

*Excerpt Reprinted from the Southbridge Evening News, Monday, Nov 19, 2012*

## **Chamber ‘keeps it local’ with annual awards**

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SOUTHBRIDGE — “Keeping It Local” was the theme of last week’s annual meeting of the Chamber of Central Massachusetts South (CCMS), at which local volunteers, businesses, and citizens were recognized for their efforts “above and beyond” on behalf of the organization and the many area communities it serves. About 130 Chamber members – representing nearly 300 area businesses and some 10,000 employees – attended the 67th annual meeting (and luncheon), held in the Crystal Ballroom at the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center.



**James Waddick accepts the Business of the Year Award in behalf of the United Lens Co.**

The United Lens Co. of Southbridge was named Chamber Business of the Year, which was introduced by McNitt as “an outstanding business in the community ... and fantastic corporate system.” A brief video entitled “I Love My Job” featuring UL workers on the job, was “brought to you by the happy employees at United Lens.” Terri Colognesi of Savers Bank spoke of the company’s willingness – even eagerness – to assist with a variety of community projects, efforts – from supporting United Way campaigns to providing warehouse space following last year’s tornadoes. “They always say, ‘Anything you need done, we’ll do it,’” said Colognesi. “That’s the way they are.” Likewise, John LaFleche of Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School in Charlton commended the company, calling it “The business of the last four decades for us!” He commended the company’s support of the school’s robotics program, its education foundation, and its co-op

education program, whereby students gain experience in the workplace and, sometimes, even their first job. LaFleche also acknowledged the dedication and naming last year of the school’s Albert J. DiGregorio Memorial Machine Shop, which, he said demonstrates that “we still are a manufacturing economy.” With UL President Bill Landon away on business – presenting an award to someone else, James Waddick accepted the Chamber award for the company.