

**PARALYMPIC SKIER AND AUTHOR JOSH SUNDQUIST TO SPEAK AT
BRISTOL EMPLOYMENT COLLABORATIVE'S EXEMPLARY
EMPLOYERS AWARDS EVENT ON OCT. 13, 2011**

Five area employers to be honored for hiring and retaining employees with disabilities

Boston, MA (Oct. 13, 2011) – Paralympic skier and author Josh Sundquist will be the keynote speaker on Thursday, October 13, 2011, when the Bristol Employment Collaborative recognizes five exemplary area employers who have made significant achievements in the hiring and retention of employees with disabilities. The event takes place at the Venus de Milo restaurant in Swansea.

Sundquist, the author of the book *Just Don't Fall*, lost his left leg to cancer at the age of nine. He's since gone on to compete for the US ski team at the 2006 Paralympics in Turin, Italy. A popular motivational speaker, he served as spokesman for the Combined Federal Campaign, which has raised \$300 million annually for a variety of charities.

Sundquist's appearance focuses attention on five area employers who will be recognized at the event, being co-sponsored by the Bristol Employment Collaborative, which works to assist employers and employees, and Work Without Limits, a statewide initiative focusing on enhancing and improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Southcoast-area companies that will be honored for their commitment to inclusive hiring practices include: Jukebox Diner, Lafrance Hospitality, Fall River Country Club, Sodexo at Bridgewater State University, and U.S. Packaging Specialties, Inc. The event is designed to mark October as National Disability Employment Awareness month and also highlight the national "What Can YOU Do?" campaign to raise awareness around employing people with disabilities.

"These companies have each made exceptional commitments to the employment and retention of employees with disabilities," said Kimberly Lapine, director of the Bristol Employment Collaborative, a program of PRIDE, Inc., one of five regional collaboratives designed to support area businesses, as well as prospective employees with disabilities. "These companies have shown that it's just good business sense to adopt inclusive hiring practices and organizations like BEC are on hand to help companies follow the lead of these exemplary employers."

-more-

In addition to BEC, the event is sponsored by UMass Medical School's Work Without Limits, a Massachusetts Disability Employment Initiative. Work Without Limits is a public/private partnership bringing together people with disabilities and their families, policy researchers, policy makers, service planners, employment service providers, employers, and other stakeholders. The initiative's mission is to strengthen the Massachusetts workforce and advance

work opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities in Massachusetts. The initiative was developed with support from the Massachusetts Medicaid Infrastructure and Comprehensive Employment Opportunities Grant (MI-CEO), funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

#