

**WBENC WBE
Stars share the
secret to
their success.**

Shining Stars

By Tanya Isley

Despite a sometimes weak and hostile economy, American Express's 2013 State of Women Owned Business Report concludes that from 1997 to 2013, the number of women-owned companies increased by 59 percent, while revenues from those companies grew by 63 percent. Despite the odds, women business enterprises (WBEs) continue to be growing, sustainable and profitable businesses. Every year, 14 of these successful women business owners are feted by the **Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)** as WBENC Stars at its Annual Summit & Salute to Women's Business Enterprises. This year marks the 16th year of the Summit and Salute, which was held this past March in New Orleans.

WBENC selects the best and brightest women business owners from its 14 Regional Partner Organizations (RPOs) once a year and honors them for their significant contributions to the U.S. economy. The honor is considered the nation's premier award for excellence among WBEs.

This group of distinguished individuals includes a number of women that *MBE* has covered before—including **Lisa Michelle Chretien**, founder and president of **Event-Mover**, who was featured in the March/April 2014 issue. Chretien, like most of the Stars, overcame obstacles in her life to achieve business success and now holds some of the most prominent contracts in the trade show industry.

Pamela Prince-Eason, president and CEO of WBENC, elaborates on the qualities that these Stars tend to have. "WBENC's 14 WBE Stars are exceptional leaders whose accomplishments make a powerful and positive impact on their industries and their communities," she says.

Although these 14 women have diverse backgrounds and come from a variety of industries, one common thread that runs through each of their stories is consistent involvement in their respective RPOs and their commitment to helping other women achieve success within the business community.

Here, in their own words, some of the 2014 WBENC Stars tell of their beginnings, their motivation and inspiration, what it means to be a WBENC Star, and why they shine bright.



Chretien



Prince-Eason