



US Business Leadership Network Announces 2011 Annual Leadership Award Winners

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WASHINGTON, DC (October 26, 2011) – The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN[®]) today announced the winners of its **2011 Annual Leadership Awards**, which were presented to the recipients last week during the USBLN[®] 2011 Annual Conference & Expo held in Louisville, Kentucky. The awards recognized leaders in seven categories - including Partner of the Year, Affiliate of the Year, Lead Employer of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Supplier Diversity Corporation of the Year, Employee Resource Group (ERG) of the Year and Market Share Corporation of the Year.

Additionally, **John D. Kemp, Esq.**, President & CEO, Abilities! was awarded with the USBLN[®] Founding Executive Director and Long Time Friend Award for his outstanding support to the organization. **Stephen J. Szilagyi**, Senior Vice President, Distribution, Lowe's Companies, Inc. was also recognized for his leadership in inclusive employment practices and his service as the 2011 USBLN[®] Annual Conference Chair.

The purpose of the 2011 USBLN[®] Annual Leadership Awards is to further the USBLN[®] mission of identifying leading disability workplace, market place and supply chain practices in use today. These awards provide the metrics by which our Corporate Partners, BLN affiliates, Volunteers and Organizational Allies are recognized for their demonstration of outstanding commitment to promoting disability diversity across the enterprise. Award recipients clearly embody the highest ethical standards and values in our community.

- **Partner of the Year**

The **Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation/National Employment Team (NET)** is the Partner of the Year award recipient. CSAVR's National Employment Team provides their business partners with a single point of contact. Stephanie Vinson and her team have supported the NCBLN in our efforts to re-start this Affiliate in the past 18 months. The NET helps businesses to identify what resources they need to support their current workforce while providing access to the largest applicant pool of people with disabilities in the U.S. The CSAVR/NET most often serves as the "silent partner" to many of the most successful disability employment business models – based on the funding that most often comes directly from VR to community service providers. The NET and VR partner with BLN Affiliates across the country and also provide funding to support staff and operations in several states including but not limited to: NC, FL, AL, TX, CA, WA, WY, NC, CT and PA.

- **Affiliate of the Year**

The **Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network** is the Affiliate of the Year award recipient. The Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network (GKC-BLN) has made a large footprint in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area through their focus on education, awareness and enhanced employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The GKC-BLN has partnered with three state and government agencies (Kansas Department of Social & Rehabilitation Services, the Missouri Governor's Council on Disability and the Department of Labor/ODEP "Add Us In" grant); local and state Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) affiliates; local service providers; and local Chambers of Commerce.

- **Lead Employer of the Year**

AMC Entertainment, Inc is the Lead Employer of the Year award recipient. AMC Entertainment is the founding employer of The Greater Kansas City Business Leadership Network, Inc. and is led by AMC's Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer, Keith Wiedenkiller. AMC theatres has created a new national program – entitled FOCUS (Furthering Opportunities, Cultivating Untapped Strengths) – around hiring people with disabilities at their theatres. Dozens of people have been hired at AMC over the past year under the auspices of this program, with the potential for hundreds more. The AMC FOCUS program is starting to receive national attention.

- **Volunteer of the Year**

Roger McCullough, Manager, HR Information and Technology Services, The Personnel Board of Jefferson County, Alabama is the Volunteer of the Year award recipient. In addition to actually starting the Alabama BLN chapter, Roger has been instrumental in carrying the ABLE Network message that employing people with disabilities makes good business sense. Roger's mission as the ABLE Network chairperson has been two-fold; create a way for people with disabilities to be recruited by employers and help educate employers about disability. He has done just that by serving on the design, development, and testing team for the ABLE Network website. The ABLE Website is a resource for employers on disability and employment related information and a one-of-a-kind recruiting site where employers can recruit qualified applicants with disabilities from Alabama's VR program. It is a direct link to potential employees with disabilities that is unique in that employers can recruit a candidate for employment and receive placement support from rehabilitation technologists and vocational rehabilitation counselors to ensure successful placements.

- **Supplier Diversity Corporation of the Year**

IBM is the Supplier Diversity Corporation of the Year award recipient. IBM's Minority Supplier Development Program began in 1968 and is one of the oldest if not the oldest supplier diversity program in the country. IBM's commitment to supplier diversity is an initiative pursued with vigilance and zeal; it is part of IBM's heritage, business plan, and future. The policy of the IBM Corporation is to provide diverse businesses the opportunity to participate in all areas of IBM's marketing, procurement, and contracting activities. This policy applies to all areas of expenditures, whether for products or services.

- **Employee Resource Group (ERG) of the Year**

Ernst & Young AccessAbilities™ is the Employee Resource Group (ERG) of the Year award recipient. Ernst & Young AccessAbilities™ became a formal part of Ernst & Young's inclusiveness efforts six years ago. Americas-wide, members represent every rank, function and major geographic area in the US and Canada. Many members do not themselves have disabilities, but have friends and family with disabilities or are involved in related volunteer or professional associations. Their mission is to help develop a workplace in which people of all abilities can reach their full potential. They have two goals: to create an enabling environment and to build a disabilities-inclusive culture. AccessAbilities holds monthly conference calls to discuss possibilities for improving Ernst & Young's support of its people with disabilities. Participants are drawn from across the US and Canada, representing all ranks and business units. Diverse membership provides a strong support base and allows the group to benefit from a variety of perspectives.

- **Market Share Corporation of the Year**

AT&T is the Market Share Corporation of the Year award recipient. At AT&T accessibility is more than a word. It is a company-wide holistic commitment and pledge to diversity that enables AT&T to create a better business environment and to be an employer of choice, preferred business partner and contributor to the community. That means creating, providing and marketing accessible and usable products and services to customers and employees at work, school and in the community.

The 2011 Annual Leadership Awards capped off yet another successful USBLN® Annual Conference.

About the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN®)

The US Business Leadership Network® (USBLN®) is the national disability organization that serves as the collective voice of over 60 Business Leadership Network affiliates across North America, representing over 5,000 employers. The USBLN® promotes the business imperative of the preparation and inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace, marketplace, and supply chain while supporting the development and expansion of its BLN affiliates. The USBLN® recognizes and supports best practices in hiring and advancing employees with disabilities, marketing to consumers with disabilities, and encourages contracting with vendors with disabilities through the development and certification of disability-owned business enterprises. www.usbln.org

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