

# Fairmont, WV's, A3L Federal Works named SBA's Encore-Owned Small Business of the Year

by John Mark Shaver FAIRMONT NEWS EDITOR May 13, 2019 0

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A3L Federal Works owner Royah Maher, of Fairmont, and Small Business Administration Mid Atlantic Regional Administrator Michelle Christian speak about the SBA's Emerging Leaders program.

Staff photo by John Mark Shaver



Maher



**FAIRMONT** — For continued work in government contracting and software development, A3L Federal Works has been named the West Virginia Small Business Association's Encore-Owned Small Business of the Year.

The award, which is given to businesses started by owners over the age of 45, was given to A3L owner Royah Maher, who opened up shop in 2014 at the age of 49. Maher said that the award is very special to her.

"It was exciting to know that they're recognizing what I've done," Maher said. "Not too many people start their companies at the age of 49 or 50. I had raised my four kids, and I was just ready to do this. It's always been my dream."

Maher, who was born in Iran and moved to the United States when she was 14, said she always wanted to open her own business, taking inspiration from her family.

"I come from a family of business owners," Maher said. "It was just in my blood. My father was amazing, and I just wanted to do it. I like the fact that I can provide jobs for other people, especially for the people of West Virginia. Right now, the majority of my employees are from West Virginia, and I'm loving it. They're smart engineers and hardworking people."

A3L now boasts 16 employees, with contracting work being done at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Leidos, among others.

"We're basically an IT company," Maher said. "We provide services like software development, testing and technical training. We do a lot of data analytics. We're very strong in biometrics. We have contracts with the Department of Defense and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services."

Tina Shaw, president of the Marion County Chamber of Commerce, nominated A3L for the award, noting Maher's hard work and commitment to the local economy.

"She's a great chamber member and a great business in our community," Shaw said. "Her business has really grown by leaps and bounds in the last two years, and she's reinvented herself. The award she won is something that very few women can do, by starting a business after a certain age and growing that business to the top for their size ...

"It shows her empowerment, her enthusiasm and her commitment to her field. She's raised a family, and now her business has doubled in size ... I'm very proud of her, and among women business owners she really stands out."



Maher praised the SBA for its help in getting her business off the ground, saying that, despite a load of setbacks, a strong network of support helped her pave the way to success.

“There is always age discrimination, whether people want to admit it or not,” Maher said. “I looked at it, and the more of a challenge, the more I wanted to prove them wrong. At that age, with all my experience, I thought I had a better chance of success, because not only have I done the work, I also have worked for small businesses doing federal contracting.”

With so much work already done in five years, Maher said she’s excited for what the future holds and is ready to expand her offerings.

“I want to grow (A3L) as much as I can,” Maher said. “I want to get more prime contracts, bigger contracts and hire more people. I want to keep the base here in West Virginia, but because all of these other agencies are anchored in northern Virginia and the D.C. area, we’ll definitely have a satellite office in northern Virginia in order to have more access to other agencies, too.”

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