Sammons honored with SBA small business award

*Natural pet food maker found a niche in local industry*

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On the Holistic Pet Center website, Chip Sammons describes himself as the owner and janitor of the business. Now he can add a new title to the description: Oregon’s Small Business Person of the Year.

The Portland District Office of the Small Business Administration named Sammons the 2012 Small Business Person of the Year for Oregon. He was honored with other small business owners during the National Small Business Week in Washington, D.C., in May.

Sammons started his Clackamas pet food store 23 years ago with a niche: healthy food and products for dogs and cats.

The Small Business Development Center at Clackamas Community College has played an important role in his business success.

“Small business owners have a lot of passion, but often lack the skill set to run a business. The SBDC provided me the skill set,” Sammons said.

Sammons began researching pet food ingredients nearly 30 years ago and he hit upon the idea of opening a pet food store that would offer products with all natural ingredients.

About the same time, he learned of a business start-up class called the Green House Program offered through the Clackamas SBDC. He connected with instructor Thomas Jones and went on to take small business management classes through the program.

He stayed in contact with the SBDC staff for ongoing business counseling.

“It’s been invaluable. I wouldn’t have a business today without some of the decisions Dr. Thomas Jones helped me make way back when,” he said.

Now Sammons is regarded by industry manufacturers and distributors as an expert in the pet nutrition business, and is often quoted in various national magazines. For 17 years, he has hosted a weekly radio program imparting information on how pet owners can best care for their animal companions.

Each year, the SBA names one business owner from each state as its Small Business Person of the Year. Awards are made based on staying power, growth in employees, sales, financials, response to adversity, innovativeness of products and contributions to community.

Sammons has served on the CCC Foundation Board for six years, was past president of the North Clackamas County Chamber of Commerce and president of CCI Enterprises, an organization that trains and employs adults with disabilities.

Seven years ago Sammons founded Friends Involved in Dog Outreach (FIDO), serving homebound seniors with pets. FIDO provides “animales” to seniors who participate in Meals on Wheels.
“Chip represents the very best of business in America – a veteran who leverages his service to the country to create a business that is committed to cutting-edge science and leadership in the market,” said Merrill Watts, interim director of the Clackamas SBDC.