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Belknap County Economic Development Council

For inquiries or additional information related to this press release please contact:
Tony Ferruolo, Chair, Board of Directors 603-524-0580

BCEDC receives International Recognition

The **Belknap County Economic Development Council** (BCEDC) received an International Economic Development Award for the nhfirstJob program from the **International Economic Development Council** (IEDC), the world's largest economic development organization.

The award was presented on Tuesday at the IEDC's Annual Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. On hand to accept this award was Eliza Leadbeater, Executive Director, BCEDC, and Francoise Elise, Program Coordinator nhfirstJob. The BCEDC received the 2004 Program Award for a project developed by an organization serving a region with a population of 50,000 or less. nhfirstJob was selected by a panel of economic development experts consisting of members from both the public and private sector. This highly competitive award recognizes exemplary role models in economic development.

The **nhfirstJob** program focuses on raising the awareness of future graduates from high school, college/university, and technical training programs to career-track entry-level employment with New Hampshire companies.

The **nhfirstJob** program began in 1994 in New Hampshire's Lakes Region through a unique partnership of the **BCEDC** and **New Hampshire Employment Security- Lakes Region office** (NHES). At that time it was observed that many area graduates sought and obtained work out of state. This exodus negatively impacted this rural region's community life and economy. To reverse this trend, BCEDC and NHES launched a program striving to connect young graduates to local companies seeking entry-level employees. The program expanded statewide in 1999 with the assistance of the **New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development**, the **Workforce Opportunities Council** and underwriting from **Fleet Bank/ Bank of America** and **Public Service of New Hampshire**.

Today, nhfirstJob is a nonprofit organization working statewide to reduce the outward migration of high school and college graduates by providing information about entry-level jobs and career-track opportunities within New Hampshire. nhfirstJob publishes, annually, the *Big Red Job Book* that provides helpful job search information for high school graduates. The directory profiles New Hampshire companies, entry-level positions, skill requirements, wages and benefits and is distributed free to high schools and NH Work Center. nhfirstJob also hosts and maintains a web site, www.nhfirstjob.net, where New Hampshire companies post entry-level jobs and job seekers post classified listings describing their qualifications and desired positions. The

posting service is another free service to both New Hampshire employers and job seekers and also has a presence at job fairs and on college and university campuses.

nhfirstJob provides comprehensive presentations to New Hampshire high schools. The presentation includes instruction on searching for entry level/first job, accessing the job search websites, utilizing the *Big Red Job Book* and presenting the film *Insights into Industry*. This film focuses on the opportunities offered with entry-level employment by highlighting companies that encourage employees to climb the ladder of success. nhfirstJob was developed from BCEDC's program *Insights into Industry* launched in 1994. The BCEDC maintains active sponsorship of the program.

The BCEDC, a regional non-profit economic development corporation, serves the businesses within the eleven municipalities that comprise Belknap County. Created in 1992, the Council works to foster a business and community climate that promotes a balanced variety of quality employment and economic opportunity. It offers a wide range of technical and business development assistance including a Business Information Center, one-on-one counseling, workforce development programs and a countywide Revolving Loan Fund. Currently, the Fund has lent over \$5 million to area businesses.

The IEDC is headquartered in Washington, DC. Its mission is to provide leadership and excellence in economic development for communities, members and partners. The IEDC awards are to recognize outstanding economic developers who champion change as an opportunity for growth.

For more information about the BCEDC, contact Eliza Leadbeater, Executive Director, at 603-524-3057, email: info@bcedc.org, website: www.bcedc.org. The Council is located at Southern New Hampshire University – Laconia Center, 2 Airport Road, Gilford, NH 03249.

For more information about nhfirstJob, contact Françoise Elise, Program Coordinator, at 603-524-0137, email: info@nhfirstjob.net, website www.nhfirstjob.net. nhfirstJob is located at Southern New Hampshire University – Laconia Center, 2 Airport Road, Gilford, NH 03249.

For more information please contact IEDC at 734 15th Street NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC, 20005, Tel: 202-557-0821, www.iedconline.org.