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State Programs Prepare 25 Virginia Companies for Export

--AIM program graduates 18 companies; VALET program graduates seven companies--

RICHMOND – A combined 25 companies from across the Commonwealth will graduate Wednesday from two state export programs, touting impressive results from their newly acquired tools to successfully export products and services overseas. The graduating companies will be recognized during a noon luncheon at the downtown Richmond Marriott Hotel.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership's **Accessing International Markets (AIM) program** will honor its final 18 graduates. The companies that successfully completed the program include, Dougherty & Associates Inc. (DAI) of Alexandria; Comter Systems, Inc. and ESI Total Fuel Management, Inc., of Fairfax County; Microbotics of Hampton; Mikro Systems, Inc. of Albemarle County; Universal Companies, Inc. of Washington County; Alliance Industrial of the City of Lynchburg; Creative Urethanes of Frederick County; FDP Virginia, Inc. of Essex County; Northland Forest Products Inc. of Fluvanna County; Phoenix Group of Virginia of the City of Chesapeake, W R Systems, Ltd. of the City of Norfolk, Return on Investment (ROI), Segundo LLC, and SSB Bart Group, both of Fairfax County; Softchalk, LLC of the City of Richmond; ThermaSteel Corporation of the City of Radford; and Waterborne Environmental Inc. of Loudoun County.

Since its inception in December 2005, the AIM program has helped 77 new-to-export companies adopt an effective approach to selling their products and services internationally. Sixty-five participants completed the year-long program. Cumulatively, during the AIM program these participants made more than 100 trips to their target markets. Fifty-two percent generated a new sale and 41 percent secured a new representative in their target market. Moreover, exports to AIM target markets rose 99 percent and total exports rose 47 percent.

Seven will also graduate from VEDP's **Virginia Leaders in Export Trade (VALET) program**, including Air Systems International, Inc., of Chesapeake; CVG, Inc. of Chantilly; Foot Levelers of Roanoke; Hamilton Beach Brands, Inc. of Henrico; Ply Gem Building Products of Roanoke and Rocky Mount; PARI Respiratory Equipment, Inc. of Chesterfield; and VSD, LLC of Virginia Beach.

Launched in January 2002, the VALET program assists exporters in the Commonwealth that have firmly established domestic operations and are committed to international exporting as an expansion strategy. Participating firms are chosen based on their dedication to growth through export. The VALET program now has 93 graduates.

“The VALET program accelerates the development of international business by connecting companies with the practical tools needed for successful export sales,” said Leslie Parpart, VALET Program Manager. “These graduating companies have utilized all of the resources of the VALET program and have really challenged themselves to grow their international businesses. This class of companies worked extremely hard during a very tough international climate, and I am confident that they will see the return on their investment for years to come.”

Currently, the VALET program has 30 companies as participants. Because of the proven results of the program’s graduates, the VALET program will expand to work with more Virginia companies over the course of the next 12 months. In addition, new participants in the program will have access to \$15,000 in reimbursement funds from the Commonwealth. The program will continue to provide participating companies assistance from a team of experienced international service providers to help them meet their international goals. Private sector service providers such as attorneys, Web designers, bankers, translators and freight forwarders contribute essential expertise for expansion into international markets.

The Virginia Economic Development Partnership, a marketing organization, was created by the Virginia General Assembly in 1995 to encourage, stimulate, and support the development and expansion of the economy of the Commonwealth. The Partnership is a state authority, which is governed by a 22-member Board of Directors appointed by the Governor and the Virginia General Assembly. To accomplish its objectives of promoting economic expansion within the Commonwealth, the Partnership focuses its efforts on business recruitment, expansion and international trade. VEDP has offices in Virginia, Belgium, Hong Kong, Mexico and Japan.

To learn more about the AIM and VALET programs, visit www.ExportVirginia.org.