



## US Business Leadership Network Announces 2007 Exceptional Leadership Award Recipients; Awards Recognize Outstanding Commitment to Promote Diversity

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WASHINGTON, DC (October 29, 2007) – The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN®) today announced the recipients of its 2007 Exceptional Leadership Awards. The awards were presented last month during the USBLN Annual Conference & Career Fair in Orlando, Florida.

The USBLN 2007 Exceptional Leadership Award recipients include:

- **Partner of the Year Award – The Able Trust of Florida.**
- **Employer of the Year Award – Hollard & Knight Law Firm**
- **BLN Chapter of the Year Award – Louisiana Business Leadership Network**



[Photo left to right: **John D. Kemp**, USBLN Executive Director & General Counsel, Richard Cole, The Able Trust board member, **Sarah S. Butters** of Hollard & Knight Law Firm, **Kimberly Seeger** of the Louisiana BLN, **Katherine McCary**, USBLN board chair, and **Daniel Gade** from The White House Domestic Policy Counsel.]

“Leadership is about change,” stated **Cathy Healy**, USBLN board member and chair of the awards review committee. “It is an intentional act achieving a purpose and a goal.”

Healy further stated, “The qualities of leaders responding to people’s fundamental wants and needs, innovative and creative about how we can improve not only our own lives but also those around us, fight for grand but controversial principles inevitably resulting in conflict with others, and possess the highest ethical standards and values.”

### Partner of the Year Award:

The USBLN selects its Partner of the Year by considering what impact the partner had on the development or expansion of the chapter as a result of partnership. The Able Trust also known as Florida’s Governor’s Alliance for the Employment of Citizens with Disabilities is a public-private foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990.

Since then it has awarded over \$420 million to individuals with disabilities and the nonprofit agencies that serve them, enabling more than 2,000 Florida citizens with disabilities to enter the workforce each year. The Able Trust youth programs provide career development and transition guidance to nearly 2,000 students with disabilities annually. In 1998 the Able Trust established the Florida Business Leadership Network.

### Employer of the Year:

The employer of the year excels in their efforts to initiate, establish, and expand local BLNs. Exemplary lead employers reach out to other businesses in order to recruit new BLN members, inspire members, and work to implement best practices in hiring, retaining and advancing workers with disabilities.

Holland & Knight, P.C. has donated hundreds of hours to the local BLNs, has encouraged and trained other employers to hire people with disabilities and through the firm's pro bono work, BLNs' have been able to launch and expand their internship programs making it possible for more students and adults with disabilities to gain the work experience they need to be successful in the workplace.

### BLN Partner of the Year:

The BLN Partner of the Year is awarded to the Business Leadership Network chapter that exemplifies promoting best practices in hiring, retaining, and marketing to people with disabilities.

The Louisiana Business Leadership Network (LBLN) is a business-led, non-profit organization dedicated to helping Louisiana employers understand, utilize, and benefit from the valuable resource that people with disabilities represent in both the consumer and labor markets. They have for four years running facilitated the Louisiana Statewide Job Fairs for People with Disabilities. In 2006, 1261 job seekers attended 9 job fairs with 198 businesses represented. This resulted in 93 interviews and 30 reported hires.

"The USBLN is proud of this year's Exceptional Leadership Award recipients," stated **Katherine McCary**, USBLN board chair of SunTrust Bank. "Their outstanding commitment to promoting diversity in the workplace clearly embodies the leadership qualities in our Partners, Employers and BLNs."

The USBLN® is the national organization that supports development and expansion of its BLN chapters across the country, serving as their collective voice. It is the only national disability organization led by business for business. The USBLN® recognizes and promotes best practices in hiring, retaining, and marketing to people with disabilities. There are 44 Business Leadership Network chapters in 32 states, including the District of Columbia, representing more than 5,000 employers across the US. The BLN uses a "business to business" approach to educate, promoting the business imperative of including people with disabilities in the workforce. Learn more at [www.usbln.org](http://www.usbln.org).

BLN Chapters are business organizations headed by a Lead Business who exemplifies these practices and shares experiences with other members-employers-within the state or region. These activities include career fairs, disability mentoring and internship programs, and training programs including disability business etiquette, accommodation, and other disability issues deemed significant to employers. Businesses join BLN chapters to learn how to expand their diversity recruiting efforts to include individuals with disabilities- not as a social model but as a business case to recruit talent and better serve their customers. BLN successes serve the workplace, the marketplace, the community and the economy. The USBLN® Vision is that every employer recognizes and benefits from the best practice of including people with disabilities in their workforce and marketplace.

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