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WINNERS NAMED IN PSYCHOLOGICALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARD

Program Rewards Employers for Creating Workplaces That Foster Employee Health and Well-being While Enhancing Organizational Performance

(Halifax, January 29, 2007) – Two Nova Scotia organizations will receive APA Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards from the Association of Psychologists in Nova Scotia and the CN Centre for Occupational Health & Safety. The College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia and Scotiabank's Atlantic Customer Contact Centre (Halifax) will be recognized at an Awards Ceremony on February 8th at the World Trade & Convention Centre.

“In this time of high job stress and increasing demands on employees, these workplaces have made it a priority to create environments that are sensitive to the health and well-being of their employees,” says Arla Day, the Canada Research Chair of Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Saint Mary's University, and chair of the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Committee. “It's great to see organizations ‘getting things right,’ and we want to reward these organizations by highlighting their best practices, and at the same time encourage other organizations to follow suit.”

The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award was created to recognize organizations that understand the link between employee health and well-being and organizational performance. Award winners implement a variety of workplace practices in an active effort to create a positive work environment. Five Nova Scotian organizations were recognized in 2005, with one of the organizations, Secunda Marine Ltd, going on to receive an Best Practices Award at the International Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award ceremony in Washington, DC last March. Secunda was the only Canadian organization at the ceremony recognized for their work in developing a healthy workplace.

The judging process for the award was conducted by a multidisciplinary team with workplace and health experts from Saint Mary's University, Dalhousie, and private practice. This team rated organizations through their written applications, interviews, employee surveys, and site visits. Each organization was judged on criteria including employee involvement, health and safety, employee growth and development, work-life balance, and employee recognition.

It's all about the employees!

The College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia was recognized for its focus on employees: employees are involved in decision making and are empowered and recognized for their accomplishments.

Shaun Newsome, a Halifax-based consultant, was impressed by the commitment of the College to providing a psychologically healthy workplace for its employees. "It was an easy decision to

nominate them for an award; the number of staff-driven initiatives in key areas and the level of employee commitment to these initiatives was very remarkable." These views were echoed by Donna Assh, a clinical psychologist in independent practice, who was impressed by the involvement and organizational pride demonstrated by the employees.

Linda Hamilton, Executive Director of the College, said she was "thrilled that the College is receiving this recognition after three years of dedicated work by our staff. It is especially significant because we advocate for positive nursing practice environments. Now, I can confidently say that the College is 'walking the talk'..that our organization is a model for others."

Support, advancement, & vibrant social environment.

When you think of a typical call centre, "calm, beautiful, & uplifting" aren't the first words to come to your mind. But that is exactly how Dalhousie clinical psychologist David Mensink described the atmosphere at Scotiabank's Atlantic Customer Contact Centre (Halifax). This Centre was recognized for its supportive atmosphere, career advancement policies, and vibrant team environment, which have resulted high employee morale and low turnover. "Our business is all about the people" says Dave Dobrosky, Vice President, "our team is working to create a culture where employees are valued and feel supported in their roles."

"These accomplishments are amazing in any organization, but are especially outstanding in a competitive customer service-based industry, in which the health of workers typically is overlooked" notes Debra Gilin, professor at Saint Mary's University, and specialist in organizational conflict management.

In a recent study conducted by Saint Mary's researchers, Lori Francis and Kevin Kelloway, about 50% of Nova Scotia employees reported work-family conflict, with over 60% of them reporting high workloads, and over 70% reporting high conflict. About 10% of these employees also reported that they had been a victim of workplace violence and aggression. "These things can lead to long-term negative health outcomes. It is up to the companies who employ individuals, as well as the employees themselves, to look for ways to reduce the amount of job stress. These two award-winning organizations should be commended for their work in promoting healthy workplaces" notes one of the study's authors, Lori Francis.

According to a 2004 poll by the American Psychological Association, two-thirds of both men and women say work has a significant impact on their stress level, and one in four has missed work because of stress.

For more information about the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award, which is supported by the American Psychological Association, the CN Centre for Occupational Health & Safety, the Association of Psychologists in Nova Scotia, and Saint Mary's University, please contact Dr. Arla Day at Arla.Day@smu.ca.