

Pinnacle Awards honor achievers

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From his first stint as a public speaker — giving a five-minute presentation on George Washington Carver and the peanut, which won him third place in a Black History Month contest in the fifth grade — Jonathan Sprinkles was a natural talent.

Supported and assisted by his father (who helped with the visual aids), Sprinkles cleaned up in grade school public-speaking circles. Losing his father to cancer as a teenager sent Sprinkles, now 32, through a troubled phase in high school, but he credits public speaking with helping him rise above his anguish. Now, as a motivational speaker, he uses his personal experience to help others overcome challenges.

“I get a sense of fulfillment from living my purpose,” he said by phone this week from an engagement in West Virginia. “And knowing I’m training the next generation of leaders: This is the most rewarding thing to me that anyone can do.”

Sprinkles, whose engagements this year have taken him to dozens of colleges and leadership summits, is among the winners of the 15th annual Pinnacle Awards for excellence in African-American entrepreneurship.

Sponsored by the Houston Citizens Chamber of Commerce, the awards honor successful African-American businesses that contribute to building strong communities.

The winners were announced at a black-tie gala at the Houston InterContinental Hotel on Friday night.

“Now, more than at any time in the history of our country, are these businesses to be celebrated and supported,” HCCC president Eric Lyons said, adding that the staying power of these African-American businesses is a clear indicator “of the innovation and savvy of these entrepreneurs.”

Sprinkles did not attend because he was booked to speak at a South Dakota leadership retreat. His mother received the award for him.

He was one of four Pinnacle Award winners. The other three are Ka-Ron Wade DDS, Topp Knotch Personnel Services and T. Ellis Art.

Dr. Ka-Ron Wade has provided dental care since 1999, specializing in cosmetic dental procedures.

Founded by Diedria Joseph in 1995, Topp Knotch Personnel is a contract and direct-hire staffing agency with Texas, Louisiana and Florida offices.

Ted Ellis, of T. Ellis Art, has sold over a million prints and posters, focusing on the subjects and traditions of his New Orleans childhood.

The Mack H. Hannah Jr. Upstart Award, which recognizes a business on the path to entrepreneurial greatness, went to Harland Healthcare Consulting. The consulting firm, owned by Marylyn Harris, launched a program in September that will help military families in crisis.