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American Express OPEN Recognizes Business Owners for Government Contracting Success with First-ever Victory in Procurement (VIP) Awards

OPEN's Government Contracting Event in New Orleans Helps Entrepreneurs Do Business with World's Largest Customer

NEW ORLEANS--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Today at the Government Contracting Procurement and Networking Event in New Orleans, American Express OPEN®, the small business division of the financial services company, recognized three small business owners for their outstanding achievements in government contracting with the first-ever Victory in Procurement (VIP) Awards.

“Persistence and starting with small contracts are two important factors to success and can lead to larger opportunities, according to contractors who participated in OPEN’s VIP survey.”

“Today we are celebrating the persistence and ingenuity of three unique small businesses. Our award winners exemplify what it takes to thrive in government contracting and are proof that small businesses can be profitable when working with the world’s largest customer,” says Karen-Michelle Mirko, Director of Customer Advocacy at American Express OPEN. “Persistence and starting with small contracts are two important factors to success and can lead to larger opportunities, according to contractors who participated in OPEN’s VIP survey.”

In 2009, the U.S. government spent \$96.8 billion on products and services supplied by small businesses, including \$33.5 billion with small, disadvantaged firms and \$16.4 billion with women-owned small businesses.

At today’s event, hundreds of business owners were given the opportunity to network and learn the tools and strategies around marketing their business to the government, planning for federal contracting as a revenue stream and executing tactics such as teaming and subcontracting to better their chances of securing contracts.

Award winners present at the event are being recognized in the categories of Government Contractor of the Year, Woman Contractor of the Year and Teaming Contractor of the Year. Nominees for the VIP awards were selected in collaboration with partners, Business Matchmaking ([www.businessmatchmaking.com](http://www.businessmatchmaking.com)), Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP) ([www.giveme5.com](http://www.giveme5.com)) and SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business" ([www.score.org](http://www.score.org)). Candidates provided details about their work and success in government contracting via a detailed application which were then deliberated over by a panel of judges who looked at criteria such as growth, strategy and community involvement. The winners are:

- **Contractor of the Year awarded to Janice M. Hamilton of New York, NY-based JMH Education Marketing, a firm specializing in creating customized education programs on behalf of corporations, government agencies, and not-for-profits. Revenues from government contracting in 2010 are estimated at \$4.29 million.**
- Woman Contractor of the Year awarded to Evelyn Graham of San Francisco, CA-based Presynct Technologies Inc., provider of complete document management solutions in public safety and healthcare. Revenues from government contracting in 2010 have risen 76% year-to-date over 2009.
- Teaming Contractor of the Year awarded to Michael Nicholas of Washington, D.C.-based NIMS Services, Inc., a full service energy marketing firm providing fuels, lubricants, oils, greases, waxes, hydraulic, transmission and brake fluids. Revenues from government contracting in 2010 are estimated at \$6.5 million.

The VIP awards are part of American Express OPEN's Victory in Procurement™ (VIP) for Small Business initiative. Launched in 2009, VIP is a national program designed to help small business owners capitalize on the enormous growth opportunity provided through government contracts. By partnering with WIPP, SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business" and Teaming USA ([www.teamingusa.com](http://www.teamingusa.com)), a partnership with Business Matchmaking, the program is helping business owners at every level of contract readiness.

Three additional business owners will be recognized with VIP awards at an American Express OPEN event in Chicago on Friday, November 5, 2010. The free Government Contracting Procurement & Networking Event will be held at the Hyatt Regency Chicago starting at 8:30 a.m. Business owners who would like to attend can register at [www.vipgovtcontracting.com](http://www.vipgovtcontracting.com).

#### About American Express OPEN

American Express OPEN is the leading payment card issuer for small businesses in the United States and supports business owners with products and services to help them run and grow their businesses. This includes business charge and credit cards that deliver purchasing power, flexibility, rewards, savings on business services from an expanded lineup of partners and online tools and services designed to help improve profitability. Learn more at [www.OPEN.com](http://www.OPEN.com) and connect with us at [www.openforum.com](http://www.openforum.com), [www.facebook.com/open](http://www.facebook.com/open) and [www.twitter.com/openforum](http://www.twitter.com/openforum).

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