



*Nancy Lilly, President of JEM Engineering, accepts the 2007 Tibbetts Award for Excellence in SBIR Achievement from Roland Tibbetts—for whom the award is named.*

## JEM Engineering Paves the Way for High-Tech Businesses in Prince George's County

In 2007 JEM Engineering was selected as a national Tibbetts Award winner. These prestigious awards are bestowed on companies judged to exemplify the very best in SBIR Achievement. There were over 4,000 applicants, but only 55 companies were selected nationwide.

Pioneer anchorman David Brinkley once said, "A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation ..." and in the spring of 2002, owners Nancy Lilly and her husband, did just that. They had recently purchased a commercial building in Laurel, Maryland where they planned to design and manufacture antenna systems. "We knew our craft," Nancy says, "but knew nothing about how to operate a business." In July 2002, she came to the Capital Region Small Business Development Center and started to build a foundation—and a relationship—that continues to this day.

"We took it one step at a time," says Nancy. Working closely with an SBDC consultant, they turned her two page outline into a full business plan that helped her obtain \$50,000 SBA loan. On the consultant's recommendation and with his assistance, they pursued and received 8(a) and other certifications. "Our counselor's expert guidance was an invaluable part of our progress," says Lilly.

After months of diligence and hard work, the milestones began to stack up. Two employees turned in to 12; \$50,000 in financing became \$475,000. When the company's foundation was solid, the regional consultant sought co-counseling from the network's technology manager who provided proposal support, compliance and evaluation support in pursuit of JEM's first SBIR and MTPI grant. They were awarded both.

Today, JEM has 4 SBIR projects in process and has received 3.9 million in government contract awards. The company boasts 43 employees and has worked with customers ranging from the U.S. Navy, NASA, and Applied Signal Technology to small commercial businesses.

JEM Engineering is paving the way for minority high technology businesses and is an example of a minority company being able to participate in the advanced technology arena. The Maryland Small Business Development Center is proud to have contributed to the success of this dynamic company and looks forward to helping them—and other small businesses—achieve greater success.