



**ACG Louisiana Announces Seventeenth Annual ACG Louisiana Award Winners
Recognizing Growth Companies, Business Professionals and Noteworthy
Transactions Throughout the State of Louisiana**

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Mary Hill, 504-610-7441, acglouisiana@acg.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ACG Louisiana to Host 17th Annual Awards Dinner on May 14, 2026 Honoring
Business Excellence and Leadership**

New Orleans, LA – April 22, 2026 – The Louisiana Chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG) proudly announces its 17th Annual Awards Dinner, celebrating the region’s outstanding business achievements and leaders. The prestigious event will take place on **Thursday, May 14, 2026**, at The Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans, bringing together top businesses, deal makers, and professionals from across Louisiana’s business community.

“This event is a powerful reflection of the strength and momentum of Louisiana’s middle-market community,” said Ben Domingue of Family Office Partners, Event Chair and Title Sponsor. “It’s an honor to serve in this role for a fourth year and to help recognize the companies and leaders who are driving meaningful growth across our state. Each of this year’s honorees represents the innovation, resilience, and forward-thinking leadership that continues to move Louisiana’s business landscape forward.”

“This event is a testament to the resilience, innovation, and dedication of our local business leaders,” said Todd Giustiniano, President of ACG Louisiana. “We are honored to celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to the economic success of our state.”

The ACG Louisiana Awards Dinner honors exceptional growth companies, business professionals, and noteworthy transactions throughout the State of Louisiana in categories including Deal of the Year, Corporate Growth, Emerging Growth, and individual dealmaking excellence.

2026 Award Winners

Deal of the Year – Fibrebond Corp

Fibrebond, a manufacturer of complex electrical modules serving data centers,

industrial, and utility sectors, was acquired by Eaton Corporation in a landmark transaction designed to expand Eaton’s data center and utility solutions capabilities. The deal was notable not only for its scale but also for its people-first structure—Fibrebond CEO Graham Walker negotiated a unique provision ensuring that 15% of the \$1.7 billion sale proceeds would be distributed as bonuses to the company’s 540 employees. This extraordinary approach underscores the company’s commitment to its workforce while marking one of the most significant transactions in Louisiana’s recent history.

Outstanding Corporate Growth – Entergy Louisiana

Entergy Louisiana provides electricity to more than 1.1 million customers across 58 parishes and continues to play a critical role in powering the state’s economic growth. In 2025, the company received regulatory approval to construct three combined-cycle natural gas generation facilities, along with significant transmission infrastructure, to support a major Meta data center in Northeast Louisiana, one of the largest economic development projects in the region’s history. This investment reflects Entergy Louisiana’s leadership in enabling expansion across key industries, including advanced manufacturing, petrochemical production, and technology.

Over the past five years, Entergy Louisiana has experienced steady growth driven by increasing industrial demand and new business development throughout the state. The company continues to invest in strengthening and modernizing its electric grid to ensure reliable, resilient, and sustainable service for its customers. Through long-term planning initiatives such as the Louisiana 100 Plan, Entergy Louisiana is helping attract new industries and create lasting economic opportunity across the region. In addition to its business achievements, the company remains committed to community engagement through programs supporting workforce development, environmental stewardship, and disaster recovery. These efforts position Entergy Louisiana for continued long-term growth while supporting the prosperity of the communities it serves.

Emerging Growth – LeBlanc + Smith

Founded and led by Robert LeBlanc, New Orleans-based LeBlanc + Smith has emerged as one of Louisiana’s most dynamic and culturally influential companies. Known for its portfolio of boutique hospitality concepts—including The Chloe, The Will & The Way, Barrel Proof, Anna’s, Barracuda Taco Bar, and Sylvain—the company has demonstrated consistent revenue growth while maintaining a deep commitment to Louisiana’s culture and communities.

Under LeBlanc’s leadership, the company has expanded beyond Louisiana into Nashville and Atlanta, with new concepts such as The Chloe Nashville, Barrel Proof Nashville, and Love’s Alibi. Along the way, its properties have earned national recognition, with The Chloe and The Celestine named among the “Best New Hotels in the World” by Condé Nast Traveler and Travel + Leisure. As a Louisiana-rooted company successfully scaling across the Southeast, LeBlanc + Smith exemplifies the innovation and cultural authenticity celebrated by ACG Louisiana’s Emerging Growth Award.

