

Seven Orange County-area executives named entrepreneurs of the year

Seven business executives were honored Thursday night as 2005 Entrepreneurs of the Year by Ernst & Young.

During the black-tie banquet at the Hyatt Regency Irvine hotel, a special "master entrepreneur" award was presented to homebuilder William Lyon, chairman of William Lyon Homes, for his 50-year involvement in business and civic affairs.

Other winners and their award categories: Aram Keith, The Keith Companies, Irvine, business services; Robert Brunswick, Buchanan Street Partners, Newport Beach, financial services; Loren Shook, Silverado Senior Living, San Juan Capistrano, health-care services; James Buch, 3 Day Blinds Inc., Anaheim, retail; **Kurt Johnson, Horizon Technology, Lake Forest, technology**; and Bruce Higgins, Redflex Traffic Systems Inc., Scottsdale, Ariz., manufacturing.

Ernst & Young has included Arizona companies in the Orange County Entrepreneur of the Year program since 2003 because of the relatively small pool of companies in Arizona's market, said Nicole Thomas, the company's spokeswoman.

"Entrepreneur of the Year award recipients embrace the entrepreneurial spirit and determination necessary to achieve success," said Jackie Brya, director of this year's program.

The winners are chosen by independent judges from business, academic and civic organizations based on the nominees' business growth, management skills and community achievements. This week's seven winners were chosen from 22 finalists.

The local winners are now eligible for consideration for national Entrepreneur of the Year honors, to be announced in Palm Springs in November. Similar local programs are held in more than 100 U.S. cities and 35 countries. A global Entrepreneur of the Year will be named in Monte Carlo.