# SP% TLGHT LOUISIANA

# LOUISIANA'S BIGGEST NIGHT FOR HONORING SMALL BUSINESSES

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# A Message From GOVERNOR JEFF LANDRY

When I took office, I made it clear that creating jobs and opportunity in Louisiana would be among my highest priorities. Today, I'm proud to say we are not just pursuing that goal, we are delivering on it.

Thanks to a modernized LED framework and historic economic wins like Meta, Venture Global, Hyundai and Woodside Energy, we are making it unmistakably clear: **Louisiana is open for business, and we are winning.** 

And winning, means more opportunities for our people and for our small and mediumsized businesses right here at home.

Combine that with the incredible successes of Louisiana's homegrown companies, and that's what makes the Spotlight Louisiana celebration so powerful. These award winners and honorees aren't just building successful businesses, they're driving what's possible when Louisiana's entrepreneurial grit meets statewide support and unprecedented momentum.

These companies represent what's best about our state:



risk-takers with perseverance, leaders with a vision, and employers who choose to grow right here, at home, in Louisiana. Their success stories are the cornerstone of our economic comeback.

To the honorees: thank you for betting on Louisiana. To the communities and support network cheering them on: thank you for creating the environment where success is possible. Together, let's keep building an economy where our kids and grandkids can thrive—without ever leaving home.

# Let's keep working. Let's keep winning. Together.

**Governor Jeff Landry** State of Louisiana

# A Message From SECRETARY SUSAN BOURGEOIS

ouisiana has entered a new era of possibility.

With a clear strategic plan in place and unprecedented coordination across business, government, and community stakeholders, we are redefining what economic success looks like and expanding who gets to participate in it. Nowhere is that more evident than at Spotlight Louisiana.

These small business awardees and Louisiana Growth Leaders represent what happens when determination meets opportunity. They are redefining what is possible, anchoring local communities, blazing trails in innovation, expanding into new markets, and building wealth that uplifts entire regions.

As evident in LED's new strategic plan, a key part of our mission is to strengthen investment in small businesses and the ecosystems that support them to drive growth, innovation, and global impact. From coaching, capital and connections to strategic research, mentorship and peer support, Louisiana is committed to helping these companies navigate complexity, scale with



confidence, and thrive in the place we call home.

But this is about more than just business growth—it's about shaping the kind of Louisiana we want to leave behind. A Louisiana where talent stays, innovation thrives, and economic success stories are written in every parish.

The companies being honored here tonight are building that legacy, and our team stands ready to continue supporting you and other businesses like you as we keep building on this momentum in every corner of our great state.

Together, we are Positioning Louisiana to Win— today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

Alson Bonnato Buergeois

**Susan B. Bourgeois** Secretary, Louisiana Economic Development

### WHAT IS SPOTLIGHT LOUISIANA?

# SP%TLIGHT

Spotlight Louisiana brings together entrepreneurs, leaders, and champions of small businesses from all corners of our state. It's a celebration of the hard work, spirit, and success that drive Louisiana's economy forward.

Held annually, this unforgettable evening is filled with recognition, inspiration, and meaningful connections. It's an opportunity to honor the best in Louisiana small business and shine a spotlight on the individuals and companies shaping our future.

#### Thank you to the many partners that help make this event unforgettable!

### WHAT IS THE LOUISIANA GROWTH NETWORK?



Launched in 2024, the Louisiana Growth Network (LGN) is an expanding suite of resources designed by Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and its partners to support small business growth, build capacity, and expand economic opportunity across the state.

In 2024, LED and its partners supported over 13,000 small businesses. Of particular importance – LED has supported more than 800 growth-oriented and secondstage small businesses from all across Louisiana. These companies collectively represent 26,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees and generate more than \$5 billion in annual sales.

Louisiana Growth Leaders is an important recognition program of the Louisiana Growth Network. The honor is a testament that the company and its leadership are making important contributions that positively impact our state and economy.

Previous Growth Leaders are invited to apply for the Legend Award, the Growth Network's highest honor, which is evaluated using same criteria and awarded by Louisiana Economic Development.

### **PRESENTING PARTNERS**









### LOUISIANA GROWTH LEADER SELECTION PANEL



### AGENDA

#### PARTNER AWARDS

Louisiana APEX Accelerator Government Contractor of the Year Red Bison Services, LLC

**LSBDC Excellence In Business Award** Angelica Fine Foods

LCTCS MEP of Louisiana Small Manufacturer's Award US Frame Factory

NFIB Small Business Champion Award Davis Products Company, Inc.

**SBA Entrepreneurial Success Award** Tre's Street Kitchen

**SBA Family-Owned Small Business of the Year** Andrews Family Allstate

**SBA Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year** Maven Scouts

**SBA Women in Business Champion Award** FTH Dimension Solutions, LLC

Small Business Development Center of Excellence and Innovation Award LSBDC at University of Louisiana Monroe

#### Women's Business Center of Excellence Award

Women's Business Resource Center -Urban League of Louisiana

#### SBA Small Business Person of the Year

Ronald "Rocky" J. Ortego III -Red Bison Services, LLC

#### LED TRADE, EXPORT & LENDER AWARDS

**STEP New to Export Award** Addiguru, LLC

**STEP Market Expansion Award** Oil Center Research International, LLC

**LEDC Fund of the Year** Momentum Fund I, LP

LEDC MLP Lender of the Year Essential Credit Union

**LEDC Most Valuable Bank** Citizens Progressive Bank

#### LOUISIANA GROWTH NETWORK AWARDS

**Small and Emerging Business of the Year** Awardmaster

SEBD Graduate Award Next Level Educational Services, LLC Campus to Commerce Award Grapheno, LLC

Innovative Company of the Year Haptech, Inc.

#### Louisiana Growth Leaders

Be Inspired Counseling & Consulting

**Creativity Justified** 

DDG

EPC

Family Resource Group, Inc.

HiTech

**PERC Development** 

**Power Temp Systems** 

Stella Maris, LLC

**SYCON International** 

#### Louisiana Growth Leader Legend

Techneaux Technology Services

# 2025 PARTNER AWARDS

## **ANGELICA FINE FOODS**

#### **LSBDC Excellence In Business Award**



Founded in 2013, Angelica Fine Foods specializes in small-batch private label retail items and large-

scale restaurant and hospitality contracts. With a focus on exceptional Louisiana-made products, their services include recipe development, menu ideation, private labeling, and glass bottling.

