

Chesapeake firm named fastest-growing company in Virginia

By MICHELLE E. SHAW

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When Chesapeake-based T-Solutions Inc. started in 2002 with two employees, its revenue was \$252,000.

Last year, the government contractor took in upwards of \$12 million with more than 100 employees.

That growth earned the company the No. 1 spot on the annual Virginia Chamber of Commerce Fantastic 50 listing as the fastest-growing company in the state.

The 50 companies were honored at the Chamber's annual Fantastic 50 banquet Thursday evening in Chantilly.

Six other Hampton Roads businesses made the list:

- J.K. Hill & Associates Inc., based in Virginia Beach, ranked No. 28, up from No. 32 last year.
- Liberty Tax Service, based in Virginia Beach, fell six places to No. 30.
- Perry & Associates Inc., based in Norfolk, ranked No. 35.
- Loyola Enterprises Inc., based in Virginia Beach, is No. 41.
- Virginia Integrated Communications Corp., based in Virginia Beach, ranked No. 45 this year, down from No. 25 last year.
- HomeChoice Partners Inc., based in Norfolk, ranked No. 48.

Eligible companies had to be privately held with headquarters in Virginia and sales between \$200,000 and \$100 million. The companies were ranked based on revenue growth over four years. The financial information was verified by the accounting firm Goodman & Co., based in Norfolk.

T-Solutions, a maintenance engineering consulting firm, has 110 employees and counts Amtrak, the Navy and the Coast Guard as clients. It showed revenue growth of 2,202 percent between 2002 and 2005, according to the Chamber.

T-Solutions has continued growing in 2006 and is on track to take in more than \$30 million in 2007, said James Todd, T-Solutions president.

"This award is recognition of all of the hard work our people have done," Todd said.

Criteria

Eligible companies had to be privately held with Virginia headquarters and sales between \$200,000 and \$100 million.

The companies were ranked based on revenue growth over four years.

The financial information was verified by the accounting firm Goodman & Co., based in Norfolk.

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Mid Atlantic Vinyl: State honoree

Fredericksburg firm making a fast climb

FASTEST GROWING COMPANIES

April 27, 2007 12:35 am

BY KAFIA HOSH

A Fredericksburg company is one of the fastest-growing businesses in the state.

Mid Atlantic Vinyl Products Inc. received a Virginia Chamber of Commerce Award yesterday for its remarkable boost in sales revenue over the past four years.

The manufacturing company creates a vinyl material used on the exterior of homes.

The company would not disclose its revenue, but it experienced a 182 percent growth rate between 2002 and 2005, according to the chamber.

Mid Atlantic President Luke Curtas attributes the growth to the company's innovative use of vinyl. Mid Atlantic produces WeatherWise, its trade-marked brand of vinyl. Vinyl is increasingly replacing wood as a low-maintenance, durable material used for outdoor rails, decks, fences and porches.

"We're manufacturing a new generation product," Curtas said. "It doesn't dent, it doesn't chip or crack."

WeatherWise is gaining national acclaim as a leading vinyl product. It will be featured in an upcoming episode of the TLC show "Designing Spaces," according to Curtas. He said the company will install WeatherWise at a Virginia Beach home.

Over time, Mid Atlantic has established a loyal customer base. The company supplies vinyl to lumber yards, independent dealers and local home improvement retailers.

The Spotsylvania County business was among the 50 fastest-growing companies honored by the chamber. It came in 31st place, up from the 34 spot last year. Mid Atlantic also took the top honors in the manufacturing category.

To be eligible for the awards, a company must be privately held and show sales between \$200,000 and \$100 million. The businesses are judged on a four-year sales revenue that is verified by Goodman and Co., a Virginia-based accounting firm.

Curtas was honored by the accolade, which he said "goes to the people of Mid Atlantic."



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[Mid Atlantic Vinyl Products employee Raul Rodriguez assembles fence sections at the firm's warehouse.](#)
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He oversees 45 employees, ranging from production staff to administrative personnel.

It's been year full of recognition for Mid Atlantic.

Just recently, Curtas was named the "Entrepreneur of the Year" by the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber President Bob Hagan said Mid Atlantic's success is a result of its cutting-edge use of vinyl.

"They've been extremely creative in their approach to a changing market and helping to avoid the use of traditional materials in favor of ones that are longer lasting," Hagan said.

While the region has experienced a general decline in the manufacturing sector, Mid Atlantic is one of the few industrial companies that are expanding.

The accolade "speaks volumes," about Mid Atlantic's contribution to the manufacturing sector, said Russell Seymour, Spotsylvania County's director of economic development. "They have a proven track record of doing business in the county."

