



For Immediate Release

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Ohio Chamber Presents The Toasted Oat with the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award

Company receives \$25,000 for its gluten-free granola products

The Toasted Oat of Columbus was named the 2014 Ohio Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Entrepreneurship award winner, April 8 at the Capitol Theatre in downtown Columbus. The award was presented during the Ohio Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting & Legislative Reception. The Hilliard Area Chamber of Commerce nominated The Toasted Oat for this prestigious award.

The award is designed to identify, honor and financially assist a company in Ohio that is demonstrating the historical innovative spirit of our state. The award recipient best demonstrates this entrepreneurial spirit through a recently introduced or pending introduction of a unique product or service that will have the ability to sustain long-term growth for the company, increase local employment and assist in the creation of economic prosperity within the state. The award comes with statewide recognition and a check for \$25,000. The nominating chamber receives a check for \$1,000.

The Toasted Oat is a gluten-free granola manufactured in Columbus. The company launched in early 2013 and hit the local shelves in May of 2013. The product is currently sold in over 40 specialty food stores throughout Ohio. The target market are those people who suffer from Celiac Disease and those wanting to remove gluten from their diet. Unlike most granolas that are hard, this granola is soft, like an oatmeal cookie.

Founder and owner Erika Boll was diagnosed with Celiac Disease in 2007. With her love of baking and a background in corporate retail, she set out to re-invent treats that she had grown fond of making. Using a granola recipe passed down from her grandmother, she took out the wheat germ that the recipe called for and substituted certified gluten-free oats. The response to her revamped recipe was overwhelming so she set out to make it in mass quantities for others.

Eighty percent of the product from the packaging to the honey is sourced from Ohio companies. The Toasted Oat currently has four flavors: Peanut & Raisin, White Chocolate & Macadamia Nut, Blueberry & Flax and Cashew & Apricot. The Toasted Oat products can be found in Ohio at Whole Foods, The Raisin Rack, Heinen's, Weiland's Market, The Hills Market, Lucky's Market, Celebrate Local, Jungle Jim's and online at thetoastedoat.com. The goal is to go national this year.

The privately owned company is the first woman-owned company to receive the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award. With eight part-time employees, the goal is to create 50 full-time positions as sales expand.

“In honor of our state’s history of innovators and entrepreneurs, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce created this award to recognize those who continue to take considerable initiative and risk in creating new products and services,” explained President and CEO of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce Andrew E. Doehrel. “The Toasted Oat truly embodies the reason we developed this award six years ago.”

One of the judges of the award said that owner and founder Erika Boll is “the next Cheryl Kruger” referring to the Central Ohio business woman who founded Cheryl’s Cookies.

Local chambers of commerce submitted nominations early this year. From those nominees, 10 were selected to compete for the award. An awards committee, made up of members from the Ohio Chamber’s Board of Directors, reviewed the detailed applications and selected the top three finalists: The Toasted Oat, Pleasant Precision, Inc. and Slate Rock Safety LLC.

The finalists for this year’s Ohio Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award and the local chambers that nominated them are:

- **A & P Technology** of Cincinnati, nominated by the Clermont Chamber of Commerce
- **Birdeye** of Wooster, nominated by the Orrville Area Chamber of Commerce
- **Capture Education Consulting Services** of New Albany, nominated by the New Albany Chamber of Commerce
- **Homestead Beer Company** of Heath, nominated by the Licking County Chamber of Commerce
- **IC3D LLC** of Dublin, nominated by the Dublin Chamber of Commerce
- **LifeCare Alliance** of Columbus, nominated by the Marion Area Chamber of Commerce
- **McWane Poles** of Coshocton, nominated by the Coshocton County Chamber of Commerce
- **Pleasant Precision, Inc.** of Kenton, nominated by the Hardin County Chamber & Business Alliance
- **Slate Rock Safety LLC** of Medina, nominated by the Greater Medina Chamber of Commerce
- **The Toasted Oat** of Columbus, nominated by the Hilliard Area Chamber of Commerce

With over 8,000 members ranging from small businesses to international companies, the Ohio Chamber of Commerce represents Ohio’s business voice. Founded in 1893, the Ohio Chamber is one of the state’s oldest business organizations. The Ohio Chamber is led by a volunteer board of directors that consists of 66 business leaders from all over the state.

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