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“Tough economic times highlight the importance of small businesses”

The BOC Awards Celebrate Entrepreneurship
Highlighting Immigrant, Women and Minority Microentrepreneurs & Small Business Owners

On June 13, 2008 the Business Outreach Center (BOC) Network held the BOC Awards 2008 to celebrate the successes of women, immigrant and minority microentrepreneurs and small business owners from NYC's diverse communities and honored public and private sector partners. The event was held at Battery Gardens Restaurant where appropriately the backdrop to the ceremony, as seen through the windows of the event space, was Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, symbols of opportunity and prosperity, which was a powerful reminder to guests of that which they were celebrating.

New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli joined public and private sector leaders to honor distinguished partners, including NYS Assemblymember Mark S. Weprin, Chair Small Business Committee, for his leadership and commitment to promoting small business development and Miguel A. Centeno, Vice President of Strategic Market Development, NE of AETNA, for his dedication to empowering small businesses and ethnically diverse communities. Private sector sponsors of the occasion included Aetna, HSBC Bank USA, JP Morgan Chase, Capital One Bank, Citibank, NA, and Forest City Ratner Companies.

Over its twelve years of existence, BOC has enabled thousands of individuals to improve their economic prospects, helping them to gain needed financing, expert guidance and connections to build local small businesses. At the gala, BOC launched its new Micro-Venture Program, an innovative effort to provide microequity grants to low-income entrepreneurs.

“Without us, fewer new businesses would start and even fewer would be successful,” stated Leslie Winter, Board Chair. Two hundred representatives of government, business, and non-profit entities, as well as numerous small entrepreneurs, gathered in Lower Manhattan to recognize the accomplishments of BOC Network and its collaborative partners; Chinatown Manpower Project, Council of Jewish Organizations of Flatbush, Washington Heights Inwood Development Corporation and West Brighton Community LDC.

The event's most moving moments happened when BOC presented awards to small business owners and microentrepreneur clients for their excellence in entrepreneurship and commitment to their communities. Woman and minority-owned business awardees included: K.Y. Chow, *GM Printing*; Okwa Okon, *Guso, Inc.*; Zhanna Shimunova, *Austin's Fancy Cut*; Murat Uyaroglu, *Prospect Perk Café*; Courtney Washington, *CW Fashion*. Seven home-based child care business owners from Corona in Queens to Washington Heights in Manhattan to Brownsville and Canarsie in Brooklyn will received awards including: Ingrid Arevalo, *Chiquilandia*; Laura Ceballos, *The Blue Sky Group Family Daycare*; Shelia Fryar-Ashley, *Little Busy Bodies*; Hattie Griffin, *Snuggle Bears Family Daycare*; Barbara Mascheck, *Mother Bee's Daycare*; Desiree Stewart, *Fingerprints Christian Learning Center*; and Joan Hallet, *My Babies Footprints Academy*.

Genuine collaborations, working together with culturally diverse individuals and organizations in service to a shared goal, is a hallmark of BOC Network.