

Chamber honors small business leaders

BY LYNN ADAIR
Staff Writer

"Small business is vital to Tulsa's economy, and vital to your chamber," said John Gaberino, 2001 chair of the board of directors of the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Gaberino gave the opening remarks at a May 18 awards luncheon honoring small businesses.

"As we point out in our new small business brochure, 87 percent of businesses in our area generate less than \$1 million in annual sales. And 85 percent of chamber members have 10 or fewer employees on their payrolls," Gaberino continued. "Small businesses are vital to a healthy and diverse economy, and their entrepreneurial spirit keeps us moving forward."

Drew Pearson, former Dallas Cowboy's wide receiver and now CEO of Drew Pearson Companies — a company that manufactures licensed headwear for the NFL, major league baseball, the NBA, the NCAA and the Walt Disney Company — was the keynote speaker at the event.

Speaking at the Tulsa awards luncheon was like coming back home, Pearson said.

"I went to the University of Tulsa and played four years of football here," he said.

But, as far as his college days at TU were concerned, "The college and the education part were more successful than the football part," he added. "I was four years of all nothing playing football here and I can say that our team never ruined anyone's homecoming. But the education I received at TU was very valu-



WINNERS CIRCLE — Drew Pearson (third from left) congratulates the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Award winners on their hard work and success. The winners are Dyanne Mason (left) director of the city of Tulsa's department of Human Rights; Susan Bramsch (second from left), president of Sterling Integrated Communications; Mary Bransford (fourth from left), owner of Tulsa News; Jerry Holder (second from right), owner of Allegra Print & Imaging; and John Johnson (right), president of Bluestem Resources Group.

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able to me. It was second to none."

Pearson said he gained a lot of valuable experience as a professional athlete that has helped him in business.

"Being successful in business is very tough," he said.

"I've experienced more problems, more losses in business than I ever did playing football. And I was never

said no to more than now I'm in business. I thought I knew what perseverance was playing football, but I really

learned what perseverance means by being in business.

"As a pro football player, you'd better know how to persevere and be persistent," Pearson continued.

"But business is a tough game. The clock never runs out and the score changes from day to day."

There are 22 million small businesses in America and they employ more than 50 percent of the workforce and represent more than half of the gross domestic product, he said.

"We may be small business, but those numbers are big time," Pearson said. "Small business plays a vital role as job creators."

Pearson reminisced about his football days and said he learned a lot on and off the field. He compared playing football to being in business.

"In both football and in business you need a strong organization with experienced leaders to create team success," Pearson said. "And you need a committed staff to breed teamwork to lead the company to success."

"One important thing I've learned is to be successful in

business, you must have good people," he continued.

"Good people are the most important aspect of any business."

Business is not just plants or product lines or assembly lines or bottom lines, but business is people communicating with people and coordinating to serve people, he said.

"It is good people who make a success of business," Pearson said. "Teamwork is essential to the success of any business."

"If you surround yourself with successful people, you have a better chance of being successful yourself," he added. "What enhanced my abilities as a football player was that I was surrounded by great people."

A good idea or concept does not make a great business person, Pearson said.

The fact is, "86.6 percent of all small businesses fail because they had bad management," he added.

Another important factor in success is the willingness to endure, Pearson emphasized.

"The number one problem in beginning a business is not obtaining start-up capital," he said. "The number one problem is obtaining operating capital — the money that is needed to keep a company going after the start-up capital is gone. And no small business is immune to this problem."

But the first step is the courage to follow your dreams, Pearson said.

"You have to have a dream, a vision. Nothing happens unless you first have a dream," he said. "The more you see in your vision, the more you can achieve. You miss 100 percent of the shots if you never take a shot."

Pearson said these are the three biggest lessons he has learned to be successful —

(1) surround yourself with successful people; (2) persevere and overcome obstacles; and (3) have a vision and then ensure the business' success by knowing where you want to go with that vision.

In closing, Pearson said,

"Small business owners, keep up the good work. You are a big part of our society and a big part of our economy."

"Make the effort; take the risk," Pearson continued. "If you never make the effort, you will never accomplish anything."

"In business, recognize the ones that stand out," he said.

The small businesses that stood out for the chamber were nominated for the small business awards.

Nominated for the 2001 Small Business Awards were Susan Bramsch, Sterling Integrated Communications; Mary Bransford, Tulsa News; John F. Hausam, John Hausam Realtors; Jerry Holder, Allegra Print & Imaging; Nathan Hostetter, Accurate Autobody; John Johnson, Bluestem Resources Group; Ken Klein, KleinCo; Dyanne Mason, city of Tulsa; Mike Monroe, Riverlakes Bowling Center; Hari Musapeta, P&R Supply; and Dean Schweegler, Clean Dean's Chimney Service.

LT. Gov. Mary Fallin announced the winners of the 2001 Small Business Awards.

Susan Bramsch, president of Sterling Integrated Communications, won the Women in Business Advocate of the Year award.

John Johnson, president of Bluestem Resources Group Inc., won the Financial Services Advocate of the year award.

Mary Bransford, owner of Tulsa News newspaper, won the Small Business Journalist of the Year award.

Dyanne Mason, director of the city of Tulsa's department of Human Rights, won the Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year award.

The 2001 Small Business Person of the Year award was presented to Jerry Holder, owner of Allegra Print & Imaging.

The 2001 Small Business Awards were part of the day-long Oklahoma Small Business Conference Agenda, which included a number of workshops and breakout sessions designed to help small businesses succeed.