

ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

Bogart company wins family business award

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The Cox Family Enterprise Center at Kennesaw State University named Bogart company burton + BURTON the winner of the 2008 Georgia Family Business of the Year in the large-business category.

The large-business category includes companies with 250 or more employees.

Maxine and Bob Burton own and operate burton + BURTON, which has grown into one of the world's largest suppliers of balloons and coordinated gift items.

Cox Award nomination forms appeared in Georgia Trend magazine, in the Cox Family Enterprise Center newsletter, and are mailed out to nearly 10,000 businesses and individuals. Applications then are sent to nominees to complete.

Nominees are first judged by Kennesaw State faculty members to choose finalists in each category, then the three finalists in each category are sent to a panel of independent judges who decide on the winners.

The attributes that made burton + BURTON stand out was the business represented the advent of an industry; the fact that three generations are employed by business; the success of the company; its creativity; and its community service, a Cox spokeswoman said.

In the early 1980s, while Maxine Burton was attending a trade show with her husband, Bob, for his wholesale floral business, she noticed a silver metallic balloon floating over the crowds, attracting a lot of attention.

Thinking this would be an excellent addition to a floral arrangement, Maxine Burton researched the idea of selling specialty balloons with balloon manufacturers, distributors and her existing floral customers. With the help of her family and through hard work, a new company was born in 1982 and continues today, employing three generations of the family.

Other Cox Awards included the Cox Century Award Winner, won by Harris Ace Hardware & Building Supply in Jesup.

Finalists in the large-business category included J & J Industries in Dalton and Jim Ellis Automotive in Atlanta.

Pull-A-Part LLC, of Atlanta, won the award for medium business for 50-250 employees. Finalists were Traton Homes from Marietta and Turner Furniture Co. in Tifton.

Parker's Heating & Air Conditioning in Americus, won the small-business category, which comprises firms with 50 or fewer employees. Acree Oil Co. in Toccoa and Stripling's General Store in Cordele were finalists.

The Cox Family Enterprise Center was founded in 1987 and is dedicated to the research, education and recognition of family businesses.

The Georgia Family Business of the Year Awards ceremony will be held May 19 at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta.

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