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## **Chamber recognizes BD manager Sanyi honored for expansion, work as Sumter ambassador**

Jim Sanyi, the plant manager at BD, was thrilled to learn Saturday evening that the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce and The Citizens Bank chose him as the businessperson of the year for 2004.

He earned the award, he said, because of all the people he works with.

“I kind of feel right now that I’ve just been honored for doing my job, and I don’t think that’s recognition-worthy,” Sanyi said.

Jim Kepner, interim president of the Sumter County Development Board, nominated Sanyi because of his work in the community and his support in convincing BD to expand the plant in Sumter a second time.

“Jim Sanyi stood out as a real ambassador to economic development in Sumter,” Kepner said. Sanyi has lived in Sumter since BD transferred him here in 1984. He became plant manager in 2000.

In today’s super-competitive environment, companies make their plants compete with each other to win expansions and new product lines. The Sumter plant was competing with BD plants in Utah and Singapore, Kepner said, but the Sumter plant won the \$80 million expansion and the 120 new jobs that should be created later this year.

That the Sumter plant won the expansion — the second major expansion in five years — is a testimony to the productivity and continuous in-house improvements at the facility, Kepner said.

Even without the expansion, Sanyi is a great ambassador for Sumter, said Grier Blackwelder, president of the chamber. Sanyi worked in 2004 as Sumter’s Ambassador for Economic Development for the state Department of Commerce.

Both Kepner and Blackwelder said Sanyi truly believes in the idea of being a good corporate citizen, and he’s led the way by becoming involved in the community himself. Most of his staff members are also highly involved in the community, Kepner said.

“In a busy time, that’s a very difficult thing to do, but he understands what the payback is going to be,” Kepner said.

This is the second year in a row that BD has been honored. The plant won Large Manufacturer of the Year for 2003.

Sanyi wasn’t the only the person called to the podium Saturday night.

Former mayor Steve Creech learned he had won the Outstanding Achievement Award.

“He has been the embodiment of the efforts to make sure Shaw Air Force Base stays open,” chamber Chairman Bill Nock said.

Creech, a lifelong Sumter resident, has been involved in all aspects of life in Sumter. The chamber particularly noted his work to save Shaw Air Force Base from the BRAC process and his involvement in community organizations like the Rotary Club and the South Carolina Municipal Association.

Tech. Sgt. Christopher Mozingo was honored as the Jones Chevrolet/L.A. Leasing Military Citizen of the Year. Not only does Mozingo work at Shaw Air Force Base as the noncommissioned officer in charge of civil engineer readiness flight plans and operations, but he also finds time to volunteer at the YMCA, the Red Cross and Westside Christian Academy.

“This award will be the most cherished award I’ll ever have because it came from you, the community,” Mozingo said.

He has helped to raise money for local causes, such as a new bus for the academy, and global causes, such as increasing AIDS awareness in Africa.

The three manufacturers of the year were chosen based on their economic impact, commitment to their work forces, involvement in the community and accomplishments.

For the second year in a row, G&G Metal Fabrication Inc./Fire Equipment Services Division took home the small manufacturer of the year award, making it the first ever two-time winner.

The company designs, fabricates and refurbishes fire equipment and emergency vehicles. Although the company has only 15 employees, its work force is actually a third larger than last year. The company consistently posts annual sales of more than \$1.35 million.

Caterpillar, which employs 150 people, was named the medium manufacturer of the year. The company offers insurance plans with \$10 maximum co-pays, 401(k) retirement plans and tuition assistance.

Just as the company cares for its employees, the employees care for the community. Workers serve on more than 20 local boards and committees and have raised \$60,000 annually through the Caterpillar Foundation, the American Heart Walk and the United Way campaign.

The large manufacturer of the year for 2004 is Eaton Corporation. The company, once known as Cutler-Hammer, produces electrical distribution equipment at its Sumter plant.

In just the last year, the company has added almost 100 employees to grow to 582 full-time workers. Eaton offers tuition assistance, merit-based pay, subsidized fitness programs and monthly all-employee meetings.

The company maintains a community involvement team to solidify support for education, health and arts programs in the community. Employees have raised \$72,000 for the United Way.

Sales in 2004 were more than \$260 million.

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