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GOVERNOR PAWLENTY LAUNCHES STATEWIDE COMPETITION FOR “BREAKTHROUGH IDEAS”

~ Winner to receive \$25,000 in seed capital and first annual “Minnesota Cup” ~

(St. Paul) March 9, 2005 – Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty today announced a statewide contest to seek out and support Minnesota’s newest and most innovative business ideas by connecting resident entrepreneurs with the state’s leading executives, investors and the University of Minnesota.

Starting today through May 6, 2005, contest organizers are asking Minnesotans to submit their business ideas online at <http://www.breakthroughideas.umn.edu>.

“The ongoing vitality of our state’s economy depends upon the constant discovery and commercialization of innovative, entrepreneurial ideas,” said Governor Tim Pawlenty. “It’s these ‘breakthrough ideas’ that have the powerful potential to grow and become the next Medtronic, Cargill or 3M of our state.”

Entrants will be asked to participate in two more rounds of competition to help judges narrow the field to five finalists, who will present to a prestigious panel of executives, investors, notable entrepreneurs, and top officials at the University of Minnesota and the State of Minnesota.

The winner of the competition will receive \$25,000 in seed capital, as well as free public relations, legal, research and management support services. The winner also will receive the first-annual Minnesota Cup, presented by David and Carolyn Cleveland and sponsored by the University of Minnesota. Second and third place winners will receive \$5,000 and \$2,500 respectively.

Entries for the Breakthrough Ideas competition may be submitted individually or from groups of up to four people. The competition will culminate with an awards event in the fall.

“We are thrilled to be kicking-off our first annual Breakthrough Ideas contest with the support of Governor Pawlenty, the University of Minnesota and a powerful roster of sponsors,” said Scott Litman, co-chair of Breakthrough Ideas. “I am confident this year’s competition will help take the creative business spirit in Minnesota to the next level and assist our state in becoming home to a new wave of revolutionary businesses.”

How the Breakthrough Ideas Contest Works

One of the contest’s core ideas is to connect entrants with the leaders in Minnesota’s business and investor community. To that end, a board of notable regional investors, entrepreneurs and “C” level executives has been assembled to judge contest submissions. The judges include:

- Scott Litman (Co-chair), co-founder of Imaginet, Two-Time Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist

- Dan Mallin (Co-chair), co-founder of Imaginet, Two-Time Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist
- Dave Cleveland, chairman of Associated Bank of Minnesota & co-founder of Riverside Bank
- Skip Gage, chairman and CEO of Gage Marketing
- Tom Gegax, former chairman & CEO of Tires Plus
- Michael Gorman, managing director of Split Rock Partners
- Sima Griffith, founder of Aethlon Capital
- Fred Haberman, founder and CEO of Haberman & Associates
- Doug Johnson, director of the Office of Business Development for the University of Minnesota
- Matt Kramer, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
- Jay Novak, editor of *Twin Cities Business Monthly*
- Thom Sandberg, founder of The Kenyon Consortium
- Robyn Waters, founder and president of RW Trend

Judging Criteria for Entrants

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- **Originality:** Is this idea truly new or is it a tweaking of something that is already in existence? Judges will be looking for ideas that are truly new and innovative. An idea can be for a product or service and can be an entirely new idea or the evolution of a previous idea. Ideas that show the greatest innovation will be viewed more favorably.
- **Viability:** Can this idea be commercialized within two years? Can this idea create or serve a market need? What is the entrant's strategy for turning the idea into a high-growth business? Judges will be evaluating ideas on their potential to generate revenue, profits and employment.
- **Quality of Presentation:** As the contest progresses from round one to round two, more emphasis will be placed on an entrant's quality of presentation.

Three Rounds of Judging

Round One: March 9 – May 6, 2005

Entrants will be asked to provide a high-level summary of their idea or concept. Submissions should answer the following questions in less than 500 words per question:

- What is your idea or concept?
- How does your idea translate into a high-growth business?
- What is your strategy for executing your idea?
- Why is your idea economically viable?

Round Two: May 23 – June 30, 2005

Thirty entrants will be asked to develop a proposal, which should include the following:

- A more detailed explanation of how their idea can become a viable business.
- A marketing and sales plan that details how they will address a market need.
- A financial projection for two years on how they will generate revenue and profits.
- A powerful use of graphics, such as illustrations and diagrams.

Round Three: July 22 – August 25, 2005

Five finalists will prepare live presentations to be given to the judging panel. Finalists must:

- Make a 15-minute oral presentation.
- Entrants are encouraged to use presentation materials, such as posters, PowerPoint, handouts, prototypes and/or multimedia.

Final Event: August 2005

The five finalists will be honored in late August 2005 at the highly promoted first annual Breakthrough Ideas event at the University of Minnesota. At the event, the finalists will make their oral presentations and the three contest winners will be announced and awarded their prizes.

Breakthrough Ideas sponsors include: The University of Minnesota; The State of Minnesota; Kenyon Consortium (Advertising); Invioni (Web); James J. Hill Library (Research); Twin Cities Business Monthly (Media); Maslon, Edleman, Borman and Brand (Legal); and Haberman & Associates (Public Relations).