

CavCom Pres. Jeff Morrill named Minn. SBA Encore Entrepreneur of the Year

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Photo submitted



Jeffrey Morrill, president of CavCom, Inc., based in Walker, has been named the Minnesota Encore Entrepreneur of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

The honor was announced March 18 by the Minnesota District Office of the SBA.

The Encore Entrepreneur of the Year is a newly-developed award based on success as measured by sales and profits, increased employment opportunities created by the business, development and/or utilization of innovative or creative business methods, and demonstrated entrepreneurial potential necessary for long-term business success and economic growth. The business owner must have a three-year track record and must have started the business after age 50.

Gail Levenson, Executive Director of the Cass County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), nominated Morrill for this award. Morrill will be honored at the Minnesota Small Business Week Awards program May 6, 2013, at The Depot Minneapolis.

CavCom is a privately-held company with manufacturing facilities in Walker, Minn., and regional sales staff throughout the U.S. Started in 2006, CavCom's focus is specialty hearing protection and accessories for two-way radios. CavCom is recognized for innovation in designing products to prevent hearing loss and improve two-way communications in high noise and/or respirator environments. Traditional radio microphones and headsets don't work well in extremely high noise or when respirator devices are employed. CavCom products provide optimum hearing protection and comfort where immediate two-way communication is critical for work safety and product quality. CavCom recognized that employees demand comfort, durability and personal protection as well as clear speech communication.

Morrill holds a master's degree in audiology from Texas Tech University and has been a leading innovator in the audiology field since 1972. From then until 1998, he founded, built and managed Impact Health Services, Inc. (IHS) in Kansas City, MO. IHS provided mobile occupational health testing and consulting services to over 5,000 manufacturing locations throughout the United States and Canada. This resulted in more than 750,000 employee examinations annually to maintain safe and healthy hearing conditions for workers exposed to loud noise and other hazards in the workplace. The testing services delivered to employees included audiometrics, respirator fit testing and noise analysis. Morrill authored and developed the first database analysis system (ECHO) for audiometric measurements in compliance with OSHA noise regulations and innovated on-site analysis and immediate notification technologies. More recently, he invented the CavCom "Talk Through Your Ears" radio communication system. This revolutionary and patented technology received the "Technology of the Year Award" by the Silicon Prairie Technology Association in 1997.

In 1998, Morrill sold IHS to US Health-Works, where he would work as president of the Preventive Services Division until 2000. In this role, he managed the growth and consolidation of the new health and safety division for US Health-Works. His responsibilities included acquisitions, integration of companies and services into a single source.

In 2000, he turned his attention full-time to developing CavCom products, first with Dooley Tackaberry, Inc., of Deer Park, Texas, and then founded CavCom, Inc. as a privately-held independent company. Morrill was 61 when he started his current business. In 2006, the offices were moved to a new building at the Walker Industrial Park, consolidating manufacturing from vendors in five states to Minnesota vendors with final assembly at the Walker facility. During this time, he implemented new product development, streamlined manufacturing processes and developed an international sales and marketing campaign. CavCom, Inc. sales have increased steadily through 2012.

Morrill has significant experience in the hearing conservation-communications business and is well networked in the industry. He is a member of professional associations including the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA), where he served as the Noise Committee Chairperson. He was co-editor of the AIHA Noise and Hearing Conservation Manual, fourth edition, and a former board member and chair for the Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation representing the AIHA. This wealth of professional contacts and industry experience enables Jeff to contract and develop new and innovative solutions for high noise and respirator communication applications.

Born and raised in Dakota County, he received his bachelor's degree from Mankato State University in 1963, taught in the Bemidji Public School system, then worked for the Minnesota Department of Health before leaving the state for 30 years. His wife, Barbara, and three of their sons work in the company.