

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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The Minnesota Council for Quality announces two manufacturers, one service company, one educational institution and one government organization are winners of the 1999 Minnesota Quality Awards. Especially momentous is the first ever Achievement (Gold) Award earned by a government organization. The Minnesota Quality Award provides a service for organizations in all sectors, large and small, throughout the state to share in achievement, learning and recognition associated with achieving performance excellence and competitive advantages.

The awards were presented at the Minnesota Council for Quality Ninth Annual Minnesota Quality Award Celebration and Mini Expo on Friday, January 28, 2000. Gerald Carlson, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, attended and spoke at the celebration. Commissioner Carlson extended Governor Ventura's congratulations to each of the winning organizations and referred to them as role models for the Ventura Administration's vision for business, trade and community development.

The Minnesota Council for Quality is a private, non-profit organization that actively builds partnerships with manufacturing, service, healthcare, educational and governmental organizations. Partnerships with the Minnesota Council for Quality provide organizations with access to key tools necessary to embark on a pathway of organizational excellence and quality. Besides facilitating and administering the Minnesota Quality Award, the Minnesota Council for Quality aids organizations in defining individual pathways through the Minnesota Assessment Process and the Baldrige *Express*. In addition, the Minnesota Council for Quality provides educational and training opportunities for organizations interested in leveraging the concepts of Visionary Leadership, Valuing Employees and Partners, Managing Innovation, Management by Fact and Responsibility and Citizenship into competitive advantages.

The Board of Directors of the Minnesota Council for Quality extends its sincere congratulations to all five winning organizations: Schwarz Williams Companies, Inc (Golden Valley; service); North Star Steel Minnesota (St. Paul; manufacturing); Turkey Store Company (Faribault; manufacturing); University of Minnesota – Duluth, Academic Services and Student Life (Duluth; education); and Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (St. Paul; government).

Each of the winning organizations is very different from one another. However, all have developed a unique blueprint for excellence which incorporates eleven (11) core values and concepts including Customer-Driven Quality, Leadership, Continuous Improvement and Learning, Valuing Employees, Fast Response, Design Quality and Prevention, Long-Range View of the Future, Management by Fact, Partnership Development, Public Responsibility and Citizenship and Results Focus. The evaluation and judging criteria for the awards process stem from these core values.

Awards can be earned at four separate levels. The Commitment (Bronze) Award is received by organizations that have demonstrated serious commitment to self-assessment as a catalyst for improvement and a means of promoting competitive and organizational excellence. They are in the early stages of developing and implementing approaches to address criteria requirements. Organizations recognized at the Advancement (Silver) level have demonstrated, through their commitment and implementation of quality management principles, progress in building systematic approaches responsive to the basic purposes of the criteria. Such organizations are in the early stages of obtaining results. The Achievement (Gold) Award recipients demonstrate sound and effective approaches responsive to the overall requirements of the criteria. They are generally aligned throughout the organization and demonstrate some evaluation and refinement. Organizations recognized at this level demonstrate good trends for most areas important to their business requirements and have no major gap. Organizations earning the Excellence (Crystal) Award have achieved the highest level of organizational excellence by the purposefulness with which they continue to improve and build upon results and systems. Such organizations show refined approaches fully deployed with positive trends in key measures and results. They are well integrated and can be national and global role models.

Schwartz Williams Companies, Inc (Golden Valley; service) earned recognition at the Commitment (Bronze) level. Advancement (Silver) recognition was achieved by North Star Steel Minnesota (St. Paul; manufacturing); Turkey Store Company (Faribault; manufacturing) and University of Minnesota – Duluth, Academic Services and Student Life (Duluth, education). The Minnesota Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities attained recognition at the Achievement (Gold) level.

Following are brief descriptions of the 1999 Minnesota Quality Award recipients:

Schwartz Williams Companies, Inc.

When expectations exceed time and resources. That’s when you should call Schwarz Williams Companies, Inc. This innovative human resource services firm provides timely advice and long-term solutions through the implementation of integrated Human Resource strategies that extend every client’s potential to improve business results. The firm has a full menu of operational support services that provides the needed resources to attract and retain high performing team members.

Its services include: HR strategic planning, staffing, employee development, compensation and relations strategies, employee benefits products, personal finance, communications and human resource information systems.

Founded in 1977, Schwarz Williams is based in the Minneapolis suburb of Golden Valley and employs 30 seasoned professionals.

Their entire staff participated in the Baldrige Express in 1998. This is their first year in the Minnesota Quality Award and the Minnesota Council for Quality congratulates them on taking their beginning steps in the journey to world-class excellence.

North Star Steel Minnesota

North Star Steel Minnesota produces a variety of high quality carbon and alloy steels for several industries. It manufactures commodity rebar to meet market demands but is heavily focused on value add products for targeted customers. Additionally, the St. Paul facility supplies steel bars for a sister plant in Duluth which produces grinding balls for the mining industry. North Star Minnesota has some market share leadership in an industry that has tremendous pressure and competition from foreign producers.

