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GrowFL Now Accepting Applications 2016 Florida Companies to Watch Awards

Second-Stage Businesses Compete to Earn Prestigious Honor

Brevard County, Fla (April 15, 2016) – [GrowFL](#), Florida's leading organization in support of second-stage growth companies, is now accepting applications for its annual *Florida Companies to Watch*® awards program. The event - now in its sixth year - honors 50 select second-stage companies from throughout the state for developing valuable products and services, creating quality jobs, enriching communities, and creating new industries throughout Florida.

Eligible applicants must be privately held, [second-stage](#) commercial enterprises. Qualifying companies must also be headquartered in the state of Florida, employ between 6 and 150 employees, and earn between \$750,000 and \$100 million in annual revenue. A selection panel of judges representing areas of economic development, banking, entrepreneurship and small business select winners based on fast and/or high growth in employment rates and revenue. Award recipients must also demonstrate unique strengths and traits including entrepreneurial leadership, product innovation, social/community responsibility and competitive business practices.

"We are excited to again present this prestigious awards program to honor exemplary second-stage businesses who have become an integral part of Florida's economic landscape," says Dr. Tom O'Neal, GrowFL Executive Director. "We received a record number of nominations last year and expect the same in 2016. This in itself says a lot about the drive and motivation of entrepreneurs throughout our state."

GrowFL is a statewide economic development organization certified by the National Center for Economic Gardening through the [Edward Lowe Foundation](#), a national, nonprofit organization that supports entrepreneurship through research, recognition and educational programs. The foundation focuses on second-stage companies — those that have moved beyond the startup phase and seek significant, steady growth. GrowFL, in turn, helps second-stage companies in Florida overcome obstacles and leads them towards prosperity by providing strategies, resources and support designed to prepare them for next level success. A typical *Florida Companies to Watch* class is comprised of businesses who collectively gross over \$450 million in annual revenue, add more than 350 new jobs per year, average a 30% increase in earnings and experience almost 20% growth in employees annually.

Brevard County is home to some of Florida's top cities for starting a business, providing companies the ideal environment conducive to success. "Second stage companies are an essential part of our economy and this statewide initiative provides an exclusive platform to showcase their success. Several companies representing Brevard County have been recognized, demonstrating the depth of business entrepreneurship in our community," stated Lynda Weatherman, president & CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast.

Second stage businesses are encouraged to apply directly to the program. The deadline for applications is 5pm EST on Friday, May 31st. The 2016 *Florida Companies to Watch* awards will be held on Thursday, November 3rd at the Hard Rock Live, CityWalk Orlando. For more information or to nominate a company, please visit <http://GrowFL.com/flctw16/>.

GrowFL is generously supported by Wells Fargo, University of Central Florida, Bright House Networks Business Solutions, The Corridor, Carlton Fields, OUC, Filmscape Productions, FPL, SCB Marketing, Florida Angel Nexus, AMTIS Inc., CliftonLarsonAllen, *FAIRWINDS* Credit Union, Enterprise Florida, IQ Orlando, Merit Advisors LP, Nperspective – CFO Services, Traction in Florida, South Florida Business and Wealth Magazine, TriNet, USF CONNECT, and U.S. Trust/Bank of America Private Wealth Management.

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About GrowFL

GrowFL is an economic development program focused on assisting second-stage growth companies prosper in the state of Florida. By providing strategies, resources and support to second-stage companies for next level growth through Strategic Research, Peer Learning and Leadership Development, GrowFL helps companies overcome obstacles to growth and leads them towards prosperity. Based on the philosophy of Economic Gardening®—to grow existing businesses in a community, region or state—GrowFL, the Florida Economic Gardening Institute, is a critical component to the state’s economic development strategy and Florida’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. GrowFL is a statewide economic development organization certified by the National Center for Economic Gardening through the Edward Lowe Foundation. GrowFL has assisted more than 800 companies through the Strategic Research and CEO Roundtable programs and recognized 250 successful entrepreneurs through the annual awards program, Florida Companies to Watch. Learn more at GrowFL.com.

About the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast

The Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast (EDC) is dedicated to attracting new business and investment and expanding existing industry throughout the Space Coast, influencing change on government laws and regulations affecting economic development, promoting the Space Coast to encourage new investment, supporting efforts of Space Coast military installations, and relaying new programs and procedures to assist manufacturing and high tech companies. The EDC is a private, not-for-profit coalition whose stakeholders are business leaders committed to the economic growth and stability of Florida’s Space Coast. Visit www.SpaceCoastEDC.org.