Mid Atlantic grew out of a fencing company Curtas and his wife opened in 1988. But in the last decade, Curtas noticed a degradation in the quality and maintenance of wood products. So, he created a vinyl department that he said "offered a low-maintenance, worry-free product."

Curtas eventually sold the fencing business, and the vinyl department separated to form Mid Atlantic.

Since its inception in the mid 1990s, Mid Atlantic continued to grow. The manufacturing company sits on seven acres along Commonwealth Drive. It includes a 34,000-square-foot facility, which will expand by 20,000 square feet next month.

The company owns a distribution center in Atlanta and recently opened another facility in Albemarle, N.C., about 45 miles east of Charlotte.

In order to stay competitive, Mid Atlantic plans to open at least one distribution center in a 250-mile radius along the East Coast. Future markets include Pennsylvania and Florida.

"It's eat or be eaten," Curtas said.

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

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VIRGINIA

Three central Va. firms recognized for growth

Three central Virginia firms were recognized at the Virginia Chamber of Commerce Fantastic 50 Awards last night in Northern Virginia.

The awards recognize the fastest-growing privately held companies in the state.

T-Solutions Inc., a woman-and veteran-owned consulting and maintenance engineering firm from Chesapeake, was the fastest-growing firm. T-Solutions had 2,202 percent growth from 2002 through 2005.

From the metro area:

- Compass Energy Solutions Inc., energy sales and services company, was No. 9, with 612 percent growth.
- Logistics Solutions Group Inc. of Hopewell, an information-technology firm, was No. 24, with 214 percent growth.
- AdvanceTEC, a clean-room contractor, was No. 49, with 108 percent growth.

Nominations for the 2007 Fantastic 50 were sought last fall from local chambers of commerce, economic-development organizations and through the sponsors' networks. Companies also could nominate themselves.

Companies are judged on a four-year sales history. To be considered, they must show sales between \$200,000 and \$100 million and demonstrate positive revenue growth and positive net income in their most recent fiscal year over the previous year.

DAILY-NEWS RECORD ONLINE

City Businesses Make 'Fantastic 50'

ERA Kline & May, Rosetta Stone Among State's Fastest-Growing Companies

Posted 2007-04-28

By Dan Wright

HARRISONBURG — Two city businesses have been listed among Virginia's fastest-growing companies.

ERA Kline & May Realty and Rosetta Stone were named to the Fantastic 50, compiled by Virginia Business magazine.

ERA Kline & May made the ranking for the third consecutive year. The company exploded with a growth rate of 1,103 percent between 2002 and 2005, according to data released by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce.

Rosetta Stone debuted on the Fantastic 50 this year, but already has received recognition in other quarters, including Inc. magazine.

The language-learning provider posted a 341 percent growth rate during the four-year reporting period.

Companies are rated by revenue growth between 2002 and 2005. To be considered for the ranking, firms must have annual sales of at least \$200,000 in the base year, 2002.

The awards were presented Thursday night at the 12th annual Fantastic 50 banquet in Chantilly.

ERA Kline & May

With the exception of the two Harrisonburg companies and Blacksburg-based Adaptive Technologies Inc., all the firms on the Fantastic 50 are located east of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

And nearly half are technology firms.

Ranked No. 6 for the second year in a row, ERA Kline & May Realty has 66 residential agents in two offices, according to owner/broker Keith May.

With a real estate market that has cooled compared to recent years, ERA's 2006 revenue was "about the same" as 2005, when the firm posted sales of \$130 million, May said.

"Our growth leveled out in 2006," May said. "But year-to-date in 2007, we are beating our '06 performance in pending sales."

Rosetta Stone

While the language-learning company made the Virginia Fantastic 50 for the first time, it was ranked among the 500 fastest-growing companies in the United States by Inc. magazine last year.

Rosetta Stone has about 600 employees and will add more this year, according to Chief Operating Officer Eric Eichmann.

"I can't give a specific number," Eichmann said. "But we are growing at a healthy rate."

Eichmann would not reveal the company's revenue, but according to the Inc. profile, Rosetta Stone posted 2005 sales of \$48.4 million.

Two years ago, Rosetta Stone landed a multimillion contract to provide its language programs to the Army, but most of the company's revenue comes from high-volume consumer sales, Eichmann explained.

Founded in 1992, Rosetta Stone produces learning programs for 30 languages that are used in 150 countries throughout the world.

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Todos Honored by Va. Chamber of Commerce

By ELISA A. GLUSHEFSKI
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Thursday, May 3, 2007

There hasn't been a moment in Carlos Castro's adult life when he wasn't climbing that proverbial ladder of success.

From his days as a teenager in a war-torn El Salvador to his beginnings in the United States as an upstart grocery store owner who knew little about the retail food industry, Castro has worked endlessly to better himself and the lives of his family and others.

