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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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34 Companies Win First Worldwide Award for Democracy in the Workplace

WASHINGTON, DC (March 6, 2007) – Thirty-four companies are the first winners in a “Worldwide Award for the Most Democratic Workplaces” sponsored by WorldBlu, Inc., a Washington, DC-based business specializing in organizational democracy.

The announcement came as part of the first Democracy in the Workplace Day, sponsored by the WorldBlu, Inc. organization. Businesses and non-profits from the US, Canada, the Netherlands and Russia made the premiere list, representing industries such as technology, telecommunications, media, manufacturing, and retail with a combined total of nearly \$3 billion in annual sales.

Among the organizations are Great Harvest Bread Company, GE Aviation’s Durham Engine Facility, Honest Tea, 1-800-GOT-JUNK, Equal Exchange, Linden Lab (makers of the Second Life virtual reality world), Zingerman’s Community of Businesses, SRC Holdings Corporation, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, i-Free, and Threadless.

“Democratic organizations operate on freedom, not fear,” says WorldBlu Founder and CEO, Traci Fenton. “Greedy, me-first, command and control business models are officially old school. These organizations represent the new school of business design.”

Organizations from the for-profit, non-profit, non-governmental and government sectors with five or more employees that have been in operation for a minimum of three years could apply for the WorldBlu award.

Employees completed a survey evaluating their organization’s practice of ten democratic principles such as decentralization, accountability, choice and integrity on a leadership level, individual level and systems and processes level.

WorldBlu developed the survey tool based on a decade of research into what makes a world-class democratic organization. The “WorldBlu List of Most Democratic Workplaces” is a list, not a ranking, and in the future organizations will be honored for the length of time they are on the list.

“Democratic companies understand that the future of business is less about pomp and more about participation, less about titles and more about meaning, and less about fiefdoms and more about being flat in order to be competitive in this new, democratic age,” explained Fenton. “This is the beginning of a movement.”

At Linden Lab, makers of the highly successful *Second Life* online virtual world, key financial data is openly shared in real-time on giant flat-screen TVs, employees are encouraged to choose their own work rather than be told by someone else what to do, and they show their appreciation for one another by “sending love” through their “Love Machine” software program.

Great Harvest Bread Company calls their franchise model a “freedom franchise” because it nurtures creativity, excellence and a true sense of ownership.

At Continuum, a design consultancy in Boston with offices in Milan and Seoul, they have “open town forums” each month. The Grammy® Award-winning Orpheus Chamber Orchestra based in New York City is completely conductorless, rotating leadership amongst orchestra members.

At Equal Exchange, the employee-owners elect their Board of Directors and hold six of the nine seats. GE Aviation’s Durham Engine Facility is flat, with just one Plant Manager for 260 employees.

Seth Goldman, Founder and CEO of Bethesda, Maryland-based Honest Tea explains the value of workplace democracy as fundamental to their competitiveness. “We try to stay away from hierarchy and instead share information, and promote communication and common goals among all levels and departments in the company. Hierarchy just gets in the way when you’re running a fast-paced, growing company.”

“Creating the world’s largest junk removal service is completely in alignment with being recognized as one of the world’s most democratic places to work,” comments Brian Scudamore, Founder and CEO of the \$158 million company 1-800-GOT-JUNK? “To ensure our organization is a world-class working environment, we focus on employee engagement through our open-office concept to create alignment and trust with our employees. We know that our steady growth and customer satisfaction relies on our ability to carry out these democratic processes.”

At Zingerman’s Community of Businesses in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a democratic workplace impacts the bottom-line. “Most people want to be a part of something greater than themselves, to contribute positively to the world around them, and we’ve always worked to give them that opportunity,” explains CEO Ari Weinzweig. “By involving as many people as possible in what we do at every level of the work, we’re convinced that we get better results on all three of our bottom-lines—the quality of our food is better, our service is better, and our financial results are better as well.”

