

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | August 29, 2008 | Press Announcement****Media Contact: Kristine Vorpapel Shields**

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**AUGUST 29, 2008 - Central Florida** – The Central Florida Partnership has recruited a top expert in entrepreneurship and business development to serve as President of the Region's "Five Star" Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce. Following an extensive global and local search, the Executive Search Committee led by Chair Kelley Mossburg, identified Indiana's Leslie Hielema as the top choice to launch the Chamber into the next level of service for the Region. She will be in office November 3, 2008.

"I am honored to be invited to join the Central Florida Partnership team," said Leslie Hielema. "Its leaders have responded to the conditions and concerns of the Region with immediacy and action, and I am thrilled to take the helm of this top-tier Chamber, now focused on entrepreneurship."

"Leslie Hielema is our top choice from an outstanding candidate pool of 100 applicants for a reason: She will take the Chamber to the next level, and will do so with an incredible portfolio of talent, expertise, and business acumen," said committee chair Mossburg, who serves as President of Schenck Company. Mossburg also led the march in 2007 toward imagining and creating the Central Florida Partnership – America's Newest Regional Partnership. During that process, a coalition of regional leaders challenged the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce to focus on ensuring Central Florida's standing as the best regional entrepreneurship system in the Americas.

The Partnership is a platform for leaders to tackle Central Florida's most critical challenges and opportunities. Hielema will ensure that the Chamber works closely with the Partnership's other lines of business and key initiatives, including *BusinessForce*, *myregion.org*, *Leadership Orlando*, and the Central Florida Transportation Corridors "Task Force." This new governance structure represents a positive next step for the Central Florida region, following over 25 years of Chamber and community leadership by Jacob Stuart.

Hielema holds a Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Michigan; a Masters of Science in Management with an International Focus from Boston University; and a Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering from the Florida Institute of Technology. She is recognized for her development of curricula in entrepreneurship and e-commerce for Valparaiso University, where she has served as a visiting professor. With a unique combination of technical knowledge and business expertise, she has continually pushed the boundaries on challenges ranging from product development to classified government contracting objectives both stateside and in global markets.

"The faculty, students, and alumni of Florida Tech are delighted to welcome back our distinguished alumna Leslie Hielema to Central Florida," said Anthony J. Catanese, Ph.D., President of Florida Institute of Technology. "She is exactly what this rapidly growing Central Florida Region needs to help plan and implement our future. I look forward to working with Leslie in my role with *myregion.org*, the Central Florida

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Transportation Corridors "Task Force," and the Central Florida Partnership. Welcome back Leslie. You do your Alma Mater proud!"

Search Committee member Martin Rubin, President and CEO of Smart City Telecom, recalls the team's reaction to Hielema: "We saw the value of her amazing portfolio of work, depth of knowledge, and enthusiasm about tackling the complex challenges facing our Region." Rubin continued, "I am confident she will lead this Chamber into the next phase of action paving the way for new scales of entrepreneurship and critical partnerships throughout Central Florida, while maintaining our exemplary "Five Star" Accreditation."

Cari H. Coats, President of C2 Advisors, Inc. and a member of the Search Committee, commented on new considerations the committee faced during the Search Process: "Following the transformation process of 2007, we had consensus that we would not want "traditional" chamber leadership because we have a new, lean chamber, supported by a professional service corps and free to focus and execute on what matters most for entrepreneurship and small business, while bolstering a business-driven agenda. Leslie rose above numerous traditional chamber CEOs with world-class management virtuosity, skills, and a depth of knowledge and experience in entrepreneurship and small business."

"The Members of the Executive Search Committee were charged with the critical task of identifying the right person to lead the new Chamber and strengthen its agenda as a critical line of business for the Partnership," said Jacob V. Stuart, President and CEO of the Central Florida Partnership. "They have exceeded all expectations. They identified the right leader who understands what it takes to interpret our changing market and represent the complex interests of businesses from across the 7-county Region."

**About Central Florida:** The Central Florida Region consists of 7 counties, including Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia, with an estimated population of over 3.5 million. The region, projected to grow by an additional 4 million people by 2050, includes 85 incorporated municipalities, is home to two United States Senators, and represents 8 congressional districts. The Central Florida Region includes the world's top spaceport, annual domestic and international airport destinations serving over 17 million residents and visitors annually, and hosts the nation's 6th largest public university and Florida's newest medical school.

**About the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce:** Understanding that small business and entrepreneurial enterprises are the backbone of our economy, the Orlando Regional Chamber is focused on establishing the top regional entrepreneurial system in the Americas for Incubation, Development and Funding – Ideas to Market. The Orlando Regional Chamber is the only metropolitan chamber of commerce in Florida to achieve "Five Star" Accreditation Status with the United States Chamber of Commerce, representing the top 4% of the nearly 7,000 chambers in the United States.

**About the Central Florida Partnership:** The Central Florida Partnership is a collaborative of business and civic leaders committed to procuring a better tomorrow for Central Florida's seven counties - Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole and Volusia. This coalition of thoughtful leaders is united by a single, guiding principle: *We have both the capacity and the responsibility to bring Ideas to Results.*

[www.CentralFloridaPartnership.org](http://www.CentralFloridaPartnership.org)

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