



SBA's San Antonio District Celebrates Small Businesses of the Year and Other Local Honorees for their Success and Impact



The U.S. Small Business Administration's San Antonio District Office is celebrating our local Small Businesses of the Year and additional honorees as it prepares for National Small Business Week, which will take place May 4-10, 2025. Please join us on May 7th in celebrating the winners who have empowered entrepreneurial success, created jobs and driven economic growth in the last year, including:

SMALL BUSINESS PERSONS OF THE YEAR JACOB & STEPHANIE AROCHA – JLA COMMUNICATIONS



JLA Communications, LLC is a full-service low-voltage, audio visual, and electrical contractor delivering scalable infrastructure solutions for complex, high-performance environments. They specialize in design-build and large-scale deployments supporting data centers, K-12 education, government, healthcare, commercial facilities, non-profits, and municipalities. Its owners, Jacob and Stephanie Arocha, have established a level of success that have won the Small Business Persons of the Year for the SBA San Antonio District and catapulted them to a meteoric level built on SBA Assistance and lending that helped them leverage the opportunities they worked hard to create.

Jacob leads field operations, training, and workforce development. Before launching JLA, he managed complex telecommunications, fiber, and security projects for NASA, military bases, school districts, and major commercial facilities. Stephanie leads operational, financial, and cultural foundations with prior experience in communications, marketing, and management.

Through critical and timely capital assistance from the SBA, they obtained a \$50,000 SBA Express LOC, \$150,000 SBA 7A working capital term note, and a \$500,000 SBA express LOC. These infusions catapulted them to a high-level of success that doubled employees to 40 and reached nearly \$8Million in sales in 2024 – four times more than two years prior!

RURAL SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Founder Charlie Agar discovered beekeeping in 2013 through an introductory course like the one he now offers at Charlie Bee. What started as a hobby quickly grew into a full-scale operation. Today, Charlie manages hundreds of honeybee colonies across Central Texas, helping landowners qualify for Ag valuation, producing honey, and performing humane live bee removals that safely relocate wild colonies to the Charlie Bee homestead, where they are nurtured and reintegrated into managed apiaries.

CHARLIE BEE COMPANY



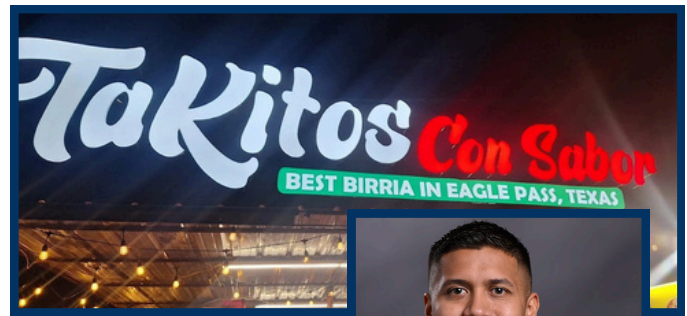
With help from UTSA's Small Business Development Center, Charlie Bee Company became a hub for beekeeping education and community engagement. At the beekeeping school and retail shop, aspiring beekeepers receive hands-on training, expert guidance, and essential equipment. The shop also serves as a gathering place for local beekeepers and offers interactive bee encounters.

Charlie Bee Company also expanded to a national TV program, now in its second season. The documentary-style series follows Charlie and his team as they remove wild honeybee colonies, share the wonder of pollinators, and highlight the importance of honeybees.



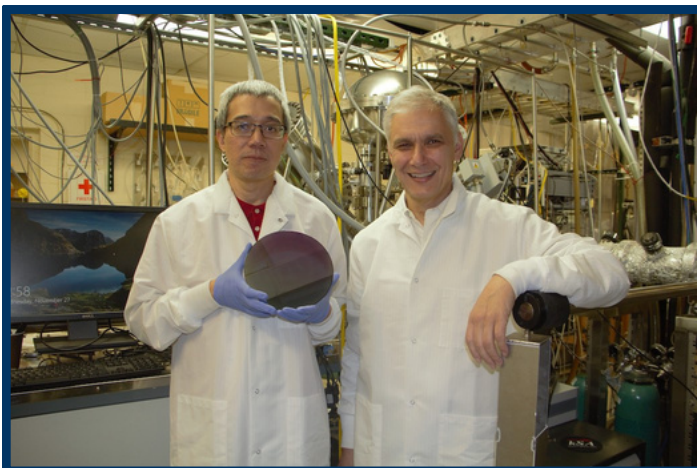
YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR ANDRES ECHAVARRIA – TAKITOS CON SABOR