After Hurricane Katrina impacted their family business's supply chain, Mitchell Rotolo "We are honored to be a recipient and remain committed to our continued partnership with LED."

— Mitchell Rotolo

took action—rebuilding and expanding into a commercial manufacturing facility with support from Louisiana Economic Development. The result is a thriving company that now serves over 30 Rotolo's Pizzeria locations and recently secured two national accounts.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Providing exceptional products developed by Louisianans, for Louisianans—that's what we love most."

#### Words of Wisdom

"Build strong relationships, stay consistent, and don't overlook the small wins. They stack up."

To learn more visit, angelicafoods.com

# US FRAME FACTORY

#### **LCTCS MEP of Louisiana Small Manufacturer's Award**



US Frame Factory is a steel framing solutions provider transforming the construction industry

through on-demand manufacturing and prefabricated systems. Headquartered in New Iberia, Louisiana, the company supplies high-quality, cold-formed steel for residential, commercial, and multifamily projects. In the first quarter of 2025 alone, US Frame Factory shipped over 1.5 million pounds of steel, manufactured 100 advanced panels for a California client, and contributed framing systems to two hotels and a multifamily development. Founded by brothers Tiago and Mateo Atwi both mechanical engineers the company is driven by a mission to solve real problems with scalable, fast-to-deploy solutions that don't compromise on quality.

#### Why Louisiana?

"We love the people. Our team is top-notch—they care deeply

"We're not just building frames-we're creating affordable, durable solutions that strengthen our communities."

– Mateo Atwi

about the product and each other. Louisiana is home, and building our business here means giving back to the community that raised us. By offering alternatives to the traditional oil and gas economy, we're helping diversify local industry while creating stable, long-term jobs that can serve the country and beyond."

To learn more visit, usframefactory.com

### **DAVIS PRODUCTS COMPANY, INC.**

#### **NFIB Small Business Champion Award**



Davis Products Company, Inc. is a familyowned distributor of paper

products, janitorial supplies, and fire extinguisher services. Founded in 1959, the company has thrived through three generations of leadership by maintaining a strong focus on customer service, flexibility, and ethical business practices.

In recent months, the company has transitioned to thirdgeneration ownership under Christopher Weintritt, reclaimed market share from national franchises, expanded its staff, and grown its online sales and geographic footprint. With inhouse janitorial machine repair and full-service fire extinguisher capabilities, Davis Products continues to deliver unique value to its clients across Southern Louisiana and West Mississippi.

#### Why Louisiana?

"The majority of our business comes from smaller market parishes, and we genuinely appreciate the easygoing, relationship-focused style of doing business here. Louisiana "This award comes with a responsibility to prove the believers right. It's a tribute to the values passed down through generations and a reminder to keep doing business the right way."

- Christopher Weintritt

is home, and it allows us to build strong community ties while serving our customers with personalized care."

#### To learn more visit, davisproductsco.com

## TRE'S STREET KITCHEN®

#### **SBA Entrepreneurial Success Award**



Founded by Kristen and Tremaine Devine in 2020, Tre's Street

Kitchen® is a Black- and familyowned food service company redefining campus dining, catering, and concessions across the Gulf South. From securing dining contracts with LSU and Southern University to catering NFL and Super Bowl LIX events, the company blends bold vision with deep community roots. "What started as a vision board became a statewide business. This journey is about legacy, flavor, and believing that food can change lives."

— Kristen and Tremaine Devine

With partnerships including Aramark, Chartwells, and Ochsner Health, Tre's Street Kitchen® serves Louisiana with flavor-forward meals, strategic hospitality, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Their signature Tre's Street Sauce® is now available nationwide via Amazon, and their growth has earned national recognition including Aramark's "Best of 2024" Growth Award and a feature during National Small Business Month by JPMorgan Chase.

#### Why Louisiana?

'Louisiana is flavor. It's culture. It's possibility. The community here embraced us from day one—and we're proud to pour back into the place that gave us our start."

#### To learn more visit, tresstreetkitchen.com

## ANDREWS FAMILY ALLSTATE

#### SBA Family-Owned Small Business of the Year



Founded in 1985 by the fearless Agnes S. Andrews, Andrews Family

Allstate is a multigenerational, Black-owned, women-led insurance agency rooted in faith, family, and service. With nearly 40 years of protecting Baton Rouge families, the agency has become a cornerstone in the community—known not just for policies, but for peoplefirst care. Today, sisters Kinda and Nayo Andrews carry the legacy forward, offering auto, home, life, and business insurance with warmth, transparency, and a deep sense of responsibility. They're not just protecting assets—they're preserving dreams and building generational security.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana is home. The soul of this place—its culture, resilience, and community makes serving here a joy. Our clients are our neighbors, and we wouldn't have it any other way." "This award honors the legacy of our mother and the love she poured into this agency. We're proud to protect our community the way she protected us."

— Andrews Family

### **MAVEN SCOUTS**

#### **SBA Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year**



Maven Scouts is Louisiana's official national security accelerator bridging

the gap between innovation and impact. Operating at the intersection of entrepreneurship, product development, and defense, the organization helps startups and mission-driven teams move technologies from concept to deployment. What sets them apart is their builder-first model. They're not just advisors—they're developers, SBIR strategists, and commercialization experts who guide innovators through federal funding, IP licensing, and real-world field testing. Founded by veterans, their work is rooted in discipline, service, and purpose.

> "We don't just develop technology-we develop people, partnerships, and purposedriven progress."

> > — Grant Rogers

#### Why Louisiana?

Louisiana has grit, talent, and soul—it's the perfect place to build high-impact ventures that protect and uplift communities.

