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NMSDC Announces Top Regional Minority Suppliers

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NEW YORK, Sept. 12 /PRNewswire/ -- Sixteen outstanding minority-owned businesses from across the country were named "Regional Supplier of the Year" by the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), it was announced today. The companies represent a cross-section of industries, including food and product manufacturing; engineering, technology and communications consulting; security management; workforce management; and commercial interior design. NMSDC will present awards to each regional winner on Wednesday, October 31, in Miami Beach, Florida, during the 2007 NMSDC Conference and Business Opportunity Fair.

"This year's regional winners are top caliber companies that meet and often exceed the service expectations of their major corporate clients," said NMSDC President Harriet R. Michel. "Their performance, business development and

presence in the community set them apart from the competition, and solidify the value of strong minority firms to our corporate partners."

The 16 regional winners are divided into four classes based on annual sales, and are nominated by their corporate customers. NMSDC-certified Asian, Black, Hispanic and Native American businesses are evaluated on the basis of business growth, development and performance, community service and the ability to overcome challenges brought on by the company owner's heritage or background.

More than 7,000 minority business owners, corporate purchasing executives and business executives are expected to attend the four-day conference, which begins on Sunday, October 28, and continues through Wednesday, October 31, at the Miami Beach Convention Center. One regional winner from each of the four classes will be

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named a National Winner at the 35th Anniversary Celebration Awards Gala held during the conference. The Conference theme is "NMSDC 2007: Building the Global Economy of Tomorrow Today." The 2007 NMSDC Regional Suppliers of the Year are listed below.

CLASS IV, SALES GREATER THAN \$50 MILLION, THE WINNERS ARE:

Dakkota Integrated Systems, LLC. Holt, Michigan-Andra Rush is the president and chief executive officer of Dakkota Integrated Systems, LLC, a Tier I manufacturing company that provides interior integration, product development and validation, pre-production builds, complex assemblies, system and component sequencing, and its signature "Just In Time" delivery to the automotive industry. Dakkota's corporate clients include DaimlerChrysler, Ford Motor Company and General Motors. The company was launched in 2001 as a joint venture between Intier Automotive Interiors and Rush Trucking. Dakkota Integrated Systems had \$605 million in sales in 2006. Ms. Rush serves on several boards, including the Native American Business Alliance and the Minority Business Roundtable. She is a national trustee for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. www.dakkotasystems.com


Ruiz Foods, Inc., Dinuba, California-Frederick R. Ruiz is chairman of Ruiz Foods, Inc., the largest manufacturer of frozen Mexican food in the United States, with nearly 200 items in its El Monterey product line. The family- owned company, now in its third generation of leadership, counts retail grocery stores, club stores, super retail centers and convenience stores such as Costco, Kroger, Safeway, Sam's Club, 7-Eleven, Target and Wal-Mart among its major customers. Ruiz Foods recorded more than \$387 million in sales in 2006. Ranked 18th on Hispanic Business Magazine's 2007 list of the nation's top 500 Hispanic-owned businesses, the company is also active in the communities of the Central San Joaquin Valley. Through the non-profit Ruiz 4 Kids organization founded in 1990, the company has contributed more than \$1 million to arts, education, health and sports/recreation programs for children. www.elmonterey.com

The Specialized Packaging Group, Inc., Hamden, Connecticut-Carlton L. Highsmith is the president and CEO of The Specialized Packaging Group, a Black-owned company that designs and manufactures paperboard packaging for consumer products companies specializing in oral care, personal care, pharmaceutical and healthcare, home care, fabric care, baby care, food and beverage, and pet care. Procter & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, Unilever, S.C. Johnson and The Clorox Company are among the company's major customers. The Specialized Packaging Group was established in 1983 and has grown through acquisition and expansion into a multinational company with manufacturing, sales, design and innovation centers located in seven states and Canada. The company recorded sales of \$130 million in 2006. Mr. Highsmith is active in the community, serving as chairman of the board of "I Have a Dream New Haven" and on the board of directors of New Alliance Bank, Quinnipiac University, Science Park Development Corporation, and the national "I Have a Dream" Project. www.spgroup-inc.com