Entrepreneurship runs in Andres Echavarria's family with both parents as businessowners. Inspired, he started Takitos Con Sabor, after graduating from Texas State University and selling his college ring to buy his first food truck. In 2019, Echavarria became a long-term client of Sul Ross SBDC and secured PPP and EIDL loans to stay afloat during COVID.



Takitos Con Sabor is known for its bold Mexican flavors and offers outdoor seating, takeout, and delivery. Customers praise his service and voted it "Best Tacos" and "Best Food Truck" in the Best of Eagle Pass 2025 Awards.

Echavarria offers employees guidance, structure, and encouragement to pursue their education. His business is built on a strong foundation of community involvement, giving back and helping others. It is not just part of his business; it's a core part of who he is.



MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR LA LUCE CRISTALLINA ALEX DEMKOV & AGHAM POSADAS

La Luce Cristallina is on the cutting edge of silicon photonics technology, where Alex Demkov and Agham Posadas have developed innovative materials to offer high-performance solutions for the growing demand of optical networks.

The Austin firm, born from their joint work at the University of Texas, has continuously outpaced itself in ingenuity. In 2022, with profitable projections in hand, the Texas State SBDC helped them to finally gain financing to keep up with their genius.

A \$3.3 million SBA 7(a) loan set La Luce on a trajectory that finally kept up with its fast-paced creativity and research. Demkov and Posadas finally procured costly, specialized equipment that enabled them to develop smaller, lower-power electro-optic modulators that are more ideal for creating high-density optical networks and advancing optical communications.

La Luce Cristallina has now received two STTR and one SBIR awards and leads the future of optical interconnects, sensing, and optical computing. The company continues to make profound advances in material science and exemplifies how small manufacturers drive economic growth and innovation and can secure a brighter, more advanced future for Texas.

BLUE COLLAR BUSINESS OF THE YEAR **G- HYATT CONSTRUCTION – JACOB HYATT**

Justin Hyatt grew up in construction alongside his father, Gerald Hyatt in North Carolina. In 2011, Justin moved to Austin and started G Hyatt Construction, named after Justin's father, whose experience and knowledge was key to Justin's success.

Since inception, G Hyatt has completed a large range of projects, including parks, police stations, senior centers, apartments, streetscapes, office buildings, pools, community centers, substations, schools, dormitories, hotels, and visitor's centers.

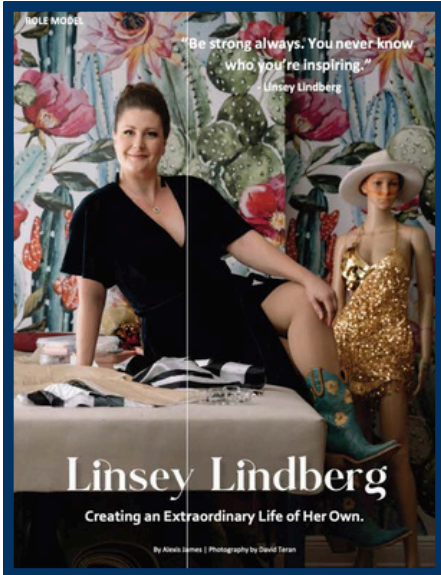
A long-term client of TX State University's SBDC, he obtained two SBA 7(a) loans over the years, which facilitated the company's growth to approximately \$25 million annually with revenue growth over \$93 Million from 2022–2025. G Hyatt admirably retains 61 full-time employees and 194 contract workers.

G Hyatt's clients consistently attest to his company's rare level of professionalism, competence, and integrity as it approaches each project with a problem-solving mindset. Hyatt's communication is known to be clear with project completion on time and on budget. Undoubtedly, an award -winning formula!



WOMAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR **LINSEY LINDBERG – ARTISAN ODDITIES & ENTERTAINMENT**

Linsey Lindberg founded AOE in her backyard shed in Austin. Through strategic leadership, innovation, and commitment to creativity, she grew it into the largest entertainment agency of its kind in Texas. It now generates \$1.6 million annually and provides work to 200 artists. When COVID closed the doors on live events, Ms. Lindberg pivoted to protect jobs. She leveraged SBA resources to stabilize AOE with a \$150,000 Economic Injury Disaster Loan, enabling a switch to virtual programming and preserving paid work for Texas artists. AOE Activity Stations is now a \$510,000-per-year division, ensuring financial security for her workforce.



While Lindberg relied on ongoing UTSA SBDC advising and support, an SVOG grant of \$573,000 supported rehiring and statewide recovery. In addition, an SBA 7(a) loan of \$230,000 enabled headquarters ownership and expansion into Dallas and Houston.

Ms. Lindberg is Director of State Governmental Affairs for the Texas Live Events Coalition, where she has secured \$180 million in hospitality and tourism recovery grants. She produces the podcast, Emerging Texas Strong, which grants over \$10,000 annually in arts sponsorships.

FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR GOT IT COVERED EVENTS – MARTHA VALADEZ

After 20 years in banking, Martha Valadez decided to put her business experience and love for hospitality to work with her sister, Marisol. In the beginning, her sister ran the company, and Martha financed it until it grew so much that she quit banking and joined the company full time. What began as a small linen rental company, Got It Covered, grew steadily into a respected catering and event business serving Central Texas for 16 years. As a small family with no formal business background, the greatest challenges they faced were financial, operational, and educational. They did not have investors, savings, or a large team. Everything they built came from hard work, long hours, and a willingness to learn.



Managing cash flow, and keeping the business afloat during slow months required constant discipline and creativity. They have learned how to stretch every dollar, reinvest wisely, and make decisions that allowed them to grow steadily without compromising quality. The SBA's PPP and EDIL Loans was instrumental in growing while surviving the pandemic. The company also secured an \$880,000 SBA loan to purchase the Grey Moss Inn.

The purchase of the Grey Moss Inn was a major financial leap for the family. A historic Hill Country restaurant with a rich legacy dating back to 1929, the restaurant had been closed for more than two years due to COVID before Martha and her family took on the challenge of bringing it back to life—restoring not only a beloved local landmark but also an important piece of the community's history. Today it is a thriving restaurant with 40 employees.



Martha's practical approach to business and her natural ability to connect with people have been key to their success. Through years of hard work and community relationships, they built a company known for reliability, creativity, and personal service.

VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

JOSEPH LUKOWSKI – LAREDO TECHNICAL SERVICES

Laredo Technical Services (LTSi) is a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business specializing in federal staffing and technical services. Since founding LTSi in 2009, Joseph Lukowski has become a trusted federal partner, employing over 100 professionals across 12 states and four countries. LTSi successfully graduated from the SBA's 8(a) Program in 2018. The program's business development guidance and contracting support benefited him greatly.

The company has successfully delivered contracts supporting the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of State, among others, focusing on human-performance optimization, healthcare, and administrative services.



Lukowski served 20 years as a US Air Force officer with command and leadership positions in criminal investigations, counterintelligence, and operational support across Europe, Asia, and the Pentagon. These experiences shaped his disciplined management philosophy and his ability to build compliant, high-performing teams capable of delivering mission-critical results in complex federal environments.

8(A) GRADUATE OF THE YEAR

JENNIFER DELGADO – STABILITY STAFFING & CONSULTING

Delgado was a teen mother who worked as a receptionist for a recruiter for many years while attending college. She focused on family but wanted more for herself. After thorough planning, she took a leap of faith and started her own business. She left her full-time job and worked out of her living room until winning her first large contract. She worked diligently, overcoming challenges, and finally moved into a small, one office suite.



She first started a staffing firm with only medical assistants, but after years of success, Stability Staffing evolved into filling professional level positions such as: Director Level Professionals, Registered Nurses, Accountants, Senior Level Analysts, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians and Procurement Managers. Stability Staffing also has a strong presence in staffing for emergency disasters as she proactively deploys nurses and staff to affected areas and is now recognized as a reliable sourcing company.