Deal Makers of the Year – Canal Barge Management Team

Canal Barge Company's sale to Redwood Holdings in 2025 was among the most significant transactions in Louisiana's maritime industry. The acquisition created an opportunity to combine the operational and logistical strengths of Canal Barge with those of Marquette Transportation, a Paducah, Kentucky-based company also owned by Redwood, forming one of the nation's leading maritime and infrastructure platforms.

Founded in 1933 as a single-barge operation in New Orleans, Canal Barge has grown into a major inland marine transportation company with a large, diversified fleet operating throughout the U.S. inland waterway system. With more than 90 years of steady growth and operational excellence, the company has established itself as a cornerstone of the U.S. maritime industry.

The 2025 transaction was deliberately structured to preserve Canal Barge's culture while supporting continued expansion. No jobs were lost as a result of the acquisition, the leadership team remains intact, and the company continues to be headquartered in New Orleans—reinforcing its longstanding commitment to Louisiana's maritime economy.

By pairing strong operational performance with a strategic, long-term partnership, Canal Barge secured new investment while maintaining its legacy and regional impact. The transaction represents not only a meaningful financial milestone, but also a model for sustainable growth that benefits employees, customers, and the broader Gulf South economy.

Young Deal Maker – Augie Gallo

Since 2018, Augie Gallo has served as Chief Financial Officer of Gallo Mechanical, LLC, the Gulf South's largest mechanical construction company. During his tenure, he has overseen financial operations across multiple affiliated entities while also leading key initiatives in IT, workforce development, and risk management.

Under Augie's financial leadership, Gallo Mechanical has experienced significant growth, expanding into the Carolinas and Florida, increasing revenues and margins, and establishing itself as a major player in data center construction throughout the South. This growth positioned the company to attract private equity investment, culminating in the successful 2025 transaction with Citation Capital.

As a central member of the deal team, Augie played a critical role in structuring and closing the transaction, which established Gallo as Citation's platform investment in the mechanical construction industry. Importantly, the deal preserved Gallo's leadership team and workforce while positioning the company for continued national expansion—all while remaining headquartered in New Orleans, where it was founded more than 80 years ago.

Lifetime Achievement (presented in memoriam)

For the first time, ACG Louisiana will present its Lifetime Achievement Award in memoriam honoring three individuals whose contributions to the region's business and civic landscape will long outlast them:

Jim Bernhard

Jim Bernhard was a visionary Louisiana business leader whose impact on the state's industrial and infrastructure sectors will be felt for generations. A Baton Rouge native, he founded The Shaw Group in 1987 and grew it into a global Fortune 500 company, creating thousands of jobs and helping shape the region's economic landscape. He later co-founded Bernhard Capital Partners, continuing his work of building and investing in companies focused on essential infrastructure and long-term growth. Known for his quiet leadership, generosity, and deep commitment to Louisiana, Jim was passionate about mentoring others and strengthening the community he called home. He is remembered not only for his remarkable professional accomplishments, but for the lasting relationships he built and the meaningful impact he made on those around him.

Joe Canizaro

Joe Canizaro was a visionary New Orleans developer, business leader, and philanthropist whose impact on the city's skyline and economic growth is enduring. As founder of Columbus Properties, he played a pivotal role in the development of major commercial projects throughout downtown New Orleans, helping to shape the city's modern business district. Beyond his professional achievements, Canizaro was deeply committed to civic leadership and education, serving on numerous boards and contributing significantly to initiatives that strengthened the local community and economy.

Richard Zuschlag

Richard Zuschlag was a pioneering entrepreneur and healthcare executive best known as the founder and longtime CEO of Acadian Ambulance Service. Under his leadership, Acadian grew from a regional operation into one of the largest employee-owned ambulance and healthcare transportation companies in the nation. Zuschlag was widely respected for his innovative approach to emergency medical services, his commitment to employee ownership, and his dedication to improving healthcare access across Louisiana and beyond. His legacy continues through the thousands of employees and communities his company serves.

ACG Louisiana invites business professionals, investors, and community leaders to attend this premier networking event. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at <https://www.acg.org/louisiana/events> or by contacting Mary Hill, 504-610-7441, acglouisiana@acg.org.

About ACG Louisiana

ACG Louisiana is a chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth, a global

organization focused on driving middle-market growth. ACG Louisiana provides networking, thought leadership, and educational opportunities to business leaders, investors, and professionals in the region.

###