Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Success Awards are discontinued
in favor of new ways to recognize the region’s risk takers

Decades ago, budding entrepreneurs received little public recognition for their efforts to turn dreams into business reality. Joel Labovitz, one of the region’s most successful entrepreneurs, didn’t think that was right, so he sought to shine a light on those dedicated, new risk takers.

The result of his inspiration was an annual awards program led by the UMD Center for Economic Development (CED), which chose a fitting name: The Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Success Awards.

Since 1993, the program – often abbreviated as the “Labo Awards” – has provided a format for thousands of Northland entrepreneurs to be saluted for their innovation and courage during awards luncheons attended by hundreds of business people each spring.

But as business and technology have improved over the years, so too have opportunities for entrepreneurs to receive support and recognition. For these encouraging reasons, 25 years after shining that initial light on entrepreneurs, the Labo Awards program has been discontinued.

“The Joel Labovitz Entrepreneurial Success Awards provided a much-needed form of recognition that was found nowhere else back in 1993, but today local entrepreneurs have great opportunities for marketing, funding and exposure – including through many local awards programs across the Northland,” said CED Director Elaine Hansen. “The time is right to transition away from an awards program to other ways the UMD Center for Economic Development can help our region’s entrepreneurs.”

Hansen said CED knew the 25th annual Labo Awards ceremony in 2017 would be its last, but did not share the news then because it wanted the focus to remain on those being recognized.

“While I never imagined the Labo Awards would run for 25 years, I am very pleased that it did,” said Joel Labovitz. “So many of our region’s employers who do so much to create opportunities to make a living in our region have been recognized over the years. The real engine of the Labo Awards has been the Center for Economic Development.”

Joel Labovitz now resides in La Jolla, California, with his wife, Sharon.

Mark Labovitz, President and CEO of Labovitz Enterprises, added, “We are so proud of our association with the CED and UMD. We really appreciate and would like to say a sincere thank you to the CED for all its years of leadership.”

“As one chapter ends, another begins as the Center for Economic Development continues to help locally-owned businesses in our region develop and grow,” added Hansen.

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