



GREAT DEEDS

New Jersey Monthly honors 10 companies for their deep commitment to charitable and social causes.

By Maryrose Mullen

MANY DIVERSE, CHARITABLE COMPANIES call New Jersey home. Their philanthropic spirit was on display as *New Jersey Monthly* honored 10 companies for their charitable works at the fourth annual Great Oak Awards dinner September 13 at the Park Chateau Estate in East Brunswick.

The Great Oak Awards honor businesses with strong Jersey roots and a deep commitment to charitable institutions and social causes. Readers nominated companies for the awards, and a panel of expert judges chose this year's honorees from a pool of 50 finalists.

Each finalist was assigned to a category based on the size of its full-time New Jersey workforce.

Nisivoccia in Mount Arlington, OpDecision in Marlton, the S3 Agency in Boonton and the Silverstrom Group in Livingston were the winners among the small companies. Columbia Bank in Fair Lawn, Riker Danzig in Morristown and WithumSmith+Brown in Princeton took top honors among the midsize companies. Bayer in Whippany, BD in Franklin Lakes and Ernst & Young in Iselin were the large-company winners.

Keynote speaker Michele Siekerka, president and CEO of the NJ Business & Industry Association and co-chair of Opportunity NJ, emphasized her pride in working with companies that strive to help New Jersey grow.

"Great businesses make great communities," she said. Here are some examples of the Great Oak honorees' charitable endeavors for the past year:

- Nisivoccia, an accounting and business-advisory firm, donated tax- and financial-planning presentations



New Jersey Monthly publisher and editor in chief Kate Tomlinson greeted the attendees at the Great Oak Awards reception and dinner.



Michele Siekerka, president and CEO of the NJ Business & Industry Association and co-chair of Opportunity NJ, delivered the keynote. Her speech focused on growing Jersey businesses.



Michael J. Smith, president of presenting sponsor Berkeley College, addressed attendees at the Great Oak Awards, started by *New Jersey Monthly* to recognize New Jersey companies—big and small—for their charitable-giving programs and policies that support nonprofits throughout the state.

Photographs by JOHN O'BOYLE

THE HONOREES

- Nisivoccia
- OpDecision
- The S3 Agency
- The Silverstrom Group
- Columbia Bank
- Riker Danzig
- WithumSmith+Brown
- Bayer
- BD
- Ernst & Young



Representatives of the winning companies and event supporters at the 2017 Great Oak Awards, front, from left: Theresa Richardson (WithumSmith+Brown), Jennifer Farrington (BD), Drew Polin (OpDecision), Kate Tomlinson (*New Jersey Monthly*), Michele Siekerka (NJ Business & Industry Association), Adam Schnitzler (the S3 Agency), Brent Ashton (Ernst & Young), David Silverstrom (the Silverstrom Group) and Brenda

Liss (Riker Danzig). Rear, from left: Michael J. Smith (Berkeley College), Joyce Buford (Allstate), Sylvia Lasalandra Frodella (H2Ocean Restaurant & Raw Bar), Karen Escobedo (New Jersey Natural Gas), Joe Visaggio (Novartis Pharmaceuticals), Patrick L. Ryan (First Bank), Matt Powers (Uber), Kelly Bonventre (NJ Sharing Network), Michael Campbell (Columbia Bank) and Laura Lampron (Nisivoccia).



Michael Campbell, second from left, who accepted the award for Columbia Bank, enjoyed the cocktail party with friends and colleagues, from left, Margaretta Morman, Shannon Jeffreys, and Debra and Gary Perino.



Sylvia Lasalandra Frodella, co-owner of H2Ocean Restaurant & Raw Bar, center, presented Laura Lampron and Tim Mehaffey of Nisivoccia with the Great Oak trophy along with Kate Tomlinson and Michael J. Smith.



to local organizations, in addition to providing supplies to the Mount Olive Food Pantry.

Telecommunications company OpDecision helped raise more than \$275,000 for the Legacy Treatment Foundation. "We wanted to change the culture of fundraising," CEO Drew Polin said. "We wanted to create a culture that reflected our board, which was very young and eager to do the work."

