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Front Page – Business Section ON THE TOP

Three South Florida Companies Followed their own Unique Paths to Recognition as Award-Winning Small Businesses

By Jim Wyss
Miami Herald Business Reporter

A military supply company, a translation service and a gift shop were among the local companies named by the U.S. Small Business Administration Monday as the “Best Small Businesses” in South Florida.

The annual awards will be presented as part of National Small Business Week and recognize excellence in small business in the SBA’s Southern Florida District, which extends from Central Florida to Key West.

Among the local winners were Mark Allen Llano, the president and CEO of Source One Distributors, a Wellington-based military supply company, Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year; Annette Taddeo, the president of LanguageSpeak, a Miami-based translation and interpretation company, Minority Small Business Champion of the Year; and Susan Gingerich, the owner and founder of Basket Garden Gifts of Pompano Beach, Woman in Business Champion of the Year.

Drawn to their fields by passion and chance, the winners not only created successful businesses but were recognized for giving back to the community.

A native of Colombia, Taddeo can trace the roots of her company LanguageSpeak back to Hurricane Andrew. She was living in Alabama when Andrew plowed through Florida and destroyed her parents’ home.

“Like a good Hispanic daughter, I drove a motor home down here and spent the next six months helping rebuild their house,” she said.

Once in Miami, she found her translation and interpretation skills in hot demand with corporate clients. By 1995 her workload had swelled to the point that she needed to incorporate and hire help.

Now, LanguageSpeak is one of the largest translation and interpretation companies in Florida, working regularly in 40 languages – including Urdu and Chinese. With seven full-time employees and more than 250 consultants spread across the globe, LanguageSpeak has attracted top-shelf clients and made a name for itself in the international community.

When diplomats from across the region came to Miami for the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas Summit, it was LanguageSpeak’s 80 interpreters that were behind the headsets.

Taddeo said her true passion is helping empower women and minorities through Women Impacting Public Policy, the nonprofit she helped found to promote women’s business issues.

“I enjoy being able to share what I’ve learned with people,” she said. “What’s really important to me is to see other people succeed.”



HIGH HONOR: Annette Taddeo is president of LanguageSpeak, a Miami-based translation and interpretation company that was named the Minority Small Business Champion of the Year. GASTON DE CARDENAS/EL NUEVO HERALD