

Excellence in business rewarded

Surika van Schalkwyk

NELSPRUIT - The glitz and glamour of the Lowveld attended the prestigious Lowveld Chamber of Business and Tourism (LCBT) Annual Awards on Saturday at the Emnotweni Arena in Riverside.

The awards recognise excellence in the business and tourism community and is the only platform in the Lowveld that specifically honours outstanding accomplishments in business and tourism operations and leadership in the region.

Mr Dave Walters of MPowerFM eased the tension of the 39 finalists with his tasteful wit as 13 awards were presented. They were categorised under Specific Awards (Entrepreneur, Franchisee and Environmental Awards), Hospitality Awards (Small, Medium and Large Enterprise Awards in the hospitality industry), Business Awards (Small, Medium and Large

Enterprise Awards) and Special Awards (Community Service, Tourism Personality, Business Personality and Leadership Awards).

Winner of the PricewaterhouseCoopers LCBT large enterprise award, Mr Koos de Wet of A1 Fisheries, is the only winner that scored 100% in all the categories in the public survey.

"He completely blew us away with his business ethics and respect for his employees and consumers," said Ms Janitta Pieterse of LCBT. Speakers at the event emphasised the volatility of the changing national and international market

and how it impacted on the business and tourism sector.

"Business operates in an ever-changing environment and those who want to be

successful must be able to adapt to the new challenges that the change brings," said Mr Johan Barnard, chairman of LCBT. According to Barnard, LCBT's main aim is to help create an environment that is conducive to a vibrant and growing economy.

"A year ago nobody would have believed that

South Africa would be left in darkness because of Eskom's incapacity to provide for the growing demand in electricity.

The LCBT has been involved with

The awards recognise excellence in business and tourism

different role players throughout the year in order to reduce the effects of the changes in the marketplace.

Meetings were held with Eskom and Mbombela regarding load-shedding and its effect on business, traffic flow and consumer spending. The LCBT was also involved with Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative and with the Komati Ngwenya Private Sector Forum, supporting the need for a dam for the Lowveld region.

But, as LCBT president Ms Helen Thrush pointed out, the purpose was not to try to give a rundown of local or international economics, "We are going to focus on the work which we have done for you, our members and our extended affected community over the past 12 months.

"Let's take responsibility for and support one another to make a difference in our community," she said.

HTS Business Support (Pty) Ltd/LCBT Entrepreneur Award, The Specific Award

Mr Herbert Samoos - News cafe
The judges' comment

Messrs Herbert Samoos and Albert Hechter receive the award for creating one of the most popular entertainment venues in Nelspruit. Since it opened its doors in April 2007, their dedicated and professional team was committed to giving their guests a little more than they expect. News Cafe has status - it's aspirational, it's trendy and it's about the vibe.

This award is presented for exceptional achievement in a start-up business that reflects the true spirit of entrepreneurship. Other finalists were:

Mpumalanga Blinds & Flooring
(Ms Katherine and Mr Lee Pitts)

The Firm Slimming and Health Clinic
(Ms Anna-Marie Barnard).



Mr James Thrush (HTS Business Support (Pty) Ltd) and Mr Herbert Samoos (News Cafe).

The HL Hall & Sons Limited Environmental Award

Dr Simon Evered - Wildlife & Environment Society of South Africa (Wessa)

The judges' comment:

Wessa participates in three environmental education programmes, each with a different emphasis and has enrolled nearly 20 schools to improve their environment. The society has taken part in a number of conservation projects, the most recent being the Save the Elephant Foundation.

The award gives recognition to excellence for either those activities which are developed, planned and managed in accordance with recognised best practice, or organisation for the benefit of the sustainability of human society and the environment on which we depend, or for organisations or individuals who have made significant contributions towards protecting, rehabilitating or establishing environmental areas or raising environmental awareness in the community.

The Ulusha Projects/LCBT Hospitality Small Enterprise Award, The Hospitality Award

Messrs Bertie and Mr Danie Schoeman and Ms Andri Nel - Nou's Toeka

The judges' comment

Nou's Toeka offers quality service, which is derived from a commitment to providing consistently high standards of

accommodation and events facilities to both local and international guests. The award is presented to businesses operating in the hospitality sector with a turnover less than R3 million per annum.

The Crossing SUPERSPAR/LCBT Hospitality Large Enterprise Award

Ms Heather Cranko - Pestana Kruger Lodge

The judges' comment

This award honours passion, round-the-clock excellence, beautiful setting, business management skills and most of all, consistency. Pestana Kruger Lodge enhances the quality of its surroundings by offering an unforgettable and complete African experience to its guests. The award is presented to a business operating in the hospitality industry, with an annual turnover which exceeds R7 million per annum.



