

Catherine Downey, CEO, CATMEDIA Georgia Small Business Person of the Year

Catherine Downey is the founder and CEO of CATMEDIA, a full service communications company headquartered in Tucker, Georgia. Approaching \$20 million in revenue, the company has been named in the Top Ten of the Atlanta Business Chronicle's 2015 Pacesetter Awards for Atlanta's 100 fastest-growing private companies, as well as named as one of the top 100 fastest growing companies [top five woman owned businesses] in America by Inc. Magazine.



Downey's career began in media as Director of Marketing & Broadcast Promotions for a Memphis-based television station.

After 15 years of executive management experience, Downey—a single mom—founded CATVIDEO, Inc. in 1997. While years of hard work and sacrifice were paying off, with her children grown, Downey re-doubled her efforts to expand the firm.

In 2011, Downey changed the company name to CATMEDIA to reflect its expanding services. Today the company offers a broad range of specialties including: media production, training, graphic design, human resource management event production, web based programming and social media. Her commitment to excellent customer service is supported by a client list that includes some of the biggest names in federal agencies: the Federal Aviation Administration, Centers for Disease Control, and the Office of Personnel Management.

CEO Catherine Downey credits SBA and its partner organizations for helping her successfully scale up her firm and her own executive management skills. "I feel like a poster child for the SBA as I have participated in many federal government programs and services that have helped grow my business." Either she or a team member visits the SBA on a quarterly basis to remain engaged and plugged into the vast network of resources. "Each class or meeting has been a building block for my growth and the growth of the company, said Downey."

Through SCORE, Catherine learned about federal procurement which led to her certification in SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program. She is a client of the Georgia Small Business Development Center and a graduate of the SBDC's Fast Track program. She graduated from SBA's Emerging Leaders Program as its 2014 class valedictorian. To round out the "poster child" image of utilizing the SBA programs and services, CATMEDIA recently took advantage of the agency's 504 loan program to purchase a 5,750 square foot facility for its Atlanta headquarters.

Today Downey is confident and poised to lead CATMEDIA in achieving its goal of \$50 million in annual revenue within the next three years.

Melinda Coker

Senior Vice President

Financial Services Champion

Melinda Coker is Senior Vice President of Small Business Access Partners (SBAP), a non-profit Certified Development Company (CDC) authorized by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to lend capital to small businesses. In her capacity, Coker focuses on marketing the SBA 504 loan program to potential borrowers, lenders, and other referral sources. She has demonstrated success in analyzing proposed projects and providing a financing structure that is acceptable to both the participating lender and the borrower. She has used her skills in analyzing financial statements and cash flow projections and her mastery of the loan closing process to assist hundreds of entrepreneurs successfully navigate the commercial lending process.



Coker began her career in SBA lending when she joined the CDC as a lender in 1998. Her vast experience and expertise has enabled her to take on a leadership role within the CDC. As Senior Vice President, she helps influence current and long-range objectives, provides underwriting and closing oversight, and represents the company with its lenders, borrowers, and the public.

Through her efforts and those of the entire SBAP team, over 500 entrepreneurs have been helped with starting and growing their companies, creating jobs and making a positive impact on their surrounding communities. SBAP has closed and funded over \$225 million in SBA 504 loan proceeds and have helped their client small businesses create over 6,600 jobs.

Coker has served on the Georgia Lenders Quality Circle (GLQC) Board of Directors and held the position of Secretary for two years.

Everlast Synthetic Products Carl Hazenberg, Founder/Part Owner Exporter of the Year

Everlast Synthetic Products of Woodstock, Georgia is a leading global supplier of seawall services, including manufacture of vinyl steel pilings which are used in design and construction and seawalls, retaining wells and lake walls.



Carl Hazenberg, founder and part owner of Everlast, recognizes that personal relationships are important in successfully conducting business internationally and is willing to invest time and funds to visit prospects and clients around the world. Unlike many exporters he is willing to consider opportunities in regions of the world that are considered high risk. To mitigate those risks he looks to the Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC), International Trade team as well as the staff of the US Export Assistance Center and other industry contact to evaluate projects and perspective partners.

The company's commitment to a comprehensive marketing and sales strategy that includes aggressively seeking export opportunities has enabled it to grow its markets, sales and jobs. Founded 10 years ago, Everlast began exporting in its third year of operations. That decision has led the company to successfully conduct business on six continents, increase its 2012 to 2014 three year sales by nearly 100 percent and grow its employee base to ten.

