

6-21-2012

## GSU CenterPoint Director is Veteran Small Business Champion

Office of Marketing and Communications

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### Recommended Citation

Office of Marketing and Communications, "GSU CenterPoint Director is Veteran Small Business Champion" (2012). *Press Releases*. Paper 656.

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<a href="#">The Office of Marketing and Communications</a>		Date: June 21, 2012 Contact: Tom Houlihan Governors State University Phone: (708) 534-8952 Email: <a href="mailto:thoulihan@govst.edu">thoulihan@govst.edu</a>					
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<a href="#">Production Procedures</a>		<p>University Park, IL, June 21, 2012 - Bob Rakstang, director of Governors State University's CenterPoint Illinois Small Business Development Center, has been named the U.S. Small Business Administration's Illinois 2012 Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year.</p>					
<a href="#">Image Standards</a>		<p>Rakstang is the guiding force behind GSU CenterPoint's highly successful Veterans Entrepreneurial Boot Camp program, which has offered training in entrepreneurial skills to more than 620 veterans in the last four years. He was honored as an advocate for veteran-owned businesses at the SBA's annual awards luncheon on June 14, at the Union League Club in Chicago.</p>					
<a href="#">Font and Typeface Guidelines</a>		<p>Since 2008, GSU CenterPoint has offered two Boot Camp events each year. Rakstang said the first Boot Camp attracted 40 veterans and a handful of speakers. Now, Boot Camp events last all day and always draw the maximum number of participants – 120 – and as many as 40 volunteer staff and presenters who share their knowledge about financing, marketing, technology, and other entrepreneurial topics of interest. Boot Camps attract veterans from across the Chicago area, from as far north as Milwaukee and as far south as Rantoul. GSU CenterPoint's Boot Camps are the only such events for veterans in the Chicago area.</p>					
<a href="#">Editorial Style Guide</a>		<p>Rakstang says he and CenterPoint Director Hillary Burkinshaw first came up with the idea for Boot Camps. "We wanted to do something for returning veterans in the Chicago Southland region, and something that had never been done before."</p>					
<a href="#">Downloads</a>		<p>For an agency like GSU CenterPoint, specializing in small business creation, veterans have much to offer, Rakstang says. Veterans have received extensive training, are well-disciplined, and increasingly tech-savvy. They are also eligible for a number of loan and business creation incentive programs on the state and federal level. The Boot Camps, he says, are designed to put veterans with marketable skills in contact with professionals who can give them expert advice on how to turn their ideas into a solid business plan.</p>					
<a href="#">Photography</a>		<p>"We want to provide veterans with greater access to expert counseling, to increase their access to capital, and to provide more one-on-one technical counseling," he says. "We will do whatever is possible to help veteran-owned businesses get started and grow."</p>					
<a href="#">Recent Press Releases</a>		<p>Rakstang is a Vietnam War combat veteran who came to GSU CenterPoint after years as a successful private sector businessman. He points with pride to his efforts as an advocate for veteran-owned businesses. "As a result of our eight Boot Camps, CenterPoint has 50 additional clients who are veterans," he says. "We picked up 10 clients after the last Boot Camp. But that's not the point. It's about helping veterans learn good business practices, regardless of whether they become our clients."</p>					
<a href="#">Archived Press Releases</a>		<p>Burkinshaw says Rakstang "is quietly dedicated to improving the business environment for veterans and is a deserving recipient of the SBA Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year."</p>					
<a href="#">Contact Us</a>		<p>CenterPoint at Governors State University is an Illinois Small Business Development Center offering professional assistance, counseling, relevant training, and ongoing support services to entrepreneurs. CenterPoint is a service of GSU with grant support from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the SBA. Veterans Entrepreneurial Boot Camps are supported by a grant from the Coleman Foundation. For more information, contact CenterPoint at (708) 534-4929 or <a href="http://www.centerpointgsu.com">www.centerpointgsu.com</a>.</p>					

Date: June 21, 2012  
 Contact: Tom Houlihan  
 Governors State University  
 Phone: (708) 534-8952  
 Email: [thoulihan@govst.edu](mailto:thoulihan@govst.edu)

**For Immediate Release**

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University Park, IL, June 21, 2012 - Bob Rakstang, director of Governors State University's CenterPoint Illinois Small Business Development Center, has been named the U.S. Small Business Administration's Illinois 2012 Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year.

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Rakstang says he and CenterPoint Director Hillary Burkinshaw first came up with the idea for Boot Camps. "We wanted to do something for returning veterans in the Chicago Southland region, and something that had never been done before."

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Rakstang is a Vietnam War combat veteran who came to GSU CenterPoint after years as a successful private sector businessman. He points with pride to his efforts as an advocate for veteran-owned businesses. "As a result of our eight Boot Camps, CenterPoint has 50 additional clients who are veterans," he says. "We picked up 10 clients after the last Boot Camp. But that's not the point. It's about helping veterans learn good business practices, regardless of whether they become our clients."

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