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Newton couple inducted into small business hall of fame

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Judith and Arthur Obermayer of Newton and Chilmark were the sole inductees into the Small Business Innovation Research Hall of Fame at the White House in its Indian Treaty Room. They were selected by the Small Business Administration in appreciation of their seminal role in securing the initial funding many decades ago for the Small Business Innovation Research Program, which has had a major economic impact on our nation.

Starting in 1970, Arthur Obermayer worked with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy to secure passage of the initial funding for the SBIR program at the National Science Foundation. Then the Obermeyers collectively worked through many political minefields to make the SBIR program government-wide in 1982 and concurrently promoted a companion piece of legislation, the Bayh-Dole Patent Act.

The SBIR Act has enhanced the performance potential for small, creative, high-tech companies in the U.S. In turn these businesses have been the technology backbone for much of our country's economic growth.

The Bayh-Dole Patent Act gives title for inventions resulting from government-funded research to small businesses and universities so that their inventions can be commercialized. Today, universities and affiliated hospitals that conduct extensive government research grants help initiate start-up companies that then use SBIR funding to prove out the commercial potential of their technology so that angel investors, venture capital and large companies will feel justified in making larger investments to bring the technology to the marketplace.

Arthur Obermayer started Moleculon Research Corp. in 1961 as a chemical and pharmaceutical research company in Cambridge. Additionally, he was active during his entire professional and business career in identifying the problems and promoting the role of small high-tech companies in dealing with the government.

Judith Obermayer, a principal in Moleculon, had a major role starting in 1979 in making SBIR government-wide and helping other small high-tech companies reach their potential.

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