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KVCC 3 businesses to receive major awards Maine Tomorrow, Delta Ambulance, A Partner in Technology to be honored

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The Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce has announced the recipients of this year's President's Award, Chamber President Peter Thompson said.

The three honorees this year are: Maine Tomorrow and its president, John Melrose; Delta Ambulance and its executive director, Tim Beals; and A Partner In Technology and its president and chief executive officer, Scott Fossett.

"All three of these businesses are good, solid companies in the Kennebec Valley," Thompson said. "They have shown various levels of growth, commitment to their community and success in good business."

The trio will be honored at the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner and ceremony Jan. 22, at the Augusta Civic Center.

John Melrose was confused when Thompson showed up at his Hallowell-based business, Maine Tomorrow, a few months ago.

"I was hurrying back from a meeting and knew he had shown up, but didn't give a reason for wanting to see me," Melrose said, "and I was wondering, 'What could this be about?'"

Maine Tomorrow

The owner of Maine Tomorrow was surprised, though pleased, to hear of the award.

"Having the chamber recognize us means a lot because of the respect we have for the chamber and our business community."

Melrose is the first to admit his professional life was built on opportunities that he happened upon.

"Many of my career decisions did not come from deep planning, but rather opportunities," he said with a chuckle, "but it's given me confidence."

Melrose and Roger Mallar, Farmingdale's road commissioner, founded Maine Tomorrow in 1982. Melrose later bought out Mallar's share.

The company does consulting, management and development work for public and private clients. One of its more prominent clients is the Maine Grocers Association.

"We handle their finances, communications, event planning; all the things that a business trade association does, we do on their behalf," Melrose said.

Other clients include the Maine chapter of the American Council of Engineers and Maine Apartment Owners and Managers.

Maine Tomorrow also handles lobbying and government affairs to certain clients.

Melrose sold Maine Tomorrow while he served as commissioner for the Department of Transportation during the King administration, from 1995 to 2002. He reacquired the business after serving in government.

"I've worked all over the state of Maine, and the businesses and government in the Greater Augusta area work well together," Melrose said. "The relationship between the two is typically a pleasant and harmonious one."

Melrose, a New York native, lives in Vassalboro with his wife. The couple have three adult children and one grandchild.

Delta Ambulance

As with Melrose, Tim Beals was surprised to hear the emergency transportation business he oversees, Delta Ambulance, was a President's Award recipient.

"I was at a loss for words," Beals, executive director, said. "The chamber president and board chair invited me to breakfast. I thought we were meeting to talk about Delta's role in the community. So, yes, it was a complete surprise."

Delta started in 1972 in Waterville. A second office was built in Augusta in 1991, and "we've just grown from there," Beals said.

The nonprofit has tried to blend in with the 18 communities it serves as its services have expanded.

"Delta continually seeks ways to gain market share or gain revenue. We've grown quietly, unassumingly, I think,"

Beals said. "That's why it's an honor for us to be recognized."

Today, Delta employs 120 people in Waterville and Augusta, focusing on emergency and nonemergency transport.

"On one side, we have routine transfers from a nursing home and people discharged from the hospital," Beals said. "Then we have the emergency side, the critical side. Business has been growing on both sides."

Delta relies on patient revenue, which is considered unusual in the industry.

"We do not charge subsidies; we're on the patient revenue end of things, and that's what makes us unique from other ambulance services," Beals said. "We don't charge our towns a fee for service."

In a nation trying to dig out of recession, Beals has a refreshing message: "We're hiring."

Delta intends to fill two full-time positions and will add another truck to its fleet after the first of year, Beals said. Employees, who Beals called the company's "best asset," will also continue to be educated on new technology as it develops.

"We're in constant pursuit of perfecting what we do for the public," he said. "As health care evolves, we will, too."

Beals, a Vermont native who has lived in Maine for 25 years, has been with Delta since 1984, serving as executive director full time since 1997. He is married and has three children.

A Partner in Technology

Winning the President's Award was a bright spot in a gloomy economy to Scott Fossett, president and chief executive officer of A Partner in Technology.

"Peter (Thompson) and about five other board members came to the office and I thought, 'Uh-oh, am I being recruited for some kind of committee?'" Fossett said with a chuckle. "But we are so pleased to get this award, just given all the gloom and doom we've seen in this economy."

A Partner in Technology provides computer and network services for a variety of businesses and nonprofit groups in central Maine.

"We suggest, sell, install and support the products we put in," Fossett said. "Hardware, software, network security, you name it."

Clients include Savings Bank of Maine, Ganneston Construction Corporation and the insurance firm Macomber, Farr & Whitten. A third of Fossett's clients are nonprofit organizations, he said.

Fossett has five employees who work out of two offices -- one in Gardiner and one that opened in March in Farmington. The firm is looking for one more full-time employee.

Though A Partner in Technology has managed to see growth through the recession, Fossett and his employees remain cautiously optimistic about the future and the business climate of central Maine.

"This is subject that comes up a lot with area business leaders," he said. "I think (central Maine business growth) is on the upswing, but it's going to be slow. Maine always lags a little bit behind the rest of the nation, and we're starting to feel what the rest of the country was feeling last year."

The strategy of keeping small business in Maine alive, however, is simple, Fossett said.

"We're going to focus on doing the little things right," he said. "That's focusing on customer service, being responsive and attentive to our clients."

Fossett launched his company nearly a decade ago, after working as a field engineer and in software development. He holds a bachelor's degree in business from Thomas College in Waterville, and also earned an associate's degree in applied electronics from Central Maine Technical College.

Fossett, an Augusta native and Cony High School graduate, is married. He has three children.

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