

SBA NEWS RELEASE

PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT OFFICE

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SBA NAMES MIRIAM SOTO OF THE WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER AT COMMUNITY FIRST FUND THE "EASTERN PA MINORITY SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION OF THE YEAR"

PHILADELPHIA, PA—The SBA's Philadelphia District Office announced that the winner of its 2009 "Eastern Pennsylvania Minority Small Business Champion of the Year" award is Miriam Soto, Director of Training for the Women's Business Center at Community First Fund.

Miriam Soto has made her mark on the minority-owned small business community over the course of her career. As the child of a non-English-speaking immigrant, she has focused her career on advancing the minority-owned business community. Early in her career, Ms. Soto quickly rose from bank teller to Community Reinvestment Act Officer, where she utilized the federal law designed to encourage commercial banks and savings associations to meet the needs of borrowers in all segments of their communities, including low-and moderate-income neighborhoods.

Currently, as Director of Training for The Women's Business Center at Community First Fund in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Ms. Soto spearheads that organization's efforts to provide programs to low to moderate income persons and other under-served populations who do not have access to technical assistance and loan capital through traditional means. The Center's services include: one-on-one counseling sessions to discuss specific business issues; intensive classroom training on establishing a new business and managing a business (conducted for both English and non-English speakers), seminars on a variety of business-related issues, and microloan and small business loan programs.

Ms. Soto also supports small business by helping to build a strong community and customer base in the region served by The Women's Business Center at Community First Fund through her many civic activities. Her work with the Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership has resulted in the training and graduation of more than 1,000 program participants who received instruction on purchasing and owning their own homes. As a Volunteer with the Spanish American Civic Association in Lancaster, Ms. Soto also teaches financial literacy as a host of a weekly radio program called "You and Your Money/Usted y Su Dinero."

“Miriam Soto’s commitment to advancing the minority-owned small business community is highly commendable,” said Dickson. “Her selfless devotion to that community makes it only fitting that the media event highlighting her recognition as the SBA’s ‘Eastern Pennsylvania Minority Small Business Champion of the Year’ be held at a client company that has truly benefited from her work for that community,” said Dan Betancourt, President and CEO of Community First Fund.

Miriam Soto was nominated for the 2009 “Eastern Pennsylvania Minority Small Business Champion of the Year” award by Joan Brodhead, Director of The Women’s Business Center at Community First Fund and Senior Vice President and COO of Community First Fund.

SBA Philadelphia District Director David Dickson presented the District Office’s 2009 “Eastern Pennsylvania Minority Small Business Champion of the Year” award to Miriam Soto at the annual “Celebration of Small Business” event hosted by the Advocates for Small Business (ASB) at Citizens Bank Park on the Darien Street side of the ballpark, outside the right field wall, from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM on May 14, 2009.

The SBA Philadelphia District Office’s May 14, 2009 “Celebration of Small Business” is a local observance of the Presidentially-designated National Small Business Week. National Small Business Week is observed in Washington, D.C., annually in recognition of the small business community’s contribution to the American economy. In 2009, National Small Business Week will be observed in Washington, D.C., on May 17-22, honoring more than 100 outstanding small business owners from around the country and culminating in the announcement of the National Small Business Person of the Year.

To request an interview or photographs, please contact Jennifer Pilcher, the SBA’s Public Information Officer in the Philadelphia District Office, at 610-382-3084 or Jennifer.pilcher@sba.gov.

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The SBA is an independent federal agency, created in 1953, to assist small businesses to start, grow, and prosper. The SBA provides financial assistance by: (1) making loans to help families and businesses recover from national disasters and (2) providing loan guarantees to commercial financial institutions for working capital (7(a) loans), buildings/land/equipment (504 loans through the Certified Development Corporations), and for exports. Through our resource partners, the SBA also offers a variety of business development programs and services such as training, government contracting and export assistance. SBA resource partners include Small Businesses Development Centers, Women’s Business Centers, and SCORE (Counselors to America’s Small Businesses). For information on all of SBA’s programs and services, visit the Philadelphia District web site at www.sba.gov/pa/phil or call (610)382-3062.