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ACA Newsletter

SMBR Selects 2011 Small Business of the Year

Contractors, consultants recognized for achievements on City of Austin projects

The City of Austin names the 2011 Small Businesses of the Year, in addition to Contractor of the Year and Consultant of the Year.

Harvey-Cleary Builders and K Friese & Associates, Inc. were selected, respectively, as Contractor of the Year for work on the City's Public Safety Training Program, and Consultant of the Year for work on the Austin Clean Water Program in addition to numerous other City projects. The Small and Minority Business Resources (SMBR) department honors contractors and consultants each year who participate in the City's Minority- and Women-Owned Business Procurement Program, in addition to graduates of the program.

SMBR celebrates diversity by recognizing businesses that promote and encourage minorities and women to participate in business contracts with the City. Companies are selected based on number of successful City projects, integrity and work ethic, and community outreach efforts.

"Our Small Businesses of the Year are companies that have an average of 22 years of experience working on projects such as the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility, Boyce Lane Transmission Lane, Austin Bergstrom International Airport Slopes Survey and the Circle C Ranch Metro Park project, just to name a few," said Veronica Briseño Lara, SMBR Director. "We're very proud of the impact that they have made within our community."

Small Businesses of the Year:

- Baer Engineering and Environmental Consulting, Inc.
- Hejl, Lee & Associates, Inc.
- HVJ Associates, Inc.
- Macias & Associates, L.P.

Two companies now exceed the Small Business Administration's size standards and are now honored as alumni of the SMBR program:

2011 MBE/WBE Graduates:

- Beard Integrated Systems, Inc.
- Link America, Inc.

In addition, SMBR recognizes service providers, including the Asian Contractor Association, Austin Area Black Contractors Association, Community Mentor Protégé Initiative, and U.S. Hispanic Contractors Association, for assistance with outreach efforts throughout the year. Small businesses certified as minority- and/or women-owned enterprises can be found on the Certified Vendors

Directory at www.austintexas.gov/smbr.

About Small and Minority Business Resources
The City of Austin's Small and Minority Business

Resources Department assists small, minority-owned and women-owned businesses as they pursue contracting opportunities with the City of Austin; encourages Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Woman Business Enterprises (WBE) and Disadvantaged

Business Enterprises (DBE) to participate in City contracts; certifies qualified Small Business Enterprises (SBE) for the Small Business Construction Program; provides bonding education; and oversees the City's MBE/WBE and DBE contracting goals in the areas of construction, professional services, commodities and non-professional services. (This article is a press release from the Department of Small and Minority Business Department. For questions about this article, please contact Blender Hill, SMBR Outreach Coordinator, (512) 974-7677





Mr. Chien Lee is the Principal of HEJL, Lee and Associates, Inc. His company is the recipient of the 2011 Small Business Award from the City of Austin.

Below is a Q&A session with Mr. Lee.

1. Congratulations on your Small Business Award of the Year. How do you feel about receiving the award?

It was a big surprise and an early Christmas gift for the company. There are many other companies and individuals that deserve to receive the award. We are just lucky that the selection committee paid extra attention to us.

2. Could you tell us about your educational background and what brought you here to Austin?

I came to the U.S. as a foreign student for advanced study and received the master's degree from Texas Tech University with major in civil engineering in 1983. Austin was a beautiful city and it was booming with land development in every corner of the city. I found a job as a civil engineer from a consulting engineering firm and continued my professional career in Austin since then.

3. Under what circumstances and motivations did you decide to start your own company?

After working as an engineering employee for more than 10 years, I felt the job was not challenging enough. I desired to take more responsible charge to excel my career with financial reward. Coincidentally, one of my ex-coworkers was looking for a partner to share the opportunity and vision of starting an engineering design firm in 1993. We started the company when Austin's economy was ready to rebound and took the advantage of the opportunity to start-up the business.

4. Could you list projects, private or public, you've done over the years?

We are a civil engineering, land planning, and surveying firm with diversified projects throughout central and south Texas. The firm designed water towers, wastewater treatment plants for the cities of Hutto, Llano, designed water treatment plant for Llano, Maverick County, designed 42-inch diameter water main for Austin, designed numerous street and drainage improvement projects, performed numerous construction staking for capital im-

provement program (CIP) projects in central Texas, reviewed subdivision plats in Hutto, Bastrop and Maverick Counties, and many other projects in the past 18 years.



