

Achs inducted into Sabex hall of fame

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He might be pushing 70, but Ken Achs isn't about to slow down.

The longtime Saskatoon developer and race enthusiast was honoured Thursday night by being inducted into the hall of fame at the Saskatoon Awards for Business Excellence (SABEX) awards that was part of the Celebrate Success! Business Awards.

The president and CEO of the Mid-West Group of Cos. and partner in Meridian Development Corp., Achs has specialized in reviving many Saskatoon buildings, including turning the King George Hotel into luxury condominiums and retail space, the CPR station, the Firehall on 11th Street, the Handicraft Supply building on Second Avenue and the RCMP building on Eighth Street.

Achs is in the process of turning the Modern Press building on Second Avenue into Mid-West's new headquarters and it "will be one of a kind," he said.

He said success has never been guaranteed and happened slowly.

Achs began in business at the age of 22 with a desire to open a speed shop in the 1960s.

"Dad mortgaged \$5,000 to start my business," he said.

Achs also raced through the 1960 and '70s, even heading down to Orange County, Calif., to race funny cars.

By the 1970 he was also starting to refurbish older buildings and the company continued to grow.

"In the '90s we kept doing things we could afford and it just kept growing,"



CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Ken Achs, left, receives the SABEX Hall of Fame award from Phil Klein, VP Commercial Financial Services of RBC, during awards gala at Prairieland Park Thursday.

he said. "Since 2000 it has taken on a life of its own."

Achs credits his employees as the main reason for his success.

And his love of going fast continues to this day.

"I want to go back and go 200 miles per hour at SIR (Saskatchewan International Raceway)," he said.

"It's been a great journey."

Reed Security took home two awards, small business of the year and for customer service.

"It's a validation that hard work does pay off," said owner Virgil Reed, who started the company 13 years ago.

He said the company's motto is from something a high school teacher told him - "Excellence takes effort."

He said if he could have looked into a crystal ball at the start 13 years ago, this is exactly where he would want to be.

Hosted by the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and presented by PotashCorp., the Celebrate Success! Awards Gala combined the Award of Innovation, the Strategic Alliance Award, Community Leadership Award, and the Saskatoon Awards for Business Excellence (SABEX) Awards.

The SABEX Awards are open to all private sectors (non-governmental), for profit, enterprises based in the greater Saskatoon area, whether large or small.

Award winners were:

SABEX Community Involvement (Sponsored by SaskTel)

Awarded to a business demonstrating substantial support for arts and culture, amateur sport, education, or volunteerism.

Conexus Credit Union

SABEX Customer Service (Sponsored by CIBC)

Awarded to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in providing services (wholesale and retail trade, purchasing and distribution, transportation, brokering, professional services, communications, and financial). Judging considers the relative size of the business.

Reed Security

SABEX Growth & Expansion (Sponsored by National Bank of Canada)

Awarded to a business who has made significant changes in their business which has resulted in Growth or Expansion of 15 per cent or more of the business' markets, physical locations, number of employees, etc., and

which in turn has made an impact on the company's overall ability to increase its revenues, investments, and profits now or in the future.

HealthServ

SABEX Marketing (Sponsored by Handy Group of Companies)

Awarded to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in marketing. The judges evaluate the success of a marketing program giving consideration to the nature of the product and the relative size of the business.

Flaman Group of Companies

SABEX Environmental Sustainability (Sponsored by Cameco)

Awarded to a business that has demonstrated a strong commitment to environment sustainability.

Confederation Inn

SABEX New Business Venture (Sponsored by SaskPower)

Awarded to a new business venture which has been in existence for three years or less and which has shown positive performance in terms of current expected profitability, job creation or entrance into new markets.

Metric Design Centre

SABEX New Product and/or Service (Sponsored by Business Development Bank)

Awarded to a business demonstrating exceptional performance in launching a new Saskatchewan-made product, device or service in the last three years, which is original and is currently available to consumers.

The James Hotel

SABEX Small Business of the Year (Sponsored by TD Canada Trust)

Awarded to a business with 15 or fewer employees.

Reed Security

SABEX Business of the Year (Sponsored by Edwards School of Business)

Awarded to a business that clearly demonstrates excellence in the areas they consider key to their success, including profitability, customer service, growth and/ or expansion, marketing, and employment creation.

Innovative Rehabilitation Consultants

SABEX Hall of Fame Inductee (Sponsored by RBC Royal Bank)

The recipient will be a long-standing member of the Saskatoon region business community.

Ken Achs

Award of Innovation (Presented by Innovation Place and the ILO - Industry and Liaison Office - U of S)

Eric Neufeld and Chad Jones

Strategic Alliance Award (Presented by Saskatoon Community Foundation)

On Purpose Leadership Inc., nominated by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saskatoon

Community Leadership Award (Presented by Leadership Saskatoon)

The Broadway Theatre - Kirby Wirchenko, Executive Director

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