Tulane Business Forum preview

September 26, 2008

Richard M. Bracken, president and COO of HCA, the world's largest private operator of health care facilities, highlights a wide-ranging lineup of speakers scheduled to present at the 29th annual Tulane Business Forum.

This year's forum, which will take place on Friday, Oct. 17, at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside, focuses on the theme of innovation, a topic that forum co-chair Keith Crawford says is relevant to all businesses regardless of size or industry.

"Innovation can be found in some unlikely places," says Crawford, a management consultant and chief financial officer with local entrepreneurial support firm the Idea Village. "For example, you don't think of the offshore services industry as being terribly innovative, but Todd Hornbeck has brought an incredible level of innovation not only to his boats but to the way the business is structured. The joke among the industry is that his vessels out in the Gulf look more like NASA space shuttles."

Hornbeck, chairman, president and CEO of Covington-based Hornbeck Offshore Services, will participate in a panel discussion on spotting opportunities along with Jim Bridger, general manager of the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, and Matthew M. Wisdom, co-founder and CEO of TurboSquid Inc. Business writer and editor Kathy Finn will moderate.

The forum kicks off with David M. Mize, retired major general and senior vice president with Apogen Technologies/QinetiQ North America, who will discuss the proposed Federal City project in Algiers, an innovative new model for military and federal installations. Next, Debra Neill Baker and Edwin Neill III of Hammond-based Neill Corp. will talk about the role innovation has played in building their business, one of the nation's leading beauty and salon services companies.

William F. Borne, chairman and CEO of Baton Rouge's Amedisys Inc., a leading provider of home health care and hospice services, will address his company's approach to the value proposition in health care. Following the panel discussion, Bracken will deliver this year's keynote luncheon address, "HCA and Innovation: Not Only a Requirement for Success, but an Important Aspect of Company Culture."

"Innovation as a process is something the New Orleans business community needs," says Crawford. "I think one reason more businesses aren't demonstrating innovative thinking is that no one's ever shown them how to drive innovation through their organizations. That's really what we strived to do with our slate of speakers."

Registration for this year's forum is at 8 a.m., and the conference runs from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tulane faculty and staff can register at the special discounted rate of $75. For more information about the special rate, please contact Rhonda Earles at 504-865-8470 or rearles@tulane.edu. To learn more about this year's program, visit http://tbf.tulane.edu.