At 52, he hasn't tired.

Castro's Todos Supermarket chain recently received the Virginia Chamber of Commerce Vanguard Award for top retail/wholesale company in the state. The same week he received that award and his ranking as a "Fantastic 50" company, he also secured a contract for store space in Dumfries.

"It's one of those dreams that you never think is going to happen," Castro said of receiving the chamber's top award for the retail/wholesale industry. "Just winning the Fantastic 50 was a big kick for us."

The Virginia Chamber of Commerce also recently ranked four other businesses from Prince William County and Manassas among the state's "Fantastic 50" companies. And one even made it into the top 10.

Virginia's "Fantastic 50" is an awards program honoring the 50 fastest growing privately held companies for their success and contribution to the state's "economic vitality," according to the chamber of commerce.

Todos was ranked 37th on the list, with 151 percent growth in a four-year period. All the rankings were based on revenue growth rate from fiscal 2002 to 2005.

Now in its 17th year of businesses, Castro has added a gift store and another market to the chain and is preparing to open a third store in Dumfries.

Log.Sec Corporation and R.W. Murray Co., both of Manassas; and Creating Results LLC, MDA Technologies and Todos Supermarket, all of Woodbridge, were ranked among the fastest growing businesses in Virginia, according to a chamber of commerce spokeswoman.

"It was extraordinary," said Tim Jackson, president of MDA Technologies. "We were very surprised and very grateful. It kind of demonstrates all the good work we're doing."

It was the company's first time making the list and it came on the heels of receiving the 2006 award for mid-size business of the year from the Prince William Regional Chamber of Commerce, Jackson said.

"It made it a pretty good year," he said.

The Woodbridge-based company, which among other things specializes in software development, was ranked 42nd, having shown a 136 percent growth in the four-year period.

Winners of the awards were honored at a recent dinner at Westfield's Marriott in Chantilly.

Log.Sec Corporation placed eighth on the list, making it the only company from the area to be among the top 10.

Erik G. Thamm, president of the company, said the award was particularly satisfying, considering the vast number of other professional services firms in the area that are constantly vying for government contracts for information technology- and logistic-based services.

"It's a pretty competitive industry we're in and it's nice to be able to stand out in the crowd," Thamm said.

"We've never focused on hitting a particular revenue number; we've always focused on doing a good job for the customer," and hoped that that would help generate more contracts.

"That's certainly been the case for us," Thamm added.

It was Creating Results' third time making it on the list, ranking at 27 this year.

The public relations, marketing and advertising firm started as a small graphics design outfit in 1993.

Todd P. Harff, president of the company, recalled his wife going door to door at local businesses to find clients who needed the extra boost.

But in 2001, the business moved from their house to an office in Woodbridge, and has since grown into a nationally recognized firm, Harff said.

In 2005, the company pulled in a little more than \$5 million in revenue and grew 206 percent from 2002 to 2005.

And while there was some doubt in the beginning as to whether the business could stay afloat, all of that doubt has since been erased by the company's strong reputation and by the hard work of Harff's team of employees, he said.

"It was never our goal to have a large, rapidly growing company," Harff said. "I always said I wanted to have a growing company, because I wanted to attract people to work in the company who are motivated, love learning, and are looking for new challenges. And you don't keep those people unless you're growing."

Harff added that receiving the award was an honor.

R.W. Murray Co., a general contracting firm that was founded in 1992, ranked 36th with a growth rate of 166 percent from 2002 to 2005, giving the company its fifth ranking on the list since its founding in 1992.

"Our continued success centers around our motto, to 'always do right,' " Chuck Loving, vice president of the company, said in a prepared statement. "This approach keeps us focused and promotes client loyalty."

To be eligible for the "Fantastic 50" award, a company must be privately held with headquarters in Virginia, show sales between \$200,000 and \$100 million, and demonstrate positive net income in its most recent fiscal year over the previous year, said Amy Hewett, a spokeswoman for the chamber of commerce.

To view all of the "Fantastic 50" award winners, visit vachamber.com.



Area companies fall short of 'Fantastic' Top of Virginia hasn't cracked state's list of Top 50 growth firms since 2000

By James Heffernan
Daily Staff Writer

WINCHESTER — The Top of Virginia may have one of the state's top local economies, but none of its companies have made the "A" list in recent years.

The area hasn't been represented on the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's "Fantastic 50" list since 2000, according to spokeswoman Amy Hewett.

This year's rankings were released April 26, and the "Virginia Vanguard" winners for highest revenue growth in four industry categories were honored at a ceremony last month in Chantilly.

