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### 'Making It!': Program Focusing on Minority Success Stories Earns Producer Accolades

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Success, in Nelson Davis' opinion, "has no boundaries based on race, gender or national origins." After two decades of producing a television program focused on telling minority success stories, his thoughts on the matter carry some weight.

The public affairs television program, "[Making It! Minority Success Stories](#)," has succeeded for 20 years, and now Davis, its creator and executive producer, will be honored for the show's service and excellence.

On March 18, the [Small Business Administration](#) and Los Angeles Mayor [Antonio Villaraigosa](#) will present the Media Advocate Award to Davis. The award will be given during the Minority Enterprise Development Awards at Club Nokia at [L.A. Live](#). Davis will also accept a Media Firm Award from the mayor, presenting on behalf of his Minority Business Opportunity Committee.

"Making It!," which airs on Tribune Co.'s KTLA-TV in Los Angeles, its home market, as well as more than 100 other markets nationwide via cable and satellite, highlights entrepreneurs and small-business development. The businesses range from single-person operations to publicly traded corporations grossing hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

Hosted by Lynette Romero and Emmett Miller, the show has featured the stories of 1,000 small-business owners over the years and has garnered more than 30 awards, including four Emmys for best Public Affairs Series.

Davis said doing the show has been full of surprises. He didn't realize when he debuted the program in 1989 that small-business owners and entrepreneurs would become personal heroes to him.

"They invariably supply education and inspiration for me and our viewers," he said. "In the present economic downturn, more people have to think like entrepreneurs."

The program "tells stories that we can all relate to," said Alberto Alvarado, Los Angeles District director of the SBA. "People of all ages, nationalities, men and women who have tried, stumbled and succeeded tell their stories in ways that touch us and make us want to try it ourselves," Alvarado told [HispanicBusiness.com](#).

Davis said about 40 percent of the shows feature Hispanics. Hispanic

entrepreneurs have included the Gavina family of Gavina Coffee; Mauro Robles, who built a large tortilla business; Paul Casanova and Viviana Pendrill, who developed the ad agency Casanova-Pendrill & Associates; and Maurice Ortega, founder of Ortega Construction.

Other notable entrepreneurs are Billy Blanks (Tai Bo), Taryn Rose (women's shoes), and Henry Yuen, inventor of VCR Plus.

The show, Davis said, helps to build a sense of community in two ways. "First, existing or aspiring business owners can see and learn from the experiences of their peers in the community," he told HispanicBusiness.com. "Also, it is important for the general population to learn about these men and women of diverse backgrounds who are building the businesses and functioning as role models for them and their children."

The program has been called a pioneer in integrating advertisers with program content. For example, in a recent program integrating [Sempra Energy](#) (NYSE: [SRE](#)), two entrepreneurs who have become star vendors for Sempra were featured. Sempra President Debra Reed also appeared on the program, giving specific information to business owners on how to build a relationship with the energy company.

The SBA's Alvarado said that Davis and his program provide a valuable service. "Before Nelson Davis, few of us knew that anyone was 'making it,' let alone who was 'making it.' As a result of his quest to tell our stories and because of his energy, now we not only know that many are making it, but we have learned through the show *how* to make it."

The show's founder, he continued, "has inspired us by presenting the real lives of the many men and women who have created businesses, jobs, and hope throughout our neighborhoods."

What has Davis gained by doing the show?

"I've learned that persistence counts even more than the basic business idea and that sometimes the only person who believes in that idea is you," he said. "Doing the show has taught me that there are some amazing low-cost or free resources available to business owners to help them succeed and grow."

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