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**Howard County Honors Five with
Economic Development Achievement Awards**

COLUMBIA, MD (September 9, 2004)—The **Howard County Economic Development Authority** will present Economic Development Achievement Awards tonight during its Annual Meeting.

As part of the Authority's annual awards program, five companies are recognized for their contributions to enhancing the economy and quality of life in Howard County. Those chosen have demonstrated a strong commitment to corporate leadership and community development.

The winners this year are:

Next Day Blinds – This custom-design interior blinds company is receiving an award for growth by an existing Howard County company. Next Day Blinds committed to expand its current Jessup location with an additional 40,000 square feet to capitalize on sales growth potential in the Baltimore market.

Neschen AG – A German-owned company, Neschen is being recognized as a premier International Company based in Howard County. Neschen is a world leader in image protection films and document conservation. Last November, the company celebrated the addition of a 40,000 square foot manufacturing operation at its U.S. corporate headquarters in Elkridge.

Syntonics LLC – Receiving an award for success as an emerging technology company, Syntonics has celebrated many recent milestones since its graduation from the NeoTech Incubator. Syntonics is the first tech transfer company from the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory and specializes in defense electronics such as optic communication systems, innovative antennas and advanced GPS holdover clocks.

Rhee Bros., Inc. – Headquartered in Columbia, Md., Rhee Bros., Inc. has grown into the largest Asian food wholesaler and retailer in North America, and receives the award for a successful minority-owned company. Their products are featured in more than 1,500 retailers including Asian grocery stores and grocery chains like Giant, Shoppers Food Warehouse, Costco and Tops Market in New York.

Humanim – In the past year, this award winner provided services to more than 4,000 individuals with disabilities in Maryland. More than 85% of those that Humanim serves are at or below poverty level. Humanim is a community-based organization and focuses on five core areas: mental health, vocational, neuro-rehabilitation, developmental disabilities and deaf services.

The winners will be recognized during an awards ceremony tonight. Dr. Richard T. Roca, Director of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, will deliver the keynote address, celebrating technology partnerships and "Ensuring the Future."

The Howard County Economic Development Authority is a public-private partnership whose primary goal is to promote economic growth and stability by supporting existing businesses, targeting new businesses, and attracting corporate/regional headquarters. The Authority also maintains several programs aimed at the special needs of small, minority-owned, and agricultural business communities. Additionally, the Authority strives to preserve the distinctive quality of life in Howard County. The Authority can be reached on the Web at <http://www.hceda.org>.