

Lee businesses hear inspiration

Message received,
says Horizon Council

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Lee County's economic development partnership celebrated its 20th year Friday with a reminder that with the right mindset, vision and grit, tough times can be just an opportunity.

The Horizon Council's annual Industry Appreciation Awards typically honor growing businesses, but the awards were put aside this year for a 20-year retrospective and presentation by inspirational speaker Scott Burrows.

The crowd of 1,100 business and community leaders at Harborside Event Center in Fort Myers set an all-time attendance record.

"A day like today is exactly what we need," said Martin Haas, president of Entech Computer Services and a past award winner. "We are a brotherhood and community. Together we can do great things."

Burrows, a former Florida State wide receiver, suffered a spinal cord injury in a 1984 car crash. He described how, over the next six years and despite medical advice, he learned to walk again. Today, he scuba dives, plays golf and skis.

While his story is personal, Burrows said there is a lesson for business as well.

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Above, Scott Burrows was the keynote speaker Friday at The Horizon Council Industry Appreciation Awards at the Harborside Event Center in Fort Myers. **At right,** business leaders from throughout Southwest Florida attend the event.

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View photos and video from the Horizon Council's Industry Appreciation Awards.

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HORIZON

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"The only things I could think about were the things I had no control over," Burrows said, comparing it to bad economic news and political squabbles. "We need to be willing to leave our paralyzed state, metaphorically speaking, and take more risks."

Burrows spent about two-thirds of his speech in a wheelchair, then stood — to rousing applause — for the final third.

"I was willing to fail, but I

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— Jim Moore, executive director
of Lee County's Economic Development Office

was unwilling to quit," he said.

Jim Moore, executive director of Lee County's Economic Development Office, said the support and enthusiasm from the community inspires him.

"It gives me chill bumps," Moore said. "Our office couldn't do this job by ourselves."

The 62-member council

includes representatives from each Lee City Council and the county commission, chambers of commerce and industry groups, as well as at-large members.

The Horizon Council serves as an advisory group to the Lee commission and the county's Economic Development Office provides staff sup-

port.

The Horizon Foundation, the nonprofit, fundraising arm of the group, has raised \$3.7 million from area businesses over its lifetime to market Lee County as a business opportunity.

Lydia Black, executive director of the Alliance for the Arts, said few communities can match Lee County's support for business.

"It really shows what Lee County has to offer is the sense of cooperation and partnership," Black said. "It's incredible."