



Prague, September 19, 2006

2006 Via Bona Philanthropy Award Goes to Metrostav

Today, the Via Foundation presented the 9th Annual Via Bona Award for Corporate Donors to Metrostav for its exemplary support of charitable activities in the Czech Republic. Other award winners include Vlastimil Venclík, the Skanska CZ Corporation, and the Hobra – Školník firm. Each award winner receives CZK 50,000, which is given to the non-profit organization of its choice.

The **Via Bona Awards** were presented in four categories on Tuesday, September 19th under the auspices of US Ambassador William Cabaniss at his official residence in Prague. The selection committee chose exemplary donors in four categories from almost 50 nominated firms and individual donors from throughout the Czech Republic.

The Via Bona Award is awarded to those who take an interest in the needs around them. *“Everyone who helps or contributes to those in need deserves thanks and recognition,”* says Jiří Bárta, Director of the Via Foundation, about the purpose of the awards. *“Each year we acknowledge donors whose generosity and commitment to bettering life in communities in the Czech Republic serve as an example for us all.”*

In the Corporate Category, the selection committee applauded the philanthropic strategy of **Metrostav a.s.** *“Metrostav has been nominated for several consecutive years and the company is often nominated by more than one non-profit organization. Thus, those that have received the company’s assistance truly value it,”* explains Vladimír Bystrov of Bison and Rose and Chairman of this year’s selection committee. The committee selected Metrostav primarily for the company’s well thought out and long-running philanthropic activities, and also because the company refuses to avoid “unpopular” topics. *“Metrostav gave a significant donation toward the construction of the Nadeje Asylum Home in Prague-Žižkov and the St. Jan N. Neumann Hospice in Prachatice. Many firms still don’t feel confident enough to link their names to the topic of dying and that’s why Metrostav’s donation is commendable,”* adds Bystrov. The committee also appreciated the fact that the company pledged annual contributions of CZK 500,000 for five years, which has enabled this non-profit organization to serve almost one hundred terminally ill patients to date. *“A commitment to long-term assistance is exceptionally valuable to a non-profit organization and Metrostav’s example should be followed by other firms considering systematic philanthropy,”* Vladimír Bystrov says.

The Via Bona awards were presented in other categories as well: among small and medium-sized companies, the firm **Hobra – Školník** captured the selection committee’s attention for its long-term, systematic support of cultural and community development of the Broumov region. *“Most of all we appreciate the fact that today, when many people wait for a subsidy or complain about legislation, we can find a willing and energetic company owner who proves that even one individual has the strength to change his environment for the better,”* says committee member Luďka Raimondová of the Association of Public Relations Agencies.

The Via Bona award for individual donors went to **Vlastimil Venclík** for founding and financing the Filip Venclík Fund for Assistance to Victims of Crimes and Promotion of Activities against Violence. *“Mr. Venclík himself experienced a tragedy, after which he could have retreated within himself and asked – rightfully so – for help. But he didn’t; he decided to come to terms with the tragedy in a remarkable way: he established a fund to support victims of crime,”* said committee member Lucie Weisssová of Český rozhlas 1 – Radiožurnál (Czech Radio 1 – Radio Journal) about the committee’s decision. The endowment fund helps victims of crimes as well as their surviving family members.

The **Skanska CZ Corporation** earned an award for its innovative approach to philanthropy in its cooperation with the Partnership Foundation. *“An environmental foundation and a construction firm – they could be enemies for life. We wanted to recognize that these two entities decided to work together – they exchange experiences and work to find compromises that benefit both,”* explained committee member Lenka Surotchak

of the Pontis Foundation based in Slovakia. In addition to significant financial support to the Tree of Life project, Skanska expanded its cooperation with the Partnership Foundation to include outreach on environmental and philanthropic topics, assistance in approaching additional donors, and consultation on professional topics such as ecological construction techniques, environmentally friendly technology, etc.

This year the committee also awarded honorable mentions to the **Marten** Company for printing day planners and other cooperation with the Máme otevřeno? (“Are We Open?”) Civic Association and to the **Československa obchodní banka** (Czechoslovak Commercial Bank) for its decade-long financial support of the Education Fund for Disadvantaged Students at the Committee of Good Will – Olga Havlová Foundation.