ZeroChaos, Orlando, Florida-Harold Mills is CEO of ZeroChaos. Established in 2000, the company provides contingent workforce management, including professional payroll, risk management and e-staffing business solutions. Their corporate clients include American Express, Bank of America, EDS, IBM, Merrill Lynch, and Nortel. ZeroChaos is one of the largest Black-owned companies in the U.S., and the largest Black-owned firm in Florida. ZeroChaos had \$366 million in sales in 2006. With 5,000 employees throughout the U.S. and abroad, it is the second-largest minority-owned staffing company in the country. Community service is a key component of the ZeroChaos business philosophy. Mr. Mills participates in several organizations in the Orlando community, including the African-American Chamber of




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www.zerochaos.com

CLASS III, SALES BETWEEN \$10 MILLION AND \$50 MILLION, THE WINNERS ARE:

A.M. Ortega Construction, Inc., Lakeside, California-Maurice Ortega is president of A.M. Ortega Construction, Inc., a general engineering company that specializes in the installation of underground dry utilities, including gas lines, cable lines and telephone lines, as well as natural gas pipeline transmission and distribution. Established in 1974, A.M. Ortega has grown from a one-man operation into a thriving company with 130 employees in offices in San Diego and Riverside. The Hispanic-owned company, whose major clients include Diversified Utilities, Erreca's Inc., SDG&E, Southern California Gas Company and Wilson Construction, recorded \$25.8 million in sales in 2006. A.M. Ortega Construction supports several organizations including the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, the Lakeside Boys and Girls Clubs of East County, the Children's Leukemia Society, the El Capitan Band Parents Association, the California Professional Firefighters, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and the Narcotic Educational Foundation of America. www.amortega.com

Carter Brothers, LLC, Atlanta, Georgia-John F. Carter is the president and CEO and Cris Carter is the chairman of Carter Brothers, LLC, a Black-owned firm that provides full security management solutions including project/program management of burglar alarm, fire and life safety products. The company also offers services supporting information technology and employment screening. Established in 2000, Carter Brothers operates in 29 states and more than 50 municipalities. In 2006, the company had \$55.3 million in sales. The firm is one of the fastest-growing companies in the security industry, with major clients including ADT, Bank of America, Bovis Lend Lease, BP, Frito Lay, General Electric, Grainger, Kraft, Standard Register and Tyco. Carter Brothers is actively involved in the community through Carter Brothers Charities, created in 2003 to support programs that focus on domestic violence, youth outreach and community development. The Henry County Haven House, Hosea Feeds the Hungry, American Red Cross, and families impacted by Hurricane Katrina have benefited from the company's generosity.
www.carterbrothers.com

Devon Industrial Group, Detroit, Michigan-David Burnley is president of Devon Industrial Group, a construction company that provides construction services to industrial, commercial, healthcare, institutional and educational customers, including construction management, design build, facility management and general contracting. The company is Black-owned and recorded sales of \$68 million in 2006. Devon Industrial Group's major customers include DaimlerChrysler, Detroit Medical Center, Ford Motor Company, General Motors and the University of Michigan. Devon Industrial has contributed to several organizations in the Detroit community, including the Autism Society of America, Habitat for Humanity, Highland Park Schools, the Jain Society, the National Association of Black Automotive Suppliers, Southeastern Village and the Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan.
www.devonindustrial.com

Eclaro International, New York, NY-Daniel Sung Park is president of Eclaro International, a business and technology consulting firm with offices in Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Texas, Virginia and India. The company offers services in business process/functional consulting; staff augmentation; professional services consulting; vendor management services; and custom application development. In 2006, the Asian-Pacific American owned firm had \$25 million in sales. Eclaro International was established in 1999 and conducts business

with major customers including Con Edison, IBM, Hewlett Packard, the New York Power Authority and Unilever. Mr. Park is an active board member of his church, Joy Christian Fellowship, and has traveled to Uganda to work with World Vision to help restore and develop poor communities in the African country. World Vision provides clean water and AIDS prevention strategies, and is working to establish commerce to enable the communities of Uganda to be self sustaining. Eclaro International supports the St. Jude's Children's Hospital, HELP USA and the Broome County (New York) Council of Churches Food Bank. www.eclaroIT.com

