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For Immediate Release

World-class excellence honoured at 2016 ABEX Awards

It was a night to honour excellence when businesses from across the province gathered in Saskatoon on October 22nd to celebrate the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce's ABEX Awards presented by Conexus Credit Union. The gala event, in its 33rd year, showcased the world class businesses and business leaders that contribute so much to Saskatchewan.

"While all of the finalists were very deserving, Hillberg & Berk was selected as Business of the Year. "They continue to grow at an incredible pace and exceed their corporate goals on every level. They truly are a world-class, Saskatchewan success story and we are exceptionally proud of them." said Steve McLellan, CEO of the Saskatchewan Chamber. The Business of the Year Award is sponsored by David Aplin Group.

The evening was augmented by student achievement; students from Weyburn Comprehensive's Junior Achievement Company Program were on hand to receive the Canadian Chamber of Commerce Company of the Year Award. This award is presented to only one Junior Achievement class in Canada each year and it is the second year in a row that a company formed by students from Weyburn Comprehensive High School has won the national Company of the Year Award. The class of 17 students, and their teacher Margot Arnold, received the award from the province's Minister of Education, the Honourable Don Morgan.

Inducted into the Saskatchewan Business Hall of Fame was Prairie Mud Service, an oil industry supplier from Estevan owned by Ray and Doris Frehlick.

"Ray and Doris built their business through true Saskatchewan determination. It's not easy to ride the waves of the oil sector, but their long term success can be attributed to their belief that if you work hard, look after customers, employees and the communities served by the business, success will follow, and it has. The Saskatchewan Chamber felt it was a natural fit for Prairie Mud to be included in the Business Hall of Fame," McLellan said.

Ms. Pat Tenney won the Roger Phillips Chamber Builder Award for her 18 year involvement with the Lloydminster Chamber. During her tenure as the Executive Director, the Lloydminster Chamber made significant contributions toward the expansion of business in that region.

"Pat is an exceptional executive leader. She worked tirelessly on behalf of her community and helped her chamber attract more business to the area while also serving at the provincial and national chamber levels. For her leadership, expertise and dedication, graciously offered for over 18 years, Pat Tenney is very deserving of the Roger Phillips Award," McLellan said.

Gavin Semple was on hand to accept the Business Leader of the Year Award, sponsored by Saskatchewan Polytechnic. For over forty years, The Brandt Group of Companies have thrived under Gavin's steady guidance.

"Gavin's success as a business leader and the impact he and his group of companies have had on the landscape in Saskatchewan is simply tremendous. The company is a giant in its industry. Brandt is a homegrown success story and its brand is synonymous with quality and deep community involvement. We are very proud to have presented him with the Business Leader of the Year Award," McLellan said.

In addition to the Business of the Year, Hall of Fame, Roger Phillips Chamber Builder Award and Business Leader of the Year, 10 ABEX category awards were presented to the pool of 55 finalists this year.

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For further information, contact:

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2016 ABEX WINNERS

Innovation – Hospitality Network Canada (2011) Inc., Regina

Sponsored by Innovation Saskatchewan

Hospitality Network Canada (2011) Inc. dates back to 1967 when it started with a simple idea to deliver TV and phone services to patients during their hospital stays. Since that time, Hospitality Network Canada has evolved into a Canadian network of interactive patient entertainment systems serving more than 40,000 beds in over 200 hospitals.

Paul Hemburrow, VP Sales & Marketing
306.347.0800

Community Involvement – Cornerstone Credit Union, Yorkton

Sponsored by BHP Billiton

Cornerstone Credit Union has been proudly serving the region of East Central Saskatchewan for over 75 years. With more than 25,000 members, 11 locations, and 186 employees, Cornerstone Credit Union represents a trusted financial institution on the prairies that puts its members and communities first. Cornerstone Credit Union has done an exemplary job serving its communities through volunteerism, financial investment, and staff involvement.

