

*For Immediate Release*

### **Express Employee of the Year Winner is the Epitome of Hope Through Employment**

**OKLAHOMA CITY, March 20, 2018**—Just three short years ago, James Michael walked into an Express Employment Professionals office with one goal—to regain custody of his son. Not only does his son now live with him full-time, but James' life has been completely transformed with the help of East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, Express franchise owner Terry Lukas and her staff.

Michael was one of five nominees for Express Employment Professionals Employee of the Year award, ultimately securing the top honor and accepting the prize in person at Express' International Leadership Conference (ILC) in Grapevine, Texas. He was initially awarded \$1,000 from Express as the Employee of the Year winner for his region, eventually winning \$5,000 as the overall winner, plus an all-inclusive trip valued at more than \$2,000.

Michael was placed on his first assignment with the East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, Express office in 2009 before moving out of the area. He returned in 2016, counting on Express to change his life. He was homeless, staying in the local Salvation Army Shelter, and needed a job to gain custody of his son who was in a bad living situation.

Express was able to put him to work the very next day.

"We felt James had many obstacles in his way, which so many would use as reasons to miss work, but he never did," Lukas said. "James did so much to get his young son into a better living environment, and you just don't see that happen often. When someone shows such determination to improve not only their life, but the life of their child, they deserve to be rewarded. He never put himself first, instead he continued to do everything in his power to better the life of his son."

Last fall, Lukas and her team worked with the client company where Michael was employed to announce his regional Employee of the Year news at the company's monthly meeting. As the regional winner, he was also now eligible for the national award. They filled Express backpacks with goodies and presented Michael with airline tickets for both him and his son, Landon, for the leadership conference in February. They continued the celebration by taking the pair suit shopping for their big moment.

At ILC, Landon was able to join his dad on stage when Michael was recognized for his outstanding work in front of more than 1,700 Express franchise owners and their staff.

"James said thank you a million times and told us he never thought just doing your job and doing the right thing could amount to this," Lukas said. "I told him we can only hope that Landon remembers this great experience and why he received the award. Hopefully, because of how and why Express rewarded him, his son will grow up with the work ethic, compassion for others and have the ambition that his dad has."

With the prize money, Lukas said her star employee plans to replace his car, which several co-workers had been helping him repair. Those co-workers even helped give Landon rides to daycare and pick Michael up for work.

Lukas said she was not surprised that everyone pitched in to help Michael in his time of need.

“That is just how much people like him,” she said.

The remaining four nominees also received \$1,000 as regional Employee of the Year winners, however, during the awards ceremony, Express surprised them further with \$5,000 each in appreciation of their dedication to the company.

“The Employee of the Year ceremony is one of my favorite parts of ILC because we get to showcase the amazing employees that work for Express and the franchise owners that invest in them,” said Bill Stoller, CEO and chairman of the board for Express. “I can’t think of a better representation of providing hope through employment.”

Other nominees for Employee of the Year included:

- Michael Bowden—Bremerton, Washington
- Eric Kramer—Cedar Falls, Iowa
- Rasjhen Z. Cotton—North Miami-Dade County, Florida
- Aaron Williams-Mathis—Royal Oak, Michigan

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### **About Express Employment Professionals**

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.56 billion in sales and employed a record 566,000 people in 2018. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit [ExpressPros.com](https://www.expresspros.com).

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