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PRESS RELEASE

Release Date: February 28, 2003
Contact: Kelly McLeod, Marketing Specialist, kmcleod@uwf.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thirty-Seven Plus Years Supporting Small Business Earn Bob Graham Recognition as Florida SBDC's 2003 Small Business Dividend\$ Award Winner



Pensacola, FL: On Wednesday, March 19, 2003, the Florida Small Business Development Center Network will hold its **Fourth Annual Capitol-Business Briefing & Reception**, from 5:30 until 8:00 p.m., at the Florida House on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C., where U.S. Senator Bob Graham will be presented with the Network's prestigious **Small Business Dividend\$ Award**. "With more than 37 plus years of proven support of Florida's small business, Graham has more than earned this recognition," says Jerry Cartwright, FSBDC Network State Director.

Since 1966, U.S. Senator Bob Graham has represented the State of Florida in various political capacities in which he has and continues to take an active role in encouraging and supporting small business enterprise in Florida, starting with the position of Florida State Representative, moving on to Florida State Senator in 1970, Governor in 1978 and U.S. Senator in 1986 where he continues to advocate for small business.

As Governor, Graham endorsed the establishment of the Florida SBDC Network in 1978. In the Summer 1990 issue of the FSBDC's Dividend\$ Newsletter, Graham continued to support the SBDC program by stating, "Florida's SBDC program provides the valuable support and resources for our small businesses to succeed. I applaud your efforts and encourage your continued work on behalf of Florida's small businesses." In an effort to learn about the challenges businesses face, Graham began his "Workdays" in 1974 and, since, has completed more than a year's worth of days laboring side-by-side with the people he represents, including Mykonos, a family-owned, Greek restaurant in Tarpon Springs, whose owners also happen to have attended seminars at the University of South Florida SBDC in 2002; a carpenter's assistant; and a small bagel maker in Florida.

Other business initiatives Graham endorsed through the years include: The first Governor's Conference on Small Business to provide a unique forum for the state's entrepreneurs to voice its concerns about laws, policies and regulations to enhance Florida's small business community; numerous Small Business Forums held throughout the state; the establishment of the Florida First Capital Finance Corporation to provide long-term fixed asset financing to small business; and the creation of the Black Business Investment Board to strengthen the state's economy through minority economic development.

Currently, Graham serves as a senior member of the powerful Finance Committee, which handles tax, trade and health-care legislation, and the committees on Environment and Public Works, Energy and Natural Resources, as well as the ranking Democrat on the Veterans Affairs Committee--all of which provide Graham an opportunity to advocate on behalf of small business.

The FSBDC Network implemented an annual event, in March 2000, as a new and exciting way to brief the Florida Congressional Delegation and its various partner organizations and agencies regarding the impact of federal funding on the overall Florida economy, the small business community and, in particular, the impact in each member's district, as well as providing partnership networking opportunities with Florida's SBDC professionals. A distinctive element of the event is the acknowledgment of a Floridian whose service to the state has included strong support of small business issues. Past award winners include: Bill Young in 2002, Connie Mack in 2001, and Andy Ireland in 2000.

For additional information about the **Capitol-Business Briefing & Reception**, please contact Kelly McLeod at 850-595-6060 x218 or kmcleod@uwf.edu or visit our website at www.FloridaSBDC.com.

The Florida SBDC Network is a non-profit, statewide network of college and university based centers that link the resources of the federal, state and local governments, as well as the private sector, to provide entrepreneurs with the one-on-one counseling, management training and information they need to prosper and grow in a complex and competitive global economy.

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A statewide service network partially funded by the U.S. SBA and administered by the University of West Florida