

News Release

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Winners for Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year[®] 2009 awards in Central Midwest announced

Kansas City, MO, June 4, 2009 – Ernst & Young LLP is pleased to announce the winners of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year[®] award in the Central Midwest region. This group of leading entrepreneurs was selected by an independent judging panel made up of regional business, academic and community leaders. The winners were revealed at a gala event Thursday, June 4, 2009 at the Sheraton Overland Park Hotel.

“We congratulate these entrepreneurs on their significant achievements,” said Randy Buseman, Ernst & Young Partner, Strategic Growth Markets. “The Entrepreneur Of The Year award salutes their efforts in business excellence and community improvement. We would all do well to emulate their determination and enthusiasm.”

The Central Midwest program recognizes companies based in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. The seven winners of the Ernst & Young LLP Entrepreneur Of The Year 2009 award in the Central Midwest are:

- Master category: **James E. Ferrell**, Chairman / CEO, Ferrellgas (Overland Park, KS)
- Wholesale distribution category: **Robert A. Reynolds Jr.**, Chairman, President and CEO, Graybar Electric Company, Inc. (St. Louis, MO)
- Technology category: **August Grasis III**, Founder and Chairman, Handmark (Kansas City, MO)
- Life sciences category: **Christopher E. Nelson, Ph.D.**, President, Kemin Industries, Inc. (Des Moines, IA)

- Private equity/venture capital backed category: **Dr. Nicholas Franano**, Chief Scientific Officer, and **William Whitaker, Esq.** VP/General Counsel, Proteon Therapeutics, Inc. (Kansas City, MO)
- Consumer products category: **Alisa Shakespeare**, President, Shakespeare's Chocolate (Davenport, IA)
- Service category: **Peter Spanos**, Founder and CEO, Vetta Sports (St. Louis, MO)

Regional award winners will be eligible for consideration for the Ernst & Young LLP Entrepreneur Of The Year 2009 national awards. Winners in numerous national categories, as well as the overall national Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year award winner, will be announced at the annual awards gala in Palm Springs, California, on November 14, 2009. The awards are the culminating event of the Ernst & Young Strategic Growth Forum, the nation's most prestigious gathering of high-growth, market-leading companies.

This year, the Entrepreneur Of The Year awards program celebrates its 23rd anniversary. The program has expanded to recognize business leaders in over 135 cities in 50 countries throughout the world. Awards are given to entrepreneurs who demonstrate extraordinary success in the areas of innovation, financial performance and personal commitment to their businesses and communities.

Youth Entrepreneur Of The Year

In addition to celebrating regional business leaders, Ernst & Young also recognized three high schools students during the Entrepreneur Of The Year awards banquet on June 4. Through their work with the nonprofit agency Junior Achievement, these students have already demonstrated significant promise as entrepreneurs. Each student was named the Ernst & Young Youth Entrepreneur Of The Year and given a \$1,000 scholarship to further their interests in business. The 2009 Ernst & Young Youth Entrepreneur Of The Year winners in the Central Midwest are: **Josh Day** of Lafayette High School in Wildwood, MO; **Kerysa Coleman** of Raytown South High School in Raytown, MO; and **Emily VanderLinden** of Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, IA.

Sponsors

Founded and produced by Ernst & Young LLP, the Entrepreneur Of The Year awards are pleased to have SAP America and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation as national sponsors.

Regional sponsors for the Central Midwest program include Lockton Companies, Inc. and *The Kansas City Star*. Locally, the program is sponsored by Faegre & Benson LLP, Husch Blackwell Sanders LLP and *Smart Business* magazine.

About Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Of The Year® Awards Program

Ernst & Young's Entrepreneur Of The Year® Award is the world's most prestigious business award for entrepreneurs. The award makes a difference through the unique way it encourages entrepreneurial activity among those with potential and recognizes the contribution of people who inspire others with their vision, leadership and achievement. As the first and only truly global award of its kind, Ernst & Young Entrepreneur Of The Year® celebrates those who are building and leading successful, growing and dynamic businesses, recognizing them through regional, national and global awards programs in more than 135 cities in 50 countries.

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