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2 women get state's top honor

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Two Northeastern Pennsylvania businesswomen were selected as among the state's top 50 women in business for 2008.

The statewide honor announced by Gov. Ed Rendell named Sunita Arora, broker/owner of ERA One Source Realty in Clarks Summit, and Ellen Cabaniss Bawcom, owner of LaTiendaUSA in Milford, Pike County.

"Whether it's the founder of a professional development firm, or the partner in charge of a global firm, or the president of a bakery, all of the winners have one thing in common — they're all hard-working people who are making Pennsylvania a better place to live, work and play," Mr. Rendell said in a press release.

When Ms. Cabaniss Bawcom received a fax from the state, she thought for a moment there was a problem with her corporate tax filing. Then she realized she was being honored.

"I knew I had been nominated, but I honestly didn't think about it," she said. "It was a surprise."

LaTiendaUSA is a Web-based company that sells wrought iron, copper and wood furniture and home accessories made by Dominican Republic artisans. She started the business in 2003 as a bricks-and-mortar store, but found it difficult to compete for tourists' dollars and attract local customers because they mostly commute and shop elsewhere. She found success on the Internet.

Ms. Arora began her career as a real estate agent working at another firm before striking out on her own. Today, ERA One Source Realty is one of the region's largest real estate outfits. Ms. Arora could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

An independent panel of judges selected the top 50 candidates based on their business growth, professional and personal accomplishments, community involvement and advocacy for women in business.

Honorees will be invited to several events on May 19, including an evening reception at the Whitaker Center in Harrisburg.

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