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Published May 03, 2008 10:06 pm - Stripling's General Store was named a finalist in the recent Georgia Family Business of the Year competition in the Small Category (fewer than 50 employees).

## Stripling's named finalist in family business awards

**Staff Reports**

MOULTRIE — Stripling's General Store was named a finalist in the recent Georgia Family Business of the Year competition in the Small Category (fewer than 50 employees).

The winner in the category was Parker's Heating and Air Conditioning in Americus. Acree Oil Company in Toccoa also was named a finalist.

Turner Furniture Company, a Tifton company with a showroom in Moultrie, was a finalist in the Medium Category.

Based in Cordele, Stripling's opened its Moultrie facility in 2005 to handle its mail order business.

"Our sausage is a unique, original product on which we have built a successful business," said company spokeswoman Ashley Goss. "It is the backbone of Stripling's operations. Our hot hog country sausage was formulated around or before 1964. The recipe for the sausage has not changed in over 40 years. Our reputation, our brand recognition, our business has been built around this single product. We are extremely proud of it!"

While the recipe hasn't changed, the method for delivering it has. In addition to the growing mail order business handled in Moultrie, Stripling's has two retail outlets in Cordele. The three together handle more than 300,000 pounds of sausage a year.

As part of the selection process, Goss said, the company had to answer questions about family dynamics both within and outside the business.

"The judges were looking for a well-rounded and successful company as well as a business where leadership has been passed to at least the second generation; multiple family members working in the company or on the board of the company and owning the business; civic, societal, and industry contributions," she said.

Stripling's averages around 40-45 employees with five of those being family members. Ricky and Lisa Hardin own the company; their daughters, Lindsay Fernandez and Goss, and their son-in-law, Clint Goss, are also employed there. Jack and Ann Hardin (Ricky's parents) recently retired from the operations of the company.


In 2001 Ricky Hardin was named as Grocer of the Year by the Georgia Food Industry Association. Stripling's jerky has been recognized by Food and Wine Magazine as "One of the Top Ten Test Kitchen Discoveries" in 2006. The store has been featured on Paula's Home Cooking as part of Paula Deen's Food Network program. Stripling's Apple Cinnamon BBQ was recently named as a finalist in the Flavor of Georgia Contest.

Other winners in the Georgia Family Business of the Year contest were:

- Cox Century Award, Harris Ace Hardware and Building Supply, Jesup.
- Large Business (250 or more employees), burton + BURTON of Bogart (winner) and finalists, J&J Industries in Dalton and Jim Ellis Automotive in Atlanta.
- Medium Business (50-250 employees), Pull-A-Part LLC of Atlanta (winner), and finalists Traton Homes of Marietta and Turner Furniture



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Company of Tifton.

Founded in 1987, the Cox Family Enterprise Center is the largest and second-oldest center of its kind in the United States today. It began the Georgia Family Business of the Year competition in 1991.



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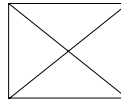
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