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From the Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center and Chicago Tribune
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INNOVATE Illinois Finalists Announced

*Most Innovative Small Businesses in Environmental, Manufacturing and
Service Industries Selected to Compete for Over \$100,000 in Prizes*

Chicago, IL. January 17, 2005 The Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center, a partnership between Chicago Community Ventures and the University of Illinois at Chicago, and funded by Governor Rod Blagojevich's Opportunity Returns economic development program through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), announced the finalists for its INNOVATE Illinois Challenge this week. They include 11 of the most innovative businesses in Northeast Illinois across the environmental, service and manufacturing sectors. There is also an award for the most innovative women-owned business and minority-owned business overall bringing the total to five final awards to be named on March 1.

INNOVATE Illinois, which launched on October 5, 2004 with a kick-off day at DePaul University, was created to recognize some of the most innovative and high growth small companies in the 10-county northeast region of Illinois. The finalists announced today were selected by a group of seven entrepreneurs, investors and industry experts. The finalists will now prepare for their presentations at INNOVATE Illinois final event on March 1, being hosted at Kendall College. Each business will present their innovation and comprehensive plan, and winners will receive awards following a Keynote address by Howard Tullman, a widely-respected entrepreneur and recently-appointed president of Kendall College who has repeatedly led highly innovative organizations.

There were a number of really strong applications, said Ed Sitar, Economic Development Manager of ComEd, an INNOVATE Illinois sponsor and Honorary Advisory Board Member. What ultimately made the finalists stand out was their proven track record and ability to implement their vision, a thorough understanding of their respective markets, and their clarity in vision and direction. ComEd is always proud to support programs like INNOVATE Illinois, because it enables us to proactively contribute value to the economy we serve, and potentially help uncover the next company that will provide significant employment opportunities.

INNOVATE Illinois was created to reward small business innovators in three diverse industries that are the foundation of the Illinois economy but are often overlooked in business plan challenges, said Susan Alnaqib, Director of the Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center. The selection committee did a fantastic job in identifying the strongest finalists from an impressive collection of applications. The companies that will present on March 1 are representative of the highly innovative small businesses in our region that are needed to drive the economy.

INNOVATE Illinois Finalists

ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR FINALISTS:

Constant Compliance: Constant Compliance, Inc. develops and markets patented technologies for environmental and homeland security applications worldwide.

Environmental Design International, Inc.: Environmental Design International, Inc., (EDI) is a full-service minority and female-owned, licensed, professional engineering firm offering a variety of engineering, industrial hygiene, environmental and information technology services.

Solvent Systems: Solvent Systems International has been providing environmental services and products to industrial customers since 1983 and works closely with the Illinois EPA and the USEPA on various projects to expand the state-of-the-art of pollution prevention.

Ineeka Tea: Ineeka Tea is an environmentally and socially responsible producer of 100% organic and fair trade whole leaf teas using an innovative infusion method.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR FINALISTS:

Reel EZ Display: ReelEZDisplay designs and manufactures innovative in-store signage and display fixtures.

Jellifish: Jellifish designs and manufactures novel guitar accessories for the professional and amateur musician .

Nu World Amaranth: Nu World Amaranth is an Amaranth producer, ready-to-eat processor and distributor that leverages the unique properties of Amaranth (a sustainable grain crop) in the gluten-free/allergen-free market. NWA manufactures cereals, snacks and baking ingredients that are sold (under its Nu-World Foods Brand) through health food stores and supermarkets.

SERVICE SECTOR FINALISTS:

Mobile MoneySaver": Mobile MoneySaver" is a real-time marketing service

that makes any Cell Phone Pay for Itself" by conveniently redeeming web-based offers when dining out. It s focused on filling the empty seats in restaurants by matching the number of offers using the UnCoupon" Revenue Management Service.

NogginLabs: NogginLabs is a full-service custom e-learning software development company that specializes in creating performance-based design e-learning software simulations for corporations.

Application 2 Admission: Application 2 Admission offers professional personal assistants and retention services to prospective college students.

Networked Robotics: Networked Robotics provides monitoring of scientific instrumentation and networks.

INNOVATE Illinois will ultimately present five awards that include \$13,000 in cash and \$7,000 in value for in-kind products and services. Jack Lavin, Director of Illinois DCEO, and Lori Healey, Principal of Perkins & Will, are co-chairs of INNOVATE Illinois. Sponsors of INNOVATE Illinois include Illinois DCEO, Microsoft, The Coleman Foundation, ComEd, Nicor, Perkins & Will, Illinois VENTURES, the Chicago I-TEC, Chicago Community Ventures, DePaul University, Kendall College, Orbitz, Intranets.com, the Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center, K Andre Consulting and others.

About The Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center

The Chicago West Side Entrepreneurship Center (CWSEC) leverages resources available in the marketplace to promote the entrepreneurial development of high-growth-potential businesses. The CWSEC works with entrepreneurs and businesses (regardless of industry or stage) that demonstrate the ability to achieve growth through revenue generation and job creation and to contribute to the economic development of Illinois. Through our services the CWSEC helps high growth potential businesses achieve significant milestones to take their businesses to the next level.