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*Diane Portnoy*  
*President and CEO*

## **Immigrant entrepreneurs honored for their economic, social and scientific contributions in Massachusetts**

MALDEN, Mass, May 9, 2013 / Two hundred people came together last night to celebrate the contributions of immigrant entrepreneurs in Massachusetts personified by 23 nominees and three award winners at The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.'s 2013 Immigrant Entrepreneur Awards Dinner at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, Mass. The nominees in attendance each received citations from their respective legislators, and the three winners received a trophy and a citation from Massachusetts Treasurer and Receiver General Steven Grossman. All were impressive examples of entrepreneurial spirit.

**Diane Portnoy**, founder, president and CEO of The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC), welcomed guests saying, "As entrepreneurs, immigrants revitalize depressed neighborhoods, create jobs, pay taxes and help form the backbone of this country.... This is not a new story in American history. Since the founding of this country, immigrants have come here with hope, drive and ingenuity and have become entrepreneurs. This evening's awardees and nominees are part of a long and proud tradition."

Guest Speaker **Steven Grossman** shared his personal relationship to immigrant entrepreneurship from his experience leading the company founded by his immigrant grandfather, Grossman Communications, to his interactions with immigrant small business owners participating in the Commonwealth's Small Business Banking Partnership. The treasurer summed up his feelings saying, "This Commonwealth will have a bright future and it will be writ large with a banner over it called immigrant entrepreneurship, and tonight is a celebration of exactly the values and the priorities that we all share."

In his closing remarks, Master of Ceremonies **Richard A. Davey, Jr.**, secretary and CEO of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and ILC board trustee, summed up what many in the audience were feeling by saying, "If you weren't inspired by that, you need to go to the cardiologist and make sure you have a heart."

### **Outstanding Neighborhood Business: Mr. Mahmud Jafri, founder of Dover Rug Country of origin: Pakistan**

Dover Rug and Home began in Jafri's house in 1989. He stored the rugs in the garage and used the living room as a showroom. Twenty-three years later, Dover Rug and Home occupies a 36,000-square-foot space on Route 9 in Natick.

Jafri is also committed to community development, which is evident in the school programs, interfaith initiatives and charitable organizations he supports. Born out of his love of the sport, he also built the Dover Squash and Fitness facility for area enthusiasts to play and use as a platform for cross-cultural understanding.

Jafri described his journey this way, "When I immigrated in 1974, I like many of you, was often apprehensive about what it would be like to start a new chapter of my life in an entirely new country. But I

knew that this great nation offered endless opportunities and welcomed people of all races and creeds from every corner of the world with open arms. The acceptance and camaraderie I experienced along the way taught me how fortunate I am to live in a country that offers the resources and guidance to anyone who has the drive and ambition to succeed regardless of where you are from, the color of your skin or what higher power you believe in.”

**Outstanding Business Growth: Mr. Rafael Guzman, founder of RM Technologies, Inc.  
Country of origin: Dominican Republic**

When Guzman bought RM Technologies in 1997, the small demolition and environmental remediation firm had only three office staff and was making \$800,000 a year. He turned it into an expanded business employing more than 200 people with 45 percent revenue growth over the last three years.

In his remarks, Guzman stressed the importance of education. He has a master’s degree in manufacturing engineering, and he thanked the American people for the assistance he received to make this education possible. He framed his company’s explosive growth as a way of giving back saying, “My company last year paid over \$3 million dollars in salaries and wages to 172 employees. I’m happy to report that this year we project to pay over \$5 million to over 250 people, mostly immigrants from the city of Lawrence the poorest city in the Commonwealth. So you see, the American dream is alive and kicking very much. It’s here for most of us to reach in this great nation.”

In addition to job creation, Guzman gives back to his community by sponsoring Lawrence film festivals, book fairs and baseball teams, and he established a scholarship for underprivileged children like himself who want to study engineering.

**Outstanding Science/Technology Business: Dr. Chiang Li, founder of Boston Biomedical, Inc.  
Country of origin: China**

Li is a prolific inventor, successful businessman and doctor committed to helping others. He has pioneered research into treatments of cancer and other life-threatening diseases. He has founded five companies and is the named inventor on 230 patents.

In 2006, when 30 scientists working under him were about to be laid off, Li resigned, started a new company and re-hired all 30 scientists. That company was Boston Biomedical, Inc. The company has developed an innovative clinical-stage product pipeline that targets cancer stem cells. It was acquired in 2012 for up to \$2.63 billion. Li currently serves as president, CEO and chief medical officer.

Li humbly shared his success with many others, including the Massachusetts’ business environment. “Here, in Massachusetts I think we have all three elements [talent, capital and a supportive political system]. That’s why there is no better place on earth, I feel, to grow science/technology/innovation business than here in Massachusetts....There is an unparalleled [supply of] science/technology [talent]. By the way, a large percentage is immigrants. The combination is so powerful. There is no country in the world that is even close to a country like America to grow innovative business.”

**About The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc.**

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. (ILC) of Malden, Mass, is a not-for-profit organization that helps immigrants and refugees become successful workers, parents and community members through direct service programs and public education. Our direct service program provides free, year-round English classes to immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston. The ILC further supports immigrants through the Public Education Institute, which informs Americans about the economic and social contributions of immigrants in our society. For more information visit the website <http://www.ilctr.org> and Facebook page <http://www.fb.com/ImmigrantLearningCenter>.

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