

Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce celebrates industry excellence



OUTSTANDING RETAIL BUSINESS: Metro Bakery and Cafe's Tennille Harmsen, Toni Vorenas and Lauren Marsden-Birch were thrilled to see their workplace take out the outstanding retail business award at Friday night's Mount Gambier business awards. Pictures: SAM DOWDY

MEMBERS of the city's business world glitzed up for the annual Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Business Awards at the Barn Palais on Friday night.

Close to 300 people made an appearance at the awards night, which has been recognising the achievements of local businesses and their employees for almost 20 years.

Three prominent long-serving businesses - Herbert Real Estate, N.F McDonnell and Sons and Gordon Refrigeration - were inducted into the chamber's hall of fame on the night.

Chamber president Lynette Martin said the event was all she had hoped for.

"Exceptional, successful and outstanding describes the 2012 gala presentation for the outstanding business awards," she said.

"Locally-owned businesses are important for our community because they employ local people and support programs and organisations that benefit school groups, charities and sporting clubs - without this support, a lot of these groups would struggle to operate successfully."

Ms Martin said the awards helped raise awareness about the businesses in Mount Gambier.

"We're all striving for excellence and the awards help encourage local businesses to aim as high as they can," she said.

"Ultimately, if Mount Gambier is known as a centre for excellent service it will encourage more and more people to do business within our city - I want to thank everyone who placed submissions on behalf of their business or employees, as well as the many sponsors who continue to support the awards each year."

Ms Martin said she was thrilled to receive so many nominations for the outstanding employee award.

"This illustrates just how important employees are in contributing to the success of a business and the fact they were nominated by customers or business owners indicates they are held in high regard," she said.

"Any business, no matter how big or how small, can't run well without good employees, so it's important to recognise their contributions to the success of the business they are employed by."

Caffe Belgiorno's Debbie Owen was the recipient of this year's outstanding employee award, although she does not feel she is doing anything out of the ordinary.

"What I do here is simply what I believe everyone should do in their workplace because whatever you do, you should do to the best of your ability," she said.

"I try to make our customers' experiences how I expect my experience to be when I go out - I love my job, the people I work with and the interaction with customers ... I enjoy hearing stories from many, very different people."

Metro Bakery and Cafe was the winner of the outstanding retail business award on Friday night.

Owner Toni Vorenas was overwhelmed by the win and said it was an incredible feeling to take out the prestigious award.

"It's an acknowledgement of support from the community and the hard work of our amazing and talented staff," she said.

"Winning an award like this gives you more motivation and confidence to keep moving forward and trying new things."