5. What contributed to your success building your own company?

We are surrounded by all the good clients, peers, elected officials, and employees that supported and shared our corporate mission. Most of all, my partner and I received strong encouragement and support from our families that allow us to achieve a good balance between business and family life. We always focus our services on the long-term benefits to the clients, not the short-term profit of the company. As engineers, land surveyors, and land planners, we are able to provide diversified professional services to the clients. Our geographical diversity of clients also enable us to weather local economic volatility.

6. What are the challenges and triumphs you have experienced as a business owner and also as an Asian businessman in the USA?

Competing with mainstream big corporation with hundreds of engineers and professionals from out-of-town is a continuous battle. Offering personal and extended service to clients enables us to advance against competition. The City of Austin's MBE/WBE program providing tremendous opportunity and support to local small firms has benefited our firm significantly.

7. Any advice for those in the Asian community in pursuit of business opportunities with the City of Austin?

Visit the Small & Minority Business Resources Department (SMBR) to learn the MBE/DBE program, get certified as a MB/WBE firm, ask for mentor's guidance, join the chamber of commerce, participate in community events, and be persistent and patient.

8. Your outlook on the US economy and the overall construction industry in Austin and TX.

I am not an economist neither a fortune-teller. The US economy is slowly recovering from the sub-prime mortgage bust and excessive war expenditure. Banks, developers, and businesses hesitate to make decisions and actions. The general election in 2012 also clouds the political decision-making process. Austin is a liberal city with beautiful landscape, well-educated citizens, committed elected officials, diversified institutions, businesses, and community. Austin's construction industry has been more stable and resistant to economic swings, compared to other cities in the nation. Formula One racetrack development will bring construction opportunity to southeast Austin. The beautiful hill country on the west will continuously attract land development. As for the Texas economy, the oil and gas exploration in south Texas has created amazing economic boom to local communities.

The New Asian American Resource Center (AARC) Scheduled for Construction in March of 2012

Austin – Flintco, the general contractor awarded by the City of Austin to design-build the AARC, hosted its first HUB mixer on December 15 at the Associated Builders and Contractors for its first phase of the construction project. More than 30 general contractors and subcontractors in the Austin area gathered to meet and greet Flintco's key personnel for the project and other contractors interested in bidding.



Top left: Michael Hutter, Vice President of Flintco (left) and Joe Sanchez, Sr. Business Development Counselor of City of Austin. Top bottom: AARC Site plans. Right: General and Subcontractors at the HUB mixer.

The project will build a new 16,000-square-foot building to include spaces for an assembly hall, catering kitchen, classrooms, offices, conference spaces, and information center. The City of Austin allotted 15 acres of land on Cameron Road and appropriated close to \$5 million dollars for the construction of the center including site improvements.

The project vision of the AARC is to build a resource center that will promote Asian heritage and commerce while providing a central location for the Asian community in the greater Austin area to congregate and foster cultural interchanges.

The anticipated bid date for the project is set to be on February 1, 2012, and the project is scheduled for construction in a month thereafter. For questions, please contact the project manager at Flintco, Daniel Oates at 512-891-7224.

Asian Contractor Association Honors Board Member and AARC President

Austin – Asian Contractor Association (ACA) Board Member LiLi and President of the Asian American Resource Center Dr. Schiller Liao were each presented with an ACA award by ACA Chairman Mahesh Naik on December 15 at an ACA's annual procurement event.

LiLi joined ACA as Director of the Board in 2009 and since then she has devoted countless number of hours in assisting ACA with monthly accounting, finance, and computer issues. The energetic and gregarious board member is also active in the Austin Chinese community and has recently helped secure an endowment from IBM, where she is employed, for the Chinese Society of Austin.

For over 10 years, Dr. Liao has campaigned for the construction of a new Asian community center in Austin. He has labored sacrificially along with other Asian leaders to obtain initial and future funding to design and build the center. His vision is nearing reality as the center is scheduled to begin construction in March of 2012. Dr. Liao, currently employed as a project manager at St Edward's University, also serves as the president of the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce, Austin Chapter.

The award ceremony was held at the China Star restaurant in a procurement event held annually by ACA to help businesses and individuals from the Asian community understand the purchasing process with the City of Austin. Participants were introduced to the city's minority vendor program and the new Austin Finance Online including how to navigate the web site and customize one's personal account to be kept abreast of the latest project opportunities and specific project details.

Left: Dr. Liao (left) and Mr. Naik; Top right: LiLi (left); Bottom Right: participants conversing at the event

