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Foster Perry, Director of UAH Small Business Development Center, said Huntsville, Madison and Madison County provide a culture that is unique to many cities. He works in unison with the Chamber of Commerce, BizTech technology incubator and the WBCNA to bring programs and consulting services to those who need them.

“It is extraordinary, really, how people in this community are willing to help others find success in business, without requiring credit or expecting any success of their own from it,” Perry said.

On the technology side, the Chamber works with BizTech, the Huntsville Association of Small Businesses in Advanced Technology (HASBAT), and with the SBA to help qualify companies for funding under the Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative for Advanced Defense Technologies (ADTs).

Small Business as an Engine for Economic Growth

When Forbes named Huntsville one of the Top 20 Leading Metros for Business in 2011, it was confirmation that Huntsville’s aggressive approach to economic development and job growth provided a friendly environment for small business of all kinds.

Starting a small business is a risk. The Chamber helps start-up companies find useful information about taxes, business licensing and small business loans. They offer advice, training and consulting services to help entrepreneurs succeed.

According to Jimmar, “We have a diverse membership that consists of companies in defense and aerospace; health and wellness; business professional services from industries such as construction, beauty and luxury services, wholesale and retail, hospitality; manufacturing, technology, biomedical/life sciences, and more.”

In fact, of the 19,982 resident companies located in Madison County, 7,225 of them are self-employed businesses, and 10,637 of them have only two to nine employees.

Jimmar added, “You cannot discount the economic engine that is small business. In addition to the Fortune 500 companies located here, 89 percent of small business residing in Huntsville employs 40,626 people.” (YourEconomy.org, 2009 data).

“We love our business community, and we want to encourage them to continue to have a positive and strong impact on the economy, schools and community,” Bouldin said. “The Small Business Awards are our way of recognizing achievements and allowing these businesses to have their time to shine in recognition knowing that we appreciate their efforts.”