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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOUTH DAKOTA CHAMBER HONORS ABEX RECIPIENTS

The South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry presented two ABEX (Awards in Business Excellence) Awards at the April 16 ceremony at the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls. The first award honored the best new business started within the last three years. **Molded Fiber Glass Companies of Aberdeen** was the winner of the New Kid on the Block Award. Business of the Year honors went to **Valley Queen Cheese Factory of Milbank**. Each received an elegant granite trophy.

Molded Fiber Glass Companies

In 2007 Molded Fiber Glass broke ground for a new wind turbine blade manufacturing plant in Aberdeen. This 314,000 square foot plant is owned by the Aberdeen Development Corporation and leased and operated by Molded Fiber Glass. The project represented a \$40 million investment and the creation of up to 750 new jobs to South Dakota. The facility was designed specifically for wind blade manufacturing.

In 2008 the first teammates were hired and sent to train in MFG's sister plant in Texas. They returned in June to begin blade production and train new teammates. The original crew of 17 turned into 100 by the end of June and well over 200 by year's end.

The ramp up of a blade factory is challenging due to the training required as each blade is produced with a high amount of labor. MFG's successful start has been achieved by attracting the best talent and by dedicating sufficient time to train its teammates in production.

In reaching a major milestone, the plant recently announced production of its 100th 37 meter blade and its 1st 40 meter blade. Due to this strong production plan, MFG is entering the 2nd phase and is planning to hire an additional 200-250 teammates before the end of 2009.

Under the direction of plant manager Blake Seas, MFG is proud to be a "green energy" company both internally and externally. It is part of the company's values that also include

honest, fair, consistent, and respectful treatment for all MFG Teammates, customer satisfaction, and leadership to enhance understanding and growth.

Valley Queen Cheese Factory

Valley Queen Cheese Factory, Inc. is a privately-held family-owned business with a growth-oriented, entrepreneurial vision. Founded in 1929 by two Swiss immigrants, Alfred Nef and Alfred Gonzenbach, with a knack for cheese-making and the drive to bring their version of the “Great American Dream” to life, Valley Queen has called Milbank home for 80 years.

Valley Queen produces over 90 million pounds of cheese annually and is one of the largest suppliers of cheese to Kraft Foods. Valley Queen specializes and is a pioneer in reduced fat cheese varieties. To make this cheese, Valley Queen purchases over 1 billion pounds of milk from dairies located up and down the I-29 corridor in Eastern South Dakota and Western Minnesota.

Valley Queen prides itself in its support of Milbank and the surrounding area by providing jobs to over 180 individuals, many who will devote an entire career to helping Valley Queen meet its mission of being “the top quality cheese producers in the United States”.

Under the direction of CEO Mark Leddy, Valley Queen Cheese is currently in the midst of a \$45 million expansion/upgrade project which will add an additional 30% production capacity to its manufacturing facility. The project is slated for completion in the fourth quarter of 2009.

The awards were presented by Governor Mike Rounds, who was in attendance to recognize the winners of the Governor’s Giant Vision Business and Student Business Competition, and David Owen, President of the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Finalists for New Kid on the Block were *MASABA* Mining Equipment of Vermillion and Premier Source of Brookings. Finalists for Business of the year were Dakota King, Inc. and Howalt-McDowell Insurance, Inc., both of Sioux Falls. (Company information is available upon request for each of the finalists.) Finalists in each category received an etched granite trophy.

ABEX Awards have been presented by the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the past 24 years. The awards are used to recognize the excellence that exists within the South Dakota business community. Finalists are judged on various factors, including economic impact, job creation, growth potential and community service.

The ABEX Awards program is chaired by Jeff Parker, Parker Transfer and Storage, Inc., Sioux Falls and Michelle M. Lavalley, Senior Vice President of Strategic Marketing and Communications for Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls. This year’s program was generously sponsored by the following companies:

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