Topping the 2007 list for highest overall growth is T-Solutions Inc., a Chesapeake-based maintenance engineering and consulting firm. Other "Vanguard" winners were Mid Atlantic Vinyl Products of Fredericksburg (manufacturing), Todos Supermarket of Woodbridge (retail/wholesale), Customer Value Partners of Fairfax (service) and SE Solutions Inc. of Reston (technology).

Nominations for the Fantastic 50 awards are sought in the fall from local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and through the program's sponsor networks. Companies may also nominate themselves.

To be eligible, a company must be privately held, with headquarters in Virginia, show annual sales between \$200,000 and \$100 million, and demonstrate both positive revenue growth and positive net income in its most recent fiscal year over the previous year. Companies are judged on a four-year financial history.

Northern Virginia, with its surplus of service and technology firms, dominated this year's list, posting 32 of the 50 companies. Virginia's eastern shore and the Richmond area were also well represented.

Harrisonburg had two companies on the list: ERA Kline & May Realty (No. 5) and Rosetta Stone, makers of the popular language-learning software of the same name (No. 17). Blacksburg's Adaptive Technologies Inc. (No. 21) was the only other western Virginia startup to make the cut.

The last company from the northern valley to make the Fantastic 50 list was Winchester real estate developer The Adams Companies in 2000, winner of the Vanguard award for highest overall growth that year. Other local firms that have made the list include DK Industrial Services, composite decking and railing manufacturer Trex — on three occasions prior to going public in 1999 — Route 11 Chips in Middletown and The Marathon Bank.

Charlie Weiss, president and CEO of the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber, admitted he hasn't given the Fantastic 50 program his full attention since returning to Winchester in October 2005 after a three-year stint with the Greater Aiken (S.C.) Chamber of Commerce. But he said the local chamber will make it a priority to nominate a local company for the honor in 2008, based on his own group's awards.

It's a good marketing tool, Weiss said, and "right in line with our mission as a business advocacy organization."

Patrick Barker, executive director of the Winchester-Frederick County Economic Development Commission, said the application process is fairly extensive, which may turn off some businesses.

"Many would rather dedicate their time to their business than awards," he said. "But I do think our community could perhaps do a better job in facilitating the process."

Barker suggested that in the future, Fantastic 50 nominations could become a joint project with the regional chamber, and Weiss agreed.

"Without a doubt, that would be a great partnership," he said.

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Newcomers dominate 2007 list of fast-growth companies

Virginia Business

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The top company in the Fantastic 50 this year is a Chesapeake-based company devoted to the maintenance of big machines.

T-Solutions, started in 2002, saw its revenue grow 2,201 percent in its first four years to lead the annual list of Virginia's fastest-growing companies. The company, owned by Tim and Darlene Todd, uses reliability-centered maintenance, a procedure involving technology and rigorous engineering analysis, to schedule the maintenance of ships, trains and other heavy equipment.

T-Solutions is a newcomer to the Fantastic 50, as were 25 other companies on the list this year. Two of the newcomers were winners in their industry categories: SE Solutions Inc. in the technology group and Customer Value Partners in the service group. The other two industry winners, Todos Supermarket in retail/wholesale and Mid Atlantic Vinyl Products Inc. in manufacturing, have appeared on the list before.

If the top company on the list is any indicator, the pace of growth has slackened this year. The top company in 2004 and 2005, THR Enterprises Inc. had a four-year growth rate of 4,761 percent and 3,951 percent, respectively. Last year's winner, SpecTal had a growth rate of 4,002 percent. The growth of THR Enterprises, a construction company, was fueled by large contracts such as the building of the Historic Jamestowne welcome center. SpecTal benefited from the surge in spending on intelligence services after 9/11.

As has been the trend for many years, the 2007 Fantastic 50 list is dominated by service and technology companies, with 22 from each category. By contrast, only three companies are manufacturers and another three are from retail/wholesale industries.

Likewise, companies from Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads are most prominent on the list. Thirty-four Northern Virginia companies were listed this year, up from 31 last year and 28 the year before. Hampton Roads was next with 10 companies, down from 15 last year.

Of the remaining companies on the 2007 list, three represent Central Virginia, two are from the Shenandoah Valley and one is from the Southwest.

Now in its 12th year, the Fantastic 50 honors privately held Virginia-based companies with the highest revenue growth over a four-year period. The program is a collaboration of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Goodman & Co. LLC and Virginia Business.

To be eligible for the list, a company must have revenue of at least \$200,000 in 2002, the base year. In addition, the company must have a positive net income by 2005 and have revenue of less than \$100 million in its most recent year.

Interestingly, three of the category winners, T-Solutions, Customer Value Partners and SE Solutions, all were founded in 2002, the base year. The vast majority of the companies were started in 1990s.

— The editors

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