Maine MEP Client Wins Achievement Award for Increased Productivity and Revenue

Bourgeois Guitars’ Growth Earns Investor Recognition from SEGF

Lewiston, Maine: Maine-made Bourgeois guitars have earned a reputation among professional musicians for being among the finest crafted acoustic guitars in the world. Now the small firm that manufactures them is earning a reputation among investors for being one of the best performing companies in the state.

Pantheon-Bourgeois Guitars, LLC, recently received the first annual Achievement Award from the Small Enterprise Growth Fund (SEGF). The award recognized the company’s outstanding productivity and revenue growth in the past year. That growth was driven in part by a project in the spring of 2012 with the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP) that helped the company streamline its production process and improve production efficiencies.

John Burns, the SEGF fund manager, praised Pantheon-Bourgeois Guitars for its ability to creatively increase productivity and drive sales with innovative product design, distribution and promotion.

"Under the leadership of CEO John Karp, Pantheon-Bourgeois Guitars has positioned itself well for future growth. The beauty of the firm is that it is founded on the masterful craftsmanship of Dana Bourgeois and now enjoys the entrepreneurial experience and innovation-oriented skills of John Karp. Quality craftsmanship and visionary business leadership have been combined – and the results are evident in the bottom line. The company received our first annual Achievement Award because of its growth and performance in 2012," said Fund Manager Burns.

In April 2012 Maine MEP began working with Pantheon-Bourgeois Guitars to review its production process. Working alongside Karp, Maine MEP Project Manager Wayne Messer examined how the company could streamline its production process within its existing facility. Utilizing lean manufacturing tools and techniques, the project team analyzed the process flow and brainstormed ideas for overcoming bottlenecks in terms of material and human movement. Spaghetti diagrams highlighted areas of improvement. Most importantly, the team developed a plan for continuously improving the production process and an ideal layout for the facility.

CEO Karp, a former MEP project manager and black belt-certified Innovation Engineering instructor, praised the benefits of the project.

"The MEP project achieved significant improvements in our production process," Karp stated. "We went from producing 5-6 guitars per week to 9 guitars per week, a 50 percent or better increase in productivity. 2012 was a record year for us in terms of both revenue and profits. And we now have a plan for further improvements and will continue to invest in areas that increase productivity and efficiency."

Maine MEP Chairman Bruce Pulkkinen praised Pantheon-Bourgeois Guitars’ commitment to quality and congratulated the company for winning the SEGF’s inaugural Achievement Award.

“The Small Enterprise Growth Fund has been an invaluable source of venture capital funding for many
promising start-up firms in Maine. The Fund’s decision to recognize the most outstanding companies in its portfolio with these awards testifies to the growing maturity and profitability of the companies. I am very pleased that Maine MEP has been able to support the growth of Pantheon-Bourgeois Guitars and hope that their success will serve as an example to other entrepreneurial ventures in Maine," said Pulkkinen.

About SEGF

The SEGF is a professionally-managed venture capital fund that invests exclusively in Maine companies who demonstrate a potential for high growth and public benefit. The fund has been actively investing in Maine companies since 1997, after its creation by an act of the Maine Legislature in 1995 to provide Maine companies and entrepreneurs access to patient sources of venture capital. The fund has received $13 million in capital contributions from the State of Maine and operates as a revolving “evergreen” fund.

About Maine MEP

The Maine MEP is a program of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP system is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2,000 manufacturing and business “coaches” whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits and enhanced global competitiveness. For information on the Maine MEP program, please visit www.mainemep.org, or phone 1-800-MEP-4MFG.