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EVENT PRODUCTION COMPANY, COFFEE SHOP WIN YORK COUNTY BUSINESS AWARDS

York County honors two local companies—Big Top Entertainment given William Rogers “Poor Potter” Award and Mobjack Bay Coffee Roasters named Small Business of the Year.

(YORKTOWN, VA, February 20, 2020) – At York County’s annual Distinguished Business Affair yesterday, two local companies accepted awards for their impact. The Economic Development Authority and the Office of Economic Development honored Big Top Entertainment with the 2020 William Rogers “Poor Potter” Award. The award—named after William Rogers, a successful 18th-century entrepreneur who was known as the “poor potter” of Yorktown—is given to growing businesses that make significant investments in York County.

Also during this event, held in the Freight Shed at Riverwalk Landing, the York County Chamber of Commerce recognized its Small Business of the Year: Mobjack Bay Coffee Roasters and Petite Café. The shop was selected for its support of the historic backdrop of Yorktown and its commitment to community.



Big Top Entertainment celebrates its 25th anniversary this year—founded by David and Julianne Kiedinger as a small retail party store. It has since grown into a major event rental and production company, handling more than 1,000 events per year. The company employs full-time art directors and specializes in custom events, boasting a massive inventory of props, tents, equipment, catering supplies.

After outgrowing its Newport News location, Big Top is moving to its new York County home in March. The Kiedingers have constructed an expansive warehouse at 500 Old York-Hampton Highway, supported from the early stages by the York County Economic Development Authority—which redeveloped the land—and the Office of Economic Development.

“On the surface, we chose Big Top for the Poor Potter award because of its capital investment and job creation in the County, plus its role in building a commercial real estate tax base,” said Jim Noel, the County’s director of economic development. “We are interested in sustainable companies, and they’ve been in business for years and continue to grow and prosper. But we also chose them because they’re great ambassadors for York County. The Kiedingers are York County residents, and they are helping support the community they live in. They hire very talented people and have a proven track record.”

“We’re humbled and grateful for this honor,” said co-owner David Kiedinger. “We’re just working hard and trying to always be better. I was shocked to hear we received it! There are a lot of great companies in York County. You don’t always notice how much you’ve grown until you stop and look back. It’s been more of an evolution than a growth—changing to the demands and following the need.”



Mobjack Bay Coffee Roasters and Petite Café was established in 2007 by Celeste and Jo Gucanac, later moving into the Historic Cole Digges House near the Yorktown waterfront. The company purchases its coffee beans from small plantations with specific certifications, creating unique roasting profiles to bring out the very best flavors in the beans. Mobjack Bay's coffees are roasted weekly. The café is designed complement the historic charm of the Cole Digges House, harkening to its colonial heritage as a coffee and tea house.

The Gucanacs and their three children give their time, energy and a portion of their profits to preserve and restore the historic building. Mobjack Bay also plans and orchestrates local clean-up projects and supports local organizations—the company has developed simple ways to include locals and visitors in the goal to clean the bay, offering incentives for picking up litter on the beach to promote a healthy environment and protect our waterways. Mobjack Bay's dedication to history and the surrounding natural environment is what attracted the chamber's attention when choosing a Small Business of the Year.

“They had a vision to help revitalize the area and become an integral part of the revitalization process by providing a service and giving back at the same time,” said Toni Chavis, president of the York County Chamber of Commerce. “The Gucanacs wanted more than a business. Their commitment to keep a piece of the history of the Yorktown waterfront alive in our Yorktown Colonial National Historical Park is both admirable and heartwarming. Their desire to educate people about our local history, coffee and even help others open their own coffee shop businesses is a sign of true entrepreneurs who also want to give back.”

Mobjack Bay has become a favorite of both the locals and tourists, for providing high-quality products that are socially responsible, organic and Fair Trade and Rainforest Alliance certified. The County has also taken a role the supporting this business, providing grant money to help move them into the Cole Digges House and retrofit the building for a coffee roasting business.

About the York County OED and EDA

The primary mission of York County's Office of Economic Development (OED) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) is to create a diverse economic base by the aggressive recruitment,

expansion and retention of businesses, industries, and tourism, thus expanding the tax base and capital investment in the County and providing new employment opportunities for its citizens. When an economic development program is successful, it results in a more balanced tax base for the locality by increasing the percentage of total taxes generated by the locality's commercial, industrial, and tourism entities. In practical terms, this means a lower real estate tax rate for all of our property-owning citizens. Additionally, a healthy commercial tax base supports quality municipal services, most importantly our Fire and Life Safety Department, Sherriff's Office, and school system. A robust commercial sector also adds immensely to our overall quality of life through charitable giving, volunteerism, and new job creation.

The Office of Economic Development works in cooperation with many regional and state agencies to pursue its mission. Key among these allies are the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Greater Williamsburg Partnership, Hampton Roads Small Business Development Center, and local Chambers of Commerce. Perhaps the most important ally is the York County Economic Development Authority. Established in 1972, the EDA is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and has unique powers established in the Code of Virginia. The EDA is a conduit for non-taxable industrial revenue bonds, can legally own, develop, and sell or lease commercial real estate, and can provide incentives necessary to close deals within targeted industry sectors.

Learn more at <https://www.yesyorkcounty.com/>

About the York County Chamber of Commerce

The York County Chamber of Commerce is a not-for-profit business membership organization operated by volunteer business leaders who care about our community. The Chamber is dedicated to serving its community by promoting the businesses and business interests of its members. The Chamber is constantly working to strengthen the area's overall economic climate by advocating for and providing enhanced business assistance and support.

Learn more at <https://yorkcountychamberva.org/>

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