

## LOOKING AHEAD

# Service firms dominate this year's Rising 25

**Average growth rate was 1,185 percent**

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TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Imagine you owned a business whose annual revenue skyrocketed from \$100,000 to more than \$1 million in just five years.

Sound impossible? Not for 25 local companies.

In fact, the average rate of growth for the Rising 25 — the Richmond area's 25 fastest-growing, privately held firms — was 1,185 percent between 1990 and 1994.

"We hope it's a reflection of the economy," said Rising 25 program director Linda

Tucker with the accounting firm KPMG Peat Marwick. "We'll have to see whether it will level off or if the growth rate can continue."

### Biggest growth jump

This is the largest jump in the six-year history of the recognition program, which is sponsored by KPMG Peat Marwick, the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce and Metro Business, the Monday business section of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Companies chosen for the 1994 class grew at an average rate of 888 percent, while the top five companies saw their profits increase by 2,558 percent. The top five firms in the class of 1995 climbed above the 3,600 percent mark in growth.

The members will be honored at a Feb. 1 banquet. At that time, the fastest-growing company in the group will be announced.

Dominated by service companies, 19 out of 25, this year's list includes law firms, wholesale distributors, computer service providers, telecommunication network installers and a fitness center.

### 84 nominees

Peat Marwick chose the Rising 25 from 84 area companies nominated for the list. Seventeen of the 25 companies are making their first appearance on the list.

Byrd Construction, the fastest-growing company in the 1994 class, made the cut again as did The Whitlock Group, which took top honors in the 1993 group. (Much of The Whitlock Group was sold last year to AmeriData Technologies Inc. of Stamford, Conn., but the firm still met the criteria for the list because it is based on 1990-94 performance.)

In addition to Byrd Construction, companies making the list for the second year in a row were Barber Martin & Associates Inc., Chesapeake Communications and Corporate Copies Inc. Comtrad Industries Inc. is making its third appearance on list. Two companies, in addition to The Whitlock Group, are on the list for the fourth time, LeClair Ryan Joynes Epps & Framme and Peoples Income Tax Inc.

"It's clear that small business is alive and well and is making a significant impact on the local economy," Tucker said. "They

On the rise	
Below are the members of the 1995 class of the Rising 25, based on their revenue growth from 1990 through 1994:	
Company	Nature of business
AA Legal Services Inc. <sup>1</sup>	General practice law firm
Alliance Engineering Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Consulting engineering and construction management services
American Family Fitness Center <sup>1</sup>	Health, fitness and wellness center
Barber Martin & Associates Inc.	Advertising agency
Byrd Construction <sup>2</sup>	New home construction
Caldwell & Gregory Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Sales and service of commercial Maytag laundry equipment
Chesapeake Communications	Telecommunications sales and service
CMS Automation Inc. <sup>1</sup>	System integration company, installs networks and systems
Comtrad Industries Inc.	Direct-response marketing
Contract Specific <sup>1</sup>	Steelcase office furniture dealer
Corporate Copies Inc.	Corporate copying services
D.M.K. Inc., Va Merry Molds <sup>1</sup>	Housecleaning services
Diversitec Corp. <sup>1</sup>	Sale and testing of telephone central office transmission and switching units
E.C. Robins International Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Importer and distributor of foreign and domestic wines
I.Y.E. Inc., Va In Your Ear <sup>1</sup>	Music and recording services
LeClair Ryan Joynes Epps & Framme	Law firm
O'Keefe Marketing Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Marketing and advertising services
Old Dominion Floor Co. Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Refinishes and installs hardwood floors
Open Plan Systems <sup>1</sup>	Recycled office work stations
Peoples Income Tax Inc.	Mass market income tax service
Rainbow Station Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Early childhood education with after-school programs and sick child care
Rose Architects <sup>1</sup>	Architectural firm
The Supply Room Cos. Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Sales of office supplies, furniture and equipment
Vocational and Medical Consultants Inc. <sup>1</sup>	Vocational and medical case management services
Whitlock Group <sup>3</sup>	Computer, video and audiovisual products and services

<sup>1</sup> Denotes first time on the Rising 25 list.

<sup>2</sup> The fastest-growing company in the 1994 class.

<sup>3</sup> The fastest-growing company in the 1993 class. Much of The Whitlock Group was sold in 1995 to AmeriData Technologies Inc. of Stamford, Conn., but the company still met criteria for the Rising 25 list based on its performance from 1990 through 1994.

make a real big contribution."

She noted that together the 25 companies employ more than 1,400 people.

The competition is designed to identify the area's 25 fastest-growing private com-

panies.

To be eligible, a company must be a local private corporation, proprietorship or partnership with annual sales of more than \$100,000 in 1990. Nonprofit firms are also excluded.



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