Solutions team, and additional local awardees who have empowered entrepreneurial success, created jobs, and driven economic growth, including:

Small Business Exporter of the Year

Kelly A. Twichel, CEO

Access Trax

Nominator: Sophia Antonopoulos, Coordinator, The Brink SBDC

Rural Small Business of the Year

Ramon L. Ozuna, CEO, Victor Celaya, General Manager, and Liliana Higgins, CFO

Imperial Pipe and Steel Supply

Nominator: Viridiana Rosales Trujillo, SBDC Center Manager, Imperial Valley SBDC

Veteran-Owned Small Business of the Year

Robert E. Severson, President & CEO

The Severson Group, LLC

Nominator: Fabian Jamal Severson, COO, The Severson Group

Women-Owned Small Business of the Year

Amy B. Chatten, Executive Director

Mammography Educators, LLC

Nominator: Jonathan Irwin, Advisor, The Brink SBDC

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Brittany D. Saiza, Owner

Soy Candle & Company

Nominator: Viridiana Rosales Trujillo, SBDC Center Manager, Imperial Valley SBDC

SBDC Excellence and Innovation Award

Connect SBDC Team

Nominator: Daniel Fitzgerald, Executive Director, San Diego & Imperial SBDC Network

Small Business Journalist of the Year - Imperial County

Arturo Bojorquez, Editor

Imperial Valley Press

Nominator: Viridiana Rosales Trujillo, SBDC Center Manager, Imperial Valley SBDC

Small Business Journalist of the Year - San Diego County

Fred Grier, Business Journalist

San Diego Business Journal

Nominator: Dr. Silvia Mah, Advisor, The Brink SBDC

Women in Business Champion of the Year

Felena Hanson, Founder

Hera Hub

Nominator: Dr. Silvia Mah, Founder & Chairwoman, Stella Foundation

District Director's Award for SBA Mission Support

Harry Duffield, Volunteer Mentor

SCORE San Diego

Nominator: Bob Ragland, Chapter Chair, SCORE San Diego

District Director's Microenterprise of the Year

Lacy J. Bird, Managing Partner, and Brittany C. Fox, Managing Partner

Small Batch, LLC

Nominators: Diana Barbiani, Program Advisor, North San Diego SBDC, and Marisa Castaneda, Project Specialist, San Diego & Imperial SBDC Network

District Director's Award for Growth

Hima R. Nippuleti, President & Founder

BoozDNA, LLC

Nominator: Cheryl Brown, Director, North San Diego SBDC

District Director's Award for Innovation

Tina Saw, CEO

Oral Genome

Nominator: Amy Duncan, Director, The Brink SBDC

District Director's Award for Overcoming Adversity

Shell Singal, Owner & Founder

Tea Bazaar

Nominator: Jessica Javier, Business Development, Asian Business Association San Diego SBDC

Jill Andrews Award for Staying Power – *In Business over 34 Years*

Tari L. Betancourt, Primary Co-Owner

Fan Diego

Nominator: John Betancourt, Co-Owner, Fan Diego

Business organizations, lending institutions, chambers of commerce, and trade associations, typically nominate candidates. Individuals and business owners may also self-nominate. A panel is convened at the San Diego District Office to review local nominations and select a winner in each of the categories.

SBA award winners will be recognized on Friday, May 9, 2025, at the 2025 SBA Awards Event, presented by the San Diego & Imperial Small Business Development Center Network, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at The Lane San Diego, 900 Bayfront Court, Suite 200, San Diego, California.

Consider submitting a nomination for our 2026 National Small Business Week Awards program. 2026 award nomination guidelines should be released in the Fall of 2025, with nominations due in early December of 2025. For nomination announcement subscribe to our email notification list at www.sba.gov/updates.

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NOTE: Detailed information for each small business winner is available and interviews may be requested. Please call Cynthia Harris, SBA, at (619) 727-4884 or email your request to cynthia.harris@sba.gov.

About the U.S. Small Business Administration

The U.S. Small Business Administration helps power the American dream of entrepreneurship. As the leading voice for small businesses within the federal government, the SBA empowers job creators with the resources and support they need to start, grow, and expand their businesses or recover from a declared disaster. It delivers services through an extensive network of SBA field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations. To learn more, visit www.sba.gov.



Mammography Educators was founded with the mission to elevate the quality and consistency of breast imaging through innovative, hands-on education. Guided by a vision to inspire breast imaging professionals to raise their standards of excellence, we're dedicated to advancing the early detection of breast cancer. Our consulting services include positioning training that meets accreditation standards, inspection preparation, compliance assistance, operational guidance, and workflow analysis. We also offer conferences and online continuing education, along with mammography and breast ultrasound initial training. With a commitment to excellence, we strive to provide an outstanding experience for every technologist, administrator, and radiologist we serve.

Learn more: mammographyeducators.com



Louise Miller, R.T.(R)(M)
Director of Education



Amy Chatten, MPH
Executive Director