

# The cream of the business crop: Chamber of Commerce awards

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SALEM - Wednesday night was one of those rare evenings when artists with nose-piercings mingle with executives in business suits. That's Salem's Chamber of Commerce: nothing if not diverse.

Nearly 600 of the city's business owners, operators and employees gathered in the Atrium of the Peabody Essex Museum for the 86th annual Celebrate Salem awards. The awards are given in several categories to reward excellence in business, and are culled from a list of 36 nominees. They are chosen by a committee of the chamber, headed up by Sandy Heaphy, and kept secret until the big night.

Rinus Oosthoek, executive director of the chamber, said it may sound cliché, but "according to us, we have 36 nominees and 36 winners."

The night began with cocktails, tasty hors d'oeuvres and the inevitable networking that accompanies a gathering of businesspeople. By 7:30 p.m. dinners of sirloin or haddock, prepared by Hawthorne Hotel catering, were being served.

The desserts sat temptingly as centerpieces, looking almost too elegant to eat. Each table had a two-tier wedding cake, and each cake was decorated uniquely — a pink cake studded with pearls of white frosting, or a pistachio-green one fringed with curtain-style icing. The cakes were part of the theme of the night, "Wedded Bliss, the Marriage of Art and Ceremony," chosen to represent the upcoming "Wedded Bliss" exhibit at PEM.

Among the night's speakers were state Rep. John Keenan, chamber President Patrick DeLulis and chamber board member Jay Finney, of Peabody Essex Museum. While each table was entitled to take home the leftover cake along with a parting gift from Jacqueline's Cookies, the award winners each brought home a framed photo of a Salem scene taken by one of three local artists, Leighton O'Connor, Tripp Mason and Richard Scott.

Many of the night's award winners had been nominated in the past, as were some of the presenters. And some winners had actually won previously for a different category.

The names and businesses of the winners are listed here, with the category.

**Businessman of the Year**, for a chamber member who has demonstrated excellence in business practices throughout the year and has demonstrated a sincere commitment to Salem: Robert Lutts, Cabot Money Management.

**Businesswoman of the Year**, a chamber member who has demonstrated excellence in business practices throughout the year and has demonstrated a sincere commitment to Salem: Jennie Cudmore, Crunchy Granola Baby.

**New Business of the Year**, awarded to the best new business that opened in 2007: Gulu-Gulu Café.

**The Long-term Achievement Award**, for a business that has achieved 10 or more years of success in the community: Coffee Time Bake Shop.

**The Community Service Award**, given to a member or organization that has an outstanding record of community service and volunteer participation: Salem Rotary.

**Excellence in Retailing Award**, which showcases the outstanding achievements of Salem retailers and is awarded to the retailer that applies superior knowledge, creativity and industry know-how to develop innovative strategies and contributes to the growth of the Salem retail sector: A & J King Artisan Bakers.