To learn more visit, mavenscouts.com

### **FTH DIMENSION SOLUTIONS, LLC**

#### **SBA Women in Business Champion Award**



FTH Dimension Solutions, LLC is a leadership development and consulting firm helping organizations

build emotionally intelligent teams and inclusive workplace cultures. With a people-first approach rooted in emotional intelligence and connection, they offer customized coaching, training, and consulting to elevate performance, strengthen collaboration, and promote well-being. Over the past 15 months, FTH Dimension Solutions has expanded its statewide impact through keynote presentations, published a book transforming classrooms through emotional intelligence, and launched a leadership development series for adolescent girls in partnership with the Office of Juvenile Justice. The firm also awarded its first scholarship and secured a grant to further support young leaders.

#### Why Louisiana?

There's something special about doing business in the place I call home. The people are warm, generous, and rooted in connection. Whether we've "This award is a reflection of every life touched and every lesson learned. It's a reminder that the work we do matters-and that with grace, growth, and purpose, we all have the power to make an impact."

— Dr. Phyllis Donatto

known each other for years or just met, there's a sense of belonging and care that makes this work more meaningful.

To learn more visit, fthdimensions.com

## LSBDC AT UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA MONROE

#### **Small Business Development Center of Excellence and Innovation Award**



The Louisiana Small Business Development Center at the University of Louisiana Monroe (LSBDC-ULM) serves as a vital

resource for entrepreneurs across Northeast Louisiana. Their unique story is deeply embedded in their unwavering commitment to driving economic impact through education, mentorship, and empowerment. As part of a statewide network, the center plays a crucial role in fostering business resilience and sustainability, particularly for underserved and rural communities.

What makes the LSBDC-ULM stand out is its collaborative model that integrates the power of university-backed research with real-world experience. The team comprises dedicated advisors who assist small business owners with everything from market research and business planning to financing and scaling strategies. Their reach and personalized approach have helped thousands of entrepreneurs achieve sustainable success.

#### Why Louisiana?

What we love about doing business in Louisiana is the

"Receiving this award is both an honor and a reminder of the responsibility we carry to continue serving Louisiana's small businesses with excellence and integrity."

— Virenda Chikkara

unwavering entrepreneurial spirit of our people. The state's cultural richness, resilience, and sense of community make it a powerful place to help businesses grow.

To learn more visit, LSBDC at ULM

### WOMEN'S BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER -URBAN LEAGUE OF LOUISIANA

#### **Women's Business Center of Excellence Award**



Established in 2001, the Women's Business Resource Center (WBRC) empowers entrepreneurs across

Southeast Louisiana through business planning, capital access, and industry-specific training. In 2024 alone, the Center served 468 clients (156% of goal), facilitated 26 capital infusion transactions, and launched programs like Start Up! Louisiana and Scale Up! "This award affirms the transformative power of entrepreneurship when paired with equity, strategy, and heart. Every client success is a community success."

— Dr. Carla Antoine

Louisiana to support new and growing businesses.

With initiatives targeting veterans, encore entrepreneurs (age 50+), minority-owned businesses, and food service operators, WBRC delivers results-driven programming that's both inclusive and impactful. Their hybrid service model and strategic partnerships—from the SBA to PepsiCo—ensure entrepreneurs are equipped with both education and access.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana entrepreneurs are driven by purpose, creativity, and a deep sense of cultural legacy.

Here, businesses do more than grow—they uplift entire communities."

#### To learn more visit, urbanleaguela.org/wbrc

# RONALD "ROCKY" J. ORTEGO III -RED BISON SERVICES, LLC

Louisiana APEX Accelerator Government Contractor of the Year SBA Small Business Person of the Year



Red Bison Services, LLC (RBS) is a Native Americanowned, SBA 8(a) certified small-disadvantaged business headquartered in Kenner, Louisiana. Since its founding in 2015, Red Bison has evolved from a side venture into a fast-growing, multifaceted construction firm that now delivers high-quality construction, facility support, and environmental restoration services. RBS specializes in pre-construction, estimating, quality control, project supervision, and self-performs civil and vertical scopes of work.

Over the past 15 months, Red Bison has significantly scaled operations—tripling revenue, nearly doubling staff, and expanding into key markets including Texas, Florida, and the Midwest. The company was named the #1 Fastest Growing LSU Alumni-Owned Business in 2024 by the LSU 100 and received the Louisiana APEX Accelerator Government Contractor of the Year award. These achievements affirm Red Bison's position as one of Louisiana's top-performing federal contractors.

What sets Red Bison apart is its leadership's ability to blend deep industry experience with a keen understanding of federal small business contracting. The RBS team has successfully delivered work for numerous federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Naval Facilities Engineering Svstems Command, Air National Guard, NASA, and the USDA. As a small business, RBS has proven it can compete at the highest levels—often outperforming larger firms through agility, professionalism, and trusted delivery.

But Red Bison's story isn't just about business growth—it's about legacy. Founded by Rocky Ortego, a proud enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation, the firm was built with the vision of creating economic opportunity rooted in culture, commitment, and capability. The slogan "Native Built" reflects both Red Bison's heritage and its values: resilience, integrity, and determination.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Knowing all of the hard work that I've poured into Red Bison-and the incredible team that has walked this path with me-these awards means the world. It's proof that when you stay the course, believe in your mission, and surround yourself with the right people, the results will speak for themselves." - Rocky Ortego

> "I was born and raised here. My family has deep roots in South Louisiana—entrepreneurship runs in our blood. There's a sense of community, culture, and loyalty in Louisiana that's unmatched. Doing business here isn't just a professional choice—it's personal. We're building a legacy in the same communities that built us."

As Red Bison looks to the future, the mission remains clear: continue delivering with excellence, mentor the next generation of builders, and expand the reach of "Native Built" solutions across the nation.

To learn more visit, redbisonservices.com

# 2025 LED TRADE, TRADE, EXPORT SALENDER SALENDER AVARDS

### **ADDIGURU, LLC** STEP New to Export Award



Addiguru is a New Orleans-based technology company revolutionizing the additive manufacturing (AM) industry with realtime, Al-driven monitoring and defect detection. Its software processes sensor data—including optical, thermal, acoustic,

and machine signals—to detect anomalies in AM builds instantly, improving quality and reducing waste. Serving sectors like aerospace, defense, and medical devices, Addiguru's solutions support a variety of processes, from Laser Powder Bed Fusion to Wire Arc AM.

