TOP STORY *(Continued from Page 1)*

County Tourism Director Amanda Fenstermaker spoke of the fifth winner's (Nonprofit category) contributions to the community before awarding that recognition to an army of staff, volunteers and instructors from the Dorchester County Family YMCA.

Haythe took the stage again to bestow the Most Innovative Business Award to Keith Graffius, founder of Crabi Gras Entertainment. Graffius took time to thank his store manager, funders and all the "absurd people who believed in me," adding, "I'm honored to stand on the same stage with Steve Disharoon who has been a rock in our community and helps us believe there's a little bit of Mayberry left in America."

County Council member Ricky Travers delivered final remarks telling the attendees that an event to "celebrate the backbone of Dorchester's business community was a no-brainer." He closed the evening reminding all to "remember the reason for the season."

A complete gallery of photos from the awards ceremony can be viewed on our Facebook page.

(Continued from page 3)

Partnerships on the Shore submitted as many as seven applications in November, according to Daniel McDermott, executive director of the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (WIB). They include one to convene employers and others to explore opportunities to enhance career pathways in electrical training. WIB, Chesapeake College, the Independent Electrical Contractors Association and two private employers submitted applications.

NEW BUSINESS
New Children's Boutique Brightens Cambridge

When Cambridge native Ashley Banks decided to open a specialty retail store in her hometown, this fashion-forward entrepreneur called on her experience at two upscale children's boutiques and the support of family and friends to christen Sur Jeudi at 511 Poplar Street. In just over two months, Bank's dream of running her own business became a reality as she cut the ribbon at Cambridge's newest retail shop during Second Saturdays on November 9.

"I've always loved fashion and wanted to open my own business," Banks said. "I just needed an extra push to follow my dreams."

A series of life-altering events in the past year gave her that push. Inspired by her six-year-old daughter and equipped with extensive experience, Banks settled on a children's store with clothing, books and toys as her first entrepreneurial venture.

Together with her husband Jamaal, the Banks found the 1,000-square-foot Historic District property on Craig's List. By October 1, they had signed the lease and begun outfitting the space. Now open seven days a week, the beautifully merchandised store features such labels as Elegant Baby, Baby Aspen and Mary Meyer.

Banks credits the city and other shop owners for their assistance and warm welcome saying, "Everyone works together downtown and it's such a beautiful thing!"

The couple underwrote all of their start-up expenses. They plan to apply for a façade improvement grant to replace the awnings.

For information on Sur Jeudi, visit them on Facebook or call 410-330-2526.

DORCHESTER Currents
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Inaugural Awards Banquet Salutes Small Businesses

More than 100 people gathered at Suicide Bridge Restaurant on Monday, December 9 for the 2013 Inaugural Dorchester County Small Business Awards. Thousands of sparkling lights transformed the Christmas-festooned glass-walled event space into a winter wonderland for the first-time awards.

Dorchester County Economic Development Director Keasha Haythe welcomed the guests and recognized the County Council and awards committee for their commitment to small businesses. Following an invocation from Grace United Methodist Church Pastor Christina Blake, guests enjoyed a buffet before settling in for the awards ceremony.

Event committee member Pat Wielgosz served as emcee and recognized by name every one of the nominated businesses. He then presented the evening's first award of 1-25 Employees to Steve Disharoon, owner of The Drug Store in Hurlock. Joining Disharoon at the podium was Senator Richard Colburn and Delegate Addie Eckardt. Senator Colburn presented resolutions from the Maryland State Senate while Delegate Addie Eckardt presented Maryland General Assembly citations with Delegates Eckardt and Haddaway-Riccio as Sponsors to each award winner.

After reading from the nomination crediting the second recipient with transforming downtown into a dining destination, David DeLuca presented the second award of 26-50 Employees to Cambridge Eateries. Co-owners Jamie and Brett Summers and Chef Patrick Fanning accepted the award. Brett took time to thank the community for their patronage and Chef Fanning for his vision.

Committee member Valerie Brown presented the New Business: 5 Years or Less Award to the Hooper's Island Oyster Aquaculture Company's Johnny Shockley and Ricky Fitzhugh, two locals "with Bay water in their blood," for transforming a struggling industry into a thriving company.

In an ironic twist, Brown's fellow committee member – Shockley's wife Nancy – then presented the Legacy: 20+ Years Award to Charles C. Powell Inc. Realtors, a firm founded by Valerie's father Charlie Powell more than 35 years ago. Brown accepted the award on behalf of her dad.

(Continued on Page 4)

TOURISM & ART
Michener Murals Paint County History

Visitors crossing Cambridge Creek on Maryland Avenue will now be welcomed to town by two magnificent murals created by local artist Michael Rosato. Commissioned in honor of James Michener's *Chesapeake*, the second of four public art installations planned for Dorchester entitled "The Watermen," was unveiled December 6 at the J.M. Clayton Company.

(Continued on Page 2)

www.ChooseDorchester.org

Currents is the monthly newsletter of the Dorchester County Economic Development Department.
For information or suggestions, contact info@ChooseDorchester.org or call 410-228-0155.

(Continued from page 1)

"Dorchester's rich history, unique Chesapeake culture and expansive landscapes are known by people around the world thanks in part to Michener's seminal work," said County Tourism Director Amanda Fenstermaker. "These inspiring works of art help tell our many stories to visitors and residents."

Fenstermaker and Rosato were joined by community leaders to officially unveil the 25' wide by 15' high mural depicting a great blue heron with a soft crab in its beak over an underwater scene of the Chesapeake teeming with marine life.

Fenstermaker believes the murals' Chesapeake landscapes inspire visitors and promote further exploration. Her office has two more Chesapeake Country corridor artworks planned in 2014 for Church Creek and East New Market.

The Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway weaves together the multifaceted layers of nationally significant maritime and agricultural heritage to reflect the distinct sense of time and place Michener captured in his novel *Chesapeake*. The murals were funded in part by a $100,000 grant from the National Scenic Byway Program.

The first mural was unveiled on September 20, at Trenton Street, and portrays a flock of Canadian geese taking flight from a farm field. It is located on the east side of Maryland Avenue on the trolley next to Powell Realtors. (The mural is featured in DCED's 'water moves us' campaign.)

Church Creek resident Michael Rosato, whose art graces museums, offices and private homes, was commissioned to create both murals based on designs he submitted in response to separate RFPs. Rosato moved his studio to Cambridge to take advantage of the tax benefits offered to artists as a result of the city's arts and entertainment district designation.

MANUFACTURING
CES Pioneers New Product

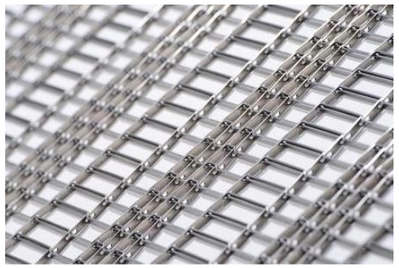
Cambridge Engineered Solutions (CES), a division of Dorchester-based Cambridge International, recently unveiled DuraFlex Edge – a revolutionary new conveyor belt – to a team of 24 sales professionals in advance of the product's world launch. Designed by head engineer Skip Messick, the patent-pending conveyor belt features an innovative design that, in tests, has proven to be the most durable on the market.

In announcing the engineering design and operational benefits of DuraFlex Edge, Cambridge International CEO Tracy Tyler said, "Cambridge has been a world leader in the metal wire industry for over 100 years, because we are constantly working to improve products and processes for our customers."

CES, the world's largest metal conveyor belting and wire cloth manufacturer, is recognized throughout the industry for outstanding engineering and customer service. With 20 exclusive product lines and over 50 patents, CES has revolutionized industry automation and plan operations.

According to Sales & Business Development Director Larry Windsor, Cambridge works closely with its manufacturing customers to engineer custom solutions. "This new technology eliminates production problems some food manufacturers were experiencing by increasing belt life, decreasing downtime and saving money."

For information on CES product lines and patents, visit www.Cambridge-ES.com or call 410-901-2660.



REAL ESTATE
Prime Historic Building in Arts District for Sale

One of downtown Cambridge's most visible and valuable commercial properties is on the market. When Provident State Bank moved its retail operation to a new location at 301 Crusader Road in October, they put their original building at 530 Poplar Street on the market for $395,000.

The beautiful, two-story, federal–style, corner and brick building in the heart of the Historic District contains almost 12,000 square feet of office space. Constructed in 1920, the building sits at the intersection of High and Poplar Streets.

According to listing agent Valerie Brown of Powell Realtors, "Provident's prime location and proven income producing record makes it a perfect investment or development opportunity for a savvy business." She points to the ample customer parking as one of the many amenities adding, "This rarely available and affordable site would be an ideal property for any entrepreneur or enterprise looking to take advantage of the many benefits the city's Arts & Entertainment (A&E) and Historic District designations offer."

Some of the many A&E tax benefits include a tax deduction on state income tax for eligible artists, an exemption state admission and amusement tax for certified arts activities, and a property tax credit for buildings renovated or constructed for an arts-related use.

Currently zoned for offices, the property includes a parking lot with over 20,000 square feet and accessible from three streets. There are currently three tenants including the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce.

To learn more about the program's incentives and opportunities visit www.ChooseCambridge.com.

For further information or to tour the property, contact Brown at 410-228-9333.

BUSINESS PROFILE
Safe Chain Provides Dorchester-Based Solutions

Memories of visiting family members on the Eastern Shore prompted Charles Boyd to 'look across the bridge' to establish a home for his new logistics company Safe Chain Solutions.

After considering options in Caroline, Dorchester and Talbot counties, he settled on Cambridge at the former Hi-Tech Plastics plant on Chesapeake Avenue.

"Dorchester County Economic Development was a huge help in establishing our location," said Boyd, reminiscing back to 2011 when DCED staff members met with him on weekends and holidays to tour warehouse locations in the County. "They really went the extra mile on our behalf."

More than half of the initial funding he needed came via the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Revolving Loan Fund.

Today, Safe Chain, a 3PL company (third-party logistics), allows companies to reduce costs and focus on the sales function while providing warehousing, distribution, fulfillment and other supply chain solutions. Clients include companies in pharmaceuticals, health supplements, beverages, apparel, cosmetics and biotech.

SAFE CHAIN
SOLUTIONS A 3PL COMPANY

One of the big selling points of our location," said Boyd, "is that we can hit 70 percent of the U.S. population within three days using the most economical shipping methods."

Boyd says business is growing and he would eventually like to buy the property and expand. In the mean time, he is looking for another 60,000 square feet of warehouse space in the Cambridge area.

"There are great things going on in Cambridge," he said, "and we would love to be here as long as we can."

Safe Chain currently has 18 full- and part-time employees (95 percent are Dorchester residents). They strive to deliver on the company's motto every day: "The success of our business relies solely on the success of our customers."

WORKFORCE
Workforce Training Collaborations Submit EARN Maryland Applications

Business and educational interests in Dorchester County and on the Eastern Shore are among 68 applications for EARN Maryland workforce development planning grants that will be awarded by the state by December 31.

EARN Maryland is a new Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation (DLLR) program that invests in industry and regional partnerships to train and educate workers. Emphasizing the power of coordination, the program rewards collaborations formed by regional businesses, nonprofits, higher-education institutions, workforce investment boards and local government.

(Continued on Page 4)