CLASS II, SALES BETWEEN \$1 MILLION AND \$10 MILLION, THE WINNERS ARE:

CARRCO Painting Contractors, Inc., Garland, Texas-Javier F. Huerta is president of CARRCO Painting Contractors, Inc., a Hispanic-owned company that provides full service commercial and industrial painting and wall covering. Established in 1994, the firm reported \$5.2 million in sales in 2006. CARRCO's major customers include Austin Industries, Centex, Coronado Builders, Hill & Wilkinson, Hunt Construction, Phillips/May Corporation, The Plano Conservancy for Historic Preservation, Precept Builders and Turner Construction Company. The company has received several awards for its work. This year, the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America (PDCA) presented CARRCO with its Safety Award and its Picture It Painted Professionally (PIPP) Award for a commercial exterior project. The company received PIPP Awards industrial exterior, new commercial, and commercial exterior projects in 2005. CARRCO is also supportive of the Dallas/Fort Worth community. Mr. Huerta is vice chairman of the Hispanic Contractors Association of Dallas/Fort Worth, is active with youth sports, and donates his time and talent to community projects and leadership development. www.carrcopainting.com

Cybernet System Management Inc. (CSMI), Schaumburg, Illinois-Cybernet System Management Inc, founded in 1983 by its president Karen Eng, is an engineering consulting firm specializing in the design and engineering of process and packaging systems for industries including food and beverage; personal care products; pharmaceutical; biotechnology; and fine chemicals. The Asian-Pacific American company had \$2.56 million in sales in 2006. The CSMI list of major customers includes Abraxis Pharmaceutical Products, General Mills, Kraft Foods, PepsiCo (Quaker, Tropicana, Gatorade), and Schreiber Foods. Dr. Eng is community-minded, participating in the Minority Business Enterprise Input Committee (MBEIC) and the Chicago Minority Business Development Council. A trained optometrist, she gives free eye exams to members of underserved communities and performs screenings at local schools. Dr. Eng has chaired the "Save the Night for Light Walk" to raise money for the non-profit organization Prevent Blindness, and has joined with CSMI staff members to participate in the Walk and volunteer for community service. www.csnius.com

LaVERDAD Marketing & Media, Cincinnati, Ohio-James M. (Mike) Robinson is president and CEO of LaVERDAD Marketing & Media, a Hispanic-owned firm whose name comes from the Spanish word for "the truth." As part of its mission, the company uses marketing, marketing research, public relations and advertising to help its clients create and market products and services that will improve the lives of ethnic consumers. The company was established in 2002 and had \$1.2 million in sales in 2006. LaVERDAD counts Allstate Insurance, Bravo Magazine, Fifth Third Bank, Procter & Gamble and SuperValu/biggs among its major customers. In the Cincinnati community, LaVERDAD has been active in initiatives that support educators and healthcare providers and address the disparity in care, services and education for ethnic consumers. The firm worked with the National Society of Hispanic MBAs to bring one of the largest Hispanic diversity initiatives in the nation to Cincinnati in 2006. That same year,

LaVERDAD awarded its first annual \$1,000 scholarship to a Hispanic undergraduate student. www.laverdadmarketing.com

Metasys Technologies, Duluth, Georgia-Sandeep Gauba is president and CEO of Metasys Technologies, Inc., an Asian Indian-American firm that provides IT staffing solutions, services procurement management, and business process outsourcing. Founded in 2000, Metasys Technologies had \$10.8 million in sales in 2006. The company's major customers include AIG, AT&T, General Electric, Georgia-Pacific, The Home Depot, the state of Georgia, Panasonic and UPS. Metasys Technologies has received a number of awards and recognitions, including being ranked No. 8 on the Atlanta Business Chronicle list of the "Best Place to Work," small business category (2005) and No. 2 on the same list in 2006; and earning the No. 1 spot on the DiversityBusiness.com list of the top diversity-owned businesses (2005). In 2006, the company was named the top minority supplier by The Home Depot. Mr. Gauba and the staff of Metasys actively participate in the Atlanta community with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the United Way, the American Cancer Society, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Atlanta Police Foundation, TechBridge and Leadership Atlanta. www.metasysinc.com

