

Cogentes-Small Business of the Year

Tom Glover, owner of Cogentes-a Georgia based IT support company-is a native of Sandersville and a graduate of Georgia Tech University. His personable nature creates an atmosphere of passion for his customers, employees, and the Milledgeville community in which he has contributed generously to through many civic endeavors.

He worked his way through college which taught him not only a great work ethic but what path was best suited for him. “Although my degree is in Engineering, I learned through college jobs that I preferred IT much more and knew that was the right career for me,” said Glover.

He worked for several years in Atlanta after graduating but moved back to the Milledgeville area in 2006 and started Cogentes one year later. “We had to work through the economic downturn at that time,” added Glover. “We had started in the finance sector but due to the economy, we revamped the company to focus on serving small to medium sized companies, and it has worked well since.”

Cogentes focuses on serving small to mid-sized businesses across the east coast as well as abroad. “We are truly passionate about our work,” said Glover. “We are dedicated to giving small business owners the technical edge they must have to compete in today’s market. As IT professionals, we are always evaluating the latest trends to maintain that edge.”

Cogentes has the motto: “Expert Support, Down Home Service” which fits perfectly for a small southern town with a rich history like Milledgeville. His expert staff provides personal design solutions crafted uniquely to each need of the client.

The company’s goal is to make the customer’s systems as cost effective and operationally efficient as possible. “We strive to provide the highest level of customer service available,” says Glover. “The shows our clients that we are as invested as they are in making their business successful.”

Services Cogentes offers include but not limited to are technical support, Office 365 solutions, Cloud backup, and online marketing. The company’s staff and consultants are highly skilled technicians, marketing experts, and business leaders with diverse backgrounds.

Company Culture and Civic Contributions

Cogentes is an organization that promotes healthy living and encourages physical fitness among employees. Glover himself has a passion for bicycling which has spilled over into his business’s atmosphere. The company has created community involvement in cycling by hosting bike rides as well as sponsoring local events. Many of the Cogentes family are members of the Bicycling Club of Milledgeville and participate in races and fun rides throughout the year.

The company was awarded the **Bronze Bicycle Friendly Business** designation in 2013, give by the American League of Bicyclists-a designation only shared by 600 other companies nationwide.

Cogentes offers a “Bike Friendly” environment for its employees and the Milledgeville-Baldwin County area using the following practices:

- Office space located among bike routes, bike trails, safe traffic routes to and from town;
- Office features shower facilities and a dedicated bike room for commuters;
- **Guaranteed Ride Home Program:** all commuters offered a vehicle ride home during inclement weather.

Glover is also founder and member of Team Cogentes Racing-a competitive bicycle racing team sponsored by Cogentes. The team cyclists have participated in state and regional events for several years.

In addition to biking for health and transportation, Glover has worked passionately to introduce cycling to younger generations. “In conjunction with the Bicycling Club of Milledgeville, we have focused on activities that involve young people in cycling,” he said. “These activities range from organizing family friendly and kids’ rides, to participating in cycling safety education and riding with “The Dream Team,” a group of underprivileged youths who have embraced cycling as a fun fitness program and exciting competition platform.”

Cogentes eagerly supports a culture of community involvement at Cogentes. Employees are encouraged to participate in service and volunteer work that best suits them as individuals. Examples of the various organizations that Cogentes employees volunteer with are the Milledgeville-Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, The Bicycling Club of Milledgeville, Café Central Soup Kitchen, the Oconee River Greenway Foundation, Live Healthy Baldwin, Keep Milledgeville-Baldwin Beautiful, Georgia Cancer Support, Partners in Education, Brentwood School, and The Milledgeville Film Festival.

“We donate volunteers, time, and services to non-profits, as well as work actively in sponsoring community events,” said Glover. “We also support the Work Ready initiative in our area by maintaining a staff of student interns for career shadowing and on-the-job training. In short, Cogentes and its team members are committed to giving back to and supporting improvement within our community.”

The commitment to community does not go unnoticed by civic leaders including Hank Griffeth, city manager for Milledgeville. He observes that Glover’s civic engagement is second only to his love of and commitment to bicycling.

“Our community is fortunate that two of Tom’s greatest loves-community service and cycling-often overlap as evidence by his activities,” said Griffeth. “I don’t believe any of the community’s biking initiatives, whether it be the Bike Friendly Community designation, Bike Walk Baldwin, Milledgeville’s first bike co-op (Coop de Ville), or the Old Capital Youth Cycling Team (just to name a few of many) would be what they are today without Tom Glover.”

Chamber Small Business of the Year

Receiving accolades is always a pleasant experience, but being recognized by peers in the business community is an extraordinary tribute. Cogentes received the honor of being named the 2017 Small Business of the Year (SBOTY) by the Milledgeville-Baldwin Chamber of Commerce (MBCC).

This award is chosen by a volunteer committee comprised of: The Chamber Executive Board (the CEO is a non-voting member), the Small Business Advisory Committee chair, and the Chamber Small Business of the Year award recipient from the past two years. The committee review and evaluate all submitted applications and select a winner based on the following criteria:

- ***Sustainability*** – Demonstration of solid customer base and increase in financial growth.
- ***Business Integrity*** – Demonstration of ethical business practices.
- ***Adaptation*** – An illustration of the creativity and imagination of the nominated business, particularly in response to challenges.
- ***Community Leadership*** – Company engagement/contribution to community service, improvement or civic involvement.

The other finalists for the 2017 SBOTY were T-Bones Nursery, Serenity Physical Therapy & Wellness, and Scenic Mountain RV Park. All nominated finalists were shown to be outstanding leaders within the Milledgeville-Baldwin County business community.

“Although Cogentes excelled in all four of the criteria measured during the Small Business of the Year process, I believe their Community Leadership is what made them shine out of the four finalists,” observed Angie Martin, executive director for the MBCC. “The evaluation committee members all agreed that the volunteerism and gift of service through time, talent, and commitment that Tom and the staff at Cogentes have provided the Milledgeville-Baldwin County community is immeasurable.”

Glover expresses humility when speaking of the award. He said, “I was honored immensely just to be nominated. It was a very pleasant surprise to be the named the winner. I share the award with Cogentes staff, consultants, and clients-it is always about the team.”

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