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Leading Disability Organizations Launch National Campaign for Disability Employment

Unprecedented 'What Can YOU Do?' Initiative Calls on Employers and Others to Improve the Disability Employment Landscape

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 18, 2009 – Last evening at the U.S. Business Leadership Network's (USBLN) Annual Conference and National Career Fair, several leading disability organizations launched the *Campaign for Disability Employment*, a new collaborative effort to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Announcement of the nationwide campaign – built around the theme “What Can YOU Do?” – came during the conference's keynote speech by Robert David Hall, actor and disability rights advocate.

Every day, people with disabilities can and do add value to America's workplaces. However, in both good economic times and bad, people with disabilities have far fewer job opportunities than the general population. The *Campaign for Disability Employment's* goal is to promote the hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities and dispel negative stereotypes about disability and employment.

Working to raise awareness and change attitudes, *What Can YOU Do?* reinforces that people with disabilities want to work and that their talents and abilities positively impact businesses both financially and organizationally. The Campaign offers a range of education and outreach tools, all designed to engage employers, people with disabilities, family and educators, and the general public. These include the community-building Web site, www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org, which offers users the chance to learn about disability employment issues and express their commitment to advancing disability employment. It also allows people with disabilities, including youth, to share their job skills and career interests. Other sections feature grassroots tools and tangible ideas for supporting the Campaign's goals, as well as a library of public service announcements (PSAs) that challenge assumptions about people with disabilities and employment. Included in the video library is the Campaign's flagship “I Can” PSA, intended for nationwide television broadcast, and the winners of the *What Can YOU Do?* video contest, which invited aspiring filmmakers to produce their own videos in support of the Campaign's goals.

At yesterday's conference, Mr. Hall, who chairs a national committee that promotes equal employment opportunities for artists and professionals with disabilities in the entertainment and media industries, launched the *What Can YOU Do?* effort on behalf of the Campaign's members by screening the “I Can” PSA for a wide audience of business and community leaders. He also called upon the employers present to support the Campaign by committing to maintaining a flexible and inclusive workplace and encouraging other business leaders to do the same.

“The Campaign is about raising expectations and changing perceptions of people with disabilities,” said Kathleen Martinez, assistant secretary for the Office of Disability Employment Policy at the U.S. Department of Labor. “The employment outlook for people with disabilities will only improve when we have the opportunity to show the contribution we can make.”

About the Campaign for Disability Employment

The *Campaign for Disability Employment* seeks to promote positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities by encouraging employers, and others, to recognize the value and talent that people with disabilities bring to the workplace, as well as the dividend to be realized by fully including people with disabilities at work. The Campaign is a collaborative effort between the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD); the National Business and Disability Council (NBDC); Special Olympics (SO); and the U.S. Business Leadership Network (USBLN). The *Campaign for Disability Employment* is supported by West Virginia University, receives technical assistance from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and is funded by the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)/U.S. Department of Labor. For more information, visit www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org.