

LEDC HONORS LOCAL BUSINESSES

By **PETER BAUMANN**
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Perhaps showing that Laramie's economy is gaining strength in a diversity of sectors, the Laramie Economic Development Corporation honored businesses and entrepreneurs in engineering, food service and non-profit Thursday at LEDC's annual banquet.

Coffey Engineering received honors as the small business of the year. LEDC CEO Gaye Stockman said that Coffey deserved special recognition, specifically for growing his company with a new location and creating more economic opportunity in Southeastern Wyoming.

"What they've done in this last year is amazing," Stockman said.

Dave Coffey reflected on receiving the survival of the fittest award five years ago to where his company is now.

"Five years ago, I was awarded the survival of the fittest award," Coffey said. "Really, sometimes I



Karen Robillard, owner of Altitude Chophouse and Brewery, socializes prior to the Laramie Economic Development Corporation's 25th annual dinner Thursday evening. Robillard is the 2010 Business Person of the Year.

LEDC: 'It's nice to know that in my own little way, I'm making Laramie a better place to do business'

Continued from page 1

find it hard to really take in what we have accomplished over those five years."

Altitude Restaurant owner Karen Robillard was recognized as the 2010 LEDC Business Person of the Year. Robillard credited much of her success over the past 15 years to the help of her husband and business partner.

"It's nice to know that in my own little way, I'm making Laramie a better place to live and a better place to do business, but I really need to give a lot of credit to my husband Craig," Robillard said. "He started his business in Laramie in the early 1980s, and 15 years ago I asked him to be his business partner, and he said okay ... we've succeeded together."

Ark Regional Services received the survival of the fittest award, which is given every year to a business that has managed to succeed even in the face of economic hardships.

Jeff Gardner, Ark Regional Services Vice President of Residential Services and Legislative Affairs lauded the accolades of LEDC and the Laramie community, as well as the vision of the original founders of the Ark more than 50 years ago.

"I would certainly be remiss first of all if I didn't recognize the founders of the Ark. We've talked a lot about vision tonight and Ark Regional Services wouldn't exist without the vision and



Dave Coffey socializes prior to the LEDC's dinner Thursday evening.

Andy Carpenan/Boomerang photographer foresight of those family members who back in about 1956 who wanted something more for their children than an institutional setting and set out to create really the first community program in the state of Wyoming," Gardner said.

Stockman also reported that LEDC has raised more than \$300,000 this year through with the help of local businesses and residents who invest in the corporation through the Partners in Progress program. Stockman added that more than 120 partners in progress had given financial support to LEDC this year.

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