The S3 Agency provided roughly \$300,000 in advertising and marketing services to the Turtleback Zoo, including a new website and TV commercial. Through its S FREE program, the advertising agency gives small organizations a chance to apply for other in-kind services.

The Silverstrom Group, a dental practice, partnered with the American Cancer Society for the annual Smiles for Life award. Every year, a cancer survivor is granted a \$25,000 cosmetic smile makeover to combat the oral effects of radiation therapy and chemotherapy.

Columbia Bank funded financial-literacy programs in schools and made \$1 million in corporate donations to New Jersey organizations. "Volunteers have participated in over 100 charitable events, our largest undertaking since 1927," said public relations officer Gary Perino.

Riker Danzig sponsored the annual Newport 10K in Jersey City, which benefits the Jersey City Medical Center. In addition, the legal firm supported organizations such as the Alliance for Lupus Research, Daytop New Jersey and Homeless Solutions.

WithumSmith+Brown's Withum Week of Caring is a collaborative effort by all 575 employees to volunteer more than 2,500 hours at 50 different organizations. "Giving back is part of who we are as a company," said Joan Kampe, director of human resources.

Bayer's initiative, Making Science Make Sense, is committed to helping improve science education and literacy in schools. "The most rewarding thing is seeing children's faces and directly interacting with them," said Sean White, oversight management in Oncology SBU.

Health-care giant BD supported groups that assist vulnerable populations faced with challenges such as hunger, housing and homelessness. "Knowing you make an impact and can effect change is very special," said Ellen Rafferty, manager of social investing.

Ernst & Young's Corporate Responsibility Strategy focuses on three target areas: education, entrepreneurship and workforce equality. EY's College MAP Program, a mentoring initiative for high school students, is active in 30 U.S. cities. "Seeing kids have an active role in their future is so rewarding," said executive director Jason Kopec. "It feels good to see they can make life better for themselves if they stay positive and stay focused."

Berkeley College was the presenting sponsor of the event; marketing partners were Allstate NJ Insurance Company, First Bank, H2Ocean Restaurant & Raw Bar, New Jersey Natural Gas, NJ Sharing Network, Novartis Pharmaceuticals and Uber. 🍀



Owner David Silverstrom, second from right, who accepted the award on behalf of the Silverstrom Group, celebrated with, from left Natalie Solomon (Silverstrom), Sandra Pacheco (S3 Agency), Debbie Goldberg (Silverstrom) and Margot Silverstrom.



New Jersey Monthly publisher Kate Tomlinson honored Mary Lou Panzano from Bayer, second from left, along with Kelly Bonventre of the NJ Sharing Network, an event marketing partner, and Michael J. Smith, president of presenting sponsor Berkeley College.



Brent Ashton, right, who accepted the award on behalf of Ernst & Young, enjoyed the cocktail party with colleagues, from left, Charlie Hatch and Sharad Dubey.



Blair Schleicher Bravo, center, from Bayer, was joined at the pre-awards cocktail party by Riker Danzig's Fiona Cousland, left, and Brenda Liss, who accepted Great Oak honors on behalf of Riker Danzig.



Joe Visaggio, left, of Novartis Pharmaceuticals, joins Ellen Rafferty of BD, one of the night's honorees.



From left, colleagues Patrick L. Ryan, Susan Paglione and Darren Kay of event marketing partner First Bank enjoy the evening.



New Jersey Monthly editor Ken Schlager, right, connects with Bert Baron of WCTC AM during the cocktail reception.



Bill Byrnes of the F.M. Kirby Foundation, left, enjoyed the cocktail party with, from left, Susan Merrill O'Connor of the Center for Non-Profits, Abby O'Neill of Abby O'Neill Consulting and Linda Czipo from the Center for Non-Profits.



Gathered at the cocktail reception were, from left, WithumSmith+Brown colleagues Jamie Quinn, Jean Safer and Holly Greco, who accepted the Great Oak Award on behalf of the company.



Drew Polin, second from right, accepted the Great Oak Award on behalf of OpDecision, from left, New Jersey Monthly publisher Kate Tomlinson, Patrick L. Ryan, president and CEO of First Bank, and Michael J. Smith, president of Berkeley College.