Everlast began to experience its most significant growth after Hazenberg participated in the workshop series, ExportGA. As part of that experience a team of trade experts from the SBDC, SBA, Georgia Department of Economic Development and U.S. Commercial Services were assigned to him as a resource for establishing an export strategy for the future. Four years later the Hazenberg continues to work with these resource partners as he further grows Everlast's international markets.

Seimitsu Corporation, Family Owned Small Business of the Year

Seimitsu Corporation was founded in Savannah, GA by Seimitsu “Sam” Cook in 1984 from a workbench in Cook’s garage. Specializing in custom business IT solutions, the company provides a wide variety of IT services and solutions, infrastructure services, voice solutions and surveillance systems. With the acquisition of an existing trunk line, SEIMITSU became the only local service provider of fiber-optic systems in the Savannah area.



From the very beginning, Seimitsu Corporation functioned as a family-owned business. Cook helmed the IT portion of the business and his wife, Cynthia, oversaw operations. When the business moved into a brick-and-mortar location on Savannah’s Southside neighborhood, Cook’s father-in-law was recruited to manage leasehold build-outs and improvements of their new workspace

The company began its relationship with the SBA in 1991, when it borrowed \$50,000 in inventory and working capital from the Small Business Assistance Corporation (SBAC), an SBA 504, microloan and Community Advantage lender in Savannah. In 2007, the company purchased an 11,000 square foot space with a SBA 504 loan from the SBAC.

Over the last three years, Seimitsu’s balance sheet shows marked growth. In particular the company’s 2015 numbers, which show total sales of \$3.15 million, a nearly \$700,000 increase over 2014. As the company has developed new, specific, and niche product offering, its market share has increased proportionally.

The company’s employee base has grown as well. From 12 full time employees in 2011, Seimitsu had 20 employees by the end of 2015. It has created three additional jobs in 2016, with another three new position expected by the end of the year.

Tisha Tallman
President, Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Minority Small Business Champion

Tisha Tallman is the President and CEO of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GHCC). Established in 1984, the GHCC is one of the largest Hispanic/Latino chambers of commerce in the nation, the largest Hispanic/Latino membership organization in the state, and the largest Hispanic/Latino chamber of commerce in the state with over 1,300 members. Under Tallman's leadership, the GHCC provides business and leadership development, supplier diversity/procurement assistance and legislative advocacy. It successfully leverages SBA and other resource partners to bring targeted outreach and training to Georgia's growing Hispanic community.



Tallman's advocacy for Hispanic owned business is not limited to the GHCC. In 2012, she participated in a panel with four former Latin American Presidents at the Global Peace Business Forum. She was a participant in a transportation infrastructure roundtable discussion at the White House through the White House Business Council American Economic Competitiveness Series. She participated in the APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) CEO Summit 2008 in Lima, Peru – a convening of Leaders of economies and senior business figures from across the Asia Pacific and the Americas. She was invited by the former President of Mexico Vicente Fox and the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce to be a member of the Commission on North American Social and Economic Prosperity.

Tallman has appeared on panels, and television and radio shows such as the BBC World Service, National Public Radio, Tavis Smiley, MSNBC, Court TV, Fox Live, and CNN en Español, to discuss a wide range of public policy issues affecting Latinos. She has also been quoted in print outlets such as Time magazine, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the National Journal, and has authored editorials and articles.

Jack Kinley CEO/Founder, Lab Monkey Communications LGBT Small Business Champion

Jack Kinley has been an outspoken advocate for the LGBT business community since founding his own company, Lab Monkey Communications, in April 2007. He has been an active member and volunteer with the Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (AGLCC) since 2008.

Through Lab Monkey, Kinley has helped the Chamber rebrand and rebuild its website in 2012 as part of efforts to revive and revitalize the faltering organization. These efforts paid off, making the AGLCC among the strongest up-and-coming affiliates of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC).



After the success of the new branding and website, Kinley joined the AGLCC Board of Directors to lead development of a comprehensive communications strategy to grow membership, boost service to current member, and expand the Chamber's reach in the metro region. In 2015 he accepted the organization's office of Vice President and will become President in May 2016.

The legacy of Kinley's work with the AGLCC will be his efforts to set the organization up for continued long-term success through continued strategic planning, development of a 501c(3) and improved messaging to better reflect the LGBT and allied audiences. These milestones will help cement the AGLC's place in the metro-Atlanta LGBT community by stabilizing the organization and allowing it to more fully embody its mission of "*LGBT advocacy thorough economics.*"

In addition to his tireless work to build and sustain the AGLCC, Kinley supports other LGBT owned businesses by sourcing talented subcontractors through his network of LGBT owned businesses. Lab Monkey, an NGLCC LGBT Certified Business Enterprise, regularly engages other LGBTBE's as Tier 2 subcontractors to help clients maximize their spend in this business category.

