

Women-friendly firms honored by chamber

BY CARA BUCKLEY

cbuckley@herald.com

If there's one thing Joy Wallace wants the world to know, it's that she's no Blondie.

"A lot of people think if a caterer is a woman, she must work out of a kitchen and drive a minivan like Blondie," said Wallace, owner of the Joy Wallace Catering Production & Design Team, referring to the buxom cartoon wife of the hapless Dagwood. "But I'm not Blondie, and I don't drive a minivan. I run seven 24-foot refrigerated trucks."

On Thursday, Wallace won the Jeanne Bellamy Award for companies with fewer than 100 employees that promote women in the workplace. Miami Lakes developer the Graham Cos. won the award for companies with 100 employees or more.

The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business Group present the awards each year.

'I'm not Blondie, and I don't drive a minivan. I run seven 24-foot refrigerated trucks.'

— JOY WALLACE,

Jeanne Bellamy Award winner

Wallace also runs a 10,000-square-foot commissary that employs 21 people year round and 425 part time. Her company whips up and serves food for some 300 events a year, feeding 50,000 people, including the likes of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain, who sampled delicacies at a 2001 party at Miami's Vizcaya. Wallace charges up to \$400 a plate, and her yearly revenues are in the millions.

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MARTA LAVANDIER/FOR THE HERALD

WINNERS: Joy Wallace, left, owner of the Joy Wallace Catering Production & Design Team, and Carol Wyllie, vice president of the Graham Cos., win awards for promoting women in the workplace given by The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Women in Business Group.

Women businesses honored

AWARD, FROM 1C

Even when times were lean, Wallace made sure her staff felt her appreciation.

After Sept. 11, when other caterers laid off employees by the hundreds or closed, she called everyone into her office to give them a raise. She still affixes handwritten notes to every paycheck. Seventy-five percent of her full-time pastry chefs, cooks and servers are women, who she says have a tougher time than men netting success.

"Women have to work harder to get ahead," she said. "And in my business, all of my competitors are men."

The third annual awards, held at the Renaissance Miami Biscayne Bay Hotel, are named

for Jeanne Bellamy, who served as the Greater Miami Chamber's first female chairperson from 1977 to 1978. Bellamy also funds a \$1,500 scholarship, awarded this year to high school graduate Mariya Orlova, who will study business at the University of Chicago this fall.

The large-company winner, the 70-year-old Graham Cos., provides day care and flexible scheduling for parents. Of its 647 total employees, 324 are women, and women hold most of the company's senior positions.

Carol Wyllie, the company's vice president and daughter of founder William Graham, said the company became women-friendly almost by default.

"Maybe it's because our

father had four girls and one boy," Wyllie said.

One sister, Sandra Graham Younts, runs the company's Don Shula's Hotel & Golf Club. Another, Beth Graham Martinez, is vice president of the Graham Property Management Co.

"We unknowingly created an environment that was an inspiration for women, and I think women appreciated us and saw us as role models," Wyllie said.

Victoria Clarke, the Department of Defense's assistant secretary for public affairs, gave the keynote address and urged the audience to support the Bush administration's anti-terrorism efforts. More than 250 people, mostly women, attended the luncheon.