

LI businesswoman honored by Obama

May 19, 2009 by TOM BRUNE / tom.brune@newsday.com

WASHINGTON - In 1992, Teresa Ward of [Rocky Point](#) began cleaning homes because, she said, she is "a compulsive cleaner."

The next year she turned her passion into a business.

And Tuesday, 16 years later, Ward was recognized by President [Barack Obama](#) as [New York's](#) small-business person of the year for 2009, an honor awarded by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Ward, 51, and her husband, Kevin, 48, a former construction company owner, have grown Teresa's Family Cleaning Inc. into a business with more than 35 employees, nearly \$1.2 million in revenue, and about 60 homes and commercial sites cleaned each day.

Ward was among 53 honorees chosen from each state and territory for their entrepreneurial spirit and success, selected along with many others for the dozens of awards in an array of categories handed out during Small [Business Week](#).

Ward said she was surprised she was chosen and believes her charitable work made the difference.



Teresa Ward Small Business Owner Honoree

After her sister died from cancer five years ago, Ward said she founded the New York chapter of Cleaning for a Reason Foundation, which cleans homes of women with cancer at no cost. It started with eight companies. Now 150 firms participate, she said.

Her husband was pleased with the award.

"It's not a cutting-edge technology industry," Kevin Ward said of the cleaning business. "It's good to see an old grassroots, mom-and-pop business can actually win an award."

At the White House ceremony Obama praised the winners.

"You're the job creators responsible for half of all private-sector jobs," he said. "Small businesses don't just strengthen our economy, they also strengthen our communities."

Two years ago, Teresa Ward sought the assistance of the SBA's Small Business Development Center at Stony Brook University. Through the center she obtained a loan and received help in streamlining her business, consolidating debt and improving her marketing.

So far, her husband said, the business has weathered the economy.

"We're hanging in there," he said. "That's sort of why we diversified away from residential cleaning. We do some niche commercial work, of boutiques and small shops."