Over the past 15 months, Addiguru has grown to more than 20 installations across the U.S., Europe, and Asia. The company has completed multiple SBIR-funded projects, filed two patent applications, and furthered its mission to redefine quality assurance in advanced manufacturing. Addiguru continues to break barriers through innovation, collaboration, and a user-centered approach to simplifying complex industrial data.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana's support for innovation and international trade has played a key role in Addiguru's growth. From export assistance

to tradeshow funding, the resources available have helped the company elevate its brand and compete globally from right here in New Orleans."

#### Words of Wisdom

"Your first plan may not work out—but stay flexible, adapt, and always listen to good advice."

To learn more visit, addiguru.com

"Addiguru is proud and surprised to receive this award. We came through the challenges of the pandemic stronger, and we're just getting started."

> – Shuchi "SK" Khurana

### OIL CENTER RESEARCH INTERNATIONAL, LLC

#### **STEP Market Expansion Award**



For over 25 years, Oil Center Research International (OCRI) has delivered over 1,000 highperformance chemical products to customers in 130 countries. Under the iconic Liquid-O-Ring® brand, OCRI supports industries from energy

and mining to agriculture, automotive, marine, and medical—with eco-friendly versions now available across nearly their entire catalog.

In just the past 15 months, OCRI has grown exports by 30%, expanded global distribution into the UAE, Oman, and Guyana, and introduced lead-free products across North

Africa and South America. Through product innovation, R&D, and bootson-the-ground partnerships, OCRI is rewriting the global playbook for performance and sustainability.

"We are deeply honored to receive this award. It represents years of passion, innovation, and the power of Louisiana ingenuity on the global stage." - Brenda Stelly

#### Why Louisiana?

"Our greatest

partnerships have been rooted right here. The support, drive, and resilience of our state continue to fuel our mission worldwide."

#### Words of Wisdom

"Travel. Train. Translate. Tailor your message to every market—and build real relationships along the way."

To learn more visit, liquidoring.com

# MOMENTUM FUND I, LP



Through its strategic investments in earlystage companies, Momentum Fund I, GP LLC has become a powerful force in shaping Louisiana's entrepreneurial ecosystem. By targeting scalable ventures and

supporting innovative founders, the fund has driven economic diversification, attracted outside investment, and helped solidify Louisiana's reputation as a rising hub for

technology and innovation.

As a catalytic initiative designed to accelerate economic growth, Momentum Fund I is more than capital it's a long-term commitment to building "The Momentum Fund has demonstrated unparalleled dedication to Louisiana's economic growth and innovation, making it a deserving recipient of LEDC's 2025 Fund of the Year award."

– Jon Atkinson

sustainable businesses and fostering the knowledge economy. The fund's support for high-growth companies ensures that its impact will resonate across Louisiana for years to come, creating quality jobs and new pathways for economic opportunity.

To learn more visit, ideavillage.org/momentumfund

### ESSENTIAL CREDIT UNION

#### **LEDC MLP Lender of the Year**



Essential Credit Union has been a steadfast advocate for small businesses across Louisiana, leveraging its role as a Micro Lender to expand access to capital for startups and socially and economically

disadvantaged individuals. Through meaningful partnerships and intentional deployment of LEDC loan programs, Essential has helped launch and scale

"This recognition from LEDC reflects our deep commitment to small business success in Louisiana. We're honored to support the dreams of entrepreneurs

#### and help them build lasting legacies."

– LaDonna Evans-Sutton businesses that fuel economic development in local communities.

With a strong commitment to financial inclusion, Essential Credit Union continues to serve as a trusted resource for entrepreneurs. Their work has transformed ideas into enterprises, and their impact is felt in every

parish they serve. Being named the 2025 MLP Lender of the Year affirms Essential's leadership in promoting equitable business growth across the state.

## To learn more visit, essentialcu.org

### CITIZENS PROGRESSIVE BANK

#### **LEDC Most Valuable Bank**



Citizens Progressive Bank (CPB) has long stood as a pillar of financial empowerment in Louisiana's small business community. As an LED Preferred Lender, CPB has not only delivered critical funding to

entrepreneurs across the state but has also played an active role in guiding those

businesses toward growth and longterm sustainability.

By ensuring that access to capital is equitable and attainable, CPB continues to help transform entrepreneurial dreams into thriving realities. This recognition as "CPB has become more than a bankit's a partner in progress and a trusted champion for Louisiana's entrepreneurs."

> – Christopher McManus

LEDC's 2025 Most Valuable Bank honors the bank's deep-rooted commitment to financial inclusion, economic advancement, and its unwavering support for Louisiana's small business owners.

To learn more visit, cpbonline.com

# 2025 LOUISIANA GROWTH NETWORK AWARDS

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## AWARDMASTER

#### Small and Emerging Business of the Year



Awardmaster is more than just a custom awards and recognition company it is a beacon of purpose and community

engagement. Operating under Atom Graphics, LLC, the company specializes in high-quality trophies, plaques, signage, and branded merchandise that celebrate achievement in meaningful ways. With over 40 years of combined experience in the recognition industry, they have become a trusted partner for schools, corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies across Louisiana.

Their story is one of faith and intentionality. Awardmaster was built on the belief that recognition is powerful when people feel seen and appreciated, they are inspired to do more and be more. This philosophy has shaped every product and partnership, grounding the company in service, excellence, and heart.

#### Why Louisiana?

"What we love most about doing business in Louisiana is the strong sense of community

"Receiving this award fills us with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. It's a reminder that when purpose meets passion, amazing things happen."

— Sarah and Adam Lopez

and collaboration. Our state is rich in culture, heritage, and connection—which aligns beautifully with our mission of recognizing what matters."

#### **Words of Wisdom**

"If we could offer one piece of advice to fellow entrepreneurs, it would be to stay anchored in your 'why.' When the storms of business come, your purpose will keep you steady and your community will carry you forward."

To learn more visit, awardmaster.com

### **NEXT LEVEL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, LLC**

#### **SEBD Graduate Award**



Next Level Educational Services is a transformative force in Louisiana's educational landscape. Founded with

a passion for guiding students and families toward academic excellence, the organization has built a reputation for delivering personalized, impactful tutoring and enrichment programs. From K-12 academic support to college readiness and career development, their services empower young minds to unlock their full potential. What truly sets this business apart is its commitment to "the whole child." More than just improving grades, Next Level focuses on building confidence, nurturing curiosity, and instilling lifelong learning habits. Their innovative and compassionate approach allows them to meet students where they are and help them grow beyond expectation.