As North Star's founding plant, the St. Paul's mini-mill employs 440 employees operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week and produces over 560,000 tons of steel products per year.

The company's quality journey began in 1987 with the Crosby Quality Education Process, and it has continually evaluated and refined its 12 key processes to focus intently on customer satisfaction and corporate business objectives. North Star's efforts led to ISO9002 certification in 1998 and recognition at the Advancement level in the 1998 Minnesota Quality Award.

It is noteworthy, especially for heavy industry, that North Star's environmental practices produce water that is cleaner after it is used than when it is taken in to the plant. It has a high employee retention rate and has created a summer work program for students that focuses on hiring children of employees. And, it is no small accomplishment that it has secured a substantial amount of capital for the purpose of upgrading its plant to be increasingly more competitive.

The demands of the Criteria evolve each year and especially in light of North Star's major capital improvement focus, we congratulate them for staying the course. The Minnesota Council for Quality recognizes North Star Steel Minnesota at the Advancement Level.

Turkey Store Company

The Turkey Store Company has been in the turkey business for more than 77 years, and is one of the nation's largest, fully-integrated operations with the most efficient supply chain in the industry. It is a private, family- and employee-owned company that manufactures raw and cooked turkey products. The company has operations in Wisconsin and Minnesota and includes two processing facilities, one hatchery, three feed mills, over 60 breeder and grow out farms, and various support facilities with processes that include feed manufacturing, breeding farms, grow out farms, processing plants, sales and marketing, and support and administration.

The Turkey Store Company has international operations in Poland and Mexico, sales to companies in over 30 countries, and the number-one market share for fresh, boneless turkey in the United States with **The Turkey Store®** brand of products.

With a 77-year history rich in the tradition of engaging a diverse workforce, employee involvement and continuous improvement, The Turkey Store company is a leader in its industry. Cost effective processes, number-one ratings in the industry for operating efficiencies, and a commitment to the environment and the health and safety of its team all hallmark this innovative, customer-focused company.

This was its first year in the Minnesota Quality Award process. The evaluation was of the Minnesota operations of the Turkey Store and The Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to congratulate them upon their recognition at the Advancement Level.

University of Minnesota – Duluth, Academic Services and Student Life

Academic Support and Student Life (ASSL) is one of three divisions at the University of Minnesota – Duluth, a regional university with 7,600 students. ASSL, which has 109 employees working in a team environment, is responsible for enrolling students and supporting their academic progress.

The office has been pursuing quality initiatives since 1985. Its goal now is to serve its customers – students – anytime, anywhere. To achieve that goal, ASSL redesigned its work processes and relocated 40% of its work force. A student assistance center now provides a multitude of services in a single location where students can register for class, apply for financial aid, or obtain other administrative services. Services are also available on-line and through a student call-in center.

Each work unit has identified the requirements and needs of its customers and has aligned measures of process success with these customer needs. UMD-ASSL has demonstrated significant growth in the areas of Leadership and Customer and Market focus. The division has captured the attention of the Chancellor and has the opportunity to influence

the future of post secondary education through its example and the respect it continues to earn.

In 1998, UMD ASSL was recognized at the Commitment level of the Minnesota Quality Award. This year the Minnesota Council for Quality is pleased to recognize their commitment and progress and present them with the Advancement Level Minnesota Quality Award.

Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities is located within the State Department of Administration and is responsible for carrying out the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, often referred to as the DD ACT. The mission of the Council is to provide information, education, and training to increase the independence, productivity, integration and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Governor appoints the Council with one-half of the membership comprised of people with disabilities and their families.

Since 1990, the Council has selected leadership development as its priority. The single most significant investment and long term commitment is its *Partners in Policymaking*[™] program created by the Council in 1986. This program is requested by organizations from around the world and is used globally.

Partners teaches leadership skills. Its graduates are equipped with knowledge and support and are encouraged to develop and strengthen their own partnerships with elected officials and policymakers at all levels of government, and participate in general community policymaking activities. A total of 447 individuals are Minnesota *Partners* graduates; more than 7,700 individuals have graduated from *Partners* programs nationally and internationally.

Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities was recognized at the Commitment level in the 1997 Minnesota Quality Award.

Since 1997, the Council has applied the quality framework to its work and to its suppliers. The Council states that it has adopted several quality practices in order to be more productive.

The Council has embraced the use of the Criteria to improve every facet of what it does and how it operates to improve business results. It has engaged its suppliers in alignment to the Criteria through their participation in coaching and MCQ training. Its Council members as well as staff learn and use best practices to improve their organization. Although constricted by traditional government that has not generally embraced integration, systems orientation and a focus on results rather than activities, the Council has made great strides by any measure.

The DD Council demonstrates a balanced approach to meeting the intent of the Performance Excellence Criteria and has no major flaws. Their leadership team is seeking an innovative approach to measuring ROI, return on investment, for stakeholders including taxpayers. Their commitment to share what they are doing with their peers, government agencies and others willing to learn is commendable.

The Minnesota Council for Quality is most pleased to present the Achievement Level award for the first time to a government agency. Congratulations to the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.