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Minneapolis Chamber announces winners of 2015 Best in Business Awards:
*Second Harvest Heartland, Accenture, Chowgirls Killer Catering, Northside
Achievement Zone, and Woodchuck USA*

MINNEAPOLIS (March 2, 2015) –The Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the winners of the 2015 Best in Business Awards. Second Harvest Heartland, Accenture, Chowgirls Killer Catering, Northside Achievement Zone, and Woodchuck USA are being recognized for their business leadership and outstanding achievements in the community over the past year.

Winners are selected in the following categories: Best in Business, Quality of Life, Small Business of the Year, Non-Profit of the Year, and Breakout Business of the Year. All award recipients will be honored at the annual Best in Business Awards luncheon on March 19 at the Loews Hotel in Minneapolis.

Second Harvest Heartland, Best in Business Award

Second Harvest Heartland is a non-profit organization with a mission to end hunger through community partnerships. As one of the largest food bank operators in the nation, Second Harvest Heartland serves 532,000 people annually in 59 counties across Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Since it was founded in 2001, the organization has increased distribution through the regional hunger relief system to 88.4 million pounds, up from 83.8 million pounds last year. More than 49% of the items distributed were fresh - including meats, produce, baked goods and dairy. Second Harvest has 167 employees and offered job promotions to 19 individuals on staff last year. In addition, approximately 33,000 volunteers contributed their time to the organization, providing time equivalent to that of 70 full-time employees. In recognition of these efforts, Second Harvest was selected as the recipient of Feeding America's Food Bank of the Year Award in 2014.

Accenture, Quality of Life Award

Accenture provides management consulting, technology and outsourcing services and has approximately 319,000 employees and offices in more than 200 cities in 56 countries. Through its 'Skills to Succeed' initiative, Accenture has equipped more than 700,000 people around the world with the skills they need to get a job or build a business. The company also established the Accenture Social Change Award in partnership with the Greater Twin Cities United Way to help solve the skills gap in the Twin Cities and further evolve employee engagement in skills-based volunteer efforts. Over the past year, Minneapolis employees of Accenture volunteered over

(more)

2,500 hours through the company's corporate citizenship programs and have engaged with organizations such as AchieveMps, Junior Achievement, and Project for Pride in Living.

Chowgirls Killer Catering, Small Business of the Year

Chowgirls Killer Catering was established in 2004 by Heidi Andermack and Amy Brown. The company has grown to employ 80 individuals during peak months and has increased revenue to more than \$2.1 million in 2014, a 16.6% growth rate over the previous year. Chowgirls pioneered the use of seasonal, organic, and locally sourced ingredients and is committed to environmental sustainability, social responsibility and the community. The company also donates 2% of annual revenue to local charities and provides staff with organized opportunities to volunteer every quarter. Chowgirls has received great recognition from local media including several "Best of Minnesota" nods from Minnesota Monthly, multiple "Diamond" Awards from MSP Magazine, and owners Andermack and Brown were named on the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal's "Top 50 Women in Business" list this past year.

Northside Achievement Zone, Non-Profit of the Year

The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) is an entrepreneurial collaboration of more than 30 organizations and nine schools partnering with families in North Minneapolis. The organization's mission is to end multigenerational poverty by closing the educational achievement gap through its "Cradle-to-Career" program. In 2014, the organization reached 739 families with 1,735 children, expanded its "Family Academy" parent education program, and partnered with Teach for America – Twin Cities and the University of Minnesota to create the state's first-ever alternative teacher licensure program approved by the Minnesota Teaching Board.

Woodchuck USA, Breakout Business of the Year

Woodchuck USA designs and manufactures a variety of high-end wooden accessories including phone cases, journals, cuff links and women's clutches. Founded two and a half years ago by Ben VandenWymelenberg, the company now employs 13 individuals and has reached total revenue growth of 175%. Woodchuck's central mission and catalyst to growth has been to "bring nature back to people, bring jobs back to America and bring quality back to products." In alignment with this vision, the Woodchuck team donates time and resources to non-profits that get kids back outside such as Outdoor Nation and Camp Kesem, as well as nurturing partnerships with American Made Matters and the Made in USA Foundation.

Best in Business Awards

Best in Business Awards is a program of the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce that recognizes companies of various sizes for their accomplishments and contributions to the community in addition to their business growth, corporate philanthropy and workplace innovations. Qualifying companies must meet certain eligibility requirements based on award type and must be members of the Chamber. The Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Best in Business Awards Luncheon to honor companies selected for each award.

Xcel Energy, RBC Wealth Management, Comcast, and PSAV are the 2015 sponsors of the Best in Business Awards. For more information about the Best in Business Awards or to purchase tickets to the awards luncheon, call (612) 370-9100 or visit minneapolischamber.org/awards.