



The law firm of Susan Koenig (left) and Angela Dunne has earned BBB's Integrity Award.

Photo: Courtesy of Koenig|Dunne

BBB's 2015 Award Winners

Integrity Links These Winners, All With Connections to Legal Profession

**By Lorraine Boyd
The Daily Record**

Each year, the Better Business Bureau, serving Nebraska, South Dakota, the Kansas Plains and Southwest Iowa, honors a handful of businesses for their “commitment to ethical marketplace practices.” In a word – Integrity. This year’s winners, announced Tuesday at the 2015 Integrity Awards Luncheon, linked a number of winners to the legal profession, directly and indirectly.

Those winners included three diverse, but uncommonly related, firms: Koenig|Dunne Divorce Law, Centris Federal Credit Union and Early Out Services.

Nearly 1,000 were on hand to congratulate the honorees and to hear featured speaker Daymond John, founder of FUBU clothing and an investor on ABC’s Shark Tank. You can find a complete list of winners in this issue.

Three Uncommon Winners

Integrity, sad to say, is not the first word that comes to mind when many people think of debt collecting, divorce lawyers or even the banking industry. That those fields represented some of the best in metro Omaha for their commitment to integrity, honesty and fair play makes the awards all the more impressive.

Koenig|Dunne

Koenig|Dunne, led by Susan Koenig and Angela Dunne, has carved out a niche law firm concentrating on “doing divorce differently.” For their efforts, they hold the distinction of being the first law firm in Omaha to be awarded this distinction.

Of the Integrity Award, Dunne said, “Everyone on the Koenig|Dunne team strives to live our values of excellence and support each day. We are honored to be recognized for our commitment to serving our clients and our community with integrity as we lead the change in the divorce experience.”

The firm wrote that “this award is not in recognition of a company’s growth, profitability or popularity, but rather the acknowledgement of ethical business practices.”

For more than 30 years Koenig|Dunne Divorce Law has served the Omaha community. They stated on their website, “We understand that divorce is complex and it is our goal to lead the change in the experience of divorce. By zealously advocating for our clients while providing them with a supportive environment, we show that divorce can

be done differently. The firm's reputation for integrity and excellent legal advocacy comes from our long tradition of this service."

Early Out Services

Early Out Services, Inc. (EOS), and its sister company, General Service Bureau, Inc. (GSB) have not only squashed the stereotype of devious debt collectors, they have been honored by the Better Business Bureau time and time again. "It's believed that we're the first collection company in the country to have ever received an integrity award from the Better Business Bureau, so it's very humbling in that regard, but it's really what dad was all about," president and CEO of GSB Bob Leavitt said in 2007, when GSB won their first Integrity Award. "It is a culmination of our staff's commitment to our mission of enhancing the financial well being of others."

He and his brother Russ, executive vice president and CFO, and sister Therese Leavitt Yakel, CEO Operations, run the two companies. Their father, A.L. (Len) Leavitt, started running GSB after the firm's founder died shortly after he founded it in 1946. Len and his son Bob purchased it in 1974.

Therese Yakel who is married to Paul Yakel, Douglas County Adult Drug Court Coordinator, said about their most recent honor, "We consider the BBB Integrity Award one of our companies' highest achievements. It is an honor to be recognized for your company's commitment to ethics and integrity. It is a testament to our father and the legacy he left for us. He certainly set the bar high and I have to think he would be proud of all that we've accomplished and how we've grown the company.

"This award is not about what one single person did, but what our entire staff has accomplished by believing in our mission and core values. This award is a tribute to each and every one of them and we couldn't be more pleased to have won this award for the second time."

The family launched a company-wide ethics program unique to the collections industry in 2010. The idea to implement a formal ethics program came from company executives participating in the Greater Omaha Alliance for Business Ethics training program.

"The purpose of the recently launched program at GSB/EOS is to formally assure both clients and the public at large that both companies uphold the highest standards for lawful and consumer friendly business practices in collections," the company stated.

Each company has now won the Integrity Award twice.

GSB, which specializes in healthcare receivables, has also been named one of InsideARM's "Best Places to Work in Collections" in 2010, after an independent panel of business and academic leaders in the community determined that EOS had incorporated ethical practices as part of their mission and formally integrated them into all facets of their business. Three years earlier General Service Bureau Inc. (GSB) won this same distinction.

Centris

Centris Federal Credit Union, which started life in 1934 as a telephone employees' credit union, adopted its current name in 2000 to reflect changes in the membership, now at 73,000 in the Midwest, as well as the economic environment.

But it remains an employee-owned, non-profit credit union, overseen by an elected board.

Their stated mission is "is to be a trusted life-long financial partner with our members to assist them in achieving their financial needs and goals."

Attorney Denise Hill, vice president and general counsel at Preferred Professional Insurance Company, who sits on the Centris board, is one of those helping them to achieve those goals.

When learning that Centris had won the BBB Integrity Award, she said they are all about serving the community – both their members and the larger community they live in.

"As an employee-owned organization, our members come first, but we are also a member of the community. We try to be a good citizen, as we promote the financial security of both members and the community. We have always done a lot of outreach; our employees are very involved in the community."

Being involved in and with the community is one of the top priorities at Centris, a trait they share with the other award recipients. Hill said Omaha is a great community in which to work and volunteer.

"I think we do a good job at reaching out and working for our members and community."

All of the honored companies have earned their Integrity Awards by being committed to their employees, customers and community.

2015 Integrity Award Winners

The Better Business Bureau's 20th Annual Integrity Awards recipients, selected by an independent panel of judges, are:

- McPherson & Jacobson, LLC, an executive recruitment and development firm (1-9 Employees)
- Koenig|Dunne Divorce Law, PC, LLO (10-40 Employees)
- Early Out Services, Inc., a company that provides accounts receivable services for hospitals and clinics, (50-149 Employees)

- Centris Federal Credit Union (150 + employees)
- Kiewit Corporation (150+ Employees)
- Make-A-Wish Nebraska is the Winner in the Charity category.

BBB Communications Director Margo Riekes said, “The Integrity Awards’ judges felt that the overall quality of this year’s applicants was very strong. Therefore, other organizations that demonstrated, through the application process, that they placed a high priority on honesty and integrity in the work place were recognized with Silver Awards of Distinction for significant commitment to ethical business practices and Bronze Awards of Merit for exemplifying the values of the BBB. They also serve as ambassadors of trust in the marketplace. The BBB is proud to make these special designations.”

Silver Award of Distinction recipients are:

- Specialized Garage Doors, LLC
- Monarch Siding & Windows, Inc.
- ServiceOne, Inc.
- Hillcrest Health Services
- One World Community Health Centers, Inc.

The organizations that received Bronze Awards of Merit are:

- K & B Janitorial Inc.
- Arbor Bank, and
- Pinnacle Bank.

“This awards luncheon is a welcomed breath of fresh air for me and the entire BBB team as we get to shine the spotlight on business done right and to take some time out of our busy schedules to celebrate marketplace role models. All of these organizations understand that ethical behavior is the true path to success,” BBB President Jim Hegarty said.