

Pioneers of Prosperity Hands over \$80,000 to Hummingbird Furnishings



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On Monday, July 27, the Pioneers of Prosperity announced the local winner for its Caribbean awards program. This year the prize was awarded to Hummingbird Furnishings. Pioneers of Prosperity is a global awards program that seeks to “inspire a new generation of entrepreneurs in emerging economies by identifying, rewarding and promoting outstanding businesses who serve as role models to their peers.”

Abby Noble, Pioneers of Prosperity Representative for Belize, said, “There are four steps in the awards selection process. The first step is to apply. Applicants must be for-profit companies that earn between US\$100,000 - US\$500,000 per year in revenue.” She said that after the application process is completed the second round is a series of follow up questions, if the applicant makes it through those questions they will then partake in a phone interview with Pioneers of Prosperity. The final round in the selection process is an in depth investigation into the company. The investigation includes meetings with the staff; clients and customers; and a look at the business opportunities and its potential to create prosperity in the community.

This year’s winner, Hummingbird Furnishings, a furniture making company, has been operating since 1987. Roberto Lopez, owner of Hummingbird, said that his dream started when his father took him to the job site. His father worked in the furniture business as well. As he grew older he had the dream of owning his own furniture company. His opportunity came when the Prime Minister at the time, Rt. Hon. Manuel Esquivel, granted him tax exemption so that he could bring in his equipment that he needed to start his business. He said, “You have no idea how eternally grateful I am that he actually allowed me to come and see him.” Lopez started his company with one employee. Today, Hummingbird Furnishings employs over 50 individuals plus ten students on a part time basis. His main clients are owners of resorts and hotels. His company also provides furnishings for many people in the United States. Lopez said that he will use part of the \$80,000 to develop a sustainable harvesting system for the production of Bamboo furniture.

Hummingbird furnishings will now participate in the regional competition that is scheduled to take place September in Jamaica. The Prime Minister of Jamaica will host that award ceremony in which ten representatives from seven countries will compete for the grand prize of US\$200,000. The seven countries in the awards program are Belize, Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. There are two country winners each for Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. The other four countries each had an honourable mention. The honourable mention for Belize is the Lodge at Chaa Creek. They received \$20,000.

At the award ceremony, Robert Lopez gave some advice to young potential entrepreneurs. He said, “Believe in your dreams and never lose sight of your goals!”