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State Honors Businesses

Tallahassee - Before a large audience, eight business were recognized by the state of Florida for being leaders in the employment of people with disabilities. The celebration was held to kick off Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Governor Charlie Crist said, "I am proud that state government is a leader in providing job shadowing and employment opportunities to persons with disabilities. Floridians with disabilities are an important part of our state's work force, and I encourage Florida's business leaders and employers to learn more about how to better utilize this pool of untapped talent."

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Blind Services, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) honored the businesses from across the state for their commitment to hiring people with disabilities. October is Disability Employment Awareness Month, and the state is highlighting the contributions of people with disabilities to the work force. The event was held in Tallahassee.

The businesses received the Florida Exceptional Employer Award. The Florida Exceptional Employer Award recognizes both the commitment of these businesses to hiring and retaining people with disabilities and also their initiative in creating unique employment opportunities.

• The businesses recognized were:

- **Bethesda Memorial Hospital** in Boynton Beach
- **Call 4 Health** of Boca Raton
- **Fausto's Food Palace** of Key West
- **Hilton at Home Reservations** of Tampa
- **Jacksonville Aviation Authority**
- **Stretcher Limo** of New Port Richey
- **Walgreens Distribution Centers** of Florida
- **Walmart** of Florida

APD Director Jim DeBeaugrine said, "We are pleased to recognize businesses that have made a long-term commitment to hiring individuals with disabilities. These workers are extremely reliable and committed to their jobs. It is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do."

Representatives from the Florida Business Leadership Network (FBLN) spoke on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities and the role their organization plays in supporting those hiring choices. The Able Trust announced a statewide media campaign promoting the hiring of people with disabilities called Look at my Abilities. The organization also announced the beginning of Disability Mentoring Day activities around the state.

The agency annually serves about 35,000 Floridians with developmental disabilities of mental retardation, autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, and Prader-Willi syndrome. For more information on the agency, call 1-866-APD-CARES or visit www.APDCares.org.

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