Organizations wanting to attract and retain top talent, boost innovation, and harness the full potential of the next generation workforce can take their cues from democratic organizations. “At Guayakí we are pioneering a new business model that demands creative solutions and we find that through democratic practices we all bring our whole selves to the process and that elevates the quality of our decisions,” stated Chris Mann, CEO of Guayaki Sustainable Rainforest Products in Sebastopol, California. Ann Price, Founder and CEO of the software firm Motek in Beverly Hills, California agrees. “It’s an incredibly fierce advantage.”

Workplace democracy isn’t only happening in organizations that operate in democratic countries either. A notable stand-out on the list is i-Free, a company based in St. Petersburg, Russia. i-Free is Russia’s market leader in mobile content and services with millions of subscribers in Russia, India, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Brazil. “Our democratic practices logically flow out of our [company] values,” explains CEO Kirill Petrov.

“Organizational democracy is inevitable,” comments Fenton. “The Internet, the demands of Generations X and Y for meaningful work, and the Gallup Organization’s report that 73 percent of US workers are disengaged at work are causing businesses to rethink their management models and embrace a more democratic style. The companies that practice organizational democracy will lead their industries, boost their bottom-line, and ultimately build a more democratic world.”



WorldBlu has also declared today “Democracy in the Workplace Day” to celebrate these organizations and the positive ripple effect their workplace practices are having on increasing freedom and peace in the world. Individuals are invited to use this day to examine how their workplaces can adopt and further mature their practice of democracy.

WorldBlu, Inc. is a Washington, DC-based leadership and business design studio specializing in organizational democracy and freedom-centered leadership. Founded in 2003, WorldBlu works with CEOs and executive teams to design, develop, and lead the most successful democratic companies in the world. WorldBlu’s approach is principle-based, freedom-centered, and results-driven. For more information, visit the WorldBlu website at www.worldblu.com <<http://www.worldblu.com>> .

(Note to editors: Ms. Traci Fenton is available for interview. Contact information is at the top of the release. The complete list of winners follows.)

The WorldBlu List of Most Democratic Workplaces™ 2007: (Not a ranking, but a list.)

1. 1-800-Got-Junk? – Vancouver, Canada
2. AIESEC International – Rotterdam, Netherlands
3. Axiom News – Peterborough, Canada
4. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc. – San Francisco, California
5. BetterWorld Telecom – Reston, Virginia
6. Beyond Borders – Norristown, Pennsylvania
7. Collective Copies – Florence, Massachusetts
8. Continuum – West Newton, Massachusetts
9. Dancing Deer Baking Company – Boston, Massachusetts
10. Equal Exchange – West Bridgewater, Massachusetts
11. FBS Data Systems – Fargo, North Dakota
12. GE Aviation – Durham Engine Facility – Durham, North Carolina
13. Great Harvest Bread Company – Dillon, Montana
14. Guayaki Sustainable Rainforest Products, Inc. – Sebastopol, California
15. Honest Tea – Bethesda, Maryland
16. i-Free – St. Petersburg, Russia
17. KI – Green Bay, Wisconsin

18. Linden Lab – San Francisco, California
19. Motek – Beverly Hills, California
20. New Belgium Brewing Company – Fort Collins, Colorado
21. Orpheus Chamber Orchestra – New York City, New York
22. Rite-Solutions – Middletown, Rhode Island
23. Roche Salon – Washington, DC
24. Sedgebrook – Lincolnshire, Illinois
25. South Mountain Company, Inc. -- West Tisbury, Massachusetts
26. SRC Holdings Corporation – Springfield, Missouri
27. TakingITGlobal – Toronto, Canada
28. Ternary Software – Exton, Pennsylvania
29. The Do LaB Event Creations – Los Angeles, California
30. The Russell Family Foundation – Gig Harbor, Washington
31. Threadless – Chicago, Illinois
32. Union Cab of Madison Cooperative – Madison, Wisconsin
33. Zaadz – Topanga, California
34. Zingerman's Community of Businesses – Ann Arbor, Michigan

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