Rachel Davis, Executive Director
SBA Women's Business Center Director/The Edge Connection
Women in Business Champion

Rachel Davis is responsible for direct supervision of the Edge Connection's SBA Women's Business Center. Launched in 2004, the Center has provided education, resources, and support services to help promote successful business start-ups, growth, expansion, and sustainability to thousands of women entrepreneurs. Since its inception the Center has been a key component to the Edge Connection's diverse resources targeted to low-to-moderate-income women, minorities, and veterans



Davis began working in the field of micro/small business development in 1996, where she worked in several capacities including Business Consultant, Program Manager, Training and Business Development Services Manager, and VP of Operations. She has created and implemented programs for micro-entrepreneurs, managed grant program deliverables including budgets, reporting and outcomes tracking and management. She is a previous board director of Georgia Micro Enterprise Network (GMEN), the supporting agency for advocacy of microenterprise. She has been a presenter at state and national conferences on microenterprise highlighting best practices in training and follow-up services. Ms. Davis earned her BA in Economics from Spelman College and her MBA from Clark Atlanta University.

A tireless advocate for women business owners, Davis leads a dynamic team of professions who continually innovate the center's approach to helping women achieve success in small business and micro enterprise. The center works closely, not only with the SBA Georgia District Office, but SCORE, the Georgia SBDC and the ACE Women's Center to coordinate programs delivery and consistency.

ACE Women's Business Center Marie Peck, Executive Director - WBC of the Year

The mission of the ACE Women's Business Center is to empower women, minorities, and low-to-moderate income entrepreneurs through financial education and training. It provides a full range of services for women at all stages of business planning, implementation, and growth, including workshops, seminars and one-on-one counseling in both English and Spanish.

The ACE Women's Business Center and Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs (ACE), the WBC host organization, are both strong SBA resource partners dedicated to providing entrepreneurship education, one-on-one consultations, and access to capital.

The Center collaborates closely with and supports the SBA frequently supporting SBA's education panels, workshops, and other programs by providing staff as trainers or panelist. The ACE's WBC's work with SBA includes many national special initiatives, such as Small Business Saturday, Women's History Month, and InnovateHer.

Accessibility is a priority to the ACE WBC. Its online scheduling portal allows clients to quickly and easily schedule a meeting or telephone consultation. The WBC maintains evening and weekend hours on a regular basis to accommodate clients working full-time or operating their businesses during standard operating hours. This flexibility allows the WBC to serve more entrepreneurs in diverse areas and in various stages of the entrepreneurial process.

The ACE WBC target market includes women and minorities in the Metro Atlanta area with a physical location in Gwinnett County, an area where 60 percent of the population are minorities. In the first year of its SBA grant, the WBC exceeded its original goals by training 589 clients and providing 140 one-on-one consultations. In 2015 it trained 470 women clients, 299 Hispanic clients, and 260 African America clients, indicating that 95 percent of clients were within the target market. The WBC also provided one-on-one consultation to 85 minority business owners and 94 women business owners.



Holly Laine Hutson

Small Business Liaison Officer, Amec Foster Wheeler

Veteran Small Business Champion

As Amec Foster Wheeler's Small Business Liaison Officer, Holly Hutson assisted over six veteran owned (VOSB) and 19 service disabled owned small businesses (SDVOSB) attain federal project in 2015 alone. She also ensured that the veteran community received a fair share of subcontracts last year, with \$8.8 million going to VOSBs and \$2.8 million to SDVOSBs, representing 20.1 percent and 8.8 percent respectively of Wheeler's total subcontract awards. These numbers reflect a significant increase in subcontract to both VSOB and SDVOSB over the previous year and in the case of SDVOSB, is over double the US governments SDVOSB subcontracting goal of 3 percent.



These numbers resulted from many years of work targeted to increasing business opportunities for veterans. For the past ten years, Hutson has used her position to craft strategies to attract and retain small businesses to Amec Foster Wheeler's subcontractor pool, particularly VSOBs and SDVOSBs. Her efforts have helped the company win multiple awards for its work with small businesses. Hutson's individual advocacy work for veterans includes fundraising efforts for K9s for Warriors, which raised almost \$2,400 at a small business networked event and funds raised in memory of deceased beloved Amec Foster Wheeler employee and Vietnam veteran Buddy Allgood for the Wounded Warrior Organization.

A tribute to the success as an advocate for veterans and veteran owned businesses, Hutson was selected as a co-presenter at USAID's Veterans Small Business Conference in November, 2015.