CLASS I, SALES LESS THAN \$1 MILLION, THE WINNERS ARE:

C.W.D. Designs Inc., Southfield, Michigan-Herman Carter is president and CEO of C.W.D. Designs, a Black-owned company established in 1982 that provides custom interior design service for offices, meeting rooms and large-scale venues, including furniture, public address systems, custom curtains, cornices and draperies, and motorized window coverings. In 2006, the firm recorded \$511,000 in sales.

C.W.D. Designs has a roster of major clients that includes Comerica Bank, DaimlerChrysler, the Detroit Public Library, Ibex Construction, McDonald's Corporation, Nationwide and Nordstrom's. Mr. Carter uses the "give as I go" philosophy of community service. Since 1993, his company has maintained a mentoring program for students in the Southfield community. Additionally, C.W.D. Designs always makes donations to schools and churches in communities where the company is involved in a work project. Past contributions include draperies, window coverings, art, logos on curtain valances and office furniture placement. www.cwddesign.com

The Champion Services Group, Inc., Miami, Florida-James A. Champion is president and CEO of The Champion Services Group, a 12-year old human resources and management consulting services company. The Black-owned firm earned \$501,000 in sales in 2006. The Champion Services Group has a number of major customers, including AVMED Health Plan, Burger King Corporation, City of Seattle, City of Miami, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), Palm Beach Community College, Pacific Maritime Association, and Royal Caribbean Cruises. Mr. Champion is active in the Miami community, serving on the board of directors of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Jackson Memorial Foundation, the Greater Miami Tennis Foundation, Black Executive Forum, Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce, and the Florida Memorial University Scholarship Committee. www.thecsgway.com

JOBS Training & Placement, Los Angeles, California-Melba Jackson Carter is the founding CEO of JOBS Training & Placement, and Arthur C. Jackson is the president. The African American-owned company provides employment readiness services including career coaching, professional training, resume writing, interviewing techniques, vocational assessments, and computer workshops. JOBS Training & Placement also assists colleges and technical schools with counseling, referrals, and networks for educational reimbursement and financial aid. In 2006, the firm had \$389,000 in sales. The five-year-old company has worked with major customers including AEG Worldwide, Compact International, Kaiser Permanente, the Los Angeles County office of Education and RBD Communication. Ms. Carter, Mr. Jackson

and the JOBS team are active in the Los Angeles community, conducting computer literacy and e-application workshops for seniors and youth, and volunteering as mentors and academic tutors with the "In His Hands" ministry. www.cmredge.com

Light Speed, LLC., Hamden, Connecticut-The husband and wife team of Carlton and Brenda Oneal are managing partners of Light Speed, LLC, a communications and consulting firm that specializes in CD and Web-based interactive communications, leadership development, executive coaching and facilitation services. The African American-owned company was established in 1994 and had \$345,700 in sales in 2006. Black Entertainment Television (BET), Empower New Haven, Northeast Utilities System, The Physicians Academy and Pfizer are among Light Speed's major customers. Mr. and Mrs. Oneal are active in the Connecticut community and have received several awards for their business performance. Earlier this year, Light Speed received the "MBE to MBE Empowerment Award from the Connecticut Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC). In 2006, the company was named one of the "Rising Stars for 2006" by the New Haven Business Journal, and in 2004, Light Speed was named Supplier of the Year by CMSDC. www.lightspedeu.com

About NMSDC

Providing a direct link between corporate America and minority-owned businesses is the primary objective of the National Minority Supplier Development Council, one of the country's leading business membership organizations. It was chartered in 1972 to provide increased procurement and business opportunities for minority businesses of all sizes.

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