#### Why Louisiana?

"I love helping individuals find their pathway and succeed in life. Louisiana is full of bright, eager students who just need the right support system—and "It feels great to know that all of my hard work and sleepless nights are not in vain."

— Krystal Placide-Taylor

we're honored to be part of that journey."

#### **Words of Wisdom**

"Set short-term goals and stay consistent, even when it seems like no one is watching or supporting you. Your impact will speak louder than applause ever could."

To learn more visit, nextleveledservices.com

## **GRAPHENO, LLC**

#### **Campus to Commerce Award**



Founded in 2016, Grapheno LLC is a research and development company revolutionizing the field of

advanced materials. Specializing in dual-use technologies for aerospace, defense, and energy sectors, Grapheno transforms lab-proven scientific breakthroughs into high-impact, real-world applications.

Over the past year, Grapheno has secured two prestigious SBIR (Small Business Innovation Research) contracts, successfully validating new aerospace and defense technologies and further cementing its reputation for excellence in materials innovation. With a model that fuses academic depth with commercial application, Grapheno delivers scalable solutions that meet both national security needs and commercial market demand.

Founded out of a student competition at Louisiana Tech University, Grapheno is a testament to Louisiana-born

"It's a powerful reminder that the late nights, the risks, and the relentless pursuit of innovation are worth it. This recognition fuels our passion to keep pushing boundaries."

— Onega Ulanova

innovation. The company's journey reflects a unique blend of vision, grit, and scientific excellence.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana is full of unexpected brilliance. The people are genuine, the support is real, and the innovation ecosystem here gives us room to grow—without losing our roots."

### To learn more visit, grapheno.us

### HAPTECH, INC.

#### **Innovative Company of the Year**



Headquartered in Downtown New Orleans, Haptech Inc. is an innovator in warfighter training technology, specializing in

proprietary haptic solutions like ERIS—Electromagnetic Recoil & Instrumentation Systems. Their patented force-feedback technology powers advanced training for military and law enforcement by delivering trueto-life recoil and interaction in simulated environments. "It's a powerful reminder that the late nights, the risks, and the relentless pursuit of innovation are worth it. This recognition fuels our passion to keep pushing boundaries."

— Kyle Monti

Since launching in 2014, the company has secured over \$11 million in U.S. military contracts, built a pilot manufacturing line in Louisiana, and recently launched its first commercial product line. Haptech also operates StrikerVR, its entertainment and gaming division, with its Mavrik blaster recently launched for Meta Quest users.

#### Why Louisiana?

"From our headquarters near the WWII Museum to our statewide recruiting efforts, Louisiana's legacy of engineering, innovation, and resilience runs deep in our mission."

To learn more visit, haptechdefense.com

# 2025 LOUISIANA GROWTH LEADERS

# **BE INSPIRED COUNSELING** & CONSULTING, LLC

**Rapides Parish** 



Be Inspired Counseling & Consulting is a growing mental health practice dedicated to providing highquality, compassionate care to individuals, couples, and families. With three locations in Pineville, Alexandria, and Natchitoches—and statewide access through secure telehealth-the practice serves clients of all ages across Louisiana. Therapists support a broad range of concerns including anxiety, trauma, grief, life transitions, and relationship issues, offering personalized treatment grounded in empathy and trust.

Over the past 15 months, the practice has experienced significant growth. A third

"We've created more than a businesswe've created a space where people feel safe, supported, and seen. Every step of our journey is driven by purpose."

- Christy Pennison

location opened in February 2024 in Pineville, while the Alexandria office relocated to a larger commercial space to support a 50% increase in team size. The firm also expanded its InspireED continuing education program, offering training for fellow mental health professionals in areas such as ethics, cultural competency, and diagnosis. Through school partnerships, community events, and regular features in CENLA Focus magazine, Be Inspired has emerged as a leading voice in mental health awareness and education across Central Louisiana.

Rooted in values of authenticity, service, and hope, Be Inspired Counseling & Consulting continues to expand while staying committed to a singular mission: to inspire hope for change and help individuals move forward and live fully.

#### Why Louisiana?

"There's something special about the way people in Louisiana show up for one another—with heart, hospitality, and a deep sense of connection. As a locally grown business, Be Inspired Counseling & Consulting is proud to serve its community, helping individuals thrive in the place they call home. The support and resilience found here are unmatched—and it's what makes doing business in Louisiana so meaningful."

To learn more visit, beinspiredcc.com

# **CREATIVITY JUSTIFIED, LLC**

#### St. Tammany Parish



Founded in 2016 from the walk-in closet of a Kenner home, Creativity Justified has grown into one of Louisiana's most sought-after marketing and advertising agencies. Carrita Tanner-Cloud, then seven months pregnant, launched the business by cold-calling and cold-emailing local companies. Less than a decade later, her agency has expanded to over 20 employees and contractors serving powerhouse clients such as the NFL, NBA, Ochsner Health, BREC, NORD, and the State of Louisiana.

Creativity Justified specializes in strategy-first marketing, branding, design, video production, digital marketing, and community engagement. The agency has built a reputation for not only bold creative work but also its commitment to diversity, empowerment, and impactdriven storytelling. As a certified minority- and womanowned business, Creativity Justified is intentional about uplifting women and entrepreneurs of color through mentorship programs and sponsorships.

"There's no place I would have founded my agency other than Louisiana. It's home. We're creatives-and as we saw with the Super Bowl, there's no other city as creative as New Orleans. We just get it right."

— Carrita Tanner-Cloud

The team's work has been featured on national platforms and has helped elevate Louisiana businesses and institutions into the national spotlight. With clients across the healthcare, education, government, corporate, and industrial sectors, Creativity Justified is expanding into Texas, California, Indiana, and Georgia, bringing Louisiana's flavor of creativity to new audiences across the country.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana's culture is deeply rooted in storytelling, artistry, and resilience—making it the perfect place to build a creative agency. Creativity Justified reflects the spirit of its home state: dynamic, diverse, and communitydriven. From the sounds of brass bands to the colors of Mardi Gras, Louisiana is where innovation meets soul—and Creativity Justified continues to proudly carry that banner forward."