Ms Heather Cranko (Pestana Kruger Lodge), Mr Clive Gould (Crossing SUPERSPAR) and Mr Dolf van Rooyen (LCBT).

The Produkta Trucks/LCBT Franchisee Award

Mr Hendrik van Rensburg - Protea Tyres Nelspruit

The judges' comment

Servicing the entire spectrum of its market, from heavy mining vehicles to ordinary

passenger vehicles, its focus remains firmly on being the best in every possible way. In this award the emphasis is on exceptional business management principles and the success of the franchise.

PricewaterhouseCoopers/LCBT Large Enterprise Award

Mr Koos de Wet - A1 Fisheries

The judges' comment

The applause from the company's employees is testimony to the leadership of Mr Koos de Wet and their amazing achievements through sheer hard work and team spirit. He was a worthy recipient of the

LCBT Leadership Award in 2007 and his business has become a legacy to its people: Scoring a staggering 100% in our public survey, they have raised the bar for those to follow in the years to come.

This award is presented to a business with an annual turnover which exceeds R20 million but is less than R20 million per annum and which has performed exceptionally in all aspects of business.

On behalf of sponsor PricewaterhouseCoopers, Mr Johan Barnard (LCBT), Mr Nick Elliot (LCBT) and Mr Koos and Ms Annemarie de Wet (A1 Fisheries).



The TRACKER/LCBT Community Service Award, The Special Awards

Ms Annriette Slabber - LifeLine Nelspruit

The judges' comment

LifeLine Nelspruit receives the award for its continued efforts and remarkable achievements in enhancing the emotional wellness of the community.

The reward is presented to a non-governmental, non-political, non-profit organisation, which focuses on the well-being, community outreach and development of the community.

The LCBT Leadership Award

Dr Louis Swanepoel - Hoërskool Nelspruit

The judges' comment

Dr Louis Swanepoel is such an inspiration through his service and dedication towards our youth, that the people around him and the community as a whole had no choice but to follow his leadership and become more

focused and aware of the education and morals of our children. As principal of Hoërskool Nelspruit and chairman of the SAOU Mpumalanga, his leadership is refreshingly hands-on. This award recognises outstanding leadership and service by an individual or individuals in all spheres of public and community life.

The Budget Rent a Car/LCBT Business Personality

Ms Brenda Horne - Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative

The judges' comment

Ms Brenda Horne is the founder and chief executive officer of the Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative. Horne has implemented a multilateral, multi-stakeholder model of

engagement with regional stakeholders and, through continuous high-level engagement with international bodies across Africa, Europe and the USA. This is awarded to an individual who has shown noteworthy and inspirational business leadership in the business environment and in the community.

The Nedbank/LCBT Small Enterprise Award, The Business Award

Mr Johan Strydom - Juweel Kuns

The judges' comment

Strydom mastered the combination of being a brilliant artist and a gifted businessman in one package. He is no stranger to receiving

awards. He received third and second places in the PlatAfrica Professional Category since 2005. This award is presented to a business whose annual turnover is less than R5 million per annum.

The Protea Hotel Nelspruit/LCBT Tourism Personality Award

Mr Eugene Cussons - Jane Goodall Institute Chimp Eden

The judges' comment

Chimp Eden now has an international audience, thanks to this larger than life personality, Mr Eugene Cussons. He responded to the desperate plight of chimpanzees worldwide and the Cussons family donated the land for the facility.

Bearing the title of rescue director, his chimp rescues and daring escapes into often hostile territories have captured the imagination of a global audience. This is a leadership award focused on the tourism industry where an individual's leadership and overall achievements in the tourism industry are inspirational.

The HUX Technologies Business Group/LCBT Medium Enterprise Award

Mr Johnny Kerswill - Hi-Tech Security Nelspruit

The judges' comment

Hi-Tech Security Nelspruit receives the award for its leadership in a highly competitive industry. A successful business in the security industry is an exceptional one. The service levels, professionalism, training, resources and costs involved in providing security to a large number of clients 24 hours

a day, every day is an achievement in itself. Hi-Tech Security Nelspruit definitely contributes greatly to our safety and tonight, we sincerely thank them.

This award is presented to a business with an annual turnover of more than R5 million but less than R20 million per annum and which has performed exceptionally well in all aspects of the business.



Mr Nick Elliot (LCBT), Mr Johnny Kerswill (Hi-Tech Security) and Mr Leon van der Merwe (HUX Technologies).

The Valencia Wholesalers/LCBT Hospitality Medium Enterprise Award

Ms Caren Oberholzer - Lone Creek River Lodge

The judges' comment

They are rewarded for honouring five-star quality and service from the rooms at the manor house to the Aspen-style timber

cottages. The restaurant also surpasses all standards by serving five-course dinners with live instrumental music. This award is presented to a business in the hospitality industry with an annual turnover of between R3 million and R7 million per annum.