Sherry Woolridge, Marketing Coordinator
306.786.2288

Community Cornerstone – Standard Motors, Swift Current

Sponsored by SaskEnergy

Standard Motors, in operation since 1910, is a fourth generation owned and operated family business serving a good portion of the southwest area of the province. The company's reputation for community involvement has become the cornerstone of its character, serving as a reliable partner for many community events, organizations and causes. Standard Motors regularly puts into action its belief that financial support is an important business responsibility which is essential to developing the kind of community where people want to live, work and play.

Ryan Plewis, Partner
306.774.6886

Export – Crestline Coach Ltd, Saskatoon

Sponsored by Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership

With a staff of just under 200 people, Crestline Coach is Canada's largest distributor of emergency specialty vehicles and commercial buses. As a marquee Canadian exporter, the company has offices across Canada and the United States. Throughout its history, Crestline has shipped products to 32 different countries. Further expansion continues through Eastern Canada, the US, and Middle East markets where a significant investment in health care infrastructure is being spent and demand for North American made ambulances is strong.

Allison Gray, Marketing Coordinator
306.986.5606

Growth and Expansion – The Saskatoon Cooperative Association Limited, Saskatoon

Sponsored by PFM Capital Inc.

Over the past ten years, the Saskatoon Co-op undertook massive replacement activity of its older assets, and pursued new opportunities that resulted in \$150.4 million dollars-worth of capital expenditures realized within the cities of Saskatoon, Martensville and Warman. Last year Saskatoon Co-op was named the 22nd largest company in Saskatchewan based on revenue.

Daniel Burke, Controller
306.933.3804

Marketing – Hillberg & Berk, Regina

Sponsored by Handy Special Events

In 2007, Founder & CEO Rachel Mielke, started Hillberg & Berk which designs, manufactures, retails and wholesales luxury jewellery for the mass market. Hillberg & Berk's ambitious marketing strategy allowed the company to achieve 600% growth over the last five years. A major sponsorship deal with the Saskatchewan Roughriders and with the Edmonton Oilers helped to increase brand awareness in rural Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Jayda Back, Marketing & Sponsorship Coordinator
306.541.3414

New Venture – Black Bridge Brewery, Swift Current

Sponsored by The Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy

Black Bridge Brewery first opened its doors in October 2014. Passion, dedication and attention to detail can be seen and tasted in every drop of craft beer brewed and packaged by the company. Owners Clayton and Kari Stenson sold 2290 hectolitres of beer in three provinces in the first year of business, supported local charities and organizations with monetary and in-kind donations, and developed 14 seasonal beers that have created a proven following. Currently Black Bridge is on tap at over 50 restaurants and bars in Saskatchewan.

Kari Stenson, Owner

306.773.4404

Priority Focus – Park Town Hotel, Saskatoon

Sponsored by Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

The Park Town Hotel prides itself on being an inclusive and diverse employer. With more than 40 per cent of its employees self-identifying as immigrants to Canada, the property boasts a dynamic and culturally sensitive work environment. New visitors to Canada not only find employment within its ranks, but often utilize the property's Park Lane Apartments located directly behind the hotel, as transitional housing as their families immigrate. The company also assists staff to participate in English classes, provides transportation assistance, extended and flexible absence policies and more.

Lindsay Coleman, Media & Events Manager

306.667.6072

Service – Viterra, Regina

Sponsored by Minard's Leisure World

In the business of grain handling and marketing, Viterra has made significant investments in its employees, technology and infrastructure to provide customers with superior service. Viterra employees develop solutions that can make the individual farming businesses better through a customization of grain contracts to technological products that give farmers immediate access to information, ensuring that each customer has what they need to succeed.

Peter Flengeris, Senior Communications Advisor

306.569.4810



**Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award –
Elysia Vandenhurk and Natasha Vandenhurk (Three Farmers Products),**
Sponsored by Cameco

With Elysia’s background as a Red Seal Chef, Natasha’s expertise in economics, and their combined passion for agriculture, the two women partnered to form a food brand that offers healthy, quality, products with full supply chain transparency to their customers, who increasingly want to know where their food comes from. Three Farmers has grown from a locally recognized brand in 2011 to a nationally recognized phenomenon sold in over 2000 locations in Canada.

Elysia Vandenhurk and Natasha Vandenhurk, Owners
877.295.1551