#### Words of Wisdom

"Get out of your comfort zone. Don't allow pedigree, cultural differences, or fear to prevent you from building relationships. Get into rooms you're uncomfortable in—and know that you belong."

Carrita Tanner-Cloud encourages emerging entrepreneurs to embrace boldness, cross-cultural connection, and the power of representation in every space."

#### To learn more visit, creativityjustified.com

# DUPLANTIS DESIGN GROUP, PC (DDG)

#### Lafourche Parish



#### Designing Resilience, Shaping Communities

With over 4,500 projects completed across the Gulf South since 1997, Duplantis Design Group (DDG) has built more than buildings—they've built trust, relationships, and resilient communities. From civil and coastal engineering to architecture, surveying, and transportation, DDG brings a full suite of services to every stage of a project's lifecycle.

This multi-disciplinary firm is fueled by a mission to create and enhance the places where people live, work, and connect. With the expansion into Mississippi as one of their most significant milestones over the past year, DDG continues to bring Louisiana ingenuity to new markets expanding their footprint while staying true to their roots.

What distinguishes DDG is its deep commitment to collaboration and communication. Their project managers assemble specialized teams to guide clients with clear, expert insight from start to finish. Internally, a cooperative culture and a passion for continuous improvement set the tone. DDG's "leave it better than you found it" approach has defined their work for nearly three decades.

"It's hard to put the feeling of winning this award into words. It's a reflection of our team's growth mindset, discipline, and unwavering commitment to serving our clients and communities with excellence."

— Matthew Newchurch

#### Why Louisiana?

"There's no place like home. The people here—our clients, our partners, our team are the most talented and

dedicated professionals we've encountered anywhere. Louisiana is more than a location; it's a foundation."

#### **Words of Wisdom**

"Hire smart, positive people and align them with purpose. When strengths are unified toward a single vision, the results are powerful."

To learn more visit, ddgpc.com

# EPC, LLC

#### **Ouachita Parish**



In 2016, brothers Josh and Caleb Etheridge were working far from home—providing for their families but longing to return to the place that shaped them. Tired of the distance and fueled by a vision, they made a bold move: launching their own utility installation company in Northeast Louisiana. That decision marked the beginning of EPC, a business rooted in community, resilience, and a commitment to doing things differently.

From the outset, EPC disrupted industry norms. While others in the space struggled for consistent work, EPC's diversified customer model brought stability and growth. By working with multiple network operators instead of relying on just one, they kept their crews busy year-round. The result? A local company that delivered high-quality, safe, and reliable utility installation services and quickly gained a reputation for excellence.

Today, EPC continues to lead by example, not just in Louisiana but in every market they serve. The company builds local workforce pipelines, offering formalized training to develop talent in the very communities where they operate. This innovative model has been recognized at both state and federal levels, as broadband and infrastructure projects increasingly prioritize local hiring strategies. EPC proves that when you invest in people and place, success follows.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana is home. There's grit and heart here you just can't find anywhere else. Our people are resilient, loyal, and deeply connected to their communities. Doing business in Louisiana means helping shape the future of the parishes that matter most and that's not something EPC takes lightly. It's not just business. It's personal. And it's powerful."



#### **Words of Wisdom**

"Stay grounded in your why. The road isn't always smooth there will be setbacks, detours, and days when it feels easier to quit than to keep going. But if your purpose is clear and you build the right team around you, you can weather anything. Be bold, stay adaptable, and lead with integrity. People don't just invest in ideas—they invest in people who are passionate, persistent, and real."

#### To learn more visit, weareepc.com

"Honestly, it's incredibly humbling. Awards like this are a result of a team that shows up every single day ready to put in the work. We are honored to be recognized, but more than anything, I see it as a reflection of the incredible people I get to lead and the communities we're fortunate to serve."

— Caleb and Josh Etheridge

# FAMILY RESOURCE GROUP, INC.

East Baton Rouge Parish



#### Putting Family First—And Growing With Purpose

Since 1990, Family Resource Group, Inc. has operated with a singular mission: be a true, trusted resource for families and the businesses that serve them. Based in Baton Rouge and deeply rooted in the communities they serve, FRG doesn't just sell advertising space—they create meaningful connections. Their approach is personal, relational, and intentional, built around the belief that success comes when people-not profit-come first.

FRG has become a cornerstone of Louisiana's community-focused business landscape by helping local companies thrive while "FRG is honored to be recognized as a 2024 Louisiana Growth Leader by Louisiana Economic Development. This award is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our team and our commitment to both business excellence and community impact. Caring for our communities has always been at the heart of what we do."

— Brandon Foreman

ensuring families are informed, supported, and empowered. Their tailored advertising programs amplify local voices and promote businesses in ways that feel authentic and impactful—making every ad a conversation and every client a partner.

What truly sets FRG apart is the human heartbeat behind the brand. Led by Alexis Alexander and a dedicated team, FRG's growth is fueled by a shared belief that family-first values aren't just good business—they're transformative.

In an industry often driven by metrics, FRG is driven by mission. And it shows.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Doing business here means being part of something bigger than yourself. It's about neighbors helping neighbors, culture that brings people together, and a business community built on trust. Louisiana is home—and home is everything."

#### Words of Wisdom:

"When you find something you love and show up every day, success follows. Stay true to your values, and the right clients will find you."

#### To learn more visit, familyresourcegroupinc.com

# HITECH



HiTech Computers of Ruston, Inc. has provided cutting-edge IT and cybersecurity solutions for nearly three decades. With 45 team members across three brick-and-mortar offices in Louisiana, HiTech delivers advanced managed services, cyber threat protection, and IT consulting to clients in healthcare, education, finance, manufacturing, and beyond. A consistent innovator in the field, HiTech has earned industry recognition as a CRN Top 250 Pioneer and MSP Titans of the Industry finalist.