Ms. Delgado has won an impressive number of awards, including 2018 SBA Minority Owned Business of the Year Award, 2018 Inc 5000 America's Fastest Growing Companies Award, 2018 Governor Abbott's Official Certificate of Recognition and many more.

SMALL BUSINESS MEDIA ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

JASON MEZA, SR. DIRECTOR COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER RELATIONS BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU



Meza serves as Sr. Director of Media Relations and Community Engagement for Better Business Bureau serving the Heart of Texas. He covers community and media relations, event coordination, and serves the San Antonio community as its local business ethics expert. He is an Accredited Public Relations practitioner as recognized by the Public Relations Society of America and contributes over 15 years of broadcast and communications expertise to enhance awareness of BBB's mission and vision across the state of Texas.

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE AWARD TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SBDC



AMERICA'S SBDC | TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY | TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION OF OUR TEAM

Joe Harper
Executive Director

Bill Thompson
Associate Director & Sr. Certified SBDC Advisor

Francisca Arana
Training/Compliance Coordinator

Jane Georgilis
Training/Social Media Coordinator

Orlando Colmenero
Sr. Certified SBDC Advisor

Susana Mesa Arango
Associate SBDC Advisor

Med Raza
Associate SBDC Advisor

Small Business Development Centers are not just educators, but builders of the community as they assist thousands of small businesses across the country. They are also the key resource partner of the U.S. SBA.

Texas State University SBDC, led by Joe Harper, has been instrumental in steering many Austin businesses to success. His nimble team covers some of the United States' fastest growing counties, where technology and innovation have soared. Through small business outreach and training, Texas State SBDC has boosted critical and competitive economic development throughout their territory and solidified the success of companies instrumental to the U.S. and state economy.

This past year they hosted 268 training events with a total of 5664 attendees and facilitated a total capital loan infusion of \$76 million to the area.

SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



Director Brenda Hicks-Sorenson

The City of San Antonio’s EDD showed a sustained, results-driven commitment to small businesses firms and leveraged its purchasing power to direct nearly half of City contracting dollars to small businesses, translating policy into real revenue and long-term growth. Through a coordinated ecosystem of capital access, technical assistance, and business development programs, the City supports entrepreneurs from startup through expansion.

Under the leadership of Brenda, Ana, and Alfred, San Antonio translated federal recovery resources into measurable, equitable outcomes—advancing the mission of the U.S. SBA and setting a national example for municipal small business recovery and growth.

In parallel, the City implemented focused support for businesses impacted by major construction projects, helping them remain open, visible, and financially stable during periods of disruption.

San Antonio’s EDD exemplifies the mission of the U.S. SBA and a clear choice for the District’s Small Business Champion.



Assistant Director Alfred Breuer



Assistant Director Ana Bradshaw



Sponsorship & Tickets

Premier Sponsor — \$5,000

(Only One Available)

Top logo on all promotions • Prime exhibit space • Exclusive breakout room signage • Custom QR code on lunch tables • Featured article & social media • Post-event webinar • Branded giveaways
Reserved table for 8 • Lunch for 8 • Logo in program & signage • Exhibit table. Scan QR code to purchase.



Networking Sponsor — \$1,500

Reserved table for 8 • Lunch for 8 •

Logo in program & signage • Exhibit table. Scan QR Code to purchase.



Reserved Table — \$600

Reserved table for 8 • Lunch for 8 •

Name listed in program. Scan QR Code to purchase.



Individual Ticket — \$75

Event admission • Lunch included. Scan QR Code to purchase.

Agenda:

- 8:00am - 8:30am: Networking Sponsor Set Up
- 8:30am – 9:30am: Attendee Registration and Networking with Sponsors
- 9:30am – 11:00am: Breakout Sessions
- 11:00am – 12:00pm: Lunch Buffet
- 11:30am – 1:00pm: Awards Ceremony
- 1:00pm: Program Ends

Location:

This will be an in-person event at:
the Norris Conference Center
618 Northwest Loop 410, STE 207
San Antonio, TX 78216