

PRESS RELEASE

PRIMERA PLASTICS FOUNDER NOEL CUELLAR NAMED A MICHIGAN FINALIST FOR ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AWARD

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For Immediate Release

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ZEELAND TOWNSHIP--Primera Plastics Inc. founder and CEO Noel Cuellar was among ten Michigan corporate leaders named as national finalists for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award.

Cuellar will compete with approximately 250 other corporate leaders from across the U.S. for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2013 Award to be presented in Palm Springs, Calif. on Nov. 16. This was the second year in a row Cuellar has been nominated for the Entrepreneur of the Year Michigan award.

"I've always said the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams and this award is proof it has worked for me and my company," said Cuellar, who started the plastic injection products firm in 1994 with his wife Janet Cuellar, two machines and two employees and has built it into a firm with 130 employees and 30 automatic injection molding presses at its 106,000-square-foot manufacturing facility at 3424 Production Court in Zeeland Township.

Cuellar was nominated for this year's entrepreneur award for corporate management and company growth during the past five years. The company reorganized operations after the economic downturn of 2008 and has come out the other side with a 15 percent a year growth pattern.

For the complete list of winners visit <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20130621/NEWS/130629972/entrepreneur-of-the-year-award-winners-recognized-for-accomplishments>.

Primera Plastics Inc. received the Ernst & Young award in the Industrial Products and Services category but it could have been given to Cuellar for overcoming major obstacles in becoming a success in business.

"Noel is an innovative entrepreneur that is always ready to meet any challenge head on. His commitment to excellence has transformed Primera Plastics, LLC into a thriving company in a highly competitive and ever changing industry," Dante Villarreal, Director Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center, Grand Valley State University said.

"We are very fortunate to have Noel Cuellar represent West Michigan as a Finalist for the E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year Award," Villarreal said.

The son of migrant farm workers from Texas, Cuellar overcame language barriers and childhood reading problems to graduate from Holland High School.

"Growing up, we followed the harvest from Texas to Florida until we settled in Michigan. I couldn't speak English until I was in the second grade," he said.

After high school, Cuellar started on the production line at the Holland Heinz pickle plant before joining the former automotive parts manufacturing company Prince Corp. (now Johnson Controls Inc.) on the production line. While at Prince Corp. he took night courses in plastics manufacturing at Grand Rapids Community College and was promoted to production technician. Cuellar decided to start his own company at age 33.

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“When I decided to start Primera, there weren’t a lot of places interested in lending me money, but with a letter of intent from Prince Corp., I was able to get my loan and get going,” said Cuellar who founded the company as a certified minority enterprise

Over the years, Cuellar and Primera Plastics Inc. have amassed an impressive list of awards including North America Supplier Award from Johnson Controls, West Michigan Hispanic Chamber Business of the Year and Michigan Best Small Business as well as making the Edward Lowe Foundation Top 50 Businesses to Watch list.

Cuellar himself has also been awarded the Hispanic Entrepreneur of the Year in 2006 from the Michigan Commission on Spanish Speaking Affairs and was the 2007 Outstanding Hispanic Entrepreneur of the Year.

“Noel’s servant leadership, incredible work ethic and drive to go above and beyond embodies the true essence of the entrepreneurial spirit,” Congressman Bill Huizenga said.

“Primera Plastic’s growth and success isn’t simply because of Noel’s keen business sense, it’s because he cares about the West Michigan community. Noel has built a superior reputation both for himself and his company. It is an honor to have a global leader in business like Ernst & Young recognize one of West Michigan’s own. They could not have found a more deserving recipient than Noel,” he said.



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