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ETI finalist for U.S. Chamber Corporate Citizenship Award

Effective Teleservices, Inc. (ETI) was named a finalist for a U.S. Chamber 2004 Corporate Citizenship Award and was invited to Washington this week to be honored with other companies, including Home Depot, Microsoft, Sprint, Siemens, KPMG LLP and Whirlpool.

"We sponsored ETI's nomination based on their volunteer presence and economic impact in our community," said Bruce Partain, President/CEO of the Nacogdoches County Chamber.

"ETI was honored as our Chamber's Large Business of the Year in 2003," Partain said. "When we became aware of the U.S. Chamber program, we knew ETI would be a good candidate."

ETI representatives and Partain were in Washington Thursday to attend an awards ceremony. ETI Chairman Dilip Barot was joined by Vice President Matt Rocco, Director of Human Resources Cindy Edwards, and Manager of Recruitment Hollie Gammel. Thomas Donohue, president and CEO of the U.S. Chamber, and U.S. Commerce Secretary Don Evans presented awards and congratulated the finalists on their philanthropy and community involvement as well as their job creation.

ETI was one of four finalists for the Corporate Stewardship Small Business Award. According to the U.S. Chamber, more than 200 applications were received for this award. "We think of ETI as a large business, but in the national arena, a 1,400-employee firm is considered small," Partain said. The winner in this category was Seventh Generation, a company that manufactures environmentally-friendly cleaning products.

In 1999 ETI's predecessor BerryDirect selected Nacogdoches from several communities competing for the call center.

"We looked at 50 locations and narrowed it to 20," said ETI President A.C. "Chuck" Smith. "Louisiana offered \$1 million and a free building. Nacogdoches didn't offer the most lucrative financial package, but had the ability to provide a quality workforce."

NEDCO President/CEO Judy McDonald said the company took off quickly in Nacogdoches.

"They promised when they came that there would be 125 to 150 jobs," she said. "Within 18 months there were 350. That's indicative of how they operate -- they always over-deliver. And it is rare to find a corporate environment that is more family-oriented. It is not just a public philanthropic image. They are also quietly taking care of their employees."

By December 2002 the company had grown to 600 workers. BellSouth, BerryDirect's parent company, announced then that they would be selling the subsidiary. BellSouth was also considering shutting the doors of the Nacogdoches center if a purchaser did not emerge.

The two senior managers at BerryDirect – Smith and Rocco – became partners with Dilip Barot, a successful real estate developer from India, and purchased the company. They renamed it Effective Teleservices, Inc.

Within 12 months ETI created an additional center in Lufkin and in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India. The company was featured in the Wall Street Journal for its outstanding promotion of employment in rural America.

By using employee teams, ETI has focused extra attention on its communities.

“We encourage five principles,” Rocco said.

“These are Work/Life Balance, Community Action, Rewards and Recognition, Recruiting and Communication. Each team has a mission statement and is empowered to decide how to accomplish its mission.”

ETI's Community Action teams have been heavily involved in the March of Dimes, American Heart Association, Habitat for Humanity, United Way, and the Nacogdoches County Chamber.

The company's close association with Stephen F. Austin State University and Angelina College has opened doors for more community support.

ETI pays up to 100 percent of an employee's college tuition.

“We employ 500 SFA students, so the tuition reimbursement program is having a profound effect on the university's enrollment numbers, the students' ability to attend college, and the pocketbooks of some of their parents,” Rocco said. The program generated \$100,000 for tuition over the past two years.

In addition, ETI invests in the health of its employees.

“This involves three key initiatives,” said Rocco, “Physical inventory, exercise and diet.” The inventory includes medical tests to establish baselines for goals. Walking clubs, aerobic classes and discounts at local gyms help employees improve their health. An on-site Weight Watchers club, healthy food in vending machines, monthly luncheons and fitness experts encourage participants to eat healthy and improve their physical condition.

The majority of ETI's business is focused on outbound customer contacts.

ETI's Clients include Fortune 100 companies within the telecommunications carrier industry. The company recently expanded to the health care and high-technology sectors. Clients include BellSouth, Dun and Bradstreet, Sprint, Verizon, Pfizer, AOL and the American Automobile Association.

The company's slogan is “Playing by the Rules.”

“Nacogdoches is home to many great businesses and individuals,” Partain said. “ETI has fit well into our community and we are proud of them for this additional recognition.”

US Chamber Link:

<http://www.uschamber.com/press/releases/2004/november/04-148.htm>

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Chamber Announces Corporate Citizenship Finalists

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Chamber of Commerce Center for Corporate Citizenship (CCC) announced the finalists for the 2004 Corporate Citizenship Awards, which showcase businesses and chambers of commerce that have demonstrated ethical leadership and corporate stewardship, made a difference in their communities, and contributed to the advancement of important economic and social goals.

CCC will recognize the finalists and announce award recipients during a dinner on December 2 in at Chamber headquarters. Thomas Donohue, president and CEO of the U.S. Chamber, and U.S. Commerce Secretary Don Evans will present the awards.

The finalists for the six award categories are:

- Citizenship in Action Award: The Home Depot, Intel Technologies Philippines Inc., MassMutual Financial Group, Siemens, and Whirlpool
- U.S. Chamber Community Service Award: Baltimore/Washington Corridor Chamber of Commerce, Highland Chamber of Commerce (Ohio), Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, and Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- International American Chamber Community Service Award: AmCham Chile, AmCham Romania, and AmCham Singapore
- Corporate Stewardship Small Business Award: Arkansas Automobile Dealers, Effective Teleservices, Inc., Seventh Generation, Inc., and Thrift Institute Community Investment Corporation of New Jersey
- Corporate Stewardship Midsize Business Award: Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc., KPMG LLP, SAP America, Inc., Taco, Inc., and University Bank
- Corporate Stewardship Large Business Award: Marriott Corporation, Microsoft, Office Depot, Inc., Principal Financial Group, and Sprint Corporation