The Via Foundation Board of Directors also awarded a Via Bona honorable mention to **Mr. Vaclav and Mrs. Marie Hora** for establishing the Hora Fund for Children from Subcarpathian Ukraine at the Via Foundation. This fund aims to improve the daily life of children in Subcarpathia by supporting cultural and educational organizations.

This year’s committee included: Vladimír Bystrov of Bison and Rose, Andrea Machálková of Citibank, Ludka Raimondová of the Association of Public Relations Agencies, Lenka Surotchak of the PONTIS Foundation and Lucie Weissová of Český rozhlas 1 – Radiožurnál.

The Via Bona Awards are presented annually in partnership with the Foundation for a Civil Society and through the gracious support of the Citigroup Foundation of the USA.

About the Via Foundation

The Via Foundation was established in 1997 as the successor to the Czech office of the US-based Foundation for a Civil Society, which had operated in the country from 1990. Through 2005, the Via Foundation distributed more than CZK 161 million toward 1,605 projects in the fields of local development, development of non-profit organizations and development of philanthropy. The Via Foundation’s database includes over 2,330 Czech non-profit organizations and municipalities that have applied for grants.

The Via Foundation’s mission is to promote and strengthen active public participation in the ongoing development of democratic society in the Czech Republic.

- We support development of good relations and cooperation between non-profit organizations, local government, and businesses, because we believe that this is the way that people can assume responsibility for their environment – thinking and talking about it together, planning changes together, and together transforming plans into reality.
- We support the development of non-profit organizations as they play a crucial role in building vibrant, healthy communities.
- We support the development of philanthropy because neither a civil society nor non-profit organizations are capable of existing without the generosity of supportive individuals, businesses and institutions.

The Via Foundation and Corporate Philanthropy

Since 2001, the Via Foundation has also been developing cooperation with firms through corporate donor funds and seminars about effective philanthropy. Our work in this area is based on our experiences from the past four years, during which we have administered the financial resources of the following companies: Citigroup Foundation, Levi Strauss & Co., Plzeňský Prazdroj a.s., Philip Morris ČR, Procter & Gamble Česká republika a.s., CS Cabot, Juniper Networks Inc., Česká spořitelna a.s. and its foundations, T-Mobile Czech Republic a.s. and Unilever ČR spol. s.r.o. Between 2001 and 2005, we distributed a total of CZK 31.2 million through our corporate donor funds.

Via Bona – A Path toward Connecting Donors and Effective Charitable Opportunities

Via Bona (‘good path’ in Latin) is a public showing of thanks to those who have significantly contributed to the betterment of their communities through effective philanthropy. The main goal is to emphasize the significance of partnerships between those who financially support charitable activities and those who directly implement such activities. In this way we aim to revitalize and popularize the notion of philanthropy and mutual assistance, which was ridiculed as an expression of bourgeois hypocrisy for forty years in communist Czechoslovakia. Through the Via Bona Awards, we strive to show that the development of private corporate and individual philanthropy is a path toward finding solutions to various problems together. Strong, vital, and

creative is the society that is capable of weaving a web of private relationships between non-profit organizations and the business sector to improving its quality of life.

Helping Communities Help Themselves

Donors and effective non-profit organizations must find ways to connect not only because of altruistic impulses but also because of a vital practical motivation: enabling individuals to address needs both independently and locally reinforces a strong, healthy democracy. Active non-profit organizations support the climate which gives individuals both the possibility and responsibility to positively influence their communities independent of the government. Senator Petr Pithart had this to say about the Via Bona Awards: *“If the wealthiest among us do not support non-profit organizations, NGOs will have to solicit the government. Then, sooner or later, the government will want to take over their agendas. If we want a strong government that will take care of all of us and all of our needs, leading finally to the attentive care of policemen in civilian clothing, we should devote ourselves exclusively to our personal profits and turn them into more and more profits. If, however, we want a government that we need but needn’t fear, then we should seek how the “good path” leads from wealth to creative, responsible people who care for those in need among us.”*

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