In the past 15 months, HiTech has continued to grow in both size and capability, expanding its service offerings while maintaining its core values. The company has rejected "While I may have guided the ship, the HiTech team deserves the recognition. We're proud to be Louisiana-built, Louisiana-owned, and fully invested in our people and communities."

— Richard Raue

outside acquisition offers in favor of staying Louisianaowned, prioritizing local job creation and long-term stability. Through strategic partnerships—most notably with Dell Technologies— HiTech brings global-caliber technology and state contract access to local agencies, schools, and businesses across the state.

HiTech's internal culture is just as dynamic. From employeedriven 3D printing labs and quarterly outings to peer-topeer recognition platforms and leadership development, the company invests heavily in its people. Mentorship thrives in-person, innovation is encouraged, and values like service and authenticity are upheld at every level.

#### Why Louisiana?

"What we love most about doing business in Louisiana is the people. Relationships here still carry weight—your word means something, and integrity matters. Louisiana is where a handshake still feels like a contract, and where honoring the past goes hand-in-hand with building the future. It's a culture of connection, service, and resilience—and HiTech is proud to grow right here."

## To learn more visit, solutionsbyhitech.com

# **PERC DEVELOPMENT, LLC**

#### Calcasieu Parish



Founded in 2010, PERC Development has grown into one of Louisiana's leading construction management firms—serving commercial, infrastructure, and light industrial clients with a core mission: Build Community. While many firms focus on blueprints and budgets, PERC is building something bigger people, pride, and place.

Their name says it all: Passion. Excellence. Reliability. Commitment. These four values drive every project and every decision. Under the leadership of Travis Manceaux and Chris Primeaux, PERC has become synonymous with thoughtful growth and peoplefirst culture in an industry too often driven by margins alone. In the past year alone, PERC was awarded its three largest contracts to date including the largest sanitary lift station

ever constructed in Calcasieu Parish, a new high school gymnasium, and the first private investment project along the Lake Charles Lakefront. These aren't just projects—they're milestones that are reshaping communities.

But what makes PERC truly unique is what's happening behind the scenes. The company has built a collaborative, growth-focused work environment designed to elevate its team—not burn them out. Their philosophy is simple: when employees thrive, so do the communities they serve.

#### Why Louisiana?

"I was born, raised, and still live in Southwest Louisiana. This state—its people, its culture, its way of life—is in my blood. We're grateful for the support we've received from LED and others working hard to uplift our region. While we're expanding, Louisiana will

"This award is a testament to what's possible when a team shares one mission. We're proud to represent Louisiana and the future of construction done right."

— Travis Manceaux

always be the heart of what we do."

#### Words of Wisdom

"Grit and consistency beat everything else. Show up. Push forward. And remember: 'Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day-in and day-out."

# To learn more visit, percdevelopment.com

# POWER TEMP SYSTEMS, INC.

Lafayette Parish



#### Powering Possibility: From Portable Equipment to Industry Pioneer

Founded in 1991, Power Temp Systems began as a small portable power distribution manufacturer—but its greatest transformation came in 2015, when new leadership took bold steps to reimagine what was possible. With a renewed mission to deliver safer, faster, and more flexible power distribution solutions, the company has since grown by over 325%, evolving into a national industry leader in both temporary and permanent power infrastructure.

Headquartered in Louisiana, Power Temp Systems now operates at the forefront of power innovation. Their specialized equipment supports everything from construction sites and healthcare facilities to data centers and high-demand manufacturing plants. With an emphasis on plug-and-play modularity, their power solutions adapt to changing needs—making installations faster, more reliable, and easier to scale.

One of their most significant breakthroughs came when the market was grappling with 14-month lead times for critical Power Distribution Units (PDUs). Power Temp engineered and delivered a more advanced system in just 10–12 weeks, redefining industry standards and showcasing the company's unmatched agility.

#### Engineering Growth and Opportunity

Their growth trajectory is equally impressive. In just two years, Power Temp expanded from 40 to 110 employees, launched a dedicated innovation and testing center, and broke ground on a new 200,000-square-foot manufacturing campus that will quadruple production capacity. More than 80% of hires have been Louisiana residents many transitioning from careers in hospitality, oil fields, and other traditional sectors.

"This award validates the journey we've taken-from a specialized local manufacturer to a national powerhouse. But more than that, it's a celebration of our team, our community, and the belief that worldclass innovation can and should happen right here in Louisiana."

— Mark Mire

This workforce-first philosophy is foundational to the company's identity. By upskilling local talent and investing in long-term careers, Power Temp Systems is building more than products they're building people and prosperity.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana gives us the best of both worlds—an industrious, skilled workforce with deep roots in manufacturing, and a forward-thinking climate for innovation and expansion. The support we've received from organizations like LED, and the eagerness of our people to learn, grow, and lead has been nothing short of extraordinary."

#### Words of Wisdom

- Don't fear reinvention. Our biggest leap came after 25 years in business.
- Build around real problems. Innovation starts by solving someone else's headache.
- Grow your people. Empowered teams are unstoppable.
- And remember—big ideas can thrive anywhere. We're proof that you don't have to be in a tech hub to lead your industry.

# To learn more visit, powertemp.com

# **STELLA MARIS, LLC**

Lafayette Parish



Founded in 2005, Stella Maris LLC is a leading provider of engineering and manufacturing solutions for the energy sector. Specializing in high-performance hydraulic power units (HPUs), chemical injection systems, and hydrostatic pressure systems, Stella Maris designs and builds equipment that supports both the traditional oil and gas industry and the growing hydrogen energy market.

Their work is technical, complex, and missioncritical—yet at the heart of Stella Maris is a value system rooted in simplicity: "We do what we say we will do." This commitment drives their client relationships, product quality, and internal culture. In the past year, the Stella Maris team achieved a major milestone, delivering production and chemical injection systems for the Shell Sparta offshore project in the Gulf of Mexico. This complex assignment required every facet of their team's skill—from engineering and design to precise manufacturing execution.

What makes Stella Maris unique isn't just its technical capability—it's the way the company runs. With a strong emphasis on employee well-being, the company fosters a culture that blends camaraderie and craftsmanship. From celebrating employee milestones to hosting industry-famous cooking competitions judged by vendors, Stella Maris has built a workplace that feels like family while delivering worldclass results.

