



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACTS:

Kyle Welborn (CEC) 312-494-6771
Marcelyn Love (DCEO) 217-558-1542

**Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity,
Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center announce winners of 2009
Innovate Illinois competition**

***J&J Solutions and Tula Foods take away top honors at the state's
entrepreneurship competition***

CHICAGO – Four Illinois companies were selected as winners of the statewide Innovate Illinois competition following final presentations by some of the state's brightest entrepreneurs. The top two companies, J&J Solutions and Tula Foods, owner of Better Whey of Life Protein Enhanced Foods, received \$30,000 each to help commercialize their product or service. The two runner-ups, Balanced IT Solutions and Universal Die Cast, Inc., each received \$10,000.

“Entrepreneurs will help Illinois find its way out of this recession, by creating jobs and bringing more innovative products and services to market,” said Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Director Warren Ribley. “We need to make sure we are nurturing an environment for high-growth companies, and Innovate Illinois provides mentoring and support services so that businesses can readily move their concepts into the market. I want to congratulate the winners of this year’s Innovate Illinois competition.”

Across the state, more than 130 companies competed in the 2009 Innovate Illinois program. From there, 30 companies were selected by the state’s regional Entrepreneurship Centers, a network supported by the DCEO, to participate in the semifinals on September 24. Twelve companies competed in the finals round held Tuesday at the University of Chicago’s Gleacher Center.

“Innovate Illinois helps identify the most promising entrepreneurs in the state and provides important resources for them to succeed. Over the last five years, the 29 winning companies of this competition have gone on to create over 500 jobs in Illinois,” said Jason Felger, Executive Vice President, Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center (CEC).

The Innovate Illinois program is administered jointly by DCEO and the CEC. To learn more about the program, visit www.innovateillinois.org.

More information on the 2009 winners is attached.

2009 Innovate Illinois Winners

Early Stage Winner

Name: J&J Solutions

Location: Palatine

Contact: John Slump, 847-421-1115

Company Description: Medical device company that has developed innovative technology to optimize safety, increase efficiency, and reduce the cost of preparing and administering chemotherapy pharmaceuticals.

Later Stage Winner

Company Name: Tula Foods, owner of Better Whey of Life Protein Enhanced Foods

Location: Evanston

Contact: Daphne Mazarakis, 888-902-TULA

Company Description: Developed a line of science-based, functional foods under the Better Whey of Life® brand. Better Whey of Life® is the first brand to enhance everyday foods with Whey Protein, a nutrient with significant emerging science behind its ability to realize fat loss and lost inches around the waist.

Early Stage Runner-Up

Company Name: Balanced IT Solutions

Location: South Beloit

Contact: Kerry Frank, 815-525-1100

Company Description: Software development company that builds customized software solutions for various industries including: aviation, security, financial, insurance, entertainment, and more.

Later Stage Runner-Up

Company Name: Universal Die Cast, Inc.

Location: Machesney Park

Contact: Harold Winebaugh, 815-633-1702

Company Description: The company zinc die cast small to medium sized flash free zinc die cast parts for a variety of industries.

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