

CONTACT: Katherine E. Arno  
Director of Training and Communication  
Maine Small Business Development Centers  
Phone 207-780-4853/FAX 207-780-4810  
E-mail [karno@maine.edu](mailto:karno@maine.edu)

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### Congressman Tom Allen Joins Maine SBDC to Honor Meriby Sweet as Maine SBDC State Star

DAMARISCOTTA, MAINE - U.S. Congressman Tom Allen joined the Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC) today to celebrate the selection of Meriby Sweet as Maine SBDC State Star. Sweet, who is center director of the Maine SBDC tech-focus group, the Maine Small Business & Technology Development Center (Maine SBTDC) located at the Maine Technology Institute in Gardiner, was chosen as the recipient of this honor earlier this year. Sweet is being recognized for the work assisting Maine's small businesses, especially inventors who are trying to commercialize new technologies.

Congressman Allen, a member of the Committee on Energy & Commerce whose issues include affordable health care coverage for small business owners and their employees, said "Meriby Sweet is one reason why we have such a high quality SBDC network in Maine. Given that four out of every five new Maine jobs this past year came from small businesses, having expertise like Meriby's and a network like the Maine SBDC is especially important to us." He added, "My congratulations and sincere thanks to Meriby and to the Maine SBDC for all of their important contributions to the community."

The State Star Awards are presented each year by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) which honors an outstanding SBDC professional in each state. The State Star Awards this year were presented in September at the ASBDC annual conference held in New Orleans where Sweet received her award. Keeping with the Maine SBDC/SBTDC custom, Maine's State Star is not formally announced in state until a presentation ceremony is held here.

To earn the State Star honor, Sweet underwent a detailed Maine SBDC review process that included both a qualitative and quantitative performance appraisal. According to Maine SBDC State Director John Massaua, "Meriby's dedication to small business in Maine and the effectiveness of her work helping companies commercialize new technologies clearly qualified her this year as Maine's highest achiever."

Congressman Allen recognized Sweet at a morning reception held at Miles Memorial Hospital in Damariscotta. The site was chosen because Sweet, who is a Maine SBDC/SBTDC certified business counselor, has two clients who are inventors and who work at Miles Memorial Hospital.

Janet Eugley Stoner, from from St. George, is a nurse at the hospital and inventor of the Echo Heart pre-natal fetal monitor. She has been working with Maine SBTDC certified business counselor Meriby Sweet to patent and license her invention. Sweet also works with Wendy Nichols from Damariscotta, who has invented an anti-emetic from a complex mix of naturally occurring compounds. Also a nurse at Miles Memorial Hospital,

Nichols has applied for a National Research Grant to study the effectiveness of her invention, called QueaseEase, in a hospital setting.

Sweet, who lives in Nobleboro, Maine, was instrumental this past year in successfully institutionalizing Maine SBTDC services to Maine's technology-based companies. Those services include strategic technology planning, technology marketing strategies, funding and capitalization work, technology licensing strategies, and partnership development.

Maine SBDC is only the fourth SBDC program in four years of the national technology accreditation process to earn the "T" designation from the Association of Small Business Development Centers, joining North Carolina, Ohio, and Michigan as Small Business & Technology Development Centers (SBTDC). Maine SBTDC was created in January, 2003, after Maine SBDC met a rigorous national accreditation authorizing them to formally provide technology support to Maine's 37,000 small and micro businesses and 100,000 independent workers.

Meriby's Maine SBTDC center is hosted by the Maine Technology Institute (MTI) in Gardiner, where a two-year-old collaboration with MTI helped Maine SBDC earn its "T" designation. Both organizations collaborate extensively on technology-intensive small businesses. Maine SBDTC at MTI helps clients with business planning and the technology commercialization process, including applications for MTI funding.

This spring Meriby received a prestigious \$5000 scholarship which is awarded to only one recipient each year to attend Duke University's Biotechnology for Business training. Knowledge gained from this May, 2004, training is being used to build on Maine SBTDC's capacity to serve Maine's biotechnology industry with business assistance, especially in the area of tech commercialization.

Meriby has been with Maine SBDTC for three years. In her earlier twenty-year career, Meriby worked at high-tech firms in California's Silicon Valley. She is a Maine native and a graduate of the University of Maine.

"It's a privilege for me to work with so many bright, ambitious Maine companies and individuals," said Sweet, adding "To honor the work that I do is to honor the entrepreneurial spirit of the clients with whom I work." ###

About Maine Small Business Development Centers: Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC) and its tech-focus group, Maine Small Business & Technology Development Centers (Maine SBTDC) provide comprehensive business management assistance, training, resource and information services to Maine's micro, small and technology-based business communities. Business assistance is provided at no cost to business owners by professional certified business counselors who meet rigorous education and business experience standards.

Maine SBDC/SBTDC is a partnership program of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in association with the SBA/OSBDC, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (Maine DECD), the University of Southern Maine (USM), and leading economic and/or community development

hosting organizations, including the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), and the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC); with support from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), the University of Maine (UMaine), and other contractors, allies and stakeholders.

Accredited by the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC) and administered by USM's School of Business, Maine SBDC/SBTDC operates a network of 11 service centers and 25 outreach offices located conveniently throughout the state.

More information about the Maine SBDC/SBTDC can be found at [www.mainesbdc.org](http://www.mainesbdc.org).

About the Association of Small Business Development Centers (ASBDC): The ASBDC represents the collective interest of the national network of small business development centers, which deliver business management assistance to and advocacy for America's small business community. As a partnership program, ASBDC works with private enterprise, government, higher education and local nonprofit economic development organizations.

Over 500,000 businesses are assisted by ASBDC member programs each year. There are over 22 million small businesses nationwide, representing 99% of all U.S. businesses. Small business employs 53% of the private work force and contributes over half of the nation's private gross domestic product. In Maine, there are 37,000 small businesses, representing almost 98% of all businesses, and 100,000 independent workers. Last year Maine SBDC/SBTDC served 5,443 clients.