

## Celebrating their Success

### SBA Honors Small Business Week Winners

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**For More Information:**

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In 1996, Kathy Kady-Hopkins and her mom, Christine Sherwood took a leap of faith and started ASL Interpreter Referral Service, Inc. from their New Brunswick homes with a \$2,000 investment. Twelve years later, they find themselves as the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) 2008 New Jersey Small Business Persons of the Year.

Kathy is the president and Chris is the vice president of ASL Interpreter Referral Service, Inc., a Somerset-based firm that specializes in providing interpreters 24/7 for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf and blind.

In making the announcement, SBA New Jersey District Director James A. Kocsi said that Kady-Hopkins and Sherwood were selected for the award based on criteria that include: Staying Power (a substantial history of an established business); Growth in Number of Employees; Increase in Sales; Financial Strength of the Company; Innovativeness of Product or Service Offered; Response to Adversity and Contributions to Aid Community Oriented Projects. The mother-daughter team was nominated for the award by Rosemary Dente, vice president/SBA business development officer for Susquehanna Bank.

"Kathy and Christine are your typical entrepreneurs; they are risk takers, people with vision and passion, and an understanding of what it takes to nurture



**Signs of Success---**Kathy Kady-Hopkins (L) and her mom, Chris Sherwood (R) started ASL Interpreter Referral Service, Inc. from their home in 1996. The Somerset-based company provides interpreters for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf and blind. An SBA loan for \$157,200 helped Kathy and Chris move their business into an office condo. Today, the company employs seven full-time employees, works with over 100 independent contractors and handles approximately 4,500 requests per year. Recently, Kathy and Chris were honored as the U.S Small Business Administration's 2008 New Jersey Small Business Persons of the Year.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Building and Financing Your Business with the SBA**

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

12:00 Noon – 3:00 p.m.

Philips Lighting

200 Franklin Square

Somerset, NJ 07601

Fee: None

For Information: (908) 526-1200

### **Building and Financing Your Business with the SBA**

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

South County Regional Branch Library

35 Coopers Folly Road

Atco, NJ 08062

Fee: None

For Information: (856) 225-6221

### **How to Start a Small Business**

Thursday, May 29, 2008

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

SBA Office

Two Gateway Center

Newark, NJ 07102

Fee: None

For information: (973) 507-9700

### **Introduction to QuickBooks**

Two Sessions

Monday, June 9, 2008

Monday, June 16, 2008

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

SBA Office – Two Gateway Center – 15<sup>th</sup> Fl.

Newark, NJ 07102

Fee: None

For Information: (973) 507-9700

### **Intellectual Property – What, How, When? Patents, Trademarks, Copyrights and more**

Thursday, June 12, 2008

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

SBA Office – Two Gateway Center 15<sup>th</sup> Fl.

Newark, NJ 07102

Fee: None

For Information: (973) 507-9700

### **Starting and Managing Your Own Business**

Tuesday, June 16, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

SBA Office – Two Gateway Center – 15<sup>th</sup> Fl.

Newark, NJ 07102

Fee: \$35 includes course book

For Information: (973) 645-2434

# Celebrating their Success

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an idea and build it into a successful company,” said Kocsi. “All across New Jersey there are companies just like ASL Interpreter Referral Service, Inc. that are making enormous contributions to the local economy. It is small business owners like Kathy Kady-Hopkins and Christine Sherwood who are meeting payrolls and providing innovative services that shape the landscape of our economy.”

Kathy, who has been hard of hearing since birth, worked for AT&T prior to starting the company. She worked in sales, selling telecommunications products to people with disabilities, as well as involved in implementing the company’s telecommunications relay service for the deaf. Kathy also became well versed in the Americans with Disabilities Act law and managed AT&T’s in-house interpreting service nationwide.

So when AT&T was downsizing and offering compensation packages to its employees, Kathy accepted the buyout. “I always dreamed of owning my own business,” said Kathy. “I have two aunts and an uncle and cousins who are deaf. My husband Paul is deaf. I knew there was a need for this service and how frustrating it was for people to get an interpreter. I decided I was going to change the market for these services.”

So Kathy approached her mom about going into business together. At the time, Christine owned Aura Associates, a training company that specialized in management skills. “When Kathy approached me about starting the business it was difficult for me to break away from my business, but I knew it was the right thing to do,” said Christine. “We just did it and the business took off quickly.”

“The key to this business is that we are providing a 24/7 service to our clients,” said Christine. “A call can

come anytime and we are ready to help that client. It could be from a hospital emergency room with a real life and death situation, and we are there to send someone there on the spot.”

Both women credit the SBA for helping them with the growth of their business. They used a \$157,200 SBA-backed loan from Temecula Valley Bank to purchase an office condo in 2005. The new 1200 square foot office space allows for a training facility, where clients can receive training in basic sign language, sensitivity training and TTY relay training.

Today, ASL Interpreter Referral Service, Inc. has grown to seven employees, works with over 100 independent contractors and handles approximately 4,500 requests, annually, for interpreter services.

As part of SBA’s National Small Business Week festivities (April 21st – April 25th), Kady-Hopkins and Sherwood were honored in Washington, D.C. by SBA Administrator Steve Preston, where they competed for the title of SBA National Small Business Person of the Year with representatives of 49 other states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. President Bush honored all 53 winners at a White House ceremony, where he announced the National Small Business Person of the Year.

Kady-Hopkins and Sherwood will also be honored by the SBA New Jersey District Office and the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce at the Annual New Jersey Small Business Week Awards Luncheon slated for Friday, May 2, 2008, at the Pines Manor in Edison, New Jersey.