

# THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST

## Valley Tech Council Gives Out Awards

Posted: May 5, 2016

By **NOLAN STOUT**

**HARRISONBURG** — Trust is key to security, Jim Schifalacqua says.

The vice president and chief information security officer of Serco Inc. discussed keeping data safe with about 260 people Wednesday at James Madison University's Festival Conference and Student Center.

Employees at Reston-based Serco's PGPubs Classification Services offices on Technology Drive in Harrisonburg analyze and classify patent applications or reclassify existing patents for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Schifalacqua asked those in attendance Wednesday who they trust and said to be wary when storing information on a cloud-based system. But don't be paranoid, he said.

"Collaboration is the best ... when the best people do great things," Schifalacqua said. "But there's also a lot of people taking advantage of it and a lot of dangers out there."

Schifalacqua, who has attended technology conferences across the country, said the Valley is full of innovators.

"Silicon Valley," he said, "has nothing on the Shenandoah Valley."

Schifalacqua was the keynote speaker at the 16th annual Shenandoah Valley Technology Council Tech Nite.

Each year, the group awards local entrepreneurs and innovators at the event. Winners were chosen



*Ken Rutherford received the Dr. John Noftsinger Leadership Award at the Shenandoah Valley Technology Council's Tech Nite on Wednesday at James Madison University's Festival Conference and Student Center. Rutherford is the director of JMU's Center for International Stabilization and Recovery. (Photos by Nikki Fox / DN-R)*



*Sven Brueckner, chief technology officer of AxonAI Inc., received the High Tech Entrepreneur Award.*

in seven categories among 16 nominees.

Following is a summary of the winners.

### **Saving Lives**

Ken Rutherford, director of the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU and a political science professor, was awarded the Dr. John Noftsinger Leadership Award.

The center seeks to mitigate the effects of landmines and explosives left behind after wars around the world.

Rutherford conducts networking, fundraising and strategic planning for the center, but also travels to help remove bombs from war-ravaged countries.

He lost his lower legs in a landmine accident in Somalia in 1993 while working on a humanitarian mission, leading him to cofound the Landmine Survivors Network.

He has testified before Congress and appeared on “Dateline,” the View and the BBC. In 2013, Rutherford was named among the “Hundred Most Influential People in Armed Violence Reduction” by the London-based Action on Armed Violence organization.

### **Teaching Tech**

Three JMU computer science professors — Hossain Heydari, Brett Tjaden and Steve Wang — won the Innovation in Higher Education Award.

They run the GenCyber and VATCyber Boot Camps to educate high school teachers about cybersecurity awareness and education, teaching methodologies, and resources to establish security courses and cyberdefense clubs in high schools.

The boot camps started in 2013 and were originally funded through a Department of Defense Information Assurance Scholarship Program Grant. Each boot camp enrolls 20 teachers for five days. Of the two boot camps held in 2015, one was for teachers from across the country and the second was for those in the state.

Stephanie Failes, technology instructional coordinator for Rockingham County Public Schools, received the Innovation in K-12 Education Award.

She supervises the Instructional Technology Resource Teachers program, which works with county teachers to help implement technology into the classroom as part of the division’s digital conversion initiative.

The five-year initiative is in its third year.

Failes also established a new professional development model called the “Tech Toolkit



*Michael and Jane Blackburn, owners of the Dairy Queen at Harmony Square, received the Green Award at the annual Tech Nite on Wednesday.*

Academy,” offering teachers a choice of sessions structured to specific lessons.

## **Tech Food**

Shenandoah Growers was awarded the Innovative Technology Application Award.

The Rockingham County company uses indoor, climate-controlled vertical growing and LED lights to produce organic herbs. The lights require 40 percent less energy than standard lights. The process, which has been developed over the last two years, improves the strength, color and flavor of the plants.

The business was started by Tim Heydon in 1998 and sells organic and nonorganic herbs along the East Coast.

Dairy Queen in Harmony Square on Virginia Avenue in Harrisonburg was awarded the Green Award for efforts to make its building environmentally friendly.

Owners Michael and Jane Blackburn were able to add high-performance, air tight insulation, energy-efficient LED lights, solar panels on the roof and low-flow water fixtures.

The store now uses 50 percent of the national energy usage average per square foot for a fast food restaurant.

## **High Tech**

Sven Brueckner, co-founder of AxonAI Inc., received the High Tech Entrepreneur Award. The city-based company provides data analytics through its AXON:OS operating engine.

The platform can provide real-time analytics and has rapid situational awareness. The company consolidated operations in Harrisonburg in December 2015.

Augusta County-based Giv2giv was presented the High Tech Company Award. The organization keeps track of paperwork associated with donations to nonprofit organizations.

Donors are able to use a centralized portal to donate to the charity of their choice, view donation statements and can contribute a split donation, with a portion going into an endowment that grows with interest over time.

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