#### Why Louisiana?

"Louisiana's people and culture are one of a kind loyal, hardworking, and rooted in community. It's a place where family values and business integrity walk hand in hand." "Stella Maris started as a small company with a big vision. Through obstacles and growth, we've stayed true to our people, our faith, and our commitment to doing right by our clients. This award is a powerful recognition of that journey."

— James "Butch" Ray

#### Words of Wisdom

"Build a team that shares your values—because your people are the face of your business. Deliver what you promise, every time."

## To learn more visit, stellamarisllc.com

# SYCON INTERNATIONAL

Lafayette Parish



#### Automation with Purpose. Leadership with Heart.

Founded in 2007, SYCON International is a CSIA-certified Systems Integration company based in Lafayette, Louisiana, delivering excellence in industrial automation for over 17 years. With capabilities spanning control system design, custom programming, instrumentation, electrical construction, panel fabrication, and commissioning, SYCON serves midstream, downstream, power generation, and manufacturing clients across the U.S.

In the past 15 months, SYCON has achieved a 125% revenue increase, expanded its team by 60%, and added new verticals, including green energy, hydrogen, and electric vehicle manufacturing. The company became a registered Professional Engineering Firm and completed the Goldman Sachs 10KSB Program, the LED Growth Network, and earned recertifications for CSIA and UL-508.

#### Built on Faith. Driven by Values.

Their growth trajectory is SYCON thrives on service. innovation, and transformation. Since taking full ownership in 2023, CEO Eric Hayes has implemented a bold vision expanding design services, signing new MSAs, and introducing "Mission Control," an award-winning gamified employee development platform that tracks progress, recognizes certifications, and rewards career growth with visible milestones and bonuses.

The company's culture is anchored in Family and Faith, fostering personal and professional growth through open leadership, unlimited PTO, and quarterly Strategic Success Plans (SSPs). Team members aren't just employees—they're leaders at every level, empowered to think critically, solve problems, and innovate for the future.

#### Why Louisiana?

"This is home. The Cajun culture, the deep pride, and the rich talent from Louisiana's universities make this the

"I don't view myself as an entrepreneur-I see myself as a servant leader. If you're not in it to help others succeed, you shouldn't be in it. That belief is what led me to join SYCON, and ultimately to lead it."

— Eric Hayes

perfect place to build. The support from local programs and LED resources makes small business ownership here feel like a partnership—not a solo journey."

#### Why SYCON Stands Out:

- Nimble, cross-trained team that adapts to client needs
- Strong internship pipeline for recruiting top talent
- Core values of Leadership, Accountability, Adaptability, and Innovation
- Focus on employee empowerment, consistency, and career growth

#### To learn more visit, syconintl.com

# 2025 LOUISIANA GROWTH LEADER LEADER

# 2025 LOUISIANA GROWTH LEADER LEGEND TECHNEAUX TECHNOLOGY SERVICES, LLC



#### Simplifying the Complex, Building What's Next

From a modest garage in Lafayette to four thriving offices across the region, Techneaux Technology Services has charted a remarkable course grounded in grit, integrity, and innovation. Launched in 2010 by two engineers with a vision to "do tech differently," Techneaux is now a collective of entrepreneurs and owners building smarter systems—and smarter businesses.

At its core, Techneaux is a technology integrator that helps organizations navigate their data journey—from collection to transfer, storage, protection, and application. The firm serves clients in industrial, municipal, and commercial sectors with services including:

- Process automation
  and controls
- Secure communication infrastructure (WAN/LAN)
- Enterprise software and data systems
- Cybersecurity solutions
- Managed IT services
- Custom software
  development
- Field measurement and panel fabrication

But while Techneaux delivers top-tier technical solutions, it's their business model that truly sets them apart.

#### People Over Profits, Always

Techneaux was designed to be different. It will never go public. It will never accept private equity or venture capital. Why? Because they believe business should be accountable to people not shareholders. Instead, Techneaux operates as a "business of businesses" that empowers leaders from within. Through distributed ownership and a long-term leadership track, team members have the opportunity to grow from contributors into company owners.

This philosophy has proven successful. In the last 15 months alone, Techneaux has:

- Hired 60 new team members
- Opened 3 new physical locations
- Added its 12th company owner
- Increased revenue by 35%
- Launched new service lines in field measurement and panel fabrication
- Navigated the retirement of a founding partner
- Supported multiple organizations in cybersecurity incident response
- Led large-scale projects in oil & gas, water, and education sectors

Beyond the numbers, Techneaux is known for its responsiveness, reliability, and resilience. Clients rely on them not only to solve immediate problems but to guide long-term strategy.



# Entrepreneurship with a Purpose

What began as a bold idea in a garage has grown into a thriving company with 180+ team members and four offices—but the mission hasn't changed. Techneaux exists to build better systems and better people. Their vision is to become the most trusted technology integrator in the Gulf South—and a launchpad for the next generation of business leaders.

Every decision, from client strategy to internal development, aligns with their founding belief: "Technology is what we sell. Leaders are what we create." The organization invests in mentoring, culturebuilding, and education to ensure each team member can thrive—and eventually lead.

Techneaux doesn't just measure success in profits; it

measures success in people. And that people-first model has created something rare: a business where technical excellence and ethical responsibility go hand in hand. Focus on employee empowerment, consistency, and career growth

#### **Why Louisiana**

"Louisiana is more than a headquarters—it's home. Techneaux is deeply rooted in Louisiana's culture of hard work, creativity, and connection. The state's support for small business growth, combined with a spirit of resilience and community, has fueled the company's expansion and sustained success.

"There's a pride here that's hard to replicate," says Ben Johnson, co-founder and this year's Growth Leader Legend honoree. "People care about "Be naive. We were told this kind of business model wouldn't work. We didn't listen. Passion and purpose will always carry you further than experience alone. Don't wait for permission-build what you believe in."

— Ben Johnson,

the work, about their teams, and about doing things the right way. The balance of drive, joy, and loyalty in Louisiana's business culture is unlike anywhere else."

From the start, Techneaux has embraced its role in helping Louisiana's industries modernize and evolve—while investing in the people who call it home